

Operation 1027: The Need for a New Political Imagination and a Pragmatic Strategy



The People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces seen in action in Sagaing Region in the last week of November (Photo: Reuters)

The Institute for Strategy and Policy (Myanmar) has released a series of three analytical reports based on our research findings regarding 'Operation 1027', initiated by the Three Brotherhood Alliance and allied forces. This latest report, **ISP OnPoint No.19** published on December 5, focuses on **the question of new political imagination and a pragmatic strategy**. In the previous ISP OnPoint No.17 released on November 10, ISP-Myanmar discussed the **'signaling effects'** of the war. On November 12, in ISP OnPoint No.18, the Institute discussed **Chinese official responses and the intertwining economic aspects of the war**.

■ Event

On October 27, 2023, the Three Brotherhood Alliance (3BHA) launched 'Operation 1027', and since November 14, 2023 have called for a nationwide mobilization to revolt against the military dictatorship. In the Karenni area, resistance groups have extended the war front to Loikaw, the state capital. Similarly, in Rakhine State, the Arakan Army (AA) has attempted to take control over strategic positions in border trade and major economic projects. In Karen State and Chin State, and in the Myanmar dry zone including upper Sagaing, resistance groups have flexed their muscles in renewed offensives. Acting President of the State Administration Council (SAC), Myint Swe evaluated the situation in the recent National Defence and Security Council (NDSC) meeting on November 8, by saying "if the government does not effectively manage the incidents happening in the border region, the country will be split into parts."

■ Preliminary Analysis

'Operation 1027' has escalated the conflict in Myanmar to a new level. Since the post-coup Spring Revolution, the prospect of a political resolution restoring the pre-coup 'old normal' is no longer feasible. 'Operation 1027' has further entangled Myanmar's conflict landscape with geopolitics, pushing the extant political power configuration and territorial integrity of the Myanmar polity beyond a mere status quo and into an irreversible trajectory. This shift is not contingent on Myanmar's national democratic legitimacy or adherence to a federal framework. Rather, it indicates a declining ability of the state to function effectively. The state has lost control over its ability to maintain law and order, collect taxes from a struggling economy, enter into contracts with foreign governments regarding sovereign affairs, and deliver essential public services such as water, electricity and healthcare. As the state loses control over the territory, it loses the ability to exercise power effectively in terms of functional and territorial reach.

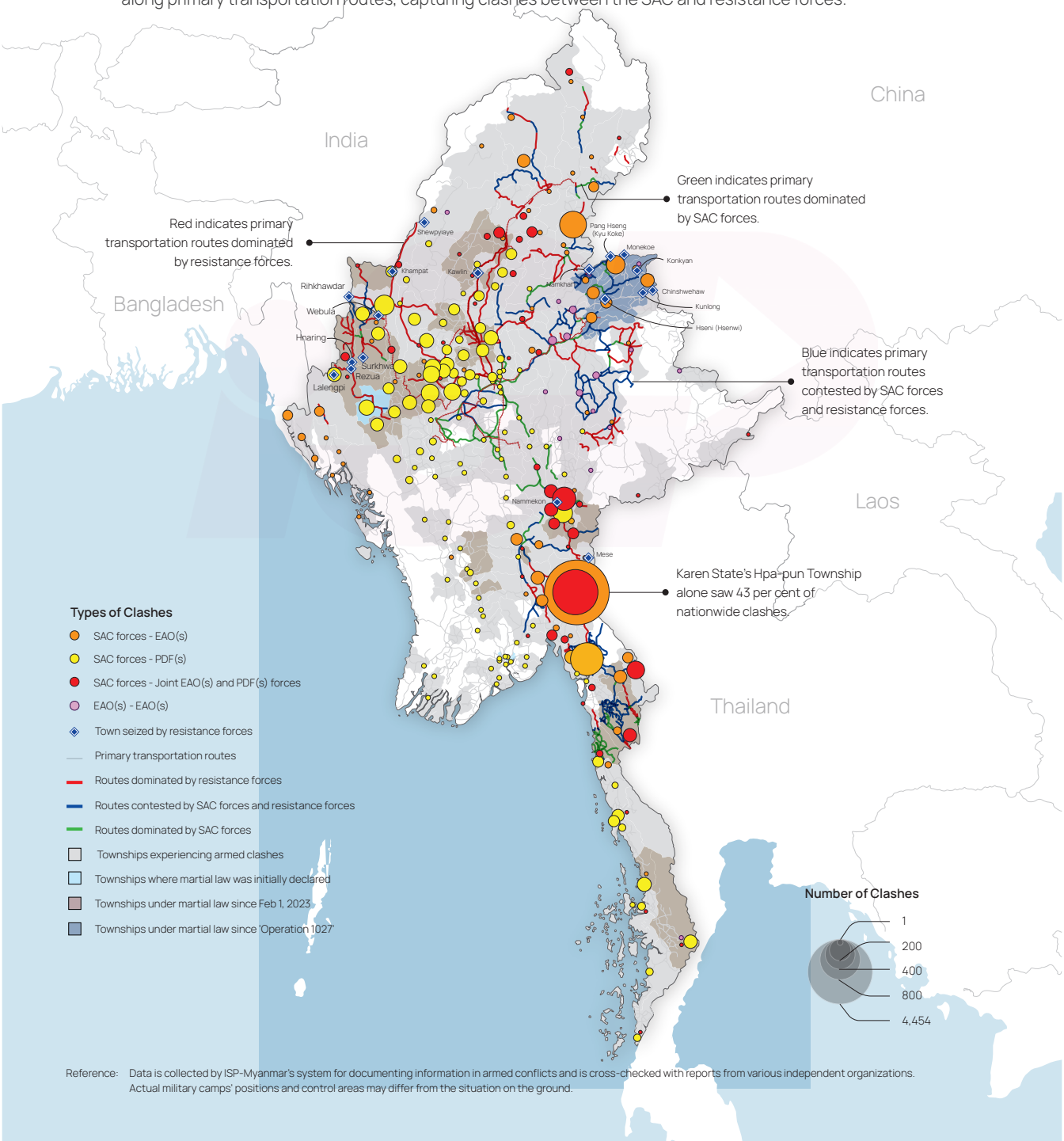
Humanitarian crises continue to worsen with no foreseeable international assistance to tackle them adequately in the near future. Youth resistance fighters ►

This ISP OnPoint No. 19 is published on **December 12, 2023**, as a translation of the original Burmese language version that ISP-Myanmar sent out to the ISP Gabyin members on **December 5, 2023**.

Note: Since the publication of this OnPoint No.19 Burmese language version, new development has occurred. With China's "support and facilitation", representatives of the State Administration Council (SAC) engaged in "peace talks" with three ethnic armed groups who were involved in an ongoing 'Operation 1027' in Kunming, China, on December 11. The junta's spokesperson confirmed the news. China foreign ministry official said the peace talks had yielded "positive results".

■ Nationwide Conflict and the Contest for Dominance (Feb 1, 2021 - Nov 26, 2023)

Since the coup, no less than **221 townships (67 per cent of the total)** have experienced at least 12,238 armed clashes. Delving into the regional dynamics, **Karenni area, Chin State and Tanintharyi Region** experienced armed conflicts in all of their townships while in Sagaing and Mandalay Regions, conflicts erupted in **34** out of 37 and **25** out of 28 townships respectively. The map below illustrates the contest for dominance along primary transportation routes, capturing clashes between the SAC and resistance forces.



Reference: Data is collected by ISP-Myanmar's system for documenting information in armed conflicts and is cross-checked with reports from various independent organizations. Actual military camps' positions and control areas may differ from the situation on the ground.

▶ have taken the opportunity of the crises facing the SAC to escalate “tipping-point armed revolution” under the slogan ‘wave after wave,’ referring to recurring and ongoing resistance movements. Their determination to secure victory has intensified. Whether or not these movements could lead to ‘total war’, which could remove the junta regime, is the key focus of **ISP OnPoint No. 17**, which has particularly highlighted the ‘signaling effects’ of the military operation and how this could be interpreted by Myanmar’s military officers, ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), and neighboring countries, including China, and further afield in some of the Western powers. Conflict stakeholders in Myanmar, such as EAOs, their supporters, and local and international allies, will calculate the direction of the winds of conflict and the strength of the conflict’s momentum to estimate how far the current movement will progress. Based on these calculations, their subsequent decisions on their involvement levels will shape the current movement’s course.

The immediate consequences of ‘Operation 1027’ demonstrate significant shortcomings in Myanmar military’s (SAC) preparedness, intelligence, battle readiness, morale, and popular support. The military finds itself overstretched across multiple fronts, rendering it fragile and vulnerable. Based on ISP-Myanmar’s findings, in the aftermath of ‘Operation 1027,’ at least eight SAC Regional Military Commands (RMC), at least four Regional Operations Commands (ROC), at least ten Light Infantry Divisions (LID) and at least nine Military Operations Commands (MOC) have been deployed to front line fighting to engage with various resistance forces groups and EAOs across 67 per cent of the country’s total area. SAC forces ▶

SCAN THIS CODE



Operation 1027:

Will All Roads Lead to Laukkai or
Naypyitaw?



