

ROUNDTABLE

Unpacking Political Institutions' Claims to Legitimacy in Burma

Coordinator

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Roundtable Description

This roundtable examines how debates around political legitimacy have re-emerged and shifted in Burma following the 2021 military coup. The proliferation of new political bodies, alongside the renewed or transformed roles of existing institutions, has expanded the terrain of authority across local, state, and national levels. In this evolving landscape, multiple actors advance claims to legitimacy grounded in institutional procedures, legal frameworks, service delivery, security provision, and historical narratives.

Rather than assuming these claims are mutually exclusive or easily reconciled, the discussion considers the tensions that arise when legitimacy is asserted by multiple governing bodies simultaneously. As political institutions emerge, adapt, and sometimes overlap or compete, questions of coordination, representation, and long-term political direction become increasingly salient. The challenge is not only how legitimacy is constructed, but how it is sustained across different levels of governance and aligned with broader political visions.

Bringing together a researcher and practitioners working across different political contexts, the discussion explores how governing bodies seek to establish legitimacy within their own constituencies while simultaneously navigating broader national and international arenas. It considers how local political realities, federal aspirations, and external recognition interact, and at times conflict, in shaping the understandings of legitimacy.

Keyword: Sources of legitimacy, Political Institutions, Historical political development, Legitimacy beyond elections