



# Military Successes With Unresolved Federal Puzzles

October 2024

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## 1. Introduction

Following the 2021 military coup, armed resistance groups were formed under various banners and leadership to oppose the military council. Simultaneously, efforts were made to establish federal units in the states, with Karenni and Chin states serving as prominent examples. However, these federal models are not fully developed units, and challenges persist in their inclusivity due to military and political competition in other regions and states. Furthermore, a lack of central-level political consensus to build a federal union has further complicated these issues.

After Operation 1027, Myanmar's military and political landscapes are gradually moving towards a situation different from the past. Although military successes are evident, it remains questionable whether these successes have resulted in political agreements. The

absence of a majority among the allied forces that contributed to military successes in drafting and approving the Federal Democracy Charter by the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) underscores the need to renegotiate political agreements for future state-building efforts.

The National Unity Government (NUG) is currently prioritizing tangible military successes as the Spring Revolution unfolds. The organizations leading the revolution need to show the public what they have achieved. There has been an increase in military successes through collaboration with Ethnic Resistance Organizations (EROs) from northern Shan State, particularly the "1027 Operation". However, it is crucial to reevaluate the drafting of the federal democratic charter, which has been suspended due to controversial issues involving many armed forces from southern Myanmar amid ongoing controversies.



## 1. Research objective

BNI-Myanmar Peace Monitor published the report "Models and Designs for Building a Federal Democratic Union" in December 2023. Reader and observer feedback requesting follow-up reports on federal affairs following the initial publication prompted the release of this report, titled "Military Successes With Unresolved Federal Puzzles."

Since the 2021 military coup, various revolutionary forces aiming to end the dictatorship and build a federal democratic union have been working to dismantle the junta by gaining military advantage.

Some ethnic groups are actively participating in the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) and the National Unity Government

(NUG) as they push for the formation of federal units based on regions and ethnicities. They are also exerting strong military pressure on the military council by forming alliances with other armed resistance groups. This research paper aims to examine recent developments in the establishment of a federal union following the 2021 military coup. It will also explore the challenges faced by organizations in comparison to the current military and political environment.

In addition, this research paper aims to identify and present methods for addressing the existing on-the-ground situation. It emphasizes to show that there is a need for forces opposing the military coup to achieve political developments as soon as they secure military gains.

## 2.1 Research Methodology

The data and evidence for this research is based on two primary sources. First, we conducted a discussion on "Federal Affairs," inviting leaders of federal units, political parties, and experts in the field to gather insights on challenges, difficulties, and future aspirations. As a second method, we gathered data from news articles, interviews, research papers, and reports published by both local and international news agencies and civil society organizations, including the BNI-Myanmar Peace Monitor.

The name of those interviewed will remain confidential unless they have consented to share it. However, to uphold the integrity of the research, we systematically retain the names of interviewees, their organizations, and relevant details.

### 3. Key discussions

After the 2021 military coup, analysts highlighted the widening of military space and the narrowing of political space. A significant number of new armed groups have emerged, conflicts have erupted across the country, and military successes have become increasingly apparent. However, these successes have also come at a cost for the public. Meanwhile, under the banner of the Spring Revolution, various political organizations and institutions have emerged, actively engaging in political struggle.

However, these groupings lack connections to existing political parties. Notably, the influence of powerful ethnic political parties is diminished, and organizations like the United Nationalities Alliance, which was established in the past, has faded from prominence. Also, the roles of organizations, such as the newly-formed People's Representative Committee for Federalism (PRCF), has not been clear.

Despite the announcement of a draft federal constitution, efforts to implement it have been unsuccessful. The political efforts emerging from the Spring Revolution have become key components. At some point, the PRCF aims to engage broadly with relevant organizations, submit a draft Federal Democratic Union Constitution and make necessary preparations. If there is consensus, it could lead to a constitution acceptable to all. However, the PRCF has not yet initiated dialogue with the NUCC.<sup>1</sup>

This research paper aims to analyze the challenges encountered by the NUG and the NUCC as they strive to establish a federal democratic union following the 2021 military coup. It will delve into the post-Operation 1027 political landscape, the dynamic of the competition between the military and political on the ground, and the varied political aspirations of different organizations. The paper will particularly focus on the convergence of these processes and explore potential future prospects.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with PRCF's Spokesperson Sai Kyaw Nyunt, Mekong News, 13 February 2024