ISP OnPoint No.17

SCAN THIS CODE



Operation 1027:

China's Economic Entanglement With
Anticipated and Unforeseen Risks



ISP OnPoint No.18

- ▶ have now been spread so thin to the extent that additional support can no longer be supplied to these front line forces. SAC forces seem to be cornered in every direction. In addition, at least 20,000 to 25,000 security forces must be constantly held in reserve to respond to potential urban anti-junta demonstrations and the wider anti-junta movement. To this end, the SAC needs to maintain at least 15 to 20 battalions surrounding each major city, such as Naypyitaw and Yangon.

A standard infantry battalion structure typically consists of about 55-60 officers and around 650 soldiers, resulting in a total troop size of roughly 700. However, in reality, some battalions are formed with only around 300 soldiers, while many others are formed with just 230-250 soldiers. Worse still, most battalions are formed with fewer than 170 soldiers. When infantry battalions have only around 170 soldiers, approximately 35-40 are required to remain at the base camp, meaning that the operational forces available to go to the frontline are only around 130 soldiers per battalion. The accurate number of operational combatants in a given battalion could be further reduced due to soldiers being absent due to poor health, desertion, or arrest and imprisonment. Therefore, if a battalion can send even 110 combatants to the frontline, it can be considered a strong unit.

During 'Operation 1027,' Infantry Battalion No. 129 under the Laukkai Regional Operations Command (ROC) in Kokang area, based in Yan Khaunt village in Laukkai Township, Kokang Self-Administered Zone, surrendered to the resistance forces' assault. News reports recorded that at the time, there were only 126 combatants in the battalion's base and a total of 262 people, including combatants' family members. Similarly, when Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 125 surrendered in Kone Gyan, only 93 combatants were present. Considering the case of Infantry Battalion No. 129, if the number of soldiers who either died in action, deserted, or were arrested for wrongdoings are presumed not to be listed, and assuming the number of these people to be around 40-50, then the total formation of the battalion could only be at maximum 170. Of these, we can assume 30 to 40 per cent of soldiers are made up of people in the age range of 40 to 50 or even older, making the actual number of effective soldiers closer to around a hundred.

The SAC fighting forces lie in stark contrast with the resistance forces. The majority of combatants from the Burma People's Liberation Army (BPLA), People's Liberation Army (PLA), People's Defense Force (Mandalay), and Mogoke Tactical Command (PDF), who are fighting alongside 3BHA forces in 'Operation 1027,' are in the 20 to 30 year age range with high levels of aggression and battle readiness. ▶

- ▶ In comparing numbers, a battalion of the People's Defence Force (PDF) under the command of the National Unity Government (NUG) is reportedly formed with around 200 soldiers. In addition, the junta military units have not been able to expand their reach after the coup. Instead, they have been forced to remain in their limited operation zones due to security challenges, which has left them unable to secure the necessary resources and sustenance.

Actually, the Myanmar military has been struggling to care for its personnel, allocating a significant portion of defense expenditures to heavy artillery and defense systems, which are not directly relevant to fighting a civil war within the country's own territory. The increased procurement of weapons is a lucrative business for corrupt high-ranking military officials and has also proved profitable for arms dealers. On the other hand, ordinary soldiers seem abandoned and underfed. Recent images of junta soldiers captured in the resistance operation demonstrated them as feeble, undernourished, and seemingly in ill health. Many soldiers had been assigned to the frontlines for prolonged periods since before the 2021 coup. Some had been deployed to frontline fighting in the Kachin and Rakhine areas for five to seven years without leave or the ability to visit their ▶

■ Impacts of Conflict in the 221 Townships Where Conflicts Have Erupted

Based on data collected by ISP-Myanmar, the number of townships witnessing conflict—defined as at least one armed clash that broke out in the specific area—has reached 221 townships since the coup, constituting 67 per cent of the national township total. To assess the impacts of the conflict in these areas, ISP-Myanmar employed three indexes: **the Security Index** (based on the number of clashes per township), **the Humanitarian Crisis Index** (based on the number of internally displaced people reportedly present per township), and **the Public Service Provision Index** (based on the operational status of township police offices and General Administration Department offices, the availability of basic services like electricity and water supply, and whether civil servant receive their salaries regularly or not). ISP-Myanmar presents the impacts of conflict from high to low on three indexes and lists

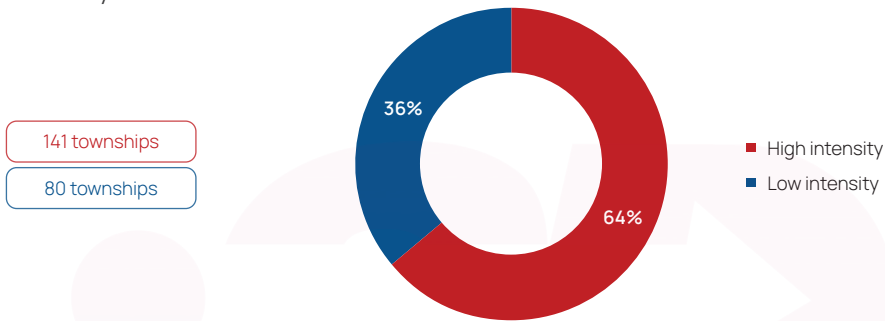
townships alphabetically in **the Appendix 1**.

According to ISP-Myanmar's analysis, the security index reveals that out of the 221 townships, 141 have experienced high intensity, while the remaining 80 exhibit low intensity. This signifies that the State Administration Council (SAC) can no longer effectively control 43 per cent of the country's territory. Moving on to the humanitarian index, 45 townships are experiencing high intensity, contrasting with 92 townships facing low intensity. Although 84 townships experienced armed conflicts, no IDPs' population were reported. Finally, the public service provision index indicates that 57 townships are undergoing high intensity, while 164 are experiencing low intensity. It is important to note that these findings are preliminary findings and will be subject to review as new data and information become available.

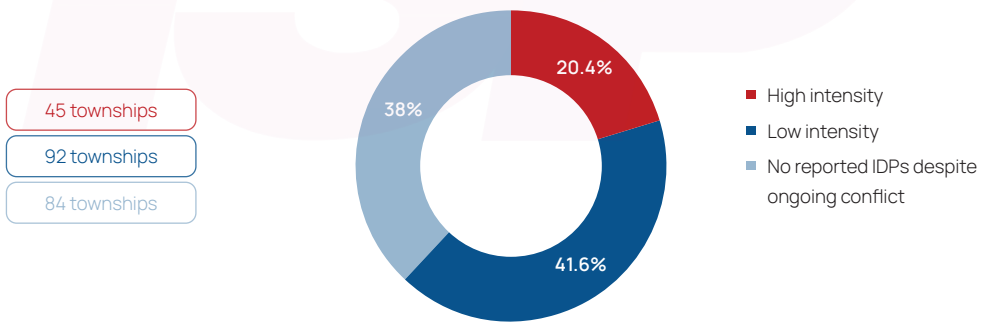
■ **Impacts of Conflict Measured Through Three Indexes in 221 Townships (Feb 1, 2021 - Nov 26, 2023)**

At least 221 townships (67 per cent of the national total) have experienced post-coup armed conflict. ISP-Myanmar has examined the impacts of conflict in each township, employing three key indexes. The preliminary analysis is outlined below. **Please refer to Appendix 1** for a detailed methodology, along with the individual indexes for each township.

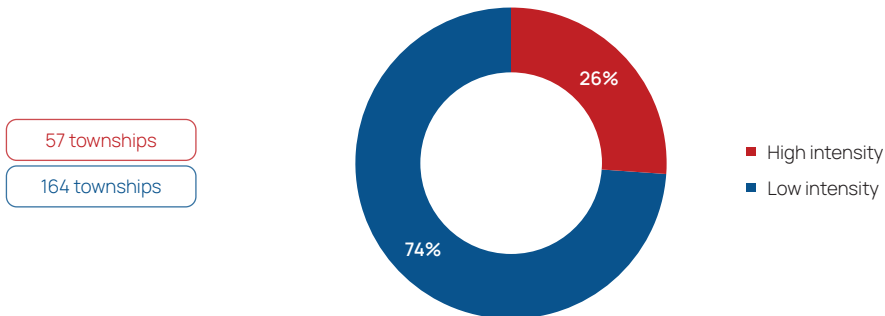
■ **Security Index**



■ **Humanitarian Crisis Index**



■ **Public Service Provision Index**



▶ families. This protracted operational deployment period has made them socially weak. In the two and a half years since the coup, military assignment for a soldier in a frontline base has become similar to serving prison-sentence since they cannot go out and meet people because of the population's antagonism towards them and other security risks as multiple armed forces are waging attrition war against them. Moreover, seeing injured fellow soldiers on the frontlines receiving neither support nor rescue must surely be a frightening experience for the combatants, weakening their morale. The consequences of this lead to distrust of their commanding officers, thus deteriorating the effective command and control within units.

