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**New voices in  
cultural relations**

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**Dynamics of 21st-century  
anti-coup resistance in Myanmar**  
Triangle model of resistance  
in Myanmar

**Htet Lynn Oo**

# Foreword

I am delighted to present the first edition of our new series New voices in cultural relations. In much of the British Council's research portfolio, we focus on the views of young people and bringing to the fore voices that are not often heard in decision making circles. Like the Cultural Relations Collection, from which this new series evolved, the central aim here is to showcase fresh perspectives and innovative thinking, fostering a platform for emerging scholars from the UK and beyond.

I'm especially pleased that we brought this collection to life in partnership with BISA, the British International Studies Association. Given the complex and uncertain times in which we live, the field of international studies is more important than ever, helping us to explore and understand the intricacies of global interactions.

This series of essays was gathered through a competitive process. It asked course leaders in the international relations discipline to put forward outstanding Masters-level dissertations that made an original contribution to their field, either through providing new scholarly insight or offering a new policy direction.

The diversity of the contributors to this series is another aspect we celebrate. Our postgraduate authors come from varied cultural and academic backgrounds, each bringing a distinct perspective to their research. This underscores the idea that international relations is not a monolithic field, but one that thrives on diversity and inclusivity.

I must first congratulate our winner, Louise Sherry, for her dissertation reflecting on the state of climate justice and COP27. The judging panel noted that 'not only does the dissertation tackle a subject of crucial global importance, it has the clear potential to transform thinking on this topic, and, one would hope, policy.' In that regard, it is a worthy winner of our prize.

The remaining essays, each commended by the judging panel, cover topics as varied as the role of information warfare in the global system; the resistance movement in Myanmar; a critique of the 'war on terror'; and an approach to inclusion and anti-discrimination in the EU drawn from interviews with Black politicians in Europe.

I would invite you to engage with the essays with an open mind. The ideas presented here are thought provoking and you may disagree with what you read. But it is in that spirit of engagement and dialogue that we hope that New voices in cultural relations will inspire you. And that it will also inspire not only current scholars and practitioners, but also future generations of international relations students, to continue exploring and contributing to this ever-evolving field.

I would like to thank our partners, BISA, for their constructive and energetic approach to this work. Thanks also to my colleagues Reesha Alvi and Purti Kohli for their excellent project management from start to finish. I'm grateful to my colleagues Amanda Alves, James Carey, Dr Lisdey Espinoza, Michael Peak and Devika Purandare for their thoughtful evaluations of the first round of submissions, and to the academic panel – Dr Nancy Annan, Dr Yoav Galai, Dr Victoria Hudson and chair Prof Kyle Grayson – for making the difficult decision of selecting the winner and commended essays.

Lastly, I extend my thanks to all the students who submitted to the competition, and my congratulations to our winner and to the runners-up. It was a pleasure to read your work, albeit a challenge to make judgments on such a diverse range of scholarship, but it is clear that the future of international relations is in good hands.

**Christine Wilson**  
Director Research and Insight  
British Council

# Introduction

## About New voices in cultural relations prize

The British Council works to support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. We do this through a range of cultural relations activities which aim to create greater mutual understanding, deeper relationships, and enhance sustainable dialogue between people and cultures.

In this spirit, the British Council in partnership with BISA (The British International Studies Association) have created the New voices in cultural relations Prize for Master's students writing a dissertation in the area of international relations.

The objective is to provide new scholarly insights or propose new policy directions that contribute significantly to the field of international relations. The prize recognizes and promotes exceptional academic achievements that have the potential to influence attitudes, practices, or policies in international relations.

Universities were invited to put forward the strongest Master's dissertation in the field of international relations. Entries were assessed by an international committee within the British Council and then by a panel of judges convened by BISA.

The publication of this essay is reward for this being one of the shortlisted entries. All shortlisted authors also received 12 month's BISA membership.

## About the essay

### *Dynamics of 21st-Century anti-coup resistance in Myanmar: triangle model of resistance in Myanmar*

Htet Lynn through this dissertation shares how the resistance movement against the military coup in Myanmar intends to explore and challenge the dichotomy between non-violence and armed resistance in the context of contemporary resistance studies. This paper contributes to contemporary resistance studies by analysing the dynamic interaction and collaboration among different forms of resistance in Myanmar, challenging conventional theoretical frameworks, and emphasizing the practical implications for future resistance movements globally.

The judging panel noted:

'This dissertation offers a well-written exploration of resistance in Myanmar, showcasing deep knowledge and effectively engaging with literature. It introduces a valuable 'triangle model of resistance' which contributes to resistance studies more generally. The study's in-depth engagement with documents enriches the analysis of the case study.'



# Abstract

*Existing literature on resistance studies presents the dichotomy between non-violence and armed resistance, portraying these movement tactics and strategies as conceptually and practically distinct, with little to no overlap (Ackerman & DuVall, 2000; Bartkowski, 2013). The empirical findings of Chenoweth & Stephan (2011) highlighted that the non-violence approach is more successful than violent campaigns in achieving the goals for substantial change. The works of Shellman, Levey, & Young (2013) also argue that there is fluidity between non-violence and armed resistance by shifting the strategies and activities throughout the process. In the middle of these theoretical debates, this paper will look at the resistance movement against the military coup in Myanmar, investigate the collaboration between different types of resistance, which are often only analysed separately. This paper is intended to identify how compatible these strategies are and whether their*

*cooperation is indeed mutually reinforcing, using the method of content analysis and autoethnography. This paper will argue that the contemporary resistance against the military coup in Myanmar suggests a tripartite model of resistance, wherein armed struggle, non-violence campaigns and activities, and diasporaic transnational advocacy form the three corners of a triangle, working together without significantly undermining each other. They mutually reinforce each other by fostering collaboration among these three components, generating functioning new institutions; rebel governance or rebelocracy. This paper will also present the implications of contemporary Myanmar resistance; the need to reconsider the dichotomous discourse on non-violence and armed resistance and take diaspora politics as a significant factor in the contemporary resistance studies.*

*Key Terms; Non-Violence Resistance, Armed Resistance, Diaspora Politics, Rebellion Governance, Rebelocracy*



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# Chapter 1 Introduction

The dichotomy of non-violence and violence is one of the significant debates in resistance studies (Beck et al., 2022). Many scholars emphasise the distinction between non-violence and violence in terms of the use of strategies and values (Ackerman & Duvall, 2000; Celestino & Gleditsch, 2013; Roberts & Garton Ash, 2009; Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011). Specifically, these scholars underscore the advantages and effectiveness of each approach. On the other hand, the critical literature highlights the problematic and confusing nature of such dichotomy, explaining the shifting nature of resistance strategies from violence to non-violence and from non-violence to violence (Ortiz, 2007; Pearlman, 2011; Beck et al., 2022; Dudouet, 2013). However, there is a substantial gap of studies on the rooms of cooperation between non-violence and armed resistance.

Diaspora communities can be influential actors in the internal politics of their home countries by using their financial, social, cultural, and political leverage (Gamlen, 2008). Since the role of the diaspora agency is significant, especially in the context of conflict and political instability, they can be peacemakers to de-escalate the resistance and conflicts at home and peace wreckers who can escalate the conflicts (Smith, 2007). Through the mobilisation of politics, economics and society, they have access to power to shape domestic politics with the help of technological advancement. They exert a certain pressure on domestic political stakeholders (Vertovec, 2005). In Myanmar

resistance, the contribution of diaspora communities has a significant impact on the resistance groups in terms of financial and emotional support (DEMAC, 2023; Lynn, 2023; International Crisis Group, 2022). Nevertheless, there is still a significant lack of studies on how the diaspora influence and shape the ongoing resistance, its nature, trend and direction.

Therefore, this dissertation is designed to fill those two gaps by studying the case study of Myanmar, the possibility and nature of working between non-violence and armed resistance and the role of diaspora communities in the resistance. This research will develop the primary argument that the resistance against the military coup in Myanmar suggests a tripartite model of resistance, wherein armed struggle, non-violence campaigns and activities, and transnational advocacy, working together without significantly undermining each other.

Another important related area of study is rebel governance, which is the institutionalisation of the resistance movement. During the resistance, especially the armed revolution, the pre-existed institutions were weakened, and wartime institutions emerged instead (Ostrom, 1990; Volkov, 2000). However, such institutions' formation, nature and practices are shaped by the trends and direction of the resistance movement. In the case study of Myanmar, the National Unity Government, Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, and

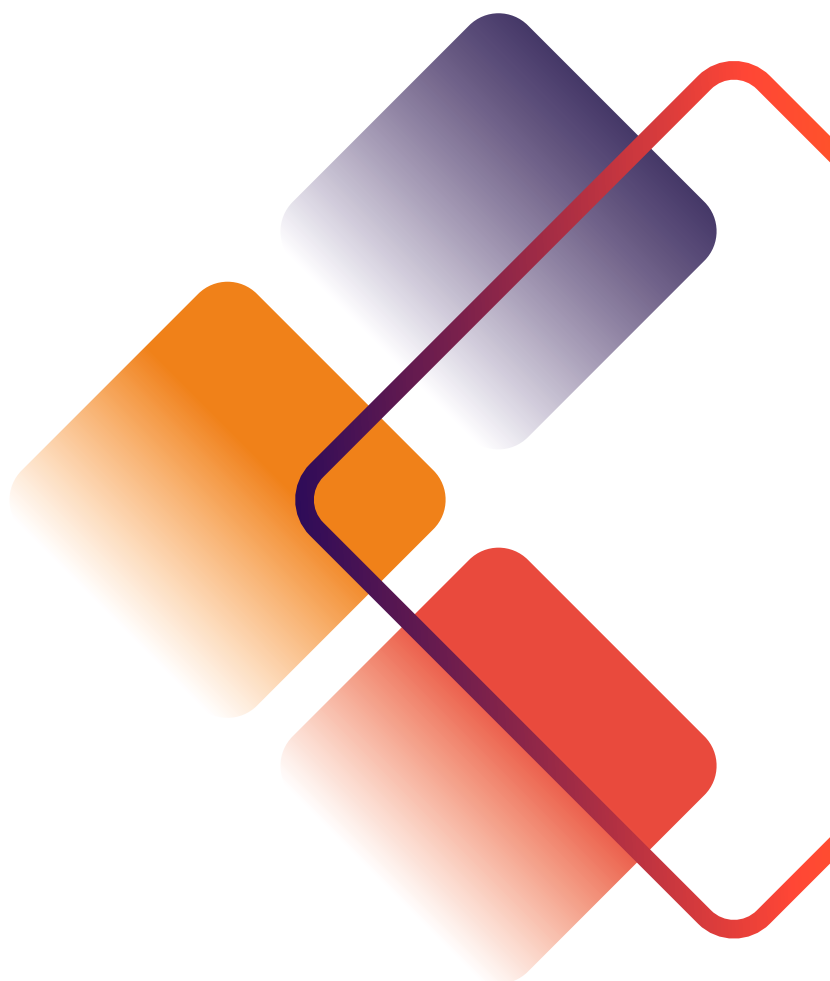
National Unity Consultative Council emerged as wartime institutions (Annawitt, 2022; Aye Chan & Ford, 2021). It is a prominent puzzle to assess how the suggested triangle model of Myanmar's resistance strategies drives the process of resistance, what the relationships among these three corners of resistance are like, and how the triangle model of Myanmar resistance has formed the rebel governance institutions.

Hence, this research project is intended to address the following the research questions

How do the non-violent resistance, armed struggle and transnational advocacy through diaspora politics collaborate within the resistance movement and how does the collaboration between politically/philosophically not perfectly aligned partners operate?

How does such a resistance model shape the emergence of institutionalisation of rebel governance?

What are the policy and philosophical implications of Myanmar's resistance model?"



