

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
Promoting National Reconciliation
And Supporting
The Democratisation Process in Myanmar/Burma
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How can the international community support the democratization and national reconciliation process in Burma? I would like to divide this into 2 segments:

- A. International Support for Dialogue in Burma,
- B. International Support for Domestic Initiatives.

I am speaking here as Director of the Euro-Burma Office, and not on behalf of any Burmese group. I am trying to assess the situation realistically so that we can come up with practical strategies. The focus here is on bringing about change in Burma and not on how to punish the generals. We are outraged by recent events but it is not enough to be angry. We need to find a solution.

My recommendations are based on the following assumptions:

1. A military solution is not possible or desirable;
2. The Burmese military does not intend to give up power. It will concede minor points to ease pressure;
3. The Burmese military intends to continue with its basic Road Map and intends to draw out the process;
4. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will engage in a dialogue with the generals;
5. The ethnic ceasefire armies will continue to participate in the military's Road Map process;
6. The population of Burma, both Burman and ethnic, want a change, but do not have the capacity to bring about change;
7. Burma's economy and social conditions will continue to deteriorate;
8. The common concern of Burma's neighbours is stability;
9. The UN Security Council will not intervene in Burma unless the situation deteriorates further;

Given these assumptions, it is crucial that a dialogue process is initiated. Without a dialogue there is no possibility of change, and there is no role for the UN or the international community.

But a dialogue in itself will not bring about change. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the ethnic forces will have to skilfully use the economic and social concerns of the people to bring about change – i.e. force the military to concede minor points, and slowly build a momentum for change. Major political concessions should not be demanded.

A. International Support for the Dialogue Process

The international community should fully support the efforts of the UN Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Burma (Ibrahim Gambari). His key asset is his access to Senior-General Than Shwe. He should mediate to bring about minor concessions.

Gambar's efforts should be fully supported by the UN Security Council.

But a more permanent international effort to bring about change in Burma is needed. This must involve the active and full participation of Burma's neighbours as well as the UN, the USA, the EU and the SPDC. A multi-party talk along the lines of the Six Party Talks for North Korea is needed. The neighbouring countries need to become part of the solution or they may be tempted to break rank in order to pursue individual national interests at the expense of a rival.

In terms of the EU, opportunities to advance the agenda will present themselves at the ASEAN Summit, the EU-India Dialogue, and the EU-China Dialogue in November.

B. International Support for Domestic Initiatives:

1. It is crucial that the people of Burma in general are helped. Their capacity to function as a normal society needs to be encouraged and supported – be it relief for the poor, refugees, education, health, livelihood and/or other social interactions. Politics and political action should not be emphasized. Humanitarian aid in its most benign form is needed and should not be linked to political developments.
2. The National Reconciliation Programme (financially supported by Denmark, Sweden and Canada) needs to be expanded and deepened. Many successes – Federalism vs independence; political control of armies, dialogue between cease-fire groups and non-cessate-fire groups, inter/intra ethnic dialogue, drafting State constitutions, encouraging the formation of state coordination bodies, etc.
3. Financial and other support for political parties for contesting new elections – examples 1990 elections; mood of the people, etc.
4. Financial and other support for promoting good governance in the areas not under the control of the military:
 - Participation of population;
 - Participation of women and youth;
 - Service delivery;
 - Transparency and accountability of cross-border aid delivery;
 - Political ideology (democracy versus military);
 - Political control of the armed forces;

Thank you.