

EAI 동아시아연구원

The Voice of Solidarity for the Restoration of Democracy in Myanmar

- **Date and Time** : April 29 (Thurs) 10:00-11:30 (KST)
- **Type** : Zoom Webinar (English)
- **Participants:**
 - **Keynote Speaker:** J. Ramos-Horta
 - **Moderator:** Sook Jong Lee
 - **Panelists:** Maiko Ichihara, Hun Joon Kim, Evan A. Laksmana, Niranjan Sahoo

■ Transcript

1. Introduction

Sook Jong Lee: Myanmar has been ruled by the military ever since it waged its first coup in 1962. The military has had strong power until 2011. However, the civil society in Myanmar has been very active in their struggle for democracy. We remember the 1974 struggle, the 1988 demonstration and the 2007 Saffron revolution. Finally, based on the 2008 constitution, the civil society and military agreed upon a pact democracy sharing power – the democratic transition Myanmar is incomplete. However, the NLD won the 2015 elections and the 2020 elections in November. They won with a big landslide victory. Many people like me and the panelists expected that a full democratic transition could be possible in the near future. However, the result was the opposite. There was a military coup on February 1 and the military charged the previous election fraud. People in Myanmar fought back with the civil disobedience movement in order to get their democracy back. However, following a military crackdown, there are currently over 750 fatalities. Many of them are young people, university students, and even young children. America, the EU, and civil countries in Asia including ASEAN condemned such horrible action. However, there has been no good effect. In the ASEAN meeting last Saturday, ASEAN made a statement through four points and the secretariat issued the statement with a consensus. The four points of demand are: the immediate cessation of violence, a constructive dialogue to reach a peaceful solution, the appointment of a special envoy from ASEAN, and humanitarian assistance. However, the military in Myanmar is stating that peace and end of protest must come first before they

engage in constructive dialogue. This poses a very pessimistic prospect but now is a very important time to discuss how Asian democracies especially can help Myanmar get back to a normal path towards gradual democratic transition. So, we invited panelists from four Asian democracies; Japan, South Korea, India, Indonesia. These four countries are also among the top 10 countries Myanmar exports to and imports from.

Before we engage in a live discussion with four excellent eminent scholars, we have a very well-known keynote speaker, Jose Ramos-Horta, a very well-known political leader. He was a very strong political activist for the independence and peace of his own country. For that effort, he was awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996. Ramos-Horta served as prime minister of East Timor from 2004–2007 and as president from 2007–2012. Now, he is a member of the council of the state and the steering committee chair of the World Movement for Democracy.

2. Keynote Speech

J. Ramos-Horta: Since independence, Myanmar was never invaded by any neighbor. There were no threats to their independence or integrity. In 2020–2021, we arrived at a situation where there are wages of war on its own people. That is what they have done for the past 60 years. Suu Kyi won the elections in November 2020, against the expectations of the Burmese military. After 5 years of the Suu Kyi government, which was unable to resolve the Rohingya problem, with tons of thousands fleeing to Bangladesh and with Suu Kyi demonized around the world, particularly by Western liberals, she was ostracized and demonized. All of her diplomas and certificates were taken away from her from the UK, Republic of Ireland, and Canada. Suu Kyi, a brave woman who led her people against the military for over two decades, suddenly saw herself brought down from the Western pedestal. That was one of the few in the world. I tried to explain to my interlocutors in the West, in the European Union to not demonize Suu Kyi. She has very little power stipulated in the constitution and on the ground. The military watched her every move. The conflict with the Rohingya was exacerbated on purpose. The military overreacted to the killings in 2017 by the Rohingya militants. The overreaction, disproportionate use of force was deliberate, calculated in part to provoke Suu Kyi into criticizing the military actions. Suu Kyi was fully conscious of the intentions, strategies of the military. So, she refused to criticize the violence inflicted on the Rohingya that forced 800,000 to flee the Rakhaina state into Bangladesh. And for this she was criticized, demonized by the West. Suu Kyi has failed on the internal security front in resolving the Rohingya problem. On the international front, she was brought down.