# Chapter 2 Literature of Theoretical Framework

## 2.1. Debates on Dichotomy of Non-Violence and Violence

A multifaceted concept of power can be oppressive and persuasive and exist at all societal levels (Foucault, 1978). Foucault works also confirmed that 'Where there is power, there is resistance' (Foucault, 1978, p.95). Moreover, different forms of power embody the effects on resistance, implying that they could produce different forms of resistance, and how the power is employed can shape the nature of resistance (Foucault, 1990). Therefore, groups of people with power, primarily the state or armed groups that use the power to influence, control, oppress or manipulate society, are inescapable from the emergence of resistance or revolution.

As a practice of resistance, a social movement entails a collective effort of the people to challenge and resist the normative codes of elites, authorities and other superior groups (Tarrow, 1994). People with a common purpose build solidarity and are involved in such movements to resist the authorities and power holders, using any available means. Such resistance can happen at every level as long as there is room for resistance. Traditionally, resistance can be assumed as actions with organised, overt, and confrontational features. Scott (1985) challenged such assumption and introduced the concept of everyday forms of resistance, which is often overlooked. In his book, he explained the practices of peasants who lack political power but still use the available rooms of resistance to challenge the superior and negotiate their positions without letting it impacts their survival and interests (1985).

In the literature of resistance studies, there is a strong influence of the dichotomy of non-violence and violence despite critical counterarguments. The recent report of Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) is an influential proponent of such dichotomy. Generally, non-violence civil resistance is built on the implication of the 'Consent Theory of Power', depicting that subordinated communities are granting the power of rulers (Vinthagen, 2006). And the proponents of non-violence resistance believe that rulers can continue to govern if the people consent consciously or unconsciously (Burrowes, 1996). On the other hand, armed resistance opponents state that violence is necessary for the transformative change of society. For instance, violence is inevitable for absolute liberation from the chain of oppression. (Fanon et al., 1963).





Some pieces of the literature suggest that people are more likely to be involved in non-violent resistance, increasing the likelihood of success. Quantitative data show that twenty out of 25 mass movements refrained from using violent approaches and discovered that 52% of the non-violent resistance was successful. In contrast, only 26% of the violent campaigns did (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011). Additionally, Parkin (2006) explained why non-violent resistance has more participation than armed resistance. Firstly, the activities and tactics of non-violence movements have more accessibility, while the armed resistance needs training, weapons, sacrifices, risks and isolation from society. As a second fact, he mentioned that there are fewer risks and more transparency of objectives and norms of non-violence resistance, unlike armed struggles, which are full of confidentiality and life risks (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011). Moreover, participants in violent resistance need to abandon the moral value of non-killing when it is not necessary for non-violence resistance. Consequently, those involved in armed struggle need high commitment and dedication to kill, die, stay away from families and friends and live under strict discipline. These depict how non-violence and violence are distinct in terms of the nature of strategies.

Parkin (2016) mentioned that violent repression of non-violent resistance (NVR) could backfire on the aggressor. Because violence against non-violent resisters triggers the emotions of power holders group, violent repression has frequently resulted in a breakdown in obedience among regime supporters, increased mobilisation against the regime, and international condemnation of the regime. For instance, more extensive non-violent operations are more likely to result in significant security force defections; 60% of the largest non-violent campaigns have done so (Parkin, 2016). It indicates that continuous non-violent actions could still be effective despite the escalating violence by the ruling regime. Moreover, the state's oppression

may shape the extent and likelihood of non-violence group. Chiang (2021) 's quantitative data analysis shows that repression of non-violent dissent, particularly physical repression, lowers the level of involvement.

Literature suggests that there are also significant differences between non-violent and armed resistance in the aftermath of the resistance. Especially its aftermath can also depend on the nature and dynamics of wartime and post-war institutions. It is challenging to develop peaceful democracy when the violent rebels frequently desire to re-establish a monopoly of violence for themselves through their manipulated wartime institutions (Karatnycky & Ackerman, 2005). Hence, it is worthy of understanding and assessing the nature and dynamic of the wartime institutions during the process of resistance.

Therefore, this session elaborated on the different philosophical roots and distinct nature of strategies between non-violence and armed resistance. However, it is less likely to keep the process of resistance to sticking with only one particular strategy as the nature of resistance is dynamic, and it can happen at any level in different forms.

## 2.2. Fluidity of Concepts and Practice between Non-Violence and Violence

In this session, it will discuss the nature of resistance in practice which is fluid. It will also explain the definition of non-violence and violence is confusing, and it is neither easy nor necessary to categorise the resistance activities in the practice of the resistance. In fact, there are still debates on conceptualising and defining non-violence and violence. Hence, this session will establish that the dichotomy itself is not helpful to understand the resistance and is not that significant in practices as both strategies exist in forms of fluidity. Therefore, Govier (2008) highlights critical issues in defining non-violence and violence, which are vague, ambiguous and inconsistent, leading to different conclusions about whether a particular act is violent or non-violent.

Govier (2008) uncovers the confusion of the conventional understanding of non-violence. She questioned whether non-violence encompasses actions that may be coercive, such as riots or attacks on security forces. It raises the dilemma of whether such acts can be considered coercive pressures within non-violence or if they cross the line into violence. Furthermore, including psychological and structural violence in the discussion further complicates the definitions. It is also worth assessing where structural violence and psychological violence are located in the spectrum of violence and non-violence, as some of the coercive non-violent tactics can commit such violence, and the traditional assumption of non-violence is to persuade the opponents without harm (Govier, 2008). Interestingly, unarmed violence, riots, property destruction and street battle have been controversial to define whether they are corrective tactics of non-violence or least intense violence strategy.

The literature highlights four main factors for shifting resistance from non-violence to armed resistance (Ortiz, 2007; Della et al., 2006; Pearlman, 2011; Thurber, 2021; Beck et al., 2022). They are '(1) State repression, (2) Internal Fragmentation, (3), Frustration with the slow pace of change and limited gain and (4) Lack of grassroots tie' (Beck et al., 2022, p. 62). Similarly, armed resisters can also shift from using armed insurgency to non-violent tactics in contexts that cannot be addressed by force but are also unripe for traditional de-escalation techniques like dialogue and political integration (Dudouet, 2013).



Therefore, the dichotomy of non-violence and violence is problematic in resistance studies though many kinds of literature still highlight the effectiveness of each approach. These two approaches' definitions are also confusing, and the distinction area is still grey. Both approaches are shifting and changing depending on multiple factors, especially state oppression. Though the literature explains the shifting nature of the strategies of non-violence and armed resistance, the scholarship does not significantly pay attention to how non-violence and armed resistance could work together in philosophy and practice.

### 2.3. Diaspora Politics

Due to the trending globalisation and transnational politics, diaspora groups become an essential agency in conflict studies and international relations studies (Vertovec, 2005). Therefore, the 'Diasporas have been reconstructed as new and potentially powerful actors in international politics' (Smith, 2007, pp.3). Despite the fact that the growing body of scholarly research focused on the concept of diaspora and its political implications, there remains a conspicuous absence of literature and academic contributions concerning the profound influence and role of diasporas within conflicts within our contemporary world, characterised by diminished boundaries (Smith, 2007).

The term is usually used loosely for the communities of migrants, refugees and their descendants that share a sense of identity tied to a different homeland (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2006). Bercovitch (2007) conceptualises the diaspora as a group deeply connected to a larger context or environment through psychological and physical ties. The identification of a diaspora lies in the degree of attachment

and the meaningful activities stimulated by that attachment towards the home country. Noteworthy, such attachment and mobilisation extent depend on the context of the homeland, specifically events affecting the homeland, such as civil war, war crimes, injustice, and natural disasters, provoke this diaspora identification more (Vertovec, 2005).

In the era characterised by globalisation and transnationalism, diaspora communities play a prominent role in exerting influence over their homeland and its political landscape through economic, social, and political means (Lynn, 2023). Globalisation expedites the degree and influence of diaspora over their homeland in multiple ways (Bercovitch, 2007). The first is the evolution and advancement in technology and communication. Because of such progress, diasporas can now function internationally without the permission of the countries where they are now based. It means the diaspora groups can still tie in with the people from their home countries and those who share the same attachment to the homeland through publications, blogs, and chat rooms on the Internet (Bercovitch, 2007).

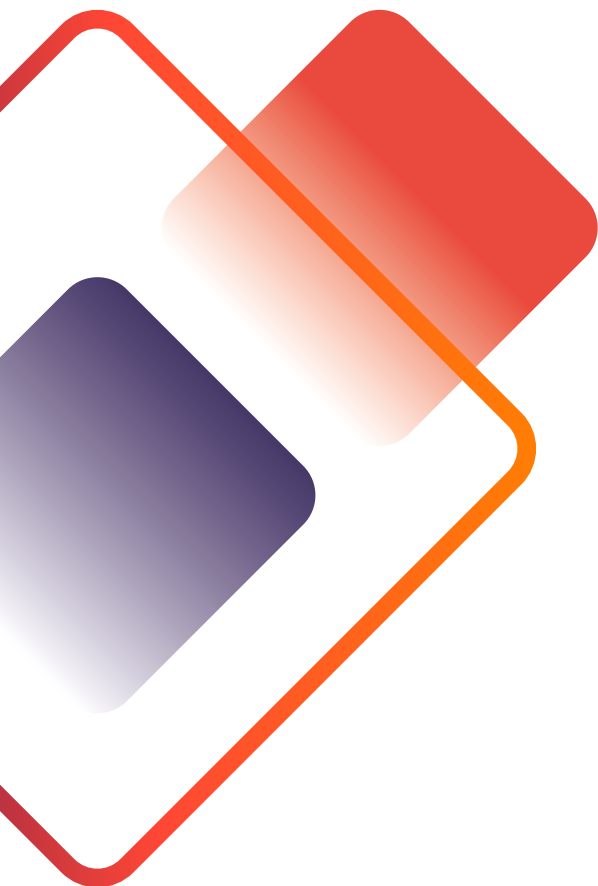


Politically, diasporas offer direct support through establishing networks and exchanging opinions and knowledge with actors in the homeland. When feasible, they participate in advisory councils or transitional governments to contribute to democratic resolutions of conflicts (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2006). Indirectly, diasporas mobilise political support among populations and policymakers in their host countries or international organisations (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2006). Diaspora activities are not solely limited to financial and political support. They can utilise their status as a free haven or platform outside their homeland to launch campaigns and activities that may be impossible within the country of origin. Diasporas operate within national and international political contexts that facilitate and constrain their endeavours (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2006).

All in all, diasporas employ their transnational networks to pool financial resources and expertise, coordinating campaigns with political counterparts in other countries. They engage in various advocacy activities, including media campaigns, demonstrations, and lobbying efforts, to highlight the plight of their homeland. Diasporas can also contribute to conflict-affected homes through advocacy for human rights, justice, and political freedoms (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2006; Bercovitch, 2007). Therefore, the diasporas are the important agency of the politics and conflicts of the home country. Hence, the diaspora's interests, interactions, values and stance have significant influence the dynamics and developments of a home country, especially the conflict or political struggle is happened at their home.

## 2.4. Institutionalisation in Revolutionary Resistance

This session will explain the institutionalization of rebellion, which can be both process and a result of the resistance movement. It will explain into three parts; rebellion, rebel governance and rebel diplomacy. Under the session of rebellion, it will present the characteristics of rebellion which are distinct from the insurgent groups. For rebel governance, it will explain the features of rebel governance and how institutionalization work. The rebel diplomacy session will be discussed to establish how diplomacy is important for the legitimacy aspect of institution building, which can be highly contributed by diaspora activism.



### 2.4.1. Rebellion

In intrastate warfare, rebellion is crucial in the complex dynamics of emerging actors and institutions (Arjona, 2016). Regarding these rebellions, the existing literature presents a dichotomy of perspectives (Arjona, 2016). While the first depicts the rebellion as freedom fighters evolving with public support, the second depicts the rebel groups as criminal gangs who use coercion and oppression against civilians. In reality, the nature and dynamic of rebellion are beyond that essentialist and oversimplified perspective.