As the military lacks popular support, the junta forces fail to receive intelligence information and even their own information is leaked to the resistance. Moreover, it is apparent that the junta military has failed to keep up with technological advances. In 'Operation 1027,' the resistance forces have deployed a battle tactic of attacking with multiple synchronized drones and drone-delivered explosives. Against such drone attacks, the junta units either cannot effectively use their jamming systems to defend themselves or else the 3BHA forces can bypass the junta's jamming systems. 3BHA forces have effectively deployed a shower of drone-delivered explosives, which have proven effective against the junta forces. In one example, the Division Commander of Light Infantry Division No. 99 was killed when drone-delivered explosives collapsed his bunker. The junta forces' unpreparedness in the face of this new tactic left many soldiers no alternative but to surrender to their assailants. The junta military is currently facing a critical period, compelled to reassess and modify its strategy, tactics, defense mechanisms, and responses to counter the EAOs' offensive. This requires a complete rethink of how to manage its forces in the military theatre. Essentially, the junta military is now confronting some of the most daunting operational challenges in its history. In essence, the short-term crises that the junta military have faced under 'Operation 1027' have clutched away the veil which had covered the military's competence. In the medium term, the SAC is muddling its way into a series of crises without being capable of finding a political exit.

Through careful analysis of the past, it can be observed that the Myanmar military has often attempted to handle crises by employing a dual-track strategy. This strategy involves using violent means to suppress opposition while pursuing a political offensive pathway against them. If the junta fails to strike a balance between these two tracks, it cannot defeat its opposition while also maintaining ▶

- ▶ a viable political exit strategy. By "pursuing a political offensive pathway," we refer to a political strategy or plan that, regardless of whether the opposition or international community endorses it, eventually forces or co-opts the opposition and the international community by dividing or weakening them.

For example, after the brutal crackdown against the 1988 democracy uprising, the junta allowed opposition political parties to register and paved the way for a new general election in 1990. Again, after the 2003 attacks against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's convoy in Depayin, the former junta fashioned a 'new political roadmap' in 2004, and similarly, after the suppression of the 2007 Saffron Revolution (the monk movement), the former junta enacted the 2008 State Constitution. However, unlike in the past, until now, the current junta has only deployed heavy-handed actions against first the 2021 Spring Revolution and now 'Operation 1027.' The junta, this time, has barely come up with any viable political paths to accommodate and divide the opposition. For worse, the SAC has also made the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) impotent.

It is highly unlikely that the proposed elections by the SAC will take place due to the significant security risks and logistical challenges. Moreover, the election process does not meet the minimum requirements of a free and fair election, and the SAC's election commission has made it difficult for parties to register. The general public is resentful about the recent violent crackdown and is unlikely to accept an election as a viable political solution. The main challenge for the SAC is whether to extend its term beyond January 31st, 2024, which marks the end of the junta's three-year rule. Even if the military were to disband the SAC and set up a new body to oversee elections (by making some concessions such as releasing the imprisoned opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi), this would still fall short of addressing public grievances. In the medium term, any military defeat could lead the junta to restructure the balance of power among its top leadership or adjust its proposed roadmap. None of these questions can be ruled out for now.

Regarding the 3BHA's 'Operation 1027,' in the short-term, the allied resistance group has pursued a limited military operation to reclaim Laukkai of the Kokang Self-Administered Zone as well as a general expansion of their areas of control. The 3BHA has also encouraged the entire country to mobilize to revolt against the junta's military rule, which can be viewed as a tactical move in order to push the junta military forces to engage across multiple fronts and to reduce the ability to concentrate troops for any counter-offensive. However, this cannot be ▶

- ▶ interpreted as engaging in a full-scale civil war with the objective of pushing for a complete victory against the junta.

One development worth observing is whether the weaponry and ammunition seized by the 3BHA since the beginning of 'Operation 1027' could be used to assault not only Laukkai and Hesni but also the junta's North-eastern Military Command based in Lashio. Among the seized weaponry, the most destructive artillery pieces include the Israeli-made Soltam Systems M-71 155mm howitzer, the Soviet-made 122mm howitzer D-30 (GRAU index 2A18), Swedish-made Carl Gustaf 84mm recoilless rifles and US-made 75mm recoilless rifles. Similarly, captured 60mm, 81mm, and 120mm motor shells can be redeployed as drone-delivered explosives. 122mm and 105/130mm howitzers have a capacity for long-distance reach. According to reported photos, 3BHA forces have seized around 30 M20 75mm and Browning .50 calibre BMG machine guns, which are well-suited for use against Mi 17/35 attack helicopters. Notably, the resistance forces have also seized many anti-tank weapons, such as 81 mm mortars that are manufactured by the Myanmar military, as well as thousands of shells of ammunition.

Even if the war does not extend to a total war to remove the junta from power, 'Operation 1027' could still tip the balance of power in favor of the Northern Alliance in the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC). 3BHA forces have now come to presume that they can enjoy an equal military footing, at least with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), and 'Operation 1027' will continue to weaken the control of other Shan EAOs over territory, power, and economic influence. This could lead to the expansion of the control area of 3BHA, increase their revenues by administering tax collection from border trade, and give them greater political influence, like princelings, at the expense of more seasoned EAOs in Kachin, Wa, and Shan.

It could be expected that the Karenni, Chin, Karen, and Kachin EAOs have joined the conflict in order to expand their control areas and seize new townships, strategic border gates, and trade routes. At the same time, the respective EAOs would likely be considering some defence mechanisms to prevent other armed forces from encroaching into their control areas. We are likely to see ceasefire agreements or cooperation agreements among different armed groups in Shan State, similar to the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP) ending hostilities and entering into cooperation agreements with each other or with other EAOs for regrouping and other alliance- ▶

- ▶ formations. Some radical groups, particularly among urban Bamar youth, who emerged during the 'Spring Revolution', have been politically active alongside the 'Operation 1027' fighting and have vowed for a three-stage objective: (1) Support EAOs to reclaim and liberate their respective lands, (2) Build a new coming-together federal union from these lands, with each having equal status, and (3) In the case of individual ethnic groups not wanting to join the new union, allow for them to choose formal secession instead.

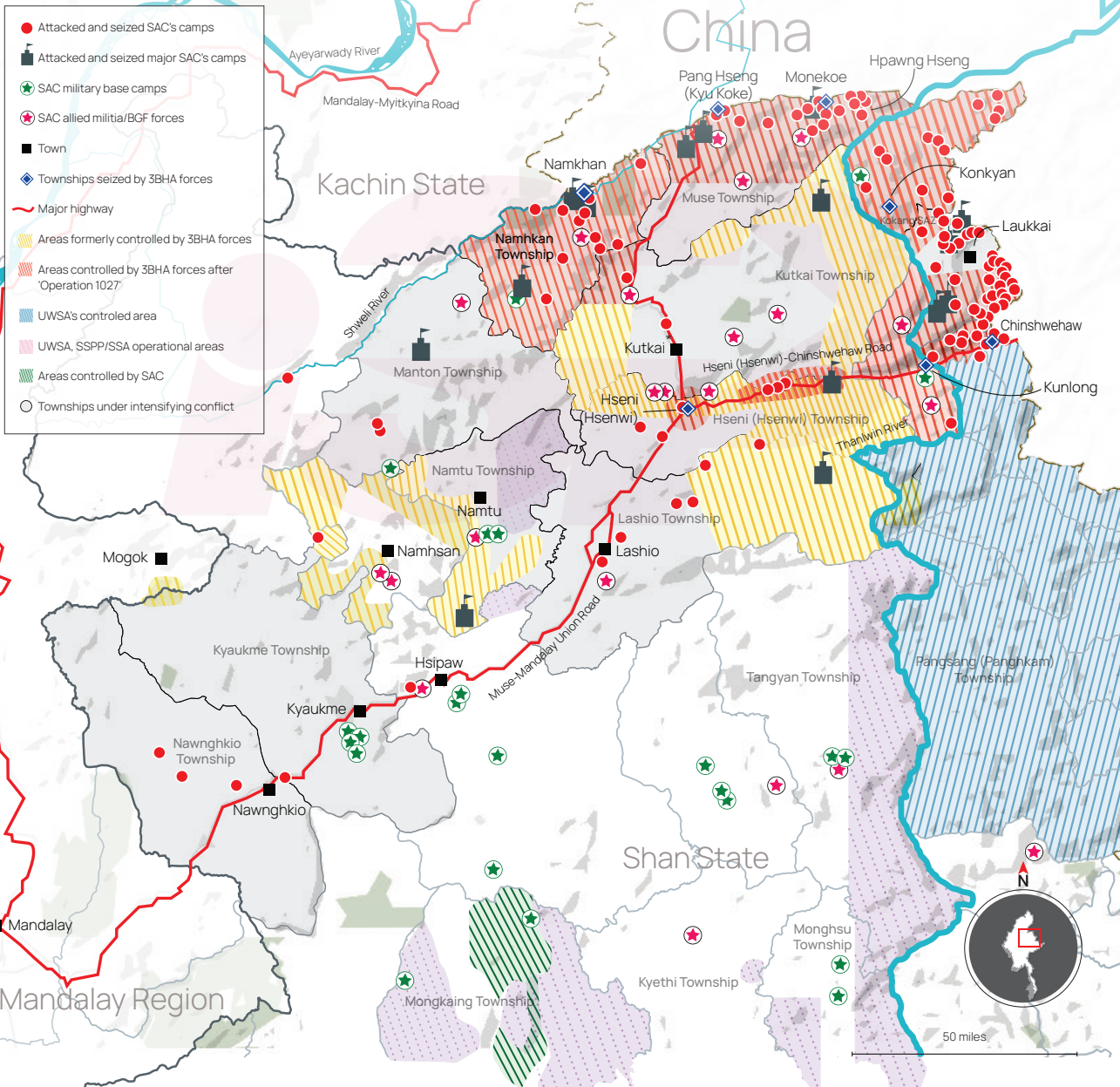
The participation of these radical groups alongside 'Operation 1027' has at least lent support to the military operational level as well as the mobilization of the political legitimacy narrative and the wider moral energy of the resistance movement. So far, these radical groups seem to be playing as supporting actors in terms of 'Operation 1027's' strategy, military objectives, and political goals. Nevertheless, the political legitimacy and moral support they bring are crucial for the 3BHA. Without the connection to the Spring Revolution, the public may perceive the 3BHA as merely aiming to regain territory or expand their areas of control. In such a case, the EAOs would still receive support from their respective minority ethnic populations but find it challenging to gain nationwide support, which they currently enjoy. From the international community's standpoint, these EAOs could be seen as pursuing secessionism or irredentism, making it difficult to support them. As it stands, the interests of the 3BHA leadership and Bamar radical groups may align in both the short and medium terms around the outcomes of 'Operation 1027.'