The first expectation, miscalculated by the military, was that Suu Kyi would lose the election in November 2020 or at least her overwhelming majority in the previous election in 2015 would be tested. More of a landslide than before. And what were the fears of the

military? That with Suu Kyi consolidating her powers, she would gradually reform the Burmese armed forces into a professional armed force, civil, like how the Indonesian military transitioned from a dictatorship in 1998–1999 to one today of a more modern professional army, separated from politics and businesses. The Indonesian military like the Chinese and Thai military owned banks, factories, and industries. China began this reform many years ago, Thailand not yet. The military in the state of Bangkok, the size of the military bank is of a much smaller scale. Same applies to that of Indonesia. In Myanmar, the clique of the military that has been ruling the country for the past 60 years own almost everything including your shuttle, the shoes you wear. They fear that they would lose absolute control of Myanmar lives and the government. They staged a coup after miscalculating. They thought Donald Trump would have won the elections in November. They were shocked that President Biden won the election. So, they had to accelerate the reversal of the democratic situation in Myanmar.

If such a coup had happened in Africa, there would have been immediate universal condemnation in Africa. For the country concerned, its membership in the African union and the regional organization in Africa would be suspended. That is what the charter of the African union says. The Africans do no longer tolerate coups by anyone. Any individual or any country perpetrating a military coup in Africa is suspended for membership and indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity if the coup is followed with violence.

Look at ASEAN, supposedly the most credible, effective regional organization in Asia at least. Every ASEAN summit, the measure dialogue partners, the US president, the Chinese president, Prime Minister of Japan, the President of Korea, President of the European Commission, Prime Ministers of Canada and Australia, President Putin – all were sent to the host capital to participate in dialogue. But ASEAN is feeble, toothless, still hanging onto their so-called internal affairs, sovereignty, sovereignty to kill, to murder, sovereignty to stage a coup in the 21st century in the heart of Asia. I understand the difficulties of ASEAN. The ASEAN is not the European Union. The ASEAN is not even the African Union; the ASEAN is not even the organization of Latin American states. A principle that unites all is respect for human rights, justice, rule of law, and opposition to coups. Infringement on these principles and values pose automatic suspension of membership, swift condemnation, and economic sanctions from this organization itself. This is not the case with ASEAN. Look at the members. The Burmese over the years witnessed the Thai experiment coups, a coup after another in the last 10 years. ASEAN and international communities turned a blind eye to the coups in Thailand. The Burmese military learned from it. After all, it seemed to be simple. With a coup and a promise for new elections, we orchestrate a new constitution. The entity that does a coup becomes the prime minister, the president of Myanmar. That is the lesson they got from Thailand. They are trying to gather the ASEAN leaders to master their strength, their commutability to reverse the coup in Myanmar. There cannot be fait accompli. So far, only Malaysia and Indonesia have issued a stronger criticism of the situation in Myanmar of

the violence. All other countries in ASEAN in the region and China have been silent. The Republic of Korea has been very forward, very blunt, and courageous. I congratulate President Moon, the leadership in Korea, the private sector companies that are freezing new investments in Korea. There cannot be any condoning silence on this massacre in the heart of ASEAN in the beginning of 2021. We cannot be accomplices. And the major challenge for all of us as people in communities in Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, and Asia, is how messages are delivered to the leaders and states that they cannot condone with their silence, with their sense of realpolitik and pragmatism, and the killing of innocent people. The situation in Myanmar is a confrontation between the military and the people. The vast majority of the people are students, the youth, bankers, civil servants, and artists. There is no one in Myanmar that has not joined the demonstration and the killings are continued.

My appeal to you is to raise your voice and pressure on ASEAN, on your respective governments in your respective countries, to impose thorough economic financial sanctions on the Myanmar military, on their cronies and on their families, freeze their bank accounts wherever you find them, complete ban on weapons exports. The two main culprits are China and Russia – they are the providers of weapons to Myanmar. Travel bans on all Myanmar officials including the new appointments made by Myanmar government, the military, as diplomatic envoys to countries like London. The international military including Republic of Korea, Japan and others should continue to accept as valid, the credentials of the ambassadors appointed by the legitimate government that was in power as a result of elections in 2015 and won the election in November 2020. That's the only way to show how serious we all are against the military coup and the massacres. In addition, last but not least, I hope that ICC, the International Criminal Court, the new prosecutor that will take over in June will issue an arrest warrant against the leader of the Myanmar military and all associated within.

3. Live Discussion

Q. Sook Jong Lee: He pointed out the weaknesses of regional organizations including ASEAN in our region, weaker than the African union in addressing violence against human rights and rule of law. He suggested concrete ideas like economic sanctions, freezing bank accounts, banning exports of weapons to Myanmar, and travel bans. He called the governments of this region to recognize the National Unity Government and bring the military leaders to the ICC. The first question is: what has your government done bilaterally and multilaterally to this horrible situation in Myanmar since the coup of February?