### 3.1 Military successes and political readiness

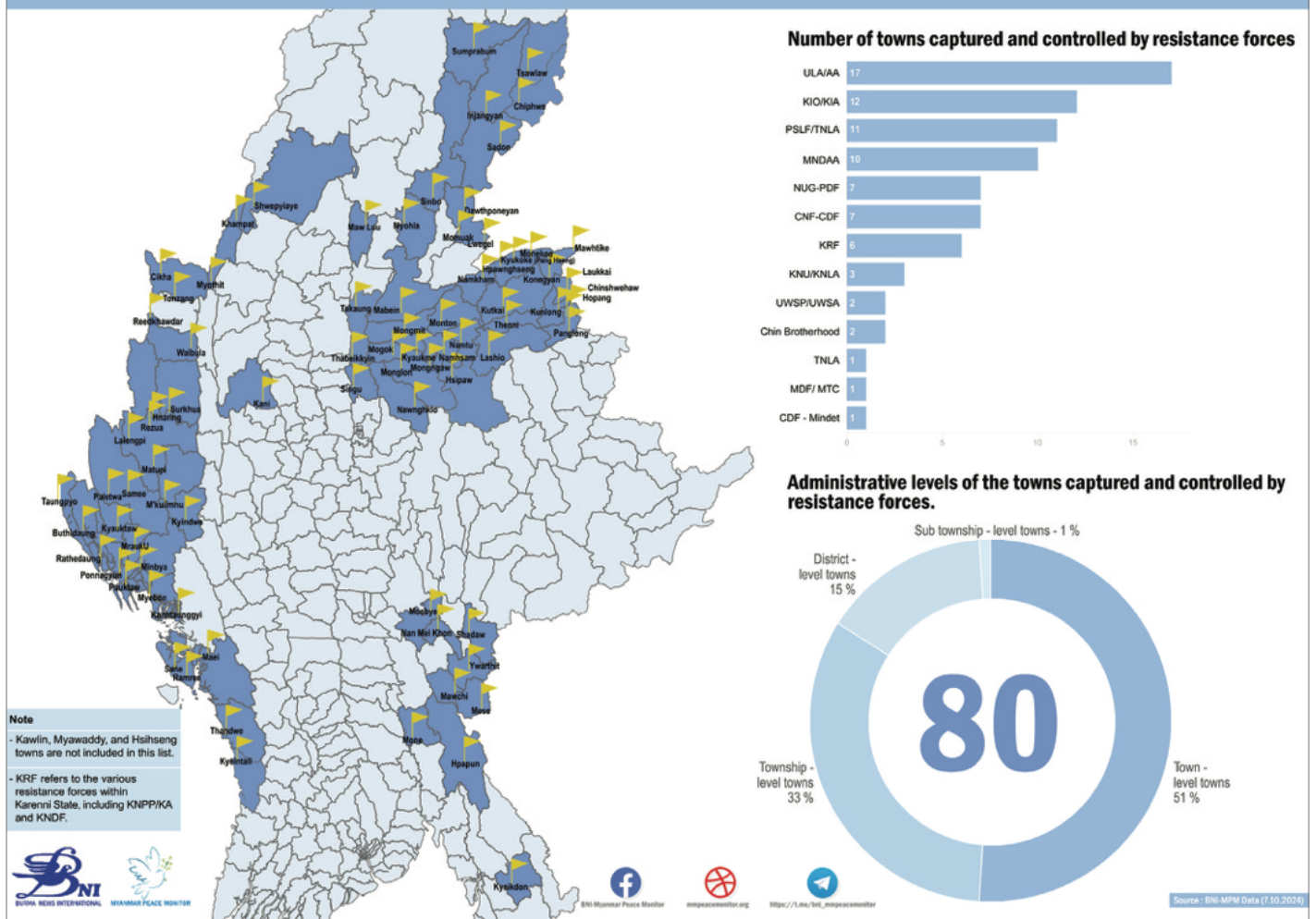
The military success of Operation 1027 and the second part of that operation became a turning point in the history of the Myanmar civil war. The capture of Lashio and the loss of the Northeast Regional Military Command has been a success for the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA)<sup>2</sup> and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), along with its allied forces. The military successes of EROs, the People's Defense Forces/ Local Defense Forces (PDFs/LDFs) and PDF battalions under the NUG, have led to the capture of nearly 80 towns from the military junta. Through these achievements, they have worked to implement executive and judicial functions simultaneously.<sup>3</sup> With such efforts, there emerges the question of "who will have the right to administer these territories?" In other words, this also raises the question of who possesses the political authority to govern.