In order for radical groups to successfully launch the revolutionary overthrow of the military junta and to win an all-out civil war, at least two or all three of the following conditions must be met: (1) The top military leadership must experience an elite split, a counter-coup, or a critical defection of forces within the military; (2) Major EAOs must form a strategic military alliance to continue fighting against the junta regime; (3) A foreign country or agency must exert effective coercive intervention against the military.

Even if a revolutionary overthrow were to happen by good fortune, the conflict actors would hardly be likely to secure a successful revolutionary transformation. History has shown us that revolutions in Russia, China, Cuba, Iran, post-Soviet states, and the Arab Spring often led to backsliding or were unable to drive social transformation. Myanmar faces an even more challenging task due to its multiple competing armed groups, high levels of poverty, and lack of positive experience in modern nation-building.

■ Laukkai the Last Target for Seizure (Oct 27, 2023 - Nov 28, 2023)

On October 27, 2023, the three Brotherhood Alliance (3BHA) and its allied forces launched the 'Operation 1027', and successfully captured Hseni town, and four border towns including Chinshwehaw. In addition, they have taken control of four border gates at Chinshwehaw, Monekoe, Pangsang, and Kyinsankyawt. By November 28, the allied forces had seized a total of 179 strategically vital military positions, base stations, and frontline posts, along with at least seven police stations. Following the surrender of Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 125 under the North-eastern Military Command, the allied forces triumphantly seized the heavily fortified largest military base and other positions in Konkyan township, which included a helicopter field. Currently, only Laukkai, where MNDAA set their sight for their operation, is left to be seized.

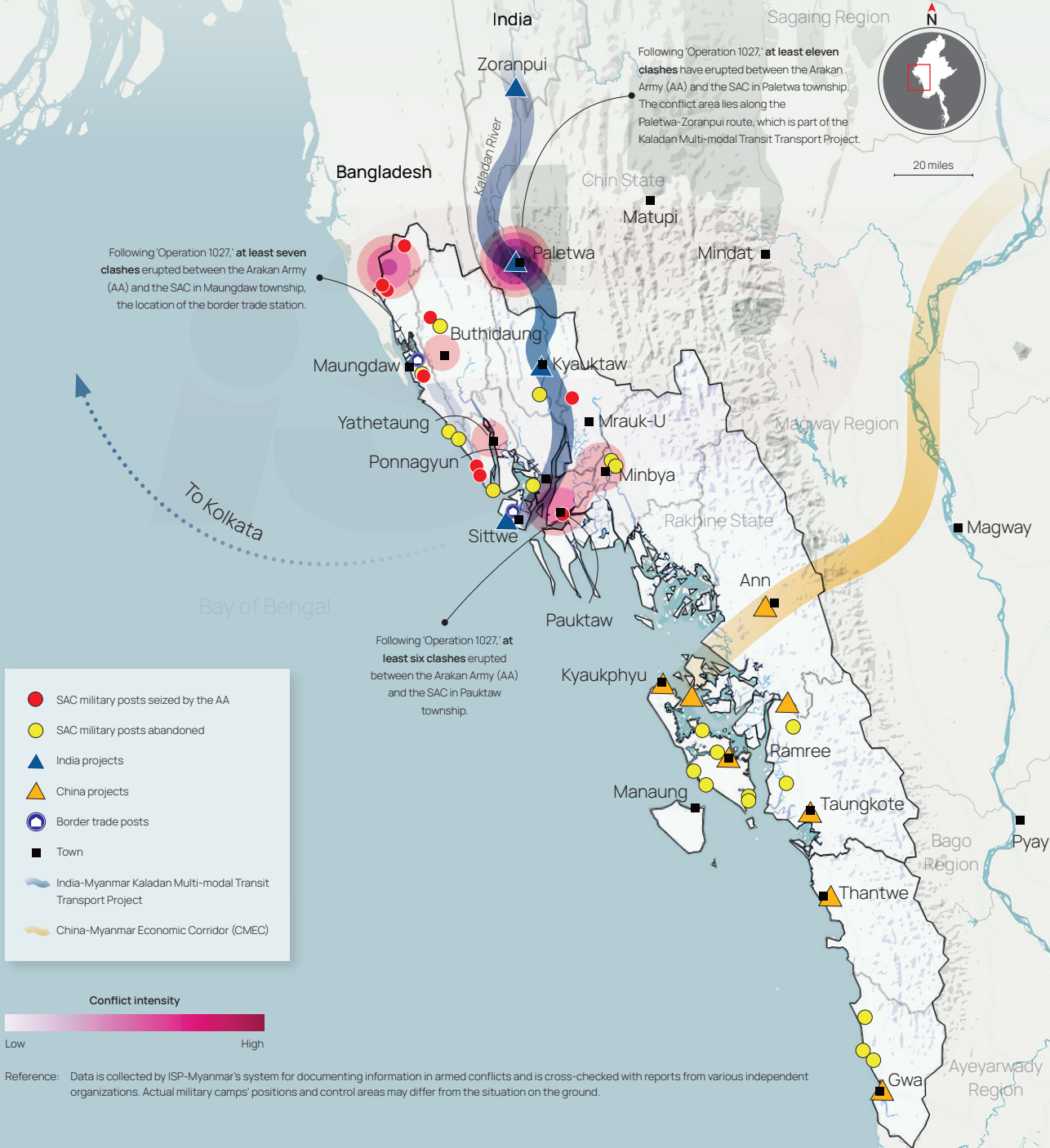


References: Data is collected by ISP-Myanmar's system for documenting information in armed conflicts and is cross-checked with reports from various independent organizations. Actual military camps' positions and control areas may differ from the situation on the ground.