There is a significant line between insurgent groups and the rebel government. Insurgents usually have no interest in civilians and consider the people as prey or targets for ethnic cleansing. They prefer to use civilians as resources for their power or fighting rather than governing them (Kasfir, 2015). In such insurgency groups, the fighters are permitted to plunder, rape, or terrorise people with impunity can serve as an incentive to keep them loyal.

Unlike insurgency, the rebel government values the compliance of civilians and provides services to those who reside in their territorial control for recognition and legitimacy. To become a rebellion, there need to be civilian residents within their controlled area. In contrast, the insurgents do not necessarily need to have civilians in their territories, and they even prefer the unpopulated area as it has fewer threats from the opponents (Kasfir, 2015)

### 2.4.2. Rebel Governance

This session will discuss how that institutionalisation called rebel governance is formed out of wartime. Moreover, it will argue that that will be both the outcome and process of resistance. As a part of war nature, the prewar institutions become weakened and destroyed, resulting in new wartime institutions, mostly informal ones. In active wartime, the war-affected territories areas have no more constant control of formal state institutions. These areas are considered ungoverned spaces, though they are under the rule of informal authorities, mostly non-state conflict actors (Kasfir, 2015). Insurgent groups take these spaces and try to govern, establishing the wartime social order and institutions (Kasfir, 2015). According to the analysis of Arjona et al. (2015), the rebel groups need to decide how to deal with residents after securing the territory, resulting in various forms of ruling, administration, service provision and governance.

The armed groups also desired to establish wartime institutions to contest their warring rivals and receive stable resources from the area where they resided (Tilly, 2017). Establishing such rebel governance can also be their strategy to challenge the pre-existing institution and claim territorial control for their objectives, including demolishing the pre-existing institutions and replacing the new ones (Kasfir, 2015).



Kasfir (2015) identified three conditions of rebel governance; territory, civilians and violence or threat of violence. While the insurgency groups only focus on keeping their adversaries out of their controlled areas, the rebel governance tends to focus more on territorial domination, depicting the extent of civilian compliance with rebellion rule and order (Kasfir, 2015). The extent of control of territories by the rebel governance can be distinct due to the continuous power of pre-existed institutions, the extent of civilian resistance or compliance and the capacity of the rebel group (Kasfir, 2015). Kasfir (2015) explained that the rebellion governance needs to control sufficient territory where the rebel leaders can organise the structures and institutions and ensure the civilians or residents feel safe complying with the rules and orders or using services provided by the rebel groups.

Rebels rule whenever they engage with local civilian residents to achieve a common goal in a territory where non-combatants can govern. Such governance activities cover a range of public service provisions; order, justice, health, and education (Kasfir, 2015). Specifically, the compliance of the civilians and the extent of civilian resistance must be considered. The civilians will resist if the pre-existing government is legitimate and effective (Arjona, 2015). It implies that the civilians are more likely to cooperate with the rebel rule if the pre-existing government is collapsed and illegitimate, without the support of the residents.

The use of violence is an evitable feature of rebel governance since the group cannot be considered a rebellion until the day the group persecuted acts of violence to oppose another group or pre-existed government (Kasfir, 2015). Acts of violence can indirectly bolster the rebellion by garnering support from civilians when they compare the extent of violence between the two factions and decide which group they can rely on for protection and safety (Weinstein, 2007).

Another contributing fact made by Pegg (1998) is that the international community will ignore the rebellion group if the violence ends, whether they effectively hold the territory or build a functioning government. Therefore, rebellion's violence and military capacity is quite determining for that group to build the rebel governance effectively for both recognition and civilian compliance.

Therefore, the effective control of territory, compliance of civilians, service provision and access to defence power are commonly accepted features of rebel governance institutions.



### 2.4.3. Rebel Diplomacy

Regarding the legitimacy of the rebellion rule, civilian compliance considered internal legitimacy, is insufficient to become the recognised rebel governance institution. Rebel diplomacy is an unavoidable practice of the rebel government in seeking legitimacy or new statehood (Coggins, 2015). This session will elaborate more on the nature and process of rebellion diplomacy, which will be linked with diaspora activism in the coming sessions. Diplomacy is a privilege of statehood, which non-state actors are not usually granted, meaning the non-state rebellion actors could not access to represent the state in the international forum or receive the immunity and diplomatic privileges outlined in the Vienna Convention for their representatives (Coggins, 2015). However, such diplomatic privileges may be granted to powerful rebels who meet the requirements for statehood, but even that can only be realised with significant external support or international appreciation (Coggins, 2015). Additionally, rebel diplomacy can effectively be practised for both short-term and long-term goals of rebel governance (Coggins, 2015).

In the short run, the rebellions could receive material or policy support, with external ties facilitated by such diplomacy. The rebellions can be granted international recognition and legitimacy to represent their community or country in international settings and secure official status in any negotiations or decision-making regarding the matter, which can advance the group's strategic objectives. Expressly, the rebel governance will be granted the external legitimised sovereignty, which the rebel governments usually lack, since the international community primarily make a judgement of recognition of the sovereignty of the states( Jackson,

1990). The strategic rationale behind rebel diplomacy is that such practice can convince the international community to grant them the same rights, privileges, and obligations that are typically offered to the recognised or legitimate representatives, not to change the foundational principles or values of these international norms, but rather to extend that for them (Coggins, 2015).

According to the insurgency guide produced by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the objectives of rebellion/insurgents include isolating the opposition or pre-existed state institution from international diplomatic and material support while seeking more support and recognition for the insurgency and enhancing both domestic and international legitimacy for the insurgent groups (2011). Only rebel diplomacy can achieve these objectives (Coggins, 2015). In this literature, it is worthy to link and explain that diaspora communities are in a great position to support the rebellion governance institutions to establish and strengthen their rebel diplomacy, which will be discussed more in the case study later.

# Chapter 3 Literature of a Case Study

This session will present the general overview and evolution of substantial events of the contemporary resistance movement in Myanmar, occasionally referred to as Myanmar's Spring Revolution. After overthrowing the democratically elected government and seizing power by the military in the early morning of the 1st of February 2023, the resistance against this oppression became unavoidable. The statement, reportedly prepared and instructed by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, was released on the first day of the coup. That statement called the people not to accept the coup and resist it resoundingly (The Irrawaddy, 2021). On the second day after the coup, students' unions organized the first anti-coup campaign called 'Banging Pots and Pans', which became a symbol and sound of resistance against the coup in Myanmar (The Guardian, 2021). On the 3rd of February, 2023, the medical officers and doctors from 110 hospitals and departments kicked off the civil disobedience movement by wearing red ribbons and leaving the offices (The Irrawaddy, 2021). At least 360,000 civil servants joined the movement and decided to go to the government office until the power was returned to a civilian government in April 2022 (RFA Myanmar Service, 2022).

On the 4th of February, 2021, there was the first organized peaceful protest in Mandalay, the second capital city, followed by mass demonstrations across the country (Aljazeera, 2021). On the 7th of February, the first largest protest in the decade, with thousands of protestors, happened at the heart of Yangon (BBC Media, 2021). On the 9th of February, the first protestor was shot by the military and later passed away (The Guardian, 2021). A month after the military coup, the regime started using violent and lethal forces to crack down on peaceful protestors. On the 14th of March 2021, more than 90 civilians were killed, while 114 protestors, including 11 children, were killed on the 27th of March 2021 alone (Reuter, 2021).





Such brutal crackdowns and extrajudicial killings of civilians leave the civilians with only one choice: armed rebellion. Most armed resistance soldiers used to be peaceful protestors (Head, 2022; Fishbein et al., 2021). The release of statements from two emerging armed resistance groups indicated that they were the groups who believed in non-violence peaceful protests but were left with no choice but to take arms to defend (BPLA, 2021; KNDF, 2021). Despite the constant peaceful protests and calls for help, the lack of international actions and visible support frustrated the non-violent protestors and gave up non-violent actions (Lynn, 2022). Two months after the coup, many people decided to take arms starting in early April 2021 (Myanmar Now, 2021).

On the 16th of April 2021, the National Unity Government, a parallel government, was formed by the elected members of parliaments and resistance groups from Kachin, Chin, Karenni, Mon and Karen (CRPH, 2021). On the 5th of May, the National Unity Government officially formed the People Defense Force (NUG-MoD, 2021). On the 7th of September, the National Unity Government solely chose the armed resistance strategy by announcing the state of emergency and calling for a nationwide defensive war (Robbins, 2021). More than 9300 armed clashes occurred in at least 205 townships between February 2021 and April 2023 (ISP Myanmar, 2023). Since the coup, there have been nearly 2,000,000 internally displaced people across the country, and there were nearly 500 airstrikes targeted against civilians by the military (Myanmar Peace Monitor, 2023).

Additionally, many activists and analysts pointed out that foreign revenues from the foreign direct investments, including taxes, renting fees, and shared profits, directly flowed to the military regime since they controlled all the state-owned infrastructures, including the state-owned business in addition to their own military-affiliated giant business entities. One of the largest revenue sectors for the Myanmar government is always natural gas since it

was forecasted to receive \$1.4 billion from 2021 to March 2022 (Myanmar Now, 2021). Many activist groups from home and abroad started several campaigns, including petition campaigns, social media campaigns, letters to foreign governments, meeting with the relevant authorities, lobbying corporates, and organizing physical protests in domestic and foreign countries to suspend operations of the foreign natural gas companies and stop the payments to the military (Blood Money Campaign, 2021). Additionally, the activist groups researched and documented the list of military-affiliated businesses and products, then advocated that people not use these products (Burma Campaign UK, 2023).

Moreover, there is a social punishment campaign to suspend any social relationships or communications with military-affiliated people, especially those who reside in foreign countries (Si Thu Aung Myint, 2021). The diaspora communities and influential activists called the relevant international communities to take action, specifically targeted sanctions against the military individual and personnel and engaging with all the relevant stakeholders (Progressive Voice, 2023). The diaspora communities play a significant role in all these campaigns and lobbying works.

This is an overview of the evolution of Myanmar resistance in the 21st century. Figure 1 also explains its evolution with the visual supports. It all started with peaceful, non-violent tactics. Later, it turned out to be armed resistance as the only way out because of the brutality of the military regime and lack of international support. On the other hand, many campaigns have been at home and abroad to challenge and restrict the sustainability of the military regime.