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<sup>2</sup> Situation in Lashio under control of MNDAA (video), The Irrawaddy News, 15 August 2024

<sup>3</sup> MNDAA says, Shan State Special Region 1 will be re-established, BBC, 3 January 2024

# 80 Towns Captured and Controlled By Resistance Forces



In regions like Shan State, home to numerous ethnic armed groups and diverse ethnic nationalities, demarcating the territorial boundaries of each ethnic group is a complex challenge. The intermingling of communities makes it particularly challenging to delineate these areas. Consequently, implementing an ethnic-based administration after gaining control of a territory can trigger ethnic conflicts.

However, some organizations have expanded their military objectives as a result of the momentum of the Spring Revolution, while groups like the Shan State Progressive Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA) and the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State

Army (RCSS/SSA) continue to struggle to adapt to the new situation. In contrast, organizations like the United Wa State Party/United Wa State Army (UWSP/UWSA), with significant weaponry and manpower, and the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), which has considerable economic power, remain neutral in both military and political matters.<sup>4</sup>

Although the NUG seems to be implementing military-political processes in a balanced way, the inability to connect these two implementations has become the biggest weakness. In particular, the organizations that are creating military cooperation and achieving military success have not made any political commitments. They are not participating in the drafting of the Federal Democracy Charter, which is being implemented by the NUCC. Such military alliances may work for short-term military operations and military successes, but without a political bond, there may be difficulties later in political negotiations. This underscores the importance of balancing political efforts with military actions.

As military successes increase, political readiness becomes increasingly important. Good outcomes can only be achieved by finding solutions that address both military and political factors, ultimately reducing the burdens on those most affected by armed conflict. With military successes, issues of territorial ownership, administration, and the expansion of resources and forces will need to be addressed simultaneously. Thus, striking a balance between military and political processes is essential for facilitating the future construction of a federal union.

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<sup>4</sup> How does “Wa” relate to Operation 1027?, BBC, 19 July 2024

### 3.2 Different political dreams

Since the coup on 1 February 2021, several PDFs have emerged and introduced their different political goals. In addition, the political dreams of the existing EROs have different forms and shapes. In particular, the issues of building a federal democratic union have become more complicated. Some EROs say that they will build a confederation, while some EROs still believe that building a federal democracy is the only solution for Myanmar.

In a talk organized by the BNI-Myanmar Peace Monitor for this paper, U Aung San Myint, the chairperson of the Karenni State Consultative Council (KSCC), said: “Since 2001, we have set a firm political goal of building a federal union.”

After the 2021 coup, political unity among revolutionary forces strengthened. Despite differences among political parties, armed groups, civil society organizations, and youth groups in Karenni (Kayah) State, a sense of collective unity has emerged. “So, we believe that now is the best time for us to exercise our right to self-determination and the state's right to self-determination,” U Aung San Myint said.

As a result of military successes and territorial control, executive, judicial, and legislative mechanisms are now being implemented according to the federal charter, while the military junta’s mechanisms are no longer operational in Karenni (Kayah) State. “If we don't take action now and prepare, we will have to negotiate extensively among ourselves when we build the future federal union,” U Aung San Myint added.



*U Aung San Myint, Chairperson of the Karenni State Consultative Council (KSCC)*

“We will not transition from a system that strengthens the union to one that distributes power to the states. Our aim is to enhance the union by reinforcing the states, and all states will need to be prepared for that. We must establish common political agreements among ourselves now. Key factors need to be discussed collaboratively. Importantly, drafting federal constitutions—whether transitional or permanent—is not a difficult task for us.”<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, there are EROs advocating for political goals like confederation, going beyond federalism. In addition, the emergence of new states has become a significant topic regarding the number of states crucial to building a federal democratic union. In particular, the emergence of a new state related to ethnic affairs within Shan State has become a key focus in the development of a federal union.