More Conflict Near the Kaladan Transport Project

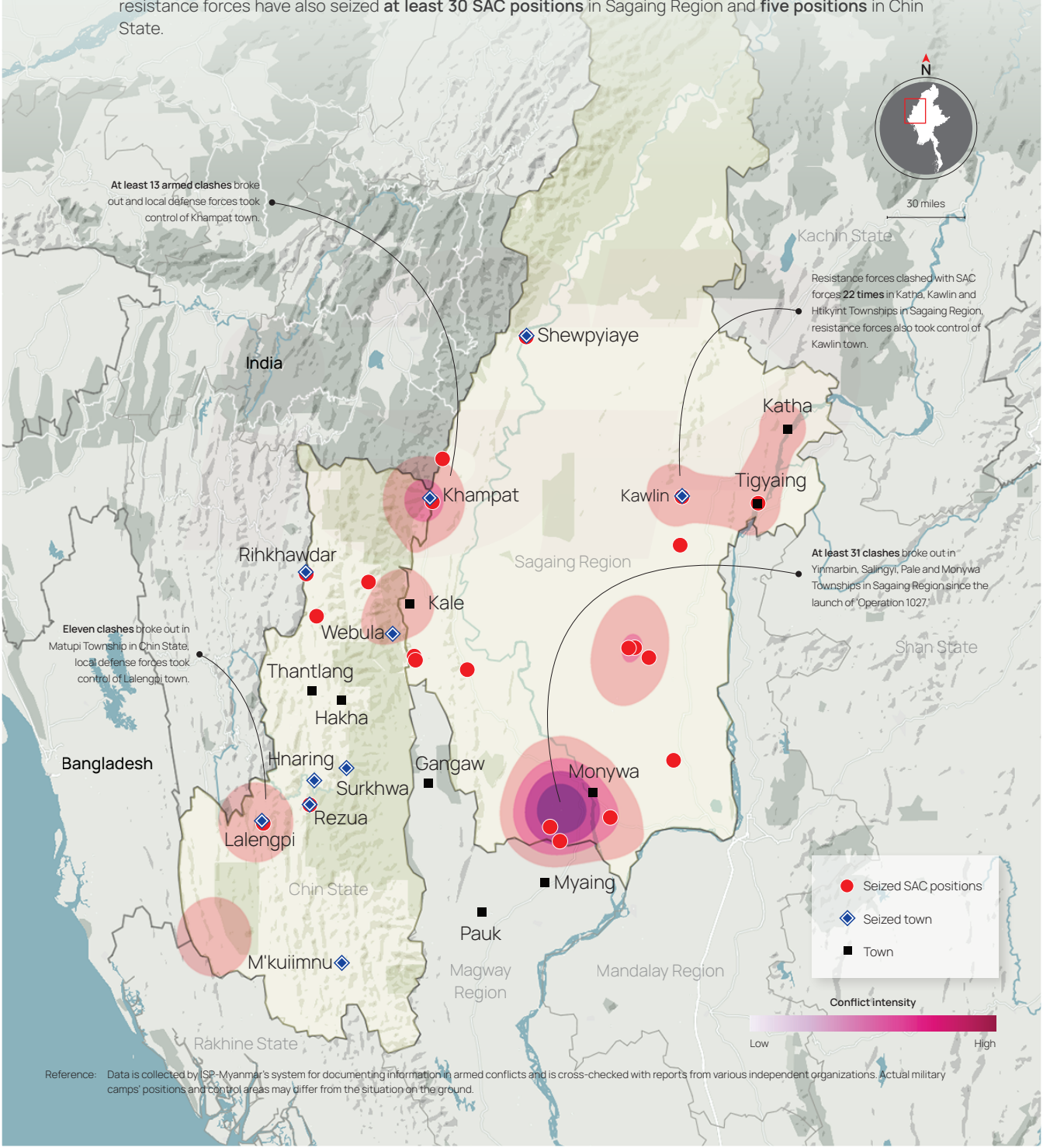
(Oct 27, 2023 - Nov 28, 2023)

Following 'Operation 1027,' clashes have resumed in Rakhine State, where the Arakan Army (AA) has seized control of **at least 46** SAC military outposts. Significantly, **nearly 40** of these SAC outposts were secured by the AA following SAC forces' withdrawal from their positions. It is worth noting that while clashes have erupted in northern Rakhine State including along the route of the India-invested Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project, no direct outpost seizures have been witnessed in southern Rakhine State, a key area for the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) project, but only SAC forces withdrew from their positions.



■ Resistance Forces Control Ten Towns in Chin and Sagaing (Oct 27, 2023 - Nov 28, 2023)

Since the launch of 'Operation 1027,' at least 28 clashes have broken out between local defense forces and SAC forces in Chin State, where joint resistance forces now control at least seven towns. In Sagaing Region, at least 119 violent incidents have occurred, and joint resistance forces have seized three towns. Joint resistance forces have also seized at least 30 SAC positions in Sagaing Region and five positions in Chin State.

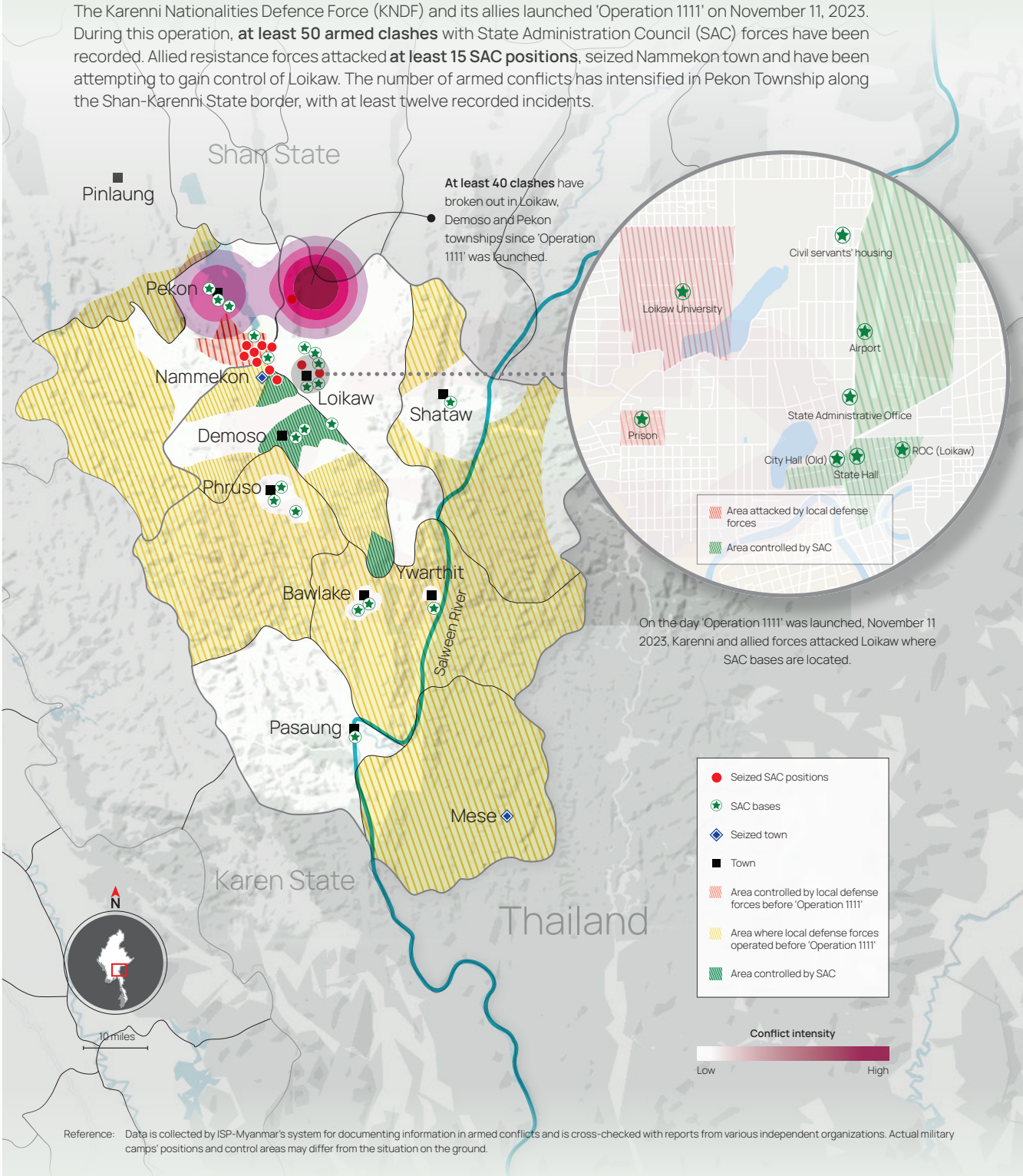


Reference: Data is collected by ISP Myanmar's system for documenting information in armed conflicts and is cross-checked with reports from various independent organizations. Actual military camps' positions and control areas may differ from the situation on the ground.

■ Karenni Defense Forces Attempting to Seize Loikaw

(Nov 11, 2023 - Nov 28, 2023)

The Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF) and its allies launched 'Operation 1111' on November 11, 2023. During this operation, **at least 50 armed clashes** with State Administration Council (SAC) forces have been recorded. Allied resistance forces attacked **at least 15 SAC positions**, seized Nammekon town and have been attempting to gain control of Loikaw. The number of armed conflicts has intensified in Pekon Township along the Shan-Karenni State border, with at least twelve recorded incidents.



Reference: Data is collected by ISP-Myanmar's system for documenting information in armed conflicts and is cross-checked with reports from various independent organizations. Actual military camps' positions and control areas may differ from the situation on the ground.

One significant theme in 'Operation 1027' is the 'Homecoming of Kokang Brothers' rhetoric. The word 'home' can refer to the place of one's birth or childhood, a place of cherished memories, or the sentimental home of one's mother. In such cases, there is little room for problems. However, when 'home' is interpreted based on ethnicity or race, or when 'our home' is exclusively defined as a nationalistic concept of home, then 'homecoming' can become problematic and politically inflammatory. For example, if a resident of Kutkai town wishes to return to their childhood home, it is a lovely idea. But if Kutkai is designated as the home of one particular ethnic group, it could spark tribalistic conflicts since several ethnic nationalities, such as Palaung, Shan, and Kachin, might be residing in the same township and claiming an exclusive sense of belonging and ownership. If the concept of home is defined by ethnicity, such rhetoric could lead to discrimination and conflict over who is the homeowner (the host) and who is the guest. The hospitality of a homeowner is presumed to be conditional, and problems could arise over perspectives such as 'the guest should not insult the homeowner' or 'the guest shall not assume a dominant position.' This perspective is parallel to the ultra-religious and nationalist group '*Ma-Ba-Tha*' since the group has advocated for discriminating between 'Buddhist homeowners' and 'all other guests.' Therefore, even the first step of the Three Stage objective formulated by the radical Bamar youth groups, reclaiming their 'own' land, is easier said than done.