# Myanmar' Spring Revolution

## Timeline

### Non-violent peaceful protest

- Military Coup
- Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Call for Resistance
- Civil Disobedience Movement Banging Pots and Pans
- Mass Protests
- Social Punishment and Boycotting

2021

February and March

At the end of 2021

756

civillians were killed

March and April

### Brutal crackdown of military

- At the end of 2021, 756 civilians were killed and 4537 civilians were arrested.
- 70 children were killed in the first four months

### Shifting the strategies

- Increasing Use of Force by Military Lack of Adequate International Support

April and May

May

### More engagement in armed resistance

- Less peaceful protests while increasing a number of formation of PDFs on the other hand National Unity Government Officially Formed people Defense Force

### Absolute armed resistance

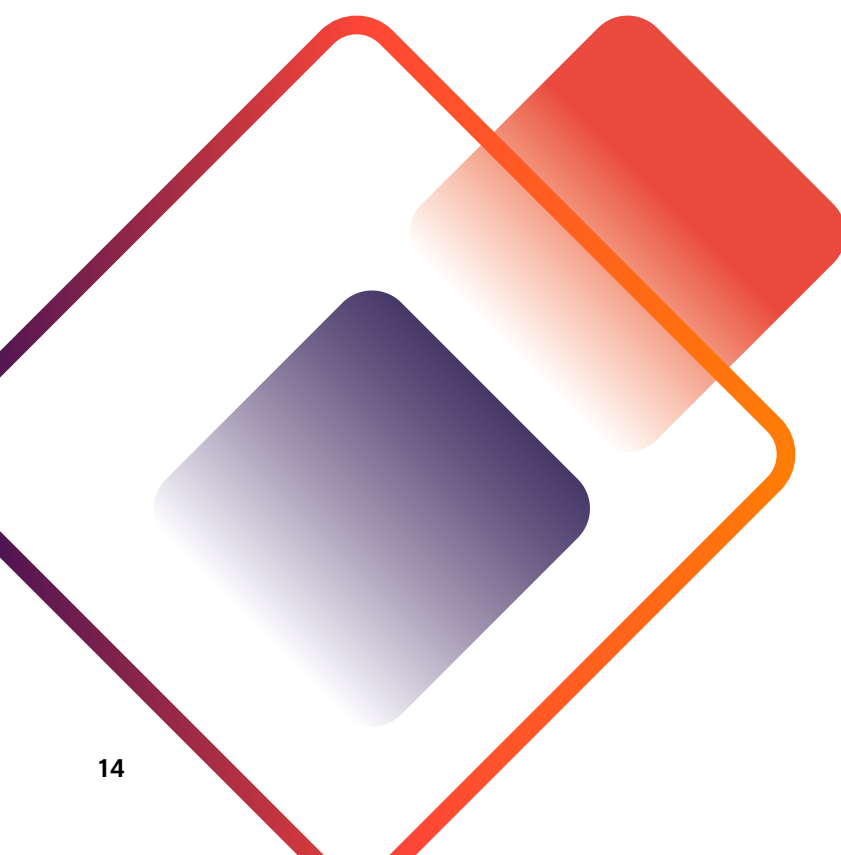
- National Unity Government announced the state of emergency and called for the nation-wide armed resistance
- Significantly increased a number of clashes across the country

September

Figure 1. Timeline on Evolution of Myanmar Spring Revolution (See chapter 3 for detailed information and relevant citations)

Figure 2. Key actors of Myanmar’s Spring Revolution (CRPH, 2021; NUG; 2021; NUCC; 2021)

Organisation	Abbreviation	Brief explanation
<b>Comittee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw</b>	CRPH	A comittee formed by the Members of parliament who were elected in 2020 elections (CRPH, 2021)
<b>National Unity Consultative Council</b>	NUCC	A coalitive political leadership body composed of non-violence group such as strike comittees, CSOs ands CDM groups, elected MPs, political parties, representative bodies of ethnic and state, and political parties. (NUCC,2021)
<b>National Unity Government</b>	NUG	A government formed by the CRPH, with the representative participation of subnation and ethnic groups. (NUG, 2021)
<b>People Defense Force</b>	PDF	Armed wing National Unity Government, see more on 5.1.2
<b>Ethnic Armed Groups</b>	EAO/ERO	Ethnic and area based revolutionary armed groups such as Kachin Independence Army, Karen National Union.



# Chapter 4 Methodology

## 4.1. Qualitative Research Methodology; Case Study and Autoethnography

In this research, the qualitative methodology was used since this project was to assess the trend, direction and nature of a specific context which is the resistance in this project (Morse, 2015). Since qualitative research methodology addresses complex and multifaceted phenomena, the methodology will help the researcher to investigate the complicated nature of a project and explain the pattern of the project (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). As this research is designed to offer nuanced analysis-based implications by explaining the model of resistance in Myanmar, the qualitative research methodology will be the suitable choice.

To address the research question(s), a combination of two research approaches of autoethnography and a case study was used. A case study is defined as 'giving special attention to totalizing in the observation, reconstruction, and analysis of a case under study' (Zonabend, 1992, p. 52). The case study can also be defined as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used' (Yin, 1984, p. 23). Hence, a case study is a research approach to investigate a particular context through a detailed analysis with several pieces of evidence, not limited to events, conditions, or relationship dynamics. In this research, the model of contemporary resistance in Myanmar was used as a case study to investigate and address the research question through multiple sources of information with detailed analysis.

Case study research is generally used for three primary purposes: building, reconstructing, or challenging the theory, concept, and causal mechanism (Miller et al., 2021). A case study is commonly used to construct, revise, question, and challenge existing theories and to form, clarify, and refine concepts (Miller et al., 2021). As this research also attempts to provide the implications of specific contexts for reconsidering resistance theories and concepts with the contextual analysis of contemporary resistance in Myanmar, the case study research approach was selected and used.



The autoethnography approach was also used to complement the case studies. Autoethnography is an approach in which the researcher(s) examine and reflect on their personal experiences to explain a specific context in a mixture of autobiography and ethnography (Ellis et al., 2011). In this approach, the researcher (s) were involved not only as an investigator but also as the primary source of data, engaging in the subjective interpretation of past personal experiences, incorporating observations, and examining the relevant news stories, blogs, and archives related to the events (Reed-Danahay, 2009; Goodall, 2006). Using autoethnography, research findings could support or reconstruct external views and stereotypes from an insider perspective (Ellis et al., 2011). Since the researcher has extensive experience in researching and reporting about the study subject, the researcher will integrate his insider perspectives and personal experiences for the research as autoethnography.

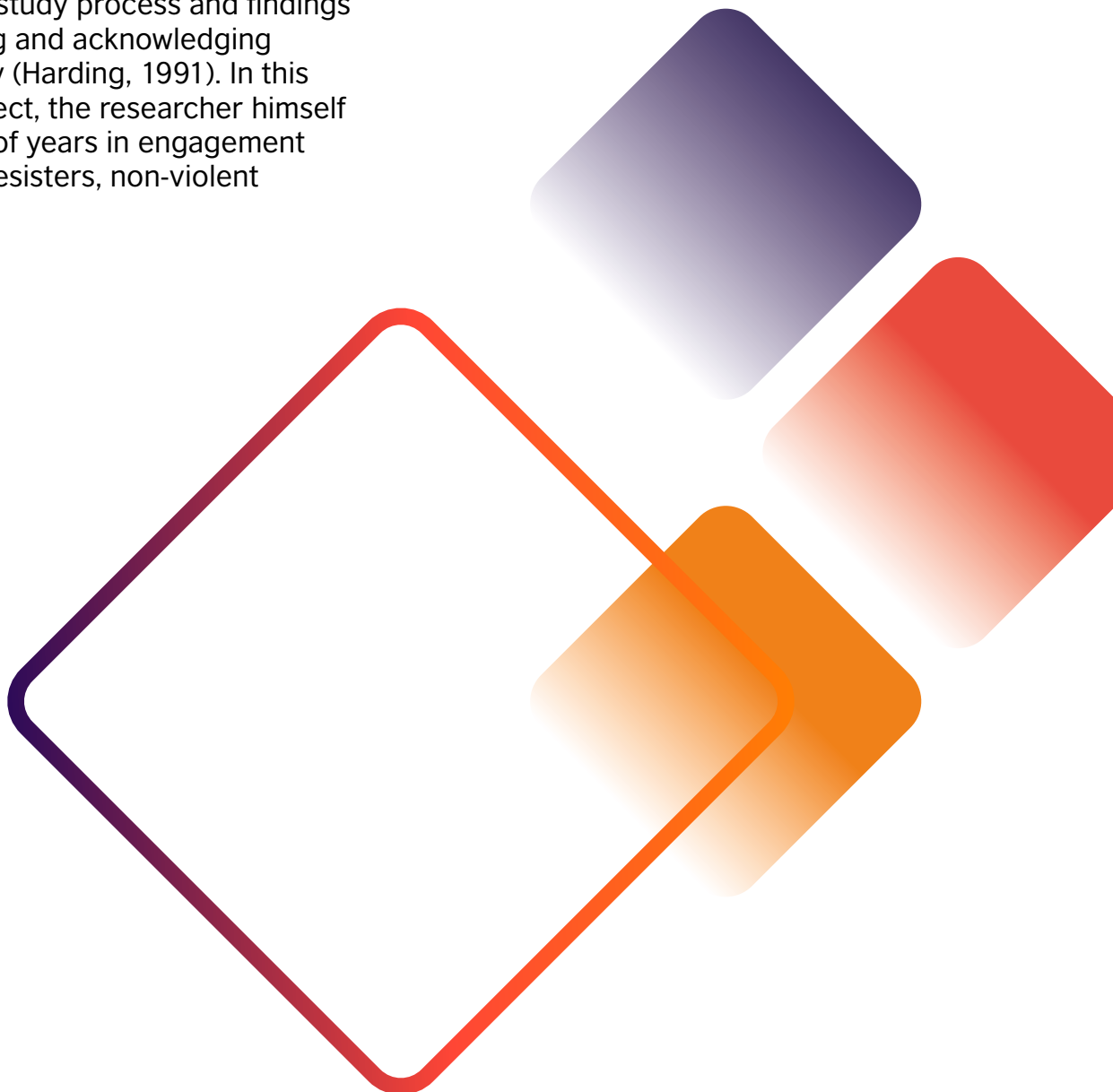
## 4.2. Reflexivity and Positionality

The autoethnographic approach could be criticised for being self-centred, subjective and individualised, resulting in being far from the objective truth of the specific study (Atkinson, 2007).

Hence, this research is aimed to challenge the existing resistance concepts and offer the implications for reconsideration by contributing not only to the studies of resistance but also to Myanmar studies. To ensure the analysis for the reflection of reality, a vast majority of grey and academic literature and evidence will be used. To control the subjectivity of the researcher's analysis, the researcher will engage in self-reflection, acknowledgement of his own position and experience, using multiple resources, reflexive data collection and analysis to address positionality and reflexivity. Positionality refers to the researcher's perspective, orientation, and situatedness in relation to the researched objects (Henry et al., 2009). The researcher's positions of power, privilege, and marginalisation can influence the access to information, interactions with participants, and interpretations of the data that researchers make.

The term reflexivity is defined as ‘reflecting upon and understanding our own personal, political and intellectual autobiographies as researchers and making explicit where we are in relation to our research respondents’ (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 121). It encompasses a thorough evaluation of the possible impact of the investigator’s background, experiences, and beliefs on the research’s design, collection, interpretation, and conclusion. Reflexivity allows researchers to identify and regulate their subjectivity, improving their work’s validity and rigour (Finlay, 2002). Hence, the researcher in this project will also engage thorough reflexivity and positionality to produce rigorous, valid and reliable research findings. The researcher need to critically consider the potential effects of their positions on the study process and findings by understanding and acknowledging their positionality (Harding, 1991). In this dissertation project, the researcher himself spent a number of years in engagement with the armed resisters, non-violent

activists, and diaspora communities through his research and advocacy works. As the dynamic and context of resistance in Myanmar is broad, it is not easy to verify that his limited experience can cover the whole dynamic of resistance. Consequently, there is some possibilities to have subjectivity in analysing and presenting the data to a certain extent. To avoid these subjective and biased analysis, the researcher will take his positionality into account and use the information with multiple sources, critically do the reflexivity at every stage of analysis and report writing.



# Chapter 5 Discussion, and Analysis

## 5.1. Strategies of Contemporary Resistance in Myanmar

Though the resistance in Myanmar was initiated with non-violence, the strategies tended to be in favour of armed resistance after the first three months of peaceful protests. Though mass peaceful protests have been declining, the civil disobedience movement still seemed to be strong and effective for at least two years. Moreover, alternative public services have also been created and are adequate to a certain extent. On the other hand, the armed resistance has escalated, and militarisation of the society is unavoidable. Noteworthy, the diaspora communities have been contributing to both strategies. The following three sessions will present an in-depth understanding of non-violence strategies, armed resistance and the significance of diaspora communities.

### 5.1.1. Non-Violent Actions and Civil Disobedience Movement

Gene Sharp (1973) documented 198 non-violent actions and categorised these actions into three groups; non-violent protest and persuasion, economic and political non-cooperation, and non-violent intervention. All these three categories of non-violent actions can be found in the case of Myanmar. As explained in the chapter 2, the non-violence actions emphasis on removing the system of conferring power to the ruling groups by withdrawing the consent of the people.