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<sup>5</sup> KSCC Chairperson U Aung San Myint speaks at a talk organized by BNI- MPM, 25 April 2024



## 4. Analyses

After the 2021 military coup, various models of federal administrative units have emerged, particularly in Karenni and Chin states. However, these units struggle with technical, political, and resource challenges in negotiating among groups with differing political aspirations. In addition, political integration among the various armed forces and the resulting challenges have not yet been fully addressed. At the same time, they appear to be making extensive efforts to bolster military momentum for enhanced security guarantees.

It has been a challenge to balance these military and political objectives. Although in times of slow military progress, the challenge is not significant. After the first and second waves of Operation 1027, balancing military and political momentum to end the military junta and build a federal democratic union has become a significant challenge.

In relation to military and political changes following Operation 1027, it is required to examine three main topics. Notably, after the first and second phases of Operation 1027, the disorganization of the junta has become apparent, and military achievements have accelerated. In a situation where military space has expanded and

political discussion has narrowed, the ability to secure strong political agreements among relevant revolutionary forces can imagine the future structure of Myanmar.

While the revolutionary forces share a common desire for a federal democratic union, they must develop a clear understanding of what type of union will be established. They need to recognize that it cannot be a "vague union" like the one outlined in the military-sponsored 2008 Constitution.

#### **4.1 The problem of military and political momentum**

Following the military coup in 2021, public movements quickly surged across the country. In response to the violent repression by the military, many people turned to armed revolution, leading to the formation of various armed groups. Then, the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), the NUG, and the NUCC, were formed to promote the revolution against the coup and work towards a federal democratic union. However, some prominent ethnic revolution organizations chose not to directly participate. Groups like the Karen National Union (KNU), the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), and the Chin National Front (CNF), only engaged selectively. Most ethnic armed forces in the north operated under the existing Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC), primarily providing military support and conducting joint operations.

The establishment of the CRPH drew heavy criticism and sparked debate, primarily due to its composition, which largely included members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) party which is dominated by the ethnic Bamar. In addition, eight EROs and up to 28 groups, including the federal units, civil society organizations, and



*People take part in a protest march during the Spring Revolution. (Photo-Courtesy)*

strike committees partook in the NUCC.<sup>6</sup> However, these participation figures are constantly shifting, with occasional resignations and terminations of involvement.

This indicates persistent "trust" issues between ethnic revolutionary armed organizations and Bamar-based revolutionary organizations. Some ethnic groups approach these relationships cautiously, drawing lessons from historical experiences with organizations like the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB) and the National Coalition Government of the Union of Myanmar (NCGUB), which emerged after the previous military coup.

In discussions regarding federal establishment and political negotiations, the perspectives of the EROs based in the northern part of Myanmar are portrayed as a political model resembling a confederation. However, these organizations are not the primary participants in the political discussions of the NUG. These

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<sup>6</sup> Federal Democratic Charter will be approved at People's Assembly organized by NUCC, VOA, 27 January 2022

organizations primarily discuss military affairs and collaborate as a strategic alliance to confront the “common enemy.” Their political strategic relationships are not yet clearly defined, and they typically release joint statements that represent a collective opinion rather than a unified political strategy.

The "Joint Position Statement by Allied Organizations Engaged in Revolutionary Struggle towards Annihilation of Military Dictatorship and Establishment of a Federal Democratic Union," released on 31 January 2024, is a common agreement between the Karen National Union (KNU), the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), the Chin National Front (CNF), and the National Unity Government (NUG).<sup>7</sup>

"This common agreement is currently a firmly established agreement between the ethnic alliance, known as K3C, which includes the KIO, KNU, KNPP, and CNF. We will continue to strive for accord among the ethnic alliance organizations," said NUG Acting President Duwa Lashi La.

This common position statement envisions building a federal democratic union consisting of states with full rights to democracy, national equality, and self-determination, as well as protecting and promoting the identities of diverse ethnic groups living in Myanmar. The statement includes six objectives, nine positions, and six phased action plans.