Observing public statements made by the leadership of 3BHA forces, their political objectives are unclear. In an open letter to the public dated October 27, despite mentioning the objectives of 'striving relentlessly to eradicate the oppressive military dictatorship, to pursue national equality, and to construct a new peaceful and prosperous federal democratic Union,' none of the constituent 3BHA forces subscribe the 'Federal Democracy Charter' adopted in collaboration with the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) and some EAOs, such as Karen, Karenni, and Chin. The October 27 open letter clearly defined the political situation as 'our country turns out to be a government-less nation since the military coup.' The 3BHA joint public statements for 'Operation 1027' did not use the term 'federal democracy.' The lack of use of the term is quite significant. Since the National League for Democracy (NLD) won the general election in 2015 to a time before the coup in 2021, the 3BHA's joint statement regarding government did use terms such as "to successfully establish a federal democratic country". This likely means that their political goals have changed. Instead, their 'Operation 1027' statement read "to protect the people's livelihood, to self-defense, to ▶

- ▶ control more of their region, to prevent airstrikes and heavy attacks by the SAC on our groups day and night, and to eradicate the military junta regime.” This agrees with the Arakan Army (AA)’s openly stated aspiration for confederation status in Myanmar. The 3BHA approach can be read as demonstrating a pragmatic political culture, one rather dissimilar to the approach of the NUCC. This may be because the 3BHA wants to avoid over-politicized and under-strategized plans.

■ Scenario Forecast

If the Operation 1027, which is conducted by the allied forces, is successful in occupying a satisfactory number of territories, expanding their sphere of influence, and controlling economically significant areas and transport routes, then the operation’s momentum could rapidly slow or even come to a halt. If the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and Kachin Independence Army (KIA) were to actively collaborate with the 3BHA operation, unless they pursued their own military or political objectives, the combined resistance could lead to an all-out (a total) civil war. Therefore, it is crucial to closely monitor how larger armed groups, such as the UWSA and KIA, decide to act, as it demonstrates one of the most important ‘signaling effects’ of the armed resistance. If the 3BHA and other major Ethnic Armed Organisations engage in the conflict with limited objectives, even if restrained or entered a truce due to various reasons, including pressure from China, they can still support the People’s Defense Forces (PDF) and Local Defense Forces (LDF) under their sphere of influence. This support could strengthen a strategy to wear down and weaken the junta military. Finally, in the event that ‘Operation 1027’ does not lead to an all-out (a total) civil war, the outcomes of the operation could lead to a ‘protracted war.’ In such a scenario, other resistance forces could seize the opportunity and momentum, intensifying pressure on the junta’s military forces, weakening junta military control over certain areas, and ultimately shrinking the total amount of territory under junta control.

According to data collected by ISP-Myanmar, armed conflicts have taken place in 221 out of 330 townships in Myanmar, which amounts to 67 per cent of the country. The data was collected two months before the third anniversary of the military coup. ISP-Myanmar has developed three indexes to measure the impacts of conflicts in the affected townships. The three indexes are the Security Index, which measures the number of clashes per township, the Humanitarian Crisis Index, which measures the number of internally displaced people per township, ▶

- ▶ and the Public Service Provision Index, which measures whether the township police offices and General Administration Office offices are open, whether basic service provisions such as electricity and water supply are available, and whether bureaucratic personnel still receive salaries.

Of the 221 townships defined as in conflict, 141 can be categorized as having a high-security index, while 80 townships scored low on the Security Index. In terms of the Humanitarian Crisis Index, 45 townships scored highly while 92 townships were classified as low intensity. There are 84 townships where fighting occurred, but no new internally displaced persons (IDPs) were reported. The Public Service Provision Index reports that 57 townships were severely impacted, while 164 townships had lower levels of impact on public service provision. According to the Security Index, the junta military has lost effective control of 43 per cent of Myanmar's territory. **(See Appendix No. 1 for ISP Myanmar's index data.)**

The current military situation may lead to diminished control areas for the junta. Although the junta military can still strategically abandon remote bases, consolidate forces in core areas, and even engage in a counter-offensive, it is unlikely to recover the popular support it needs. Moreover, the crisis and multiple shortages facing the economy can no longer be disguised. The humanitarian crisis could also deteriorate even further. During the 'Operation 1027' period, over 300,000 people were forced to leave their homes, and the total number of IDPs created by the fighting since the military coup has now exceeded four million.

In this context, it is crucial to shape a new political imagination, to build a new inclusive political home, like the "land of the free and home of the brave". Practical commitments and guarantees from the major resistance forces are needed to determine the future configuration of the new nation-state. Without such aspirations and agreements, the situation could spiral out of control, allowing more radical groups to achieve their goals. The radical resistance group's ideal aspiration is (1) supporting EAOs in reclaiming and liberating their respective lands, (2) building a new coming-together federal union from these lands with equal status for each, and (3) allowing individual EAOs to choose formal secession if they do not want to join the new union. However, the current military situation favors each of the individual resistance forces acting alone, which could lead to skipping the Stage-2, which is 'coming-together federal union-building', and directly lead to Stage-3, which is 'fragmentation', if each group takes advantage of the circumstances favorable to themselves.

Armed groups, especially the EAOs, tend to favor members who are loyal to their own group based on ethnicity, race, or political affiliation. This preference can lead to the creation of small states or quasi-states in local areas, where the group controls the centralization of power. These mini-states then would exercise territorial control, demand loyalty from rival armed groups, establish administrative mechanisms to manage tax collection systems, provide basic services in a preferential or discriminatory manner based on ethnic, regional, and political affiliations, and promote ethnocentric identity discourses. In such a scenario, political power in Myanmar could be diffused among many competing principalities, or 'mandala political model'. The discourse surrounding such a scenario is different from the concept of 'local governance' imagined by international humanitarian agencies and NGOs. Rather than local governance within a wider state, this would merely be mini-state or quasi-state building in a fragmentation scenario.

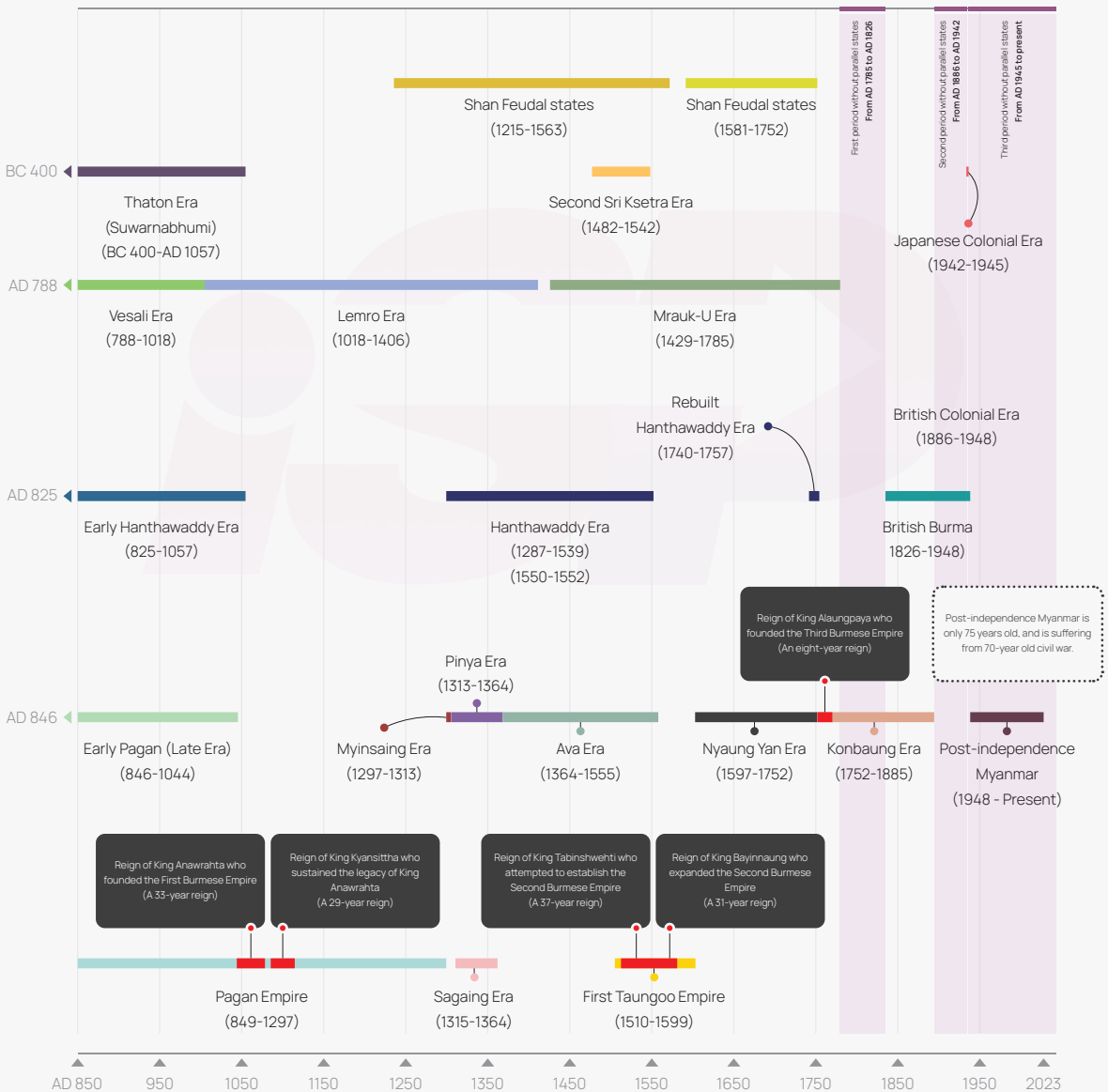
The study of Myanmar's history reveals a pattern of rising and falling powers. From the decline of the Pagan Empire to the rise of the Taungoo Dynasty, from the fall of Taungoo to the emergence of the Konbaung Empire and then the fall of Konbaung, the history was marked with division and the emergence of competing principalities, known as 'mandala political model.' Much of the country's history involved small competing kingdoms, political crises, and political declines and collapses. Throughout, the feudal and ruling elites' legitimacy has never been based on modern nationalism, and the relationship between the rulers and the ruled was simply that of patron-client relations. However, in the present context, the concept of 'home' is now seen through an exclusive nationalistic lens. This has led to the extension of control by powerful armed groups, driven by their respective exclusionary nationalistic objectives in a multiethnic polity, which has the potential to ignite tribal conflicts. Similar to the ongoing grievances of minority ethnic groups resisting Burmanization within a union with the majority Bamar polity, numerous regions in Myanmar might witness similar tensions. Various armed groups who are or become dominant in a region and who do not necessarily constitute a majority in those areas could spark similar conflicts.