As a first category of non-violent actions, massive non-violent peaceful protests can be seen as obvious signs of resistance against the military coup. In 2021, there were at least 6000 anti-coup demonstrations nationwide (ACLEDA, 2022). There are still protests and demonstrations even more than years after the coup, especially in the central region of Myanmar and Dawei, the

southern part of Myanmar. For instance, the 841st demonstration day was organised in Yinmarpin township, Sagaing region, on 11th July 2023 (Myaelatt Athen, 2023). Moreover, the Democracy Strike Committee-Dawei still organised the demonstration until 8th August 2023 (DDMSC, 2023). Since the early days of the coup, the peaceful protestors organised the strike committee and coordinated with each other. Significant strike coordination groups are the General Strike Committee, General Strike Coordination Committee, General Strike Committee of Nationalities. Because of continuous and dedicated protests, it made the military regime difficult to justify the military coup and hide the public opposition to the military rule. As Chenoweth & Stephan (2011) mentioned, the non-violent peaceful protests seemed to have more accessibility and participation of the general public.



Additionally, Myanmar people were active in the widespread campaign of economic and political non-cooperation. Its significant movement is the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), in which thousands of civil servants boycotted and decided not to work in government departments as long as the military was in power (Lynn, 2022). There were at least 360,000 who joined that movement, and at least 14000 security forces defected (RFA Myanmar Services, 2022; Hein Htoo Zan, 2023). The movement was even nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (The Irrawaddy, 2021). Because of that movement, the military regime could not function the government services, especially education and health, for a certain period of time (Lynn, 2022). Because of the threats to regime stability by the CDM movement, the military regime suffered from a shortage of experienced staff, a leak of sensitive information, and weakened administrative capabilities (Bawi Thang, 2023).

As a part of non-violent interventions, alternative education, health, and justice services have been offered by both parallel government and private organisations. In significant instances, 140,000 University teachers were dismissed, and at least 40 per cent of students decided not to continue their education under the military-affiliated or controlled schools or universities (Lynn, 2021). Therefore, both National Unity Government and pro-democratic groups decided to provide alternative quality education to these students and young people (Lynn, 2021). These alternative interventions not only challenge the existing services provided by the military rule but also enhance the governing capacities of the anti-coup democratic forces.

### 5.1.2. Armed Struggle; People Defense Force

In using armed resistance as a strategy, the People's Defense Force (PDF) is a significant newly emerged political actor. However, the armed group of people defence force itself is dynamic, and that newly formed People Defense Force- PDF can be categorised into four main groups: 1) those under NUG's chain of command; 2) nationality- and region-based defence forces, closely affiliated with local EAOs; 3) independent, self-established PDFs; and 4) local PDFs (LPDF) at the community level (Htet Lynn Oo, 2022). Figure 3 explains the categorisation of these people's defense forces, depicting the dynamic nature of armed resistance in Myanmar. Regarding the chain of command of these PDFs, they operate under the authority of the Central Command and Coordination Committee (C3C) and Joint Command and Coordination (J2C), both established by the NUG and its EAO allies (Ye Myo Hein, 2022). The People's defense force is considered an armed wing of the National Unity Government, which approximately 200,000 personnel (ISP Peace Desk, 2023).



While there are 300 PDF battalions under the National Unity Government, there can be many people in defense forces who still need to be added to any chain of command due to the dynamic and disorganised nature of armed group formation (Ye Myo Hein, 2022). As of May 2022, only 75 per cent of the people's defense forces has built an engagement with National Unity Government, and some local defense forces have built a coalition (Loong, 2022). There are still occasions involved in isolated acts of violence, often relying on improvised explosives to target military-related locations. The situation becomes even more intricate as approximately 3,000 violent incidents have occurred since the coup, with no specific armed group claiming responsibility (Loong, 2022). According to the data collected by the Myanmar Peace Monitor between 1st May 2021 and 11th July 2023, there are at least 223 armed groups with the name of people defense forces across the country (2023).

Despite differences in formation and strategies, all the people's defense forces have more or less the same objective: to abolish the dictatorship and establish an authentic federal and democratic union (NUG-MOD, 2023; BPLA, 2022, GSCN, 2021). These objectives are the catalyst of coalition among the revolutionary forces.

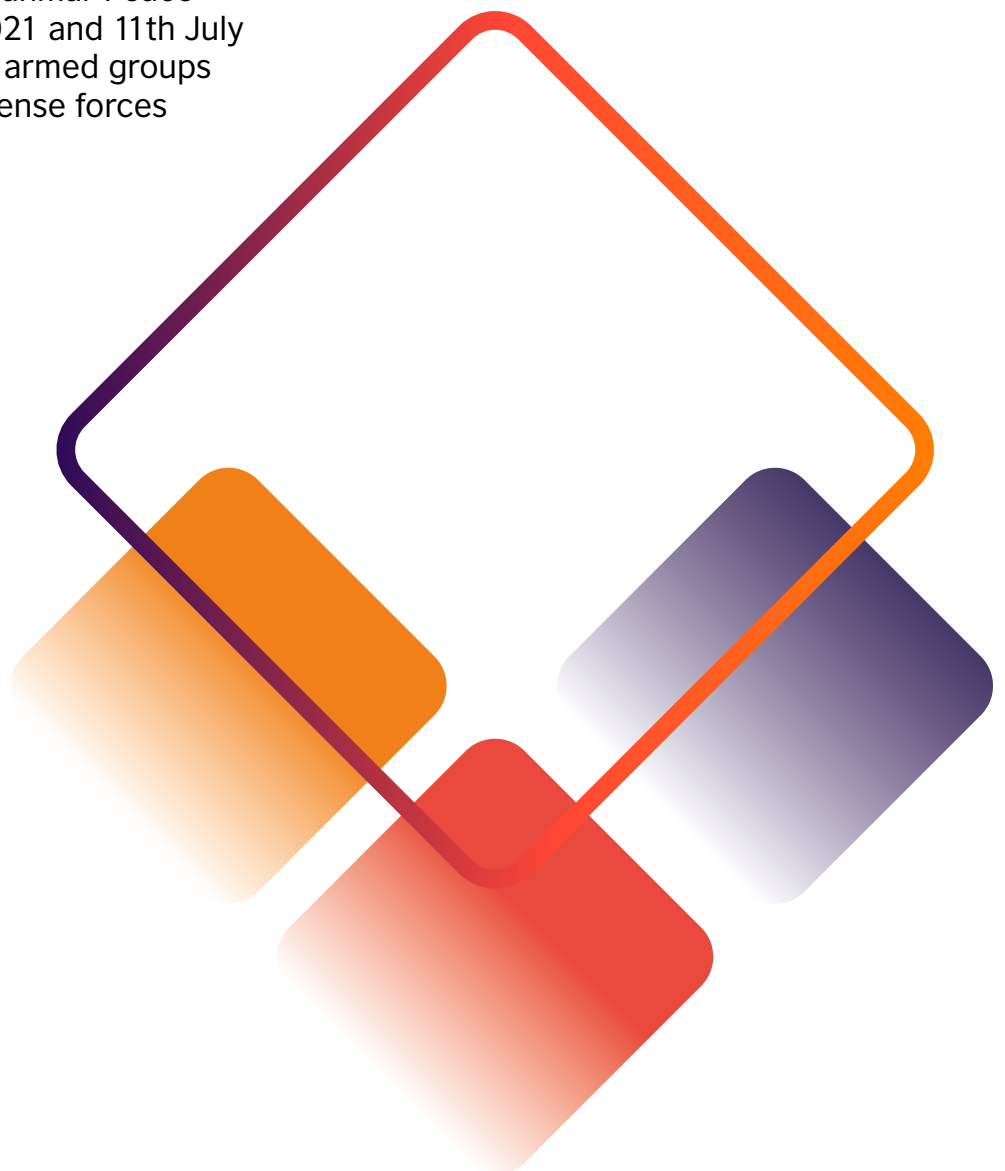


Figure 3. Four Categories of People Defense Forces (Htet Lynn Oo, 2022, Photos from KNDF, and the Irrawaddy)

## Four Categories of People Defense Force

### PDF UNDER NUG

- At Least 300 battalions of PDF under NUG, Under Five Regional Commands (ISP Peace Desk)
- 200-300 troops are in each battalion (Ye Myo Hein, 2022).
- 20 percent of PDF troops are equipped with military-grade weapons and another 40 percent have homemade weapons (Ye Myo Hein, 2022)



### Ethnic or Area Based PDF

- These PDF's are under the command of respective EAO and ethnic or area representative body, which is also under the CIC and JIC
- For example, Karenni Nationalities Defense Force under the command of Karenni State Consultative Council (representative body) and KNPP (EAO), Chinland Defense Force (CDF) under the ICNCC (representative body), Kachin People Defense Force (KPDF) under the Kachin Independence Organization



### Independent Self-established PDF

- People Defense Forces established with loose connection or horizontal alliance with the NUG and ethnic armed groups
- Burma People's Liberation Army, which has the horizontal alliance with NUG, three brotherhood alliance, Student Armed Front, close partnership with Karen National Union
- Other significant examples, People Revolutionary Army, Social Democratic Front, People Independence Army, People Liberation Front



### Local People Defense Force

- Village or township based defense team, mostly can be seen in Dry Zone, Anyar area, in which at least 436 groups were recorded and most of them are LPDF (ACLED, 2022)
- As of April, 2022, there were at least 401 LPDFs with 30,000 personnels (Ye Myo Hein, 2022).
- Names varies, reflecting the desire for federal democracy, like 'Federal Liberation Army' and 'United Democratic Force,' while others are based on their place of origin, such as 'Monywa Heroes Group' and 'People's Defence Force - South Monywa.' Additionally, some groups have unconventional names like 'Big Beautiful Hearted Hoodlums' and 'Dragon Warrior' (IESS, 2022)
- LDF's are self-funded through community and diaspora donations, relying on homemade weapons. Some LDF's are associated with larger EADs for training and equipment. They engage in irregular warfare, using tactics like landmines, skirmishes, sabotage, and targeted killings, to prevent the junta from controlling rural areas. (Ye Myo Hein, 2022)