In the period following Operation 1027, which began on 27 October 2023, there has been increased military cooperation between the Three Brotherhood Alliance (3BHA) and the PDFs under the NUG. For the NUG, military support from the 3BHA members is

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<sup>7</sup> White campaign, Common Positions and Declining Signs of Military Council, BNI-MPM, 5 February 2024



more crucial for attacking the military junta than reaching political agreements. Therefore, military objectives currently take precedence over political talks.

Khaing Thukha, the spokesperson of the Arakha Army (AA), said that they will continue to fight for the liberation of the entire Arakan State and build the future of Arakan State with their own hands by shaping their own destiny with full self-determination. "Arakan State has no intention of seceding from the Union but will adhere to the principle that the people of Arakan can shape their own destiny within Myanmar with a political principle that is no less than the level of a confederation. We will not be requesting these opportunities from anyone; rather, the AA will take action to secure guarantees for them," said Khaing Thukha.<sup>8</sup>

In the current period of the Spring Revolution, although various revolutionary forces have identified the military junta as a common enemy, each of them has its own political considerations, goals, and dreams for future state-building. It is crucial to seriously consider how to integrate and converge these political thoughts, objectives, and dreams.

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<sup>8</sup> AA vows to liberate entire Arakan State, RFA, 4 March 2024



*Members of Arakha Army (AA)*



"At this time, the NUG is proceeding within its own capacity. We'll have to wait and see how much they can handle and how well they can act as a bridge between various groups to make things run smoothly. To be honest, we haven't seen much satisfaction with the NUG yet. They have joined the Spring Revolution to fight the common enemy. On the other hand, there will still be long-term issues to discuss. We must not lose momentum in destroying the common enemy just because we're worried about long-term discussion points," said Maung Saungkha, the commander of the Bamar People's Liberation Army (BPLA).<sup>9</sup>

Given the current political situation in Myanmar and the evolving landscapes, it will take some time and negotiations for the various groups and forces to align politically. Dr. Nyo Twan Awng, the AA vice commander-in-chief, believes that a scenario will emerge where revolutionary forces will need to meet and engage in dialogue, either after the military dictatorship ends or when the junta is close to collapse.

"At that time, how far we can come closer then, how closely we can negotiate, depends on time and the political will and intentions of the organizations involved in the talks. Whatever happens, we will continue to fight with optimism until we realize the political aspirations of the people of Arakan and the people of Myanmar," said Dr. Nyo Twan Awng.<sup>10</sup>

As efforts progress toward ending the military dictatorship and building a future federal democratic union, there are currently various considerations for future state-building are evident: a Union model based on states, including a Bamar state; the current model of seven

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<sup>9</sup> Exclusive interview with BPLA Commander Maung Saungkha, BNI-MPM, 23 February 2024

<sup>10</sup> Exclusive interview with AA Vice Commander-in-Chief Dr. Nyo Twan Awng, BNI-MPM, 31 March 2024

states and seven regions; considerations based on ethnicity; considerations based on geographical areas; considerations for the emergence of new states; and a confederation model.

#### **4.2. The problem of the emergence of federalism and new states**

Lway Poe Ngeal, a member of the Ta'ang Political Consultative Committee (TPCC), believes that in terms of federalism, power resides closest to the people. In implementing sovereignty and self-determination, there is no need to wait for or seek permission from others.

"Federalism isn't something that can be done by giving it to this or that ethnic group. The most important point is that sovereign power lies with the people. If the people participate and if the people believe that these leaders have the capacity to act and that they can exercise their own governance, then they can start to implement their own self-governance.," said Lway Poe Ngeal.<sup>11</sup> She is aware that when seeking a genuine political solution, states should not be created on the basis of ethnic designations, but the emergence of new states should be welcomed.

Dr. Pon Nya Mon, the executive director at the Ethnic Nationalities Affairs Center (ENAC) and an expert on federalism, said that when people think of a federal democratic union, they immediately have two concepts in mind: "Coming Together"<sup>12</sup> and "Holding Together."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Discussion by TPCC member Lway Poe Ngeal at a talk organized by BNI-MPM, 25 April 2024

<sup>12</sup> "Coming together" refers to a system where independent states (or units) voluntarily come together to form a larger federal union with equal rights and mutual agreement.

<sup>13</sup> "Holding together" refers to a system where a large, socio-economically diverse country that previously practiced a centralized unitary system decentralizes power and distributes authority between the central government and its states to form a federal country.

