

A political revolution in the making is taking place in Myanmar

Via [Europe Solidaire](#)

The military has made a blatant power grab, unseating the elected civilian government. That is the story in Myanmar, according to a legion of Western journalists and political analysts. There is a palpable unreality to these reports. Dramatic though the coup may have been, it is the aftermath that is seismic for the people of Myanmar.

What is happening all over the country is more than just 'massive protests' – it is a revolution in the making. This has taken shape in the space of less than a month, as if the elements were lying in wait. Members of Gen Z, those born between the late 1990s and 2010, are at the forefront and this alone is heartening to witness. Resistance to the coup is also doing away with long-standing divisions of ethnicity, religion, domicile and occupation. At one stroke understanding and unity of thought and purpose has appeared; this must be maintained at all costs.

There is some worry about differences in objectives, but I would say they add to the stew rather than detract from it. Long-suppressed voices like those of the Rohingya and Muslims are now being seen and heard prominently, and women are participating in strength.

Last year, I happened to be in Hlaing-tharyar, the biggest and poorest township in urban Yangon, and the sight of a shanty-town stretching for miles beside the highway was something to remember. Class has not featured in Myanmar's politics for decades. But thanks to the digital age and social media, the movement has stretched out to small towns and villages. I have

witnessed protesters marching with banners proclaiming they are “networks of the urban poor” at least twice in the past month.

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Inadvertently and unexpectedly, Myanmar is having to embrace all this and more. I can see demure and restrained college students becoming more politicised with every passing day. Last month, student unions from 18 tertiary education institutions made a joint statement condemning China for blocking a United Nations resolution to condemn the coup. And perhaps the biggest bloc at the protests that took place last week were from technological universities all over the country – it was no mean logistical feat to gather them in Yangon. Unions in Myanmar have long been weak, but the military coup has ironically revived them.

Blessings and curses

Cataclysms bring a lot of anxiety in their wake, and a largely agrarian society like Myanmar’s responds, in part, by falling back on embedded beliefs and traditions. Buddhist monks made their advent on the streets of Mandalay, a city in northern Myanmar, but they are not the radicals and this is nothing out of the ordinary.

Rural people marched in the ancient heritage site of Bagan in central Myanmar, and it was very photogenic. Some middle-aged women even made offerings to the city’s 11th-century temple to put an ancient curse upon those responsible for the coup. I haven’t heard of the curse before, but it is long and terrible. (Theravada Buddhism would never countenance this sort of thing, but Bagan in its heyday was also a centre of Tantrism).

What is certain is that the changes afoot in Myanmar are radical. The term 'political transition' needs to be ditched. Even if Aung San Suu Kyi, the deposed state counsellor, were to return to power tomorrow, it's questionable whether she would be able to manage the movement.

The Myanmar military, which has triggered all this, is now staring at a deep-seated convulsion. Road-maps, constitutions and elections are not going to help very much. An opportunity has opened up to the people of Myanmar, and they are taking it.