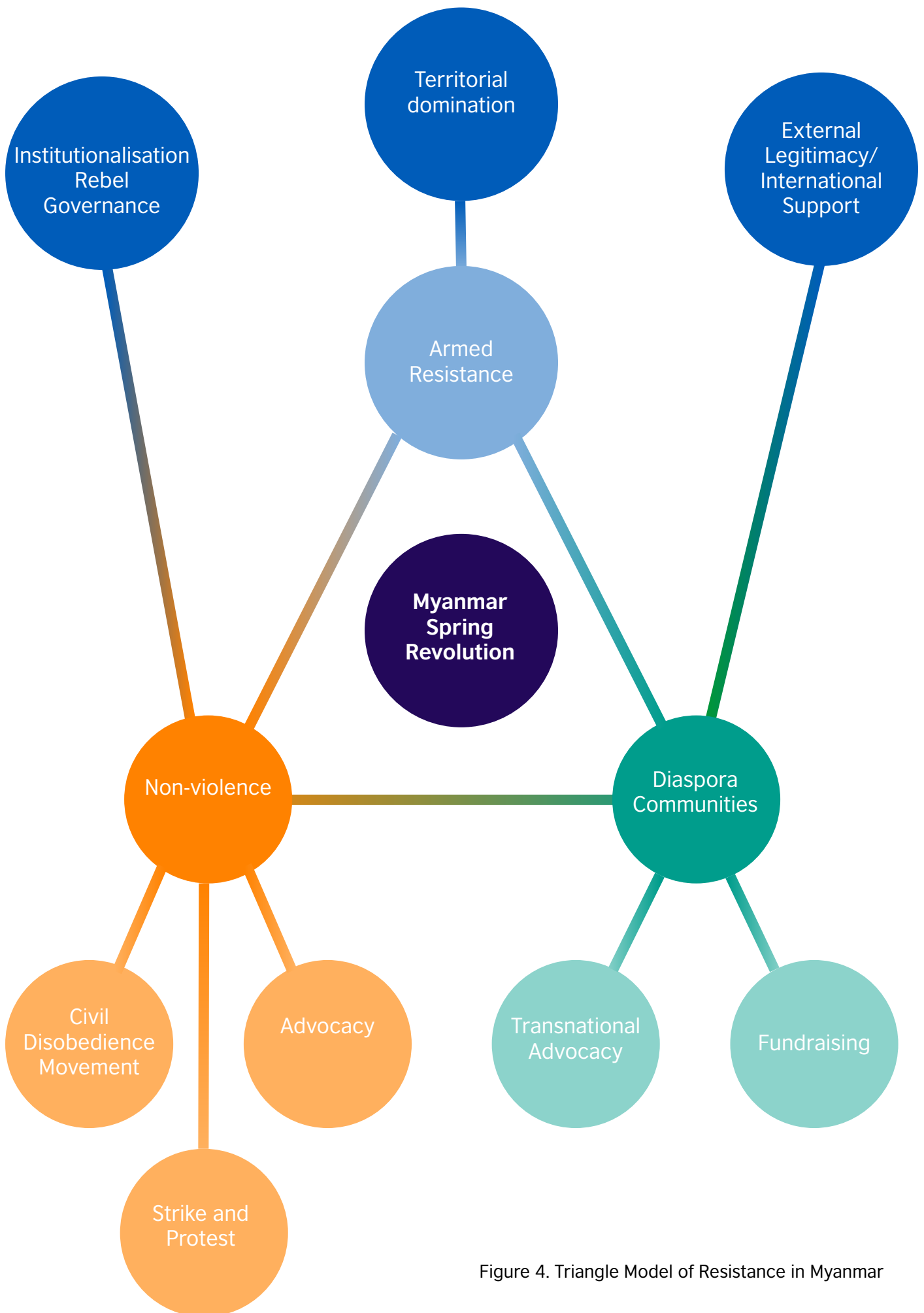



Figure 4. Triangle Model of Resistance in Myanmar

### 5.1.3. Significance of Diaspora Activism

In the context of Myanmar, there are three main drivers of diasporas from Myanmar (DEMAC, 2022). They are:

1. Forced displacement or escape of affected people and minorities from violent civil wars and religious, ethnic and political persecution
2. Seeking secure political environments abroad by activists, academics, and civil societies
3. Forced or voluntary migration to seek better educational and economic opportunities

Therefore, most diaspora fleeing from Myanmar are political, forced, and economic diasporas (Lynn, 2023). As explained in chapter 2.3, the diaspora communities are not homogenous but, establish its identity based on the sense of belonging to their home country.

Though there is no precise data for the population of Myanmar diaspora abroad, there is at least 2.3 million Myanmar diaspora in Thailand for different reasons, the most prominent host of Myanmar diaspora communities (Pedroletti, 2022). As of December 2022, more than one million refugees and asylum seekers in neighbouring countries became the political and violent diaspora (UNHCR, 2023). After 1988, the transnational activities of the diaspora in exile became more prominent, and the networks they formed tended to be a base for their resistance (Egreteau, 2012). Furthermore, the development of Burmese media in exile, like DVB (Democratic Voice of Burma) as an important information source and a driver of diasporic mobilisation, has increased their importance (Humphries, 2009; Cho, 2011). Unlike the previous political moments in the past, there have been significant contributions and influence of Myanmar

diaspora communities in the contemporary resistance movement. Especially the diaspora communities could engage and influence domestic politics due to the benefits of the advancement of technology and communications (Lynn, 2023).

In the 21st century, the diaspora's activities can be categorised into two main areas: transnational and/or host country-focused advocacy or lobbying efforts and fundraising. Diaspora organisations have contributed significantly to advocacy campaigns by focusing on upholding human rights, drawing attention from abroad, and spreading awareness of offline and online atrocities (DEMAC, 2022). In order to press for action, these organisations have interacted with governments at various levels in the host countries, using various methods, sending letters, organising campaigns, petitions, lobbying, and meeting with relevant actors. Throughout the evolution of diasporic activities, their operations rely heavily on fundraising, which has allowed them to sponsor numerous causes and events. Nowadays, mainstream media and social media websites (Facebook) have also been crucial in promoting these organisations' online fundraising activities.

Therefore, the anti-military groups' funding has primarily originated from two primary sources: residents within Myanmar and the sizable diaspora population. According to a recent study by the International Crisis Group (2022), diaspora groups are the major contributor to the crowdfunding of anti-military groups in the country, although precise data is unavailable. DEMAC's (2022)' recent study on the diaspora humanitarian organisation highlights that the current fundraising activities of the diaspora are primarily promoted and happen on social media. As elaborated in chapter 2.3, the diaspora communities take advantage of technology advancement and integrate that benefit in their intercontinental communication, advocacy and fundraising works.

It is estimated that diaspora organisations have successfully raised over 3 million USD to address the crisis (DEMAC, 2022). The Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's Official Fundraising Program (CRPH-OFP) is a diaspora-led fundraising network comprising individuals and groups from Singapore, the United States, Japan, Korea, Australia, Taiwan, England, Thailand, Malaysia, Canada, Macau, New Zealand, and Europe. In their one-year report, they announced that they successfully raised 15 million USD through a network spanning 35 countries, conducting over 200 fundraising campaigns (CRPH-OFP, 2022).

The diaspora employed various strategies and campaigns for fundraising purposes (Lynn, 2023). Indeed, some groups raised funds by preparing and selling traditional Myanmar food cuisines. For instance, Manchester Hin-Oh-Gyi, a diaspora group based in the United Kingdom, managed to raise nearly 200,000 sterling pounds between September 2021 and the present (Lynn, 2023). Moreover, the artists also use their art for fundraising. For example, Ko Pauk, a director, created a movie named Ma Thawk Mi Thaw Moe Khar Yay and screened it worldwide, raising thousands of dollars for the revolution. Without the support and active contribution of the diaspora community, such massive fundraising is not feasible (Lynn, 2023).

Indeed, the diaspora is crucial in financially supporting the armed resistance movement against the junta in their homeland. In the report, Chin families have contributed over \$200,000 to the Chinland Defense Force (CDF), providing regular donations (Peter, 2022). The funds are allocated to support the armed resistance and assist displaced civilians affected by the conflict in the Chin state and other regions. Additionally, a senior officer from the U.S.-based CDF-Hakha Support Team of North America confirmed that their group has also sent hundreds of thousands of dollars to the resistance groups in Hakha, with ongoing financial support expected as long as feasible. The exiled Myanmar diasporas from Thailand even used a certain portion of their earnings to support the revolution of Myanmar (Pedroletti, 2022).

In addition to such significant financial contributions, Myanmar diaspora communities contribute significantly to advocacy works. In the first six months of the coup, at least 300 reported demonstrations across the coup, advocating their respective host countries to take action against the military regime (ACLED, 2021). Noteworthy, the global network of Myanmar diaspora communities organised tens of simultaneous global demonstrations in at least 25 countries and 48 cities worldwide (Lynn, 2023). In addition to organising transnational simultaneous global strikes, diaspora groups have been actively engaged in advocacy and lobbying efforts within their host countries. As a notable instance, the diaspora organisations in the United States constantly lobbied the United States Congress and policymakers to sign and adopt the Burma Act, resulting in the legislation of passage of the Burma Act in NDAA 2023 (USACM, 2023).

Moreover, the diaspora communities are in a position to influence the anti-dictatorship organisations for two main reasons. The first is their vast and considerable contribution to these organisations, not limited to the National Unity Government, political activists and resistance groups as elaborated above. While the people at home have many risks in engaging with the officials from the resistance groups and the national unity government, there have been constant engagement and public town hall meetings between the national unity government and the diaspora communities. At least 12 cabinet members of the National Unity Government have the physical meeting with the Myanmar diaspora communities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs-NUG, 2023; Ministry of Human Rights, 2023, Ministry of Health and Education, 2023, Ministry of Electricity and Energy, 2023; မောင်, 2023; Ministry of Commerce, 2022). These platforms can be considered opportunities for the diaspora communities to inform, advocate and influence the political stakeholders of the country.

## 5.2. Triangle of Resistance (Armed Resistance, Non-Violence and Transnational Diaspora Politics)

As discussed in the literature review, the dichotomy of non-violence and violence is problematic and irrelevant in practices though it is quite dominant in the literature. This literature also indicates that the strategies are shifting depending on the given situations without explaining whether these strategies work together or not. However, the subject of this study establishes that these strategies collaborate without significantly undermining each other.



The case study of Myanmar suggests that there are also strategic collaborations between non-violence peaceful protestors, advocacy groups and armed resisters, which will be explicitly mentioned in the following session. At the same time, the diaspora communities offer financial and moral support to both groups, continuing the transnational advocacy works. Specifically, these three strategies have been collaborating to serve the purpose of territorial domination, functioning institution building and achieving international recognition and support.

### 5.2.1 Strategic Collaboration/ Cooperation

The resistance of Myanmar indicates the strategic collaboration among three strategies, in organizing the non-violent actions. These non-violent actions became more effective and sustainable because of the support of the other two groups.

There were many occasions that the armed resistance groups gave the peaceful protestors security provisions since the beginning of the coup. Such peaceful protests guarded by the ethnic armed group's security forces can mostly be seen in the controlled areas of the Karen National Union in Karen State and some areas of Karenni State (KIC, 2021; RFA, 2021). Karen National Union explicitly stated they would protect the anti-coup protestors since the early coup. (BNI, 2021). When the people's defence forces were established and became stronger, most of the peaceful protests in Sagaing and Magway area were reportedly guarded by the local people's defence forces (The Irrawaddy, 2022; DVB TV News, 2023). Therefore, a considerable number of protests have been happening in these central areas in which the people's defence forces provided security protections to the protestors (Htet Lynn Oo, 2022). Therefore, non-violent actions seem more consistent in areas with strong armed resistance. Protection of armed resistance impacts the continuation of non-violent protests in these areas.

Another supported finding is that the highest participation of civil servants who joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) occurred in the Chin state, where the armed resistance has been robust since the coup (BNI, 2021). More than 70 per cent, 14,591 of 20,000 civil servants in Chin State, reportedly refused to work under the military regime (BNI, 2021). There are two plausible explanations why non-violent actions, including civil disobedience movements, have achieved outstanding success and higher participation in areas where armed resistance groups hold substantial political and territorial control.

The first one is the accessibility and availability of support, shelter, and protection these armed resistance groups offer. Many defence forces in Sagaing and Magway regions publicly announced that they would defend and protect the CDM civil servants and peaceful protestors (The Irrawaddy, 2021; Kachin Waves, 2021). In May 2021, the Chinland Defense Force, the major armed wing people defence force in Chin state, pledged to protect and defend the CDM civil servants and warned those threatened by these CDM staff (Chinland Joint Defense Committee, 2021). Another powerful people defence force, Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF), established KNDF-CDM Committee and supported the CDM staff (KSCC, 2022). Existed ethnic armed groups also hosted and protected thousands of CDM staff at risk in their respective controlled areas (KHRG, 2021; Myanmar Now, 2021, Mathieson, 2021). Without these supports, shelter, and security protection, the non-violent CDM movement could not survive even in the first year of the coup.

Secondly, the armed resistance groups used their power leverage and pressured the civil servants to join the movement through persuasion and cooperation. For instance, a powerful ethnic resistance group called Karen National Union warned the government staff to leave their posts in their controlled area (J, 2022). Similarly, Kachin Independence Army warned the civil servants to resign and not to work at the government departments under the military regime (The Irrawaddy, 2022).

Regarding the diaspora's contribution to such Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), more than 147 CDM support teams were organized by the diaspora communities across the country (NUG, 2021). Overseas Myanmar expatriate groups in Japan, Singapore, Thailand, and Western countries are also raising substantial funds. In Japan alone, there were four Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) groups in, which the Tokyo-based WLM alone has raised over K100 million from the Myanmar community as of February 20, 2021. The Myanmar community in South Korea contributed K83 million, while expatriates in Los Angeles raised approximately US\$60,000 (around K84.5 million) (Frontier Myanmar, 2021). This support could mean more than financial contributions but also the psychological support of solidarity from the diaspora communities.