He explains that many revolutionary forces, including EROs, want to pursue the "coming together" model. While "coming together" can be discussed in principle, it's difficult to implement in practice. "For true federalism, to rebuild your state in a 'coming together' fashion, you need to have power in your own state," said Dr. Pon Nya Mon.<sup>14</sup> He also gives the following example.

"If Karenni can control about 85 percent, that's a significant state power. Once you have the power, you can think of how you want to build your federalism. You can build the federalism you want, the federalism you dream of. In the past, even though you had a dream of federalism, it was difficult to build when you had no power. Now this revolution has gained real state power, especially in Karenni State."

According to Dr. Pon Nya Mon, at this time when the military junta is suffering major battlefield defeats across the country and losing control of key towns, the revolutionary forces need to be prepared to fill the power vacuum with pre-established federal institutions, obtain political agreements, and secure commitments for building a federal democratic union.

For example, as an organization, they seize control of an entire state and declare that their state is liberated. On the grounds that federalism is difficult to build, they may choose to exist as a separate independent country or strive for a confederation model. "We must not forget about federalism. To strengthen it, we need a renewed commitment from those who are fighting, those who are not fighting, and political parties," added Dr. Pon Nya Mon.

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<sup>14</sup> Discussion by ENAC Executive Director Dr. Pon Nya Mon at a talk organized by BNI-MPM, 25 April 2024



*Photo - Maung Saungkha Facebook*

The goal of the Spring Revolution seems to be only a general consensus on a federal democratic union, with no clear and distinct form so far.

Maung Saungkha, the BPLA commander, said: "Whether it's a Union or not depends on whether the Bamar and other non-Bamar ethnic groups will live together or not. To what extent will we Bamar people be able to prove we are trustworthy through our words and actions? Will they still have doubts about whether they'll be conned like before if they live with the Bamar people? I really wish for a Union that is 'coming together' with full trust in each other." <sup>15</sup>

At the same time, the issue of the emergence of a Bamar state has become a factor to consider for future state-building. While there are groups that accept the idea of a Bamar state, there are also strong camps that cannot yet accept it.

The Bamar People's Liberation Army (BPLA) has proposed the idea of a Bamar state as a political aspiration, stating that it aims to

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<sup>15</sup> Exclusive interview with BPLA Commander Maung Saungkha, BNI-MPM, 31 March 2024

achieve harmony among the member states that are or are likely to become part of the Union in the long term.

Maung Saungkha explained: "We shouldn't cling to this or that idea as an absolute must. Politics must fall apart and the country must fragment before we claim our respective territories and rights to self-determination, and then decide to come together. This kind of union could be more reassuring for the Union."

Dr. Naing Aung, a military and political analyst, stated that in order to establish a federal democratic nation in the future, it is essential to gather the fundamental desires of the ethnic groups, ensure full self-determination and autonomy, and create a pathway led by these ethnic groups themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Dr. Naing Aung posed the question: "People of the plains should consider if they want to form a Bamar state or organize themselves by geographical areas. They should then negotiate with the ethnic groups on this idea. If the ethnic groups agree to it, they'll include it in the Union they form. If not, we'll go our separate ways. Isn't it better to live peacefully side by side rather than living in the same compound or neighborhood and constantly quarrel or fight?"

However, he also points out that ethnic groups striving for self-determination need to ensure justice and equality for smaller ethnic groups and diverse minorities within their own states and regions.

Dr. Naing Aung continued: "I don't want people to think that the current map and borders must remain as they are. If we can think beyond that, we'll be closer to a solution."

Khun Myint Tun, the chairperson of the Pa-O National Federal Council (PNFC), recalled the emotional speech by Khun Htun Oo, the

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<sup>16</sup> Exclusive interview with military and political analyst Dr. Naing Aung, BNI-MPM, 31 March 2024



leader of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), at the 1993 National Convention. He recounted how Shan leaders at that time had no ideas or solutions on how to solve the Shan State issue.