Thus far, it seems that some local and international supporters, who are still enamored with conflict, agree with Edward N. Luttwak's famous words 'Give War a Chance'¹. Many portray 'the illusion of hell' as 'divine rewards' and so let them. ▶

¹Luttwak, Edward N. (Jul-Aug 1999). Give War a Chance. Foreign Affairs, Vol. 78, No. 4. pp. 36-44. Council on Foreign Relations.

■ Mandala Political Model from the Pagan Dynasty to the Present

This figure displays the existence of rival states from the Pagan Dynasty to the present, encompassing the internationally recognized territory of contemporary Myanmar. Over the past 1,200 years, three dynasties have established empires or pre-nation states within this geographical expanse. The history unfolds with the rise and fall of Pagan Empire followed by the rise and fall of the Taunggoo Empire, the ascendancy of the Konbaung Empire, and then, the eventual fall of the Konbaung leading to the British colonial rule. Even during intermittent periods (ranging from eight to a maximum of 68 years) when these empires thrived, mandala political model persisted, engaged in power struggles. Therefore, Myanmar's history was filled with collapses and consistent crises, reflecting the persistent competition of power among the rival states.



Reference: This graphic is a condensed summary derived from existing historical records and texts by Myanmar historians. Interpretations of historical events and terms may vary among historians due to different perspectives and considerations. This depicts dynasties, empires and small states which emerged within the territory of contemporary Myanmar, and some might be left out.

► Instead of imposing untimely solutions, the effective approach should focus on:

- (1) Providing **humanitarian aid** and protecting civilians to mitigate the adverse effects of conflict from a conflict mitigation perspective.
- (2) Encouraging **interdependent community building** that can prevent tribalistic conflicts from arising due to ethnic-based mini-state or quasi-state building and the formation of ethnic enclaves. Then allow the resulting vibrant civil society to at least provide basic public goods to needy populations.
- (3) Establishing **communication channels and coordination** among the conflict parties. If the time ripens for international mediation, these could serve as an effective base for negotiations.

One possible glimmer of hope lies in the potential development of solidarity among various armed groups, including EAOs from different regions and comrades-in-arms who have come together to fight a common enemy. Through cooperation and sharing knowledge, they may be able to establish mutual trust. For example, Bamar civilian groups donated 500 million Kyats to the MNDA during the conflict, which would likely encourage goodwill and foster confidence among the Kokang population. Similarly, some resistance groups have adjusted their policies to gain local support and recognition from the international community. For example, the Arakan Army (AA) has started using the word 'Rohingya' and softened its policies to a more pragmatic level. If these practices are integrated into the state-building process, it could lead to a positive development of political socialization. This could help to build a political culture that is more sensitive to norms and principles. Yet the process of political sensitization of norms and principles is rather weak and slow-paced when compared with the potential for mini-state or quasi-state building, or the trend towards militarization. It is crucial to curb the glorification of military might and the deterministic pursuit of military victory in all aspects.

As previously suggested, our current focus as local and international communities should be on mitigating the severe consequences of armed conflict, promoting interdependent community building, and raising awareness of political norms and values. This includes developing civilian-led local governance, safeguarding freedom of speech and press, opposing any laws or regulations that promote ►

- ▶ discrimination or social conflicts, and ensuring the protection of women and children's rights. Additionally, we must avoid over-extracting natural resources, as it can have detrimental effects on the natural ecosystem.

As mentioned earlier, both Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) and revolutionary forces share the desire to bring about positive change and develop better systems. Soldiers could engage in endogenous political learning, which involves learning from each other. Likewise, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), media, academics, international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), foreign governments, and support groups could enhance the knowledge and practice of exogenous political learning by collaborating with EAOs and revolutionary forces. This approach, in Daniel Ritter's words, would create an 'iron cage'² of international norms around the conflict actors.

At the same time, we must be cautious against the deceptive optimistic views of liberals and radicals who believe that "all good things go together." In the realities of a complex political world, which is often characterized by naked power and vested interests silencing the norms and values, such an optimistic scenario could hardly be realized. The warning bell from 'Operation 1027' rings loud and clear that Myanmar needs a new political imagination that aspires toward an all-inclusive state. It also needs a new political roadmap consisting of pragmatic steps through which conflict forces can strategically progress sequentially. ■

²Ritter, Daniel. P. (2014). *The iron cage of liberalism: international politics and unarmed revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

■ Impacts of Conflict in the 221 Townships Where Conflicts Have Erupted

Based on data collected by ISP-Myanmar, the number of townships witnessing conflict—defined as at least one armed clash that broke out in the specific area—has reached 221 townships since the coup, constituting 67 per cent of the national township total. To assess the impacts of the conflict in these areas, ISP-Myanmar employed three indexes: **the Security Index** (based on the number of clashes per township), **the Humanitarian Crisis Index** (based on the number of internally displaced people reportedly present per township), and **the Public Service Provision Index** (based on the operational status of township police offices and General Administration Department offices, the availability of basic services like electricity and water supply, and whether civil servant receive their salaries regularly or not). ISP-Myanmar presents the impacts of conflict from high to low on three indexes and lists townships alphabetically below.

■ High intensity ■ Low intensity ■ No reported IDPs despite clashes

Sr No.	Townships	Security Index	Humanitarian Crisis Index	Public Service Provision Index
1	Amarapura	Low	None	Low
2	Aungmyaythazan	Low	None	Low
3	Ayadaw	High	Low	Low
4	Bago	Low	High	Low
5	Banmauk	Low	Low	Low
6	Bawlake	High	High	High
7	Bhamo	High	None	Low
8	Bilin	High	Low	Low
9	Bogale	High	None	Low
10	Bokpyin	High	Low	Low
11	Budalin	High	Low	Low

Sr No.	Townships	Security Index	Humanitarian Crisis Index	Public Service Provision Index
12	Buthidaung	High	Low	High
13	Chanayethazan	Low	None	Low
14	Chanmyathazi	Low	None	Low
15	Chauk	High	None	Low
16	Chaung-U	High	Low	Low
17	Dagon Myothit (East)	Low	None	Low
18	Dagon Myothit (North)	Low	None	Low
19	Dagon Myothit (Seikkan)	Low	None	Low
20	Dawbon	Low	None	Low
21	Dawei	High	Low	Low
22	Demoso	High	High	High
23	Falam	Low	High	Low
24	Gangaw	High	High	Low
25	Gyobingauk	Low	None	Low
26	Hakha	Low	High	Low
27	Hkamti	Low	None	Low
28	Hlaingtharya	Low	None	Low
29	Homalin	High	Low	Low
30	Hopang	High	None	High
31	Hopong	Low	Low	Low

Sr No.	Townships	Security Index	Humanitarian Crisis Index	Public Service Provision Index
32	Hpa-An	Low	None	Low
33	Hpakant	High	Low	Low
34	Hpapun	High	High	High
35	Hpasawng	High	Low	High
36	Hpruso	High	High	High
37	Hseni (Hsenwi)	High	Low	High
38	Hsihseng	High	Low	Low
39	Hsipaw	High	Low	Low
40	Htantabin	Low	None	Low
41	Indaw	High	Low	High
42	Injyangyang	Low	Low	High
43	Kalaw	Low	None	Low
44	Kale	High	High	Low
45	Kalewa	High	None	High
46	Kamma	Low	None	High
47	Kanbalu	High	High	Low
48	Kani	High	High	Low
49	Kanpetlet	Low	High	High
50	Katha	High	Low	High
51	Kawhmu	Low	None	Low