The largest and longest CDM non-violent action could only continue due to armed resistance and diaspora communities' material, financial and psychological support. Because of the strategic cooperation of armed resistance and financial support of diaspora communities, non-violent actions, especially the Civil Disobedience Movement, became the critical pillar of Myanmar's Spring Revolution, which could challenge the legitimacy of military rule (Progressive Voice, 2023).

In the non-violent boycotting campaign of military products and business campaigns, the armed resistance groups actively contributed to the success of that campaign. Using leverage and correction, newly established people's defence forces and existing armed resistance groups pressured and warned the residents in their respective areas to join the boycotting campaign and refuse to use the economic cooperation. Taung National Liberation Army in Shan State announced the military businesses and products list. It warned the residents in their area not to sell, buy or use these products in November 2021 (Shwe Phee Myay News Agency, 2021). Similarly, there are many reported warnings issued by the armed resistance groups. On January 8 2022, Kachin Independence Army and Indaw People Defense Forces seized and destroyed beers produced by the military-affiliated enterprises (Lu Nge Khit, 2022). Moreover, there was also a reported case that the People's defence force in the Karenni state checked and seized the commercial products of the military on the highway (The Irrawaddy, 2022).

Therefore, the non-violent actions of peaceful protests, the powerful CDM movement and boycotting campaigns have been more functioning and effective because of the contributions and strategic cooperation from armed resistance groups and diaspora communities. Though the literatures discussed in the theoretical framework suggest that the non-violence actions have fewer risks, it seemed that the peaceful protestors and those who joined the CDM movement in Myanmar had significant risks. Instead, the protection and support of the armed resistance become the risk mitigation strategy for these non-violence group for a certain extent. Without the strategic cooperation of armed resistance groups and diaspora communities, the non-violent groups could be more vulnerable with more risks and threats.



### 5.2.2. Working-Together Platforms

This sub-session indicates that groups with non-violent actions, armed resistance and diaspora communities could exist and work together on the same platform. The collective effort of non-violent action groups, armed resistance groups, elected officials, and diaspora communities can be seen at both national and sub-national levels. In all these platforms, the three groups collaborate for revolutionary discussions and the political dialogue of nation and state building.

Though there are many political platforms in which the three groups exist and collaborate, this session will highlight certain examples of the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), Mon State Federal Council (MSFC), Pa O National Federal Council (PNFC), Kachin Political Interim Coordination Team (KPICT), and Sagaing Forum. Under the NUCC, there are 31 council members, of which at least 11 are non-violent action activists, such as strike committee members and CDM group, and at least eight ethnic armed groups are also involved (Myanmar Peace Monitor, 2022). KPICT was formed by domestic and diaspora Kachin communities in coordination with Kachin Independence Army (KPICT, 2021). PNFC explicitly considered Pa O diaspora communities as one of the main pillars of their organisation together with Pa O people defence force and protest groups (PNFC, 2023). Similarly, Mon State Federal Council, Interim Chin National Consultative Council, and Taung Political Consultative Committee are also composed of the elected MPs, strike committees, CDM civil servants, and armed resistance groups (SFIG, 2023). All these platforms are considered as revolutionary and political front of Myanmar's Spring Revolution.

Therefore, these platforms indicate that the non-violent action groups, armed resistance groups and diaspora communities have functioning collaboration among themselves. Though the literatures from the chapter 2.1, significantly mention the distinct nature of armed resistance and non-violence group, the case study of Myanmar suggest otherwise which was these strategies could work effectively. The following session will elaborate more on how the rebel governance institutions are formed and how such institutionalisation is shaped by non-violent, diaspora and armed resistance groups.



### 5.2.2. Formation of Rebel Governance

As discussed in session 2.4, the resistance and conflicts in Myanmar triggered the birth of new institutions. Specifically, a significant form of rebel governance infrastructure emerged, by increasing territorial domination, providing public services and establishing diplomacy with the international community. This session will discuss how the triangle model enhances the formation and institutionalisation of rebel governance. While the revolutionary defensive wars of armed resistance groups result in gaining territorial control and domination, the diaspora communities play a significant role in the rebel diplomacy between home and host countries, and non-violent action groups involve in administrative and governing mechanisms. Along with the escalated armed resistance, leading to a nationwide civil war, the military regime lost control of territories in more significant parts of the country. In contrast, people's defense forces and armed resistance groups are increasingly gaining territorial control (Human Rights Council, 2023). Approximately 40–50 per cent of Myanmar is reportedly under the control of ethnic armed groups and people defense forces (Martin, 2022). The analysis of the Special Advisory Council-Myanmar(2022) shows that only 40 per cent of territories were under a military regime's direct or indirect domination, while more than 40 per cent of territories are under full or partial control of ethnic armed groups and people defense forces. National Unity Government also claims that the resistance groups control half territories of the whole country (Mizzima, 2022).

Chin state resistance group, Chin National Front, also claimed that 70 per cent of the Chin state was under the control of Chin revolutionary groups (BNI, 2023). Another people's defense force, Karenni Nationalities Defense Forces, also stated that the military lost control in 90 per cent of Karenni state (BNI, 2022). Though there are limitations to verifying these data due to the shifting dynamics of conflict settings, it is safe to say that the military regime loses effective control of the country.

Non-violent resisters, especially those who joined the civil disobedience movement and were dismissed by the military regime, actively contributed to establishing and operating public services and administration institutions. As a significant example, Kachin State Comprehensive University, which existed and operated under the territorial control of an ethnic armed group called the Kachin Independence Army, was established by the university teachers who participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and the Kachin Independence Organisation (Myanmar Peace Monitor, 2022). Online Universities called Myanmar Nway Oo University and Spring University Myanmar were also established and contributed by the educators who joined the CDM. Similarly, the health professionals who joined the CDM also actively provide telehealth and physical clinical services in the controlled areas of resistance groups (MoIC, 2022).

Many of these CDM civil servants actively serve in the ministries of the National Unity Government to provide administrative works and public services (Lynn, 2022). As a part of local administration, people administration bodies were instructed to establish on a township basis, with the elected MPs, CDM staff and other relevant actors (CRPH, 2021). These public administration bodies began functioning in areas effectively controlled by resistance groups, undertaking all the administrative tasks, including policing, judicial services and taxation (Aung Tun, 2022). These public administrative bodies are reportedly operated by the CDM staff, with the formation of elected MPs, strike

committee representatives and CDM leaders. At least such township people's administration bodies were established, together with police forces in 171 townships, in which a taxation system has been implemented and generated 10 billion Myanmar kyats in revenue (NUG, 2023). Moreover, the NUG also established the Ministry of Justice, comprising civil servants, judiciary officials, judges, and academics who were part of the Civil Disobedience Movement. There are 25 township law courts with 118 judges responsible for presiding over criminal and civil cases (NUG, 2023).

Lastly, the diaspora communities take a huge role in rebel diplomacy. Because of the active contributions and support of the diaspora communities, NUG has opened representative offices in the Czech Republic, England, Norway, France, South Korea, Japan, and Australia (NUG, 2023). The eight representatives from these offices are reportedly leaders and active representatives of Myanmar diaspora communities in these respective countries. They constantly engage with the respective diaspora communities and advocate for the relevant stakeholders to recognise and support the National Unity Government. Myanmar diaspora communities have been advocating for the host countries to recognise the National Unity Government by sending letters and organising peaceful protests (Hirokazu, 2022; Lynn, 2023). As a result of these advocacy efforts, the NUG have received official engagement and support from the international community, especially the European countries. However, the official recognition process could be delayed (Hutt, 2022).

Because of its inclusive nature and collaboration among the pro-democracy groups, the European Union officially issued to support the CRPH, the NUG and the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) as the only legitimate representatives of the democratic wishes of the people of Myanmar (European Parliament, 2022). Malaysia's foreign minister also calls ASEAN to engage with NUG and NUCC as Myanmar's legitimate and representative body (Mizzima, 2022). The National Defense Authorization Act of the United States explicitly mentioned and pledged to support the National Unity Government and National Unity Consultative Council (Martin, 2023). Moreover, the foreign minister from National Unity Government paid the first official visit and met the president of Timor Leste in July 2023 (MOFA, 2023). Additionally, the representatives from NUG and NUCC can be reported as travelling worldwide to talk with foreign government officials and Myanmar diaspora communities. All these efforts result from inclusive and close collaboration among the groups despite the different tactics and strategies. Diaspora communities often lobby and advocate for their respective host countries to recognise and support the NUG and NUCC as legitimate bodies (Justice for Myanmar, 2023; Lynn, 2023).



These data suggest that the revolutionary group in Myanmar are in the process of institutionalisation and functioning the rebel governance. As suggested by the literature of 2.4, the revolutionary group of Myanmar becomes an effective rebel governance body, which holds respectable defence power, territorial domination, public endorsement, functioning administrative mechanism, and diplomatic achievements. Significantly, these rebel governance features are approvingly shaped by the collaboration and coordinated effort of non-violence groups, armed resisters and diaspora communities.

### 5.3. Obstacles in Triangle Strategies of Resistance

Despite the practical collaborated work of the triangle model, collaboration could not be expected to be smooth since the groups involved hold different tactics, practices and values. This session will address and elaborate on the obstacles to collaboration among the groups of the triangle model in principle and practice.

The number of civil servants, especially security forces, who joined the CDM declined in 2022 and 2023 when the armed resistance intensified and erupted throughout the country. According to data collected by Frontier Myanmar (2023), eighty per cent of military defectors or CDM security forces occurred only in the early months of the military when non-violent actions were dominant. Though such a decline in CDM participation can be attributed to the tightening security restrictions of the military regime, only 500 out of 10,000 defectors joined the armed resistance, and the rest remained to adopt non-violent actions (Frontier, 2023). That data implies that those in non-violent actions

are uncomfortable with taking arms, though they even used to take them before.

When the armed resistance group became stronger, especially after the official declaration of defensive war, the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) experienced a significant decline in participation, with more than 150,000 members deciding to leave the movement (RFA, 2022). CDM staff members believe that public backing for the movement has shifted towards the armed opposition since the National Unity Government (NUG) initiated a war against the junta in September (RFA, 2022).

During a press conference, while releasing the report, NUG officials acknowledged that the support had also shifted towards military expenditures (RFA, 2022). Consequently, the focus on providing financial assistance to the CDM had declined, likely contributing to the decline in CDM membership. Though the CDM and non-violent action groups are significant, the participation and support for the CDM can be considered decreased due to the shifted attention to armed resistance. Diaspora community funding also focuses more the armed resistance and reduces the support to non-violent groups (Lynn, 2023).

Peaceful protests safeguarded by armed forces may inadvertently put the protesters in danger and blur the objectives of the demonstrations. While armed resistance may be perceived as a means of ensuring security for the peaceful protestors, it could invite a violent escalation or trigger a counterinsurgency crackdown from the military. If it is the case, it will contrast with the character of non-violent action, which has higher public accessibility because of fewer sacrifices and risks (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011). These peaceful protestors may not have the necessary training and knowledge of how to proceed and find the safe space if a clash between a guarded armed group and the military breaks out in the middle of protest (Htet Lynn Oo, 2022).

Though it is true that the coalition of armed resistance for non-violent actions and campaigns, using leverage and pressure is effective and supportive, it could also compromise the fundamental values of non-violence. Moreover, the escalated conflicts affected the decline of non-violent activities to a certain extent.

Though the NUCC is highly regarded as the most inclusive political situation, it is mainly criticised as slow and ineffective, and it is reported obstacles that the NUCC faces challenges of factional politics, historical grievance and mistrust (Ford & Ye Myo Hein, 2022). In the round table discussion organised by Burma Affairs and Conflict Study, NUCC members revealed that the decision-making process of NUCC adopts the complete consensus of all the council members, which was essential in trust building but resulted in slow decision-making (2023). During the round table discussions, the council members disclosed that the NUCC consists of various groups sharing a common objective but differing approaches, strategies, and principles. Consequently, this diversity leads to a protracted decision-making process, which has limited effectiveness despite ongoing efforts.