"They couldn't negotiate the Shan State problem among the people of Shan State. Not even the Shan leaders themselves could take the lead. Then who took that seat? It was the military. They took the seat and designated self-administered areas. The lesson here is that in any given era, it is essential to negotiate and resolve issues among ourselves. If we cannot resolve them, the intermediaries will take the lead. If we can't do this now, we need to consider whose hands we are placing our leadership and positions into. We must engage in dialogue and negotiation among ourselves," warned Khun Myint Tun.<sup>17</sup>

In other words, in order to build a future federal democratic union, there must be significant discussions among the various power groups to agree on a federal model. Similarly, the emergence of new states, including a Bamar state, can neither be prevented nor hindered. However, these questions should be seen as federal questions that need to be answered.

This issue rests on the shoulders of all revolutionary forces, including the NUG. Leaders must have broad vision and acumen, while accepting the political lessons of decades with empathy to find common solutions. At the same time, the creation of a unified Federal Army, including PDFs/LDFs, EROs, and other armed groups that emerged in response to the 2021 military coup, is a crucial factor to consider from now on.

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<sup>17</sup> Discussion by PNFC Chairperson Khun Myint Tun at a talk organized by BNI-MPM, 25 April 2024

### 4.3. The problem of security sector reintegration

Since gaining independence, Myanmar has been embroiled in a civil war for over 70 years, with ethnic groups such as the Kachin, the Karenni (Kayah), the Karen, the Chin, the Mon, the Bamar, the Rakhine (Arakan), and the Shan taking up arms against the government and military in their respective regions, fighting for equality, self-determination, and autonomy.

Since the military coup on 1 February 2021, numerous armed groups have resisted the military junta. These include over 280 PDFs/LDFs<sup>18</sup>, over 300 PDF battalions under the NUG Ministry of Defense, over 250 township-level PDFs (known locally as Pa Ka Pha), and hundreds of other armed groups fighting against the junta.

The integration of these armed forces is as important as the federal questions. It has become a conundrum that requires preparations and negotiations until a consensus on the armed forces is reached.

Article 55 of the Fundamental Principle of Federal Security and Defense in the Declaration of the Federal Democratic Union 2021, Federal Democracy Charter Part 1, states: “The security and defense policies of the Federal Union are to be based on human security. All troops for the federal union’s security and defense are under the administration of the democratically-elected civilian government.”

While this can be considered an excellent basic principle for the military sector, there is skepticism about whether all armed resistance groups, including EROs not yet represented in the Federal Democracy Charter, can adhere to it.

U Lwin Ko Latt, the NUG Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration, said that the issue of disarmament in the post-revolution period

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<sup>18</sup> People's Defense Force Dashboard, BNI-MPM, 31 August 2024

should not be a major challenge given the country's circumstances. He also explained that the organizations under their control are fully committed to liberation from dictatorship, the realization of equal human rights, and the building of a federal nation.<sup>19</sup>

"If we use a federal system, there will be various levels of administrative and armed security forces. We are thinking about processes such as inviting participation in these, or providing sufficient incentives for disarmament, working step by step, and finally implementing the rule of law. We are thinking about such processes and implementing them," added U Lwin Ko Latt.

Political analyst U Than Soe Naing believes that while the NUG is capable of handling issues of military equipment and security integration with the PDF battalions and LDFs under its control, its capacity is limited when it comes to dealing with other armed resistance groups not under NUG command.

"There are still groups applying to join the NUG, as well as forces that operate independently without adhering to NUG's policies. If the NUG is unable to effectively integrate these groups, these armed forces could become a problem in the post-revolution period," said U Than Soe Naing.

After the 2021 military coup, various armed resistance groups have emerged under different names and forms. While it is possible in the current situation to coordinate these groups in some form militarily, the question of how to build a federal army model for security sector integration during post-revolution state-building is crucial.

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<sup>19</sup> U Lwin Ko Latt says disarmament issue shouldn't be major challenge, BNI, 14 February 2024

The problem of integrating the security sector is an unavoidable problem that needs to be negotiated and resolved. Individual or organizational interests should not be prioritized. Failure to negotiate with a vision for the future state and its people, no political agreement will be sustainable in the long term. The country will only cycle through security-related problems and will not be able to free itself from the vicious cycle of conflict.

Lessons should be learned from the security sector arrangements in the 2008 Constitution and the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). It should be noted that methods such as forced disarmament or forced subordination are not effective measures.