Sr No.	Townships	Security Index	Humanitarian Crisis Index	Public Service Provision Index
52	Kawkareik	High	High	High
53	Kawlin	High	High	High
54	Kawthoung	Low	Low	Low
55	Kayan	Low	None	Low
56	Khin-U	High	High	Low
57	Konkyan	High	None	High
58	Kungyangon	Low	None	Low
59	Kunlong	High	Low	High
60	Kutkai	High	Low	Low
61	Kyaikmaraw	High	Low	Low
62	Kyaikto	High	Low	Low
63	Kyainseikgyi	High	Low	High
64	Kyangin	Low	None	Low
65	Kyaukkyi	High	High	Low
66	Kyaukme	Low	Low	High
67	Kyaukphyu	High	None	Low
68	Kyaukse	Low	None	Low
69	Kyauktaga	High	Low	Low
70	Kyauktaw	Low	None	High
71	Kyethi	Low	Low	Low

Sr No.	Townships	Security Index	Humanitarian Crisis Index	Public Service Provision Index
72	Kyonpyaw	Low	Low	Low
73	Kyunhla	Low	High	High
74	Kyunsu	High	Low	Low
75	Labutta	High	None	Low
76	Laihka	High	Low	Low
77	Lashio	High	Low	Low
78	Laukkai	High	High	High
79	Launglon	High	Low	Low
80	Lawksawk	Low	Low	Low
81	Letpadan	High	None	Low
82	Loikaw	High	High	High
83	Loilen	Low	Low	Low
84	Mabein	High	Low	High
85	Madaya	High	Low	Low
86	Magway	Low	None	Low
87	Mahaaungmyay	Low	None	Low
88	Mahlaing	High	None	Low
89	Mansi	High	Low	Low
90	Manton	High	None	High
91	Matupi	High	Low	Low

Sr No.	Townships	Security Index	Humanitarian Crisis Index	Public Service Provision Index
92	Maubin	Low	None	Low
93	Maungdaw	Low	Low	Low
94	Mawkmai	High	None	Low
95	Mawlaik	High	Low	Low
96	Mawlamyine	Low	None	Low
97	Mayangone	Low	None	Low
98	Meiktila	Low	None	Low
99	Mese	High	High	High
100	Minbya	High	Low	High
101	Mindat	Low	High	High
102	Mindon	High	None	Low
103	Mingin	Low	High	Low
104	Minhla	High	Low	Low
105	Mogaung	Low	None	Low
106	Mogoke	High	None	Low
107	Mohnyin	Low	Low	Low
108	Momauk	Low	Low	Low
109	Mongkai	Low	Low	Low
110	Mongmit	High	Low	Low
111	Mongton	Low	Low	Low

Sr No.	Townships	Security Index	Humanitarian Crisis Index	Public Service Provision Index
112	Mongyang	High	None	Low
113	Monywa	High	Low	Low
114	Mrauk-U	Low	Low	High
115	Muse	High	High	Low
116	Myaing	High	High	High
117	Myaung	High	High	Low
118	Myaungmya	High	None	Low
119	Myawaddy	High	High	Low
120	Myebon	Low	None	Low
121	Myeik	High	Low	Low
122	Myingyan	High	Low	Low
123	Myinmu	High	High	High
124	Myitkyina	Low	None	Low
125	Myothit	Low	None	Low
126	Namhkan	High	Low	High
127	Namtu	Low	Low	Low
128	Nansang	Low	Low	Low
129	Natmauk	Low	Low	Low
130	Natogyi	High	None	Low
131	Nattalin	High	Low	Low

Sr No.	Townships	Security Index	Humanitarian Crisis Index	Public Service Provision Index
132	Nawngkhio	High	Low	Low
133	Ngape	Low	Low	Low
134	Ngazun	High	Low	Low
135	North Okkalapa	Low	None	Low
136	Nyaung-U	High	None	Low
137	Nyaunglebin	Low	Low	Low
138	Nyaungshwe	High	Low	Low
139	Oktwin	Low	None	Low
140	Pabedan	Low	None	Low
141	Pakokku	High	Low	Low
142	Palaw	High	Low	Low
143	Pale	High	High	High
144	Paletwa	High	Low	Low
145	Pathein	Low	None	Low
146	Patheingyi	High	None	Low
147	Pauk	High	High	High
148	Pauktaw	High	High	High
149	Paung	Low	None	Low
150	Paungbyin	High	Low	Low
151	Paungde	High	Low	Low

Sr No.	Townships	Security Index	Humanitarian Crisis Index	Public Service Provision Index
152	Pekon	High	High	High
153	Phyu	High	Low	Low
154	Pindaya	Low	None	Low
155	Pinlaung	High	Low	Low
156	Pinlebu	High	Low	High
157	Putta-O	Low	Low	High
158	Pwintbyu	Low	None	High
159	Pyawbwe	High	None	Low
160	Pyay	High	None	Low
161	Pyigyitagon	Low	None	Low
162	Pyinmana	Low	None	Low
163	Pyinoolwin	Low	None	Low
164	Rathedaung	High	Low	High
165	Sagaing	High	Low	High
166	Salin	High	Low	Low
167	Salingyi	High	High	High
168	Saw	High	Low	High
169	Seikphyu	High	Low	Low
170	Shadaw	High	High	High
171	Shwebo	High	High	Low

Sr No.	Townships	Security Index	Humanitarian Crisis Index	Public Service Provision Index
172	Shwedaung	Low	None	Low
173	Shwegu	High	Low	Low
174	Shwegyin	High	High	Low
175	Sidoktaya	High	Low	Low
176	Singu	High	Low	Low
177	Sintgaing	High	None	Low
178	Sumprabum	High	None	High
179	Tabayin	High	High	High
180	Tachileik	High	None	High
181	Tada-U	Low	None	Low
182	Taikkyi	Low	None	Low
183	Tamu	High	Low	Low
184	Tanai	Low	Low	Low
185	Tangyan	High	Low	Low
186	Tanintharyi	High	High	Low
187	Tatkon	High	None	Low
188	Taungoo	Low	Low	Low
189	Taungtha	High	None	Low
190	Taze	High	High	High
191	Tedim	Low	Low	Low

Sr No.	Townships	Security Index	Humanitarian Crisis Index	Public Service Provision Index
192	Thabeikkyin	High	Low	Low
193	Thaketa	Low	None	Low
194	Thanatpin	High	None	Low
195	Thanbyuzayat	High	Low	Low
196	Thandaunggyi	High	Low	High
197	Thantlang	High	High	High
198	Thaton	Low	Low	High
199	Thayarwady	High	None	High
200	Thayet	High	None	High
201	Thayetchaung	High	Low	Low
202	Thazi	High	None	Low
203	Thongwa	Low	None	Low
204	Tigyaing	High	High	High
205	Tilin	Low	Low	Low
206	Tonzang	High	None	Low
207	Tsawlaw	Low	None	High
208	Twantay	High	None	Low
209	Waingmaw	High	Low	Low
210	Waw	High	None	Low
211	Wetlet	High	High	Low

Sr No.	Townships	Security Index	Humanitarian Crisis Index	Public Service Provision Index
212	Wuntho	High	High	Low
213	Yamethin	High	None	Low
214	Ye	High	None	Low
215	Ye-U	High	High	Low
216	Yebyu	High	Low	Low
217	Yedashe	High	Low	Low
218	Yenangyaung	High	None	Low
219	Yesagyo	High	High	Low
220	Yinmarbin	High	High	High
221	Ywangan	High	None	Low

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Operation 1027:

Will All Roads Lead to Laukkai or
Naypyitaw?



ISP OnPoint No.17

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Operation 1027:

China's Economic Entanglement With
Anticipated and Unforeseen Risks



ISP OnPoint No.18

Index Selection Methodology

Based on data collected by ISP-Myanmar using the Armed Conflict Data Collecting System (ACDCS), the number of townships witnessing conflict—defined as at least one armed clash—has reached 221 since the coup, constituting 67 per cent of the national township total. ISP-Myanmar conducted a study to assess the impacts of conflict in these areas by utilizing three key indexes. The index selection methodology is as follows.

1. **Security Index** is defined as the number of clashes where mutual fighting occurred between two groups in each township. The classification into 'high intensity' and 'low intensity' is determined by comparing the number of clashes and their impact in each township over nearly three years post-coup.
2. **Humanitarian Crisis Index** is defined by the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) calculated based on the population of each township. The classification into 'high intensity' and 'low intensity' is made by comparing the percentage of IDPs and their impacts relative to the total population in each township. In cases where clashes occur but no IDP is reported, the label 'none' IDP is applied.
3. **Public Service Provision Index** is defined using four indicators: whether township police offices are open, whether general administration department offices are open, whether basic services such as electricity and water supply are operational, and whether bureaucratic staff receive their salaries. The classification into 'high intensity' or 'low intensity' is made by comparing the collected data.






These findings are preliminary and not definitive answers. They will be revised upon the availability of new data.

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