The challenges of intergroup cooperation within the NUCC are evident through the observed instances of temporary suspension of participation by certain constituent groups. Ethnic armed groups of the Karen National Union, Women League of Burma and General Strike Committee of Nationalities used to suspend their participation in October 2021 but resumed their participation later (Federal Journal, 2021). Moreover, the powerful political parties National League for Democracy, Shan National League for Democracy, and Kachin Interim Political Coordination Team suspended their participation in the NUCC. However, they continued participation in revolutionary works in the other way (BACS, 2023).

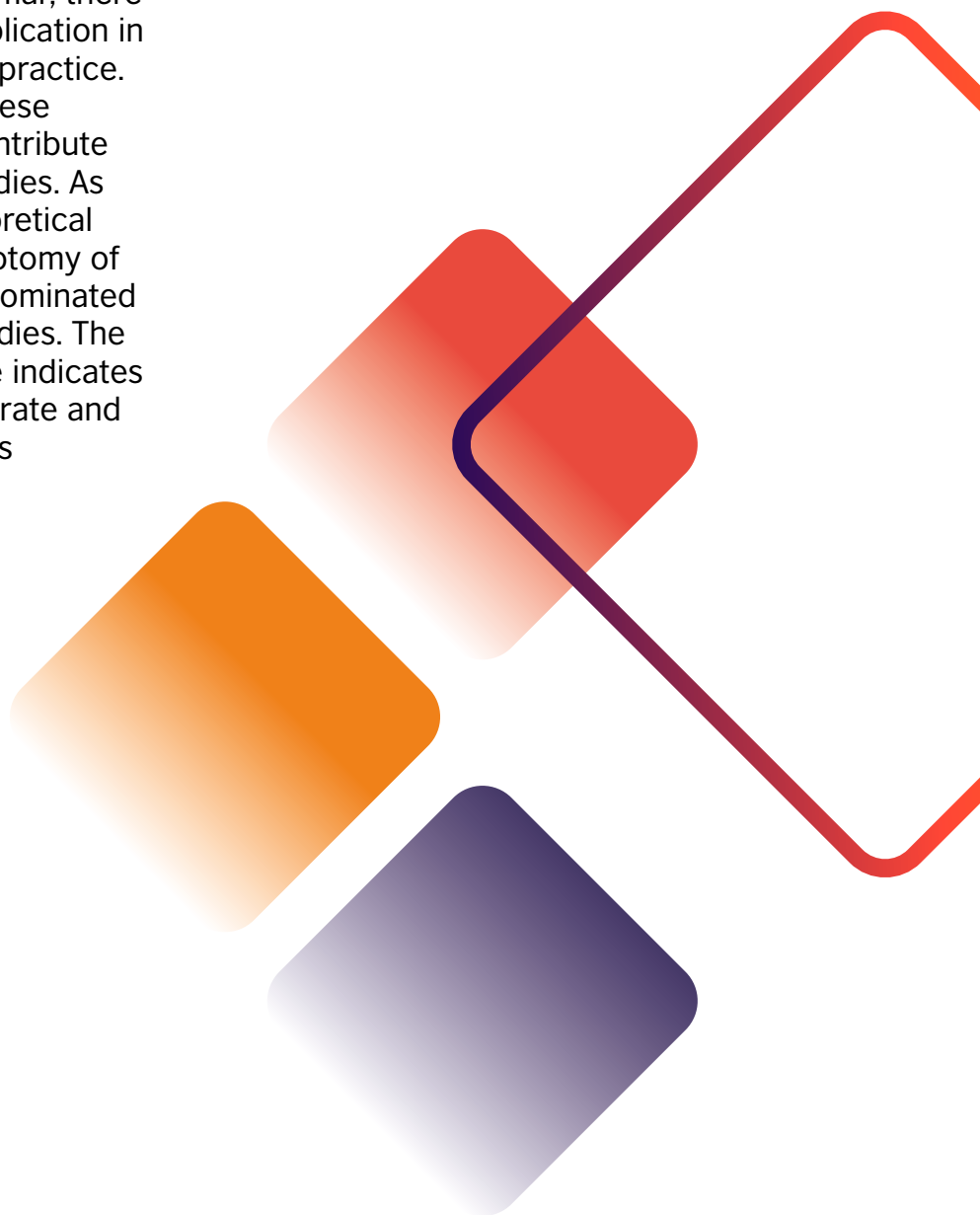


Therefore, the collaboration among these strategies compromised the values of non-violent action groups to a certain extent. Moreover, escalated armed resistance decreased non-violent actions due to public and political actors' shifting attention, support and participation. The non-violent action groups are significant but weakened compared to the early coup period. Furthermore, differences in nature, value and strategies also result in slow decision making though there are progresses.

#### 5.4. Implications of Myanmar Case Study for the Resistance Studies

After the thorough empirical analysis of the contemporary resistance in Myanmar, there are two main implications: the implication in philosophy and the implication in practice. The session will elaborate what these implications and how they can contribute to the literature on resistance studies. As elaborated in the sessions of theoretical background 2.1 and 2.2, the dichotomy of non-violence and violence is predominated in the literatures of resistance studies. The case study of Myanmar resistance indicates that both strategies could collaborate and work together effectively, with less significant obstacles.

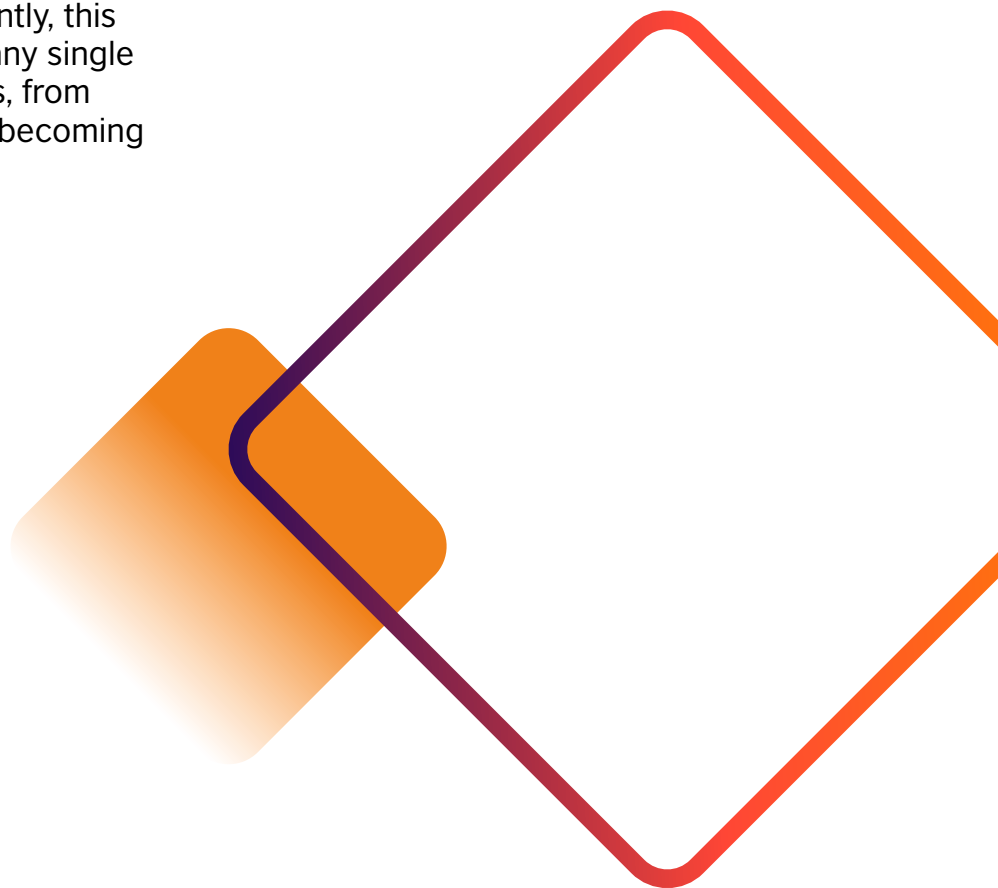
Though the literature on the diaspora also indicates another dichotomy: diaspora can be either peacemakers or peace wreckers in conflicts (Smith, 2007), the diaspora could be more than that. They could be considered as hidden influencers or key players in the shadow as they can directly involve in home politics and influence the political dynamics using the leverage of fundraising and advocacy. In the case study of Myanmar, the diplomacy of rebel governance cannot function without the advocacy support of the diaspora communities. The case study of Myanmar proves that the diaspora communities can also be considered a resistance group from afar.



Due to the distinct and specialised delegation of duties among various groups, the governance of rebels is posited to achieve greater effectiveness. Armed resistance groups primarily defend territories, while non-violence groups focus on maintaining public administration according to democratic values, existing rules, and laws. This separation of responsibilities and balance of power could also the risk of the likelihood of cycles of violence, a concern highlighted by Chenoweth & Stephan (2011), which is that arms and weapons might be manipulated to fuel further hostilities in post-conflict scenarios.

Furthermore, diaspora communities' advocacy and financial support contribute to balanced and cohesive coordination between non-violence and armed resistance groups. The collaboration of these three groups within the same platform, both in policy and practice for current and future nation and state building, enhances checks and balances among them. Consequently, this inclusive platform helps prevent any single group, particularly armed factions, from monopolising armed powers and becoming another form of dictator.

Hence, the findings of this study imply that non-violence and armed resistance could collaborate and achieve favourable outcomes. As an implication in practice, it would be more effective if the groups with different strategies held the specialised tasks relevant to their values, tactics and nature. Another theoretical implication is that diaspora activism needs to be considered a critical resistance strategy. In practice, the study implies that the resistance could be more effective with the support of the diaspora communities. Finally, the balanced and inclusive resistance model could prevent another form of dictatorship or armed-based bullying, which is the concern by Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) in post-armed resistance context.





# Chapter 6 Conclusion

As resistance is an inevitable reaction to oppression, Myanmar's Spring Revolution was a massive public uprising against the military coup and consequent violence committed by the military. As explained in chapter 3, the evolution of Myanmar's Spring Revolution is orchestrated by the military regime's responses towards peaceful protests, the international community's reaction and the opposition group's political leadership. People in Myanmar still commit to the resistance as long as there is room or they have a chance in different forms at every community level.

The portrayal of revolution is mainly driven by three main strategies; non-violent action, armed resistance and diaspora transnational activism. Though the existing literature only indicates a dichotomy of non-violence and violence or the nature of fluidity, Myanmar's Spring Revolution established the grand triangle model of resistance strategy in which these mentioned strategies collaborate. In the case study, non-violent and armed resistance groups collaborate strategically to have effective and well-functioning non-violent actions. The financial and psychological support of diaspora communities positively affects non-violent actions. Especially the Nobel non-violent project, Civil Disobedience Movement, was able to threaten the stability of the military regime only with the support and collaborative effort of armed resistance and diaspora communities. Moreover, the increasing number of establishments of representative and inclusive political platforms at national and sub-national is evidence of the working platforms of these three different strategy groups.

Significantly, rebel governance, which secures territorial domination, functioning administrative bodies, and compliance with public and diplomatic recognition, is the favourable outcome of the triangle resistance model. Despite that, there are

still limited obstacles in collaboration, such as compromised values and tough negotiation. This paper provides two main implications in theory or philosophy and practice. The findings contribute to the studies of resistance that non-violence and violence could collaborate in the 21st century, and it highlights the reconsideration of the traditional studies of resistance, the dichotomy of non-violence and violence. These strategies could be more effective if they are balanced and assigned to the relevant responsibilities in practice. Furthermore, the paper also underscores the vital role of the diaspora in resistance and urges the scholars in resistance to paying attention to the diaspora in a 21st-century resistance.



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