## **5. Policy Recommendations and Conclusion**

The military, the political landscape, and the pace of developments after the coup on 1 February 2021 have significantly affected the model of state-building to be constructed in the post-revolution era. For this reason, the BNI-Myanmar Peace Monitor has continuously studied and published reports on the emerging designs and models of federal units in each state. While the military momentum has become faster and more extensive after Operation 1027, the political progress seems to be slowing down. This report focuses on analyzing how to strengthen political ties between revolutionary forces seeking to build a federal democratic union. The following two policy recommendations are presented:

## **(1) Reassess the political dialogue processes**

It has been over three years since the 2021 military coup. Likewise, the journey of the Spring Revolution, aimed at dismantling the military junta and establishing a federal democratic union, has also surpassed three years. During this time, a political consensus has been reached among various groups, but some resistance groups that should be involved are still excluded.

There is a common political agreement among the KNU, the KNPP, the KIO, the CNF, and the NUG. Similarly, three EROs, five councils representing states/nationalities, and the Women's League of Burma (WLB) have reached agreements on building a future federal democratic union by taking a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach, starting with strengthening the states.<sup>20</sup>

By examining the political consensus among these revolutionary forces, it becomes clear that there is a delay or weakness in reaching a political agreement among the members within the NUCC, which is considered the vanguard of the revolution during the Spring Revolution period. In other words, the weakness of political dialogue processes within the NUCC is evident.

Therefore, it is crucial to reassess the stagnant dialogue processes and issues, and move towards practical and implementable discussion processes for the future state as soon as possible. Instead of spending time building trust among the resistance forces, efforts should be made to reach political agreements for the future state and its citizens as soon as possible, based on mutual trust, respect, and understanding among the various groups.

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<sup>20</sup> Statement on building a future federal democratic union, released on 19 September 2024, includes KNU, KNPP, CNF, KSCC, PNFC, NMSP, NMSP-AD, MSFC, TPCC, and WLB. <https://bit.ly/4ezeYqw>



*NUG Defence Minister U Yee Mon (Photo -Maung Saungkha)*

## **(2) Aim for political agreements through military cooperation**

During the current Spring Revolution period, the role of the Central Coordination and Coordination Committee (C3C)<sup>21</sup>, formed by the K3C (consisting of the KNU, the KNPP, the KIO, the CNF) and the NUG, along with the “Operation 1027” grouping led by the 3BHA<sup>22</sup>, as well as joint operations in areas such as Karen, Karenni, Chin, Sagaing, Magway, and Mandalay, can be observed. It can be said that all revolutionary forces now understand and believe that working together with each other is more effective in defeating the military junta.

NUG Defense Minister U Yee Mon explained the cooperation between the EROs and the NUG-PDF: "In the current revolution, the respective EROs will take main responsibility for the liberation of the states. For the liberation of the mainland regions, the NUG-PDFs will take the main responsibility. The EROs will help strengthen PDFs and improve their combat capabilities in their respective areas. This demonstrates the current understanding and division of labor in the revolution."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide (2023-2024), Page 40, BNI-MPM

<sup>22</sup> Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide (2023-2024), Page 42, BNI-MPM

<sup>23</sup> Interview with NUG Defense Minister U Yee Mon (Video), The Irrawaddy, 1 September 2024

Analyzing Minister U Yee Mon's statement, while it can be said that there is strong military coordination between the allied EROs and the NUG, the ability to collaborate with PDFs-LDFs that are not under NUG control across the country is not yet evident. In addition, more time is needed for talks and negotiations to align the interests, aspirations, and goals of the EROs that have not yet allied with the NUG.

A scenario in which resistance forces will have to enter into political dialogue with each other will occur either after the end of the military junta or even earlier. Dr. Nyo Twan Awng, the vice commander-in-chief of the Arakha Army (AA), said that they will continue to fight until the political aspirations of the people of Arakan and the people of Myanmar are realized.

According to the findings of BNI-Myanmar Peace Monitor, military alliances and collaborations, however strong they may be, can unravel at any time like "unbound bamboo stalks" without solid political agreements. To prevent the risk of alliances and unity being weakened by divisive interests and incentives, it is time for all revolutionary forces to collaborate and reach political agreements through military cooperation.