A. Maiko Ichihara: The essence of the Japanese government's move regarding the crisis is quiet diplomacy and humanitarianism within constraints. The humanitarian aspect colors

Japanese diplomacy a little more than before but in a way that does not stand out. The Japanese government is seeking to maintain its quiet diplomacy, which is to show its stance only in a quiet manner. The purpose is to maintain the roots for negotiation with the Tatmadaw and consequently pretend to have difficulties grasping the government's positions and actions. In order to keep its action low profile, the foreign ministry sometimes releases related information only in Japanese and sometimes it does not do so in its own and instead lets former diplomats do the job at a private capacity. Before, the key to reading their stance is to read what is not written in their statements and also to read interviews of and articles written by the former top leadership of departments related to the foreign ministries.

My take is as follows. They have omitted constant messages that Japan does not acknowledge the Tatmadaw led government as a legitimate government and is highly alarmed by serious human rights abuses by the Tatmadaw. They have maintained three principal positions that they call 1) stop the suppression of citizens, 2) release the NLD top leadership, and 3) restore the democratic process in Myanmar. The Japanese government has had negotiations with Tatmadaw officials but they do not seem to be using sanctions as leverage during the negotiations because they hope to keep quiet democracy. This is a limitation in Japan's approach. Japan seems to relegate itself to the sidelines in support of ASEAN's role in resolving the crisis. That is why a series of meetings between foreign ministers and senior deputies have been held between Japan on one hand and Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Vietnam on the other, in the lead-out to the ASEAN emergency summit on April 24 and after that. Does Japan sanction the Tatmadaw? The answer is yes and no. They terminated all ODA to Myanmar to show Japan's opposition to the Tatmadaw's approach in this crisis but they do so only quietly and not necessarily as a bargaining chip or even as a sanction. They quietly terminated new ODA projects in early March taking opposition as if there were no ODA projects planned for this year. A recent interview of a former Japanese ambassador to Myanmar appeared in the Nikkei Asian Review seems to show that there has already been a discussion on termination of all the ODA projects not only new ones. However, even if the government is to put an end to it, it will do so quietly. But the Japanese government's concern on this humanitarian can be seen in the fact that, for example, they provided emergency aid of 19 million dollars in early March for internally displaced persons and those Myanmar refugees fled to Bangladesh in order to provide support for their medical and human healthcare, shelter, and food. In order to not to make it a form of support for the Tatmadaw the aid is provided through international organizations such as the International Red Cross, the World Food Program, and the International Organization for Migration.

When it comes to Japanese civil society, there has been very dynamic activism among them, particularly among the youth. University students both in Tokyo and Kyoto have been leading multiple signature campaigns to support the CDM and have conveyed their signatures to Japanese parliamentarians in order to request the Japanese government support the CDM.

They have also been conducting fundraising campaigns through crowd-funding. Social science researchers studying Myanmar, Southeast Asia, and development also support these initiatives. Overall, while Japan might seem quiet from outside the country, there is really a wide variety of vibrant support for the people in Myanmar both in the government and civil society in Japan.

Q. Sook Jong Lee: Professor Kim, in the case of South Korea, I think it is more likely that the government is engaged in assertive diplomacy but I do not know, if this diplomacy is actually heard to the Myanmar government or not – so, why don't you explain what the Korean government has done so far?

A. Hun Joon Kim: I will discuss the Korean government's response and responses from the civil society. The Korean government response was, as mentioned, quick and assertive. The measures can be divided into two—firstly, official statements and several meetings. Korea issued four statements on Myanmar: SNS messages by the president and the prime minister. The National Assembly has also adopted a resolution condemning the military. The tone of criticism and urgency increased over these different statements. The most recent one states that Korea is deeply shocked over the loss of many innocent civilians and strongly condemns the continuing violence. High level government officials had meetings with the Myanmar ambassador, students, and workers from Myanmar to hear and deliver their concerns. These meetings, along with official statements sent a clear and strong message.

Secondly, immediately after the first large scale massacre, the government took effective steps of bilateral diplomatic and economic sanctions. So far, six measures are in place. First, the government suspended new exchange and cooperation in the field of defense and security. Second, the government stopped exporting the military supplies and then decided to strictly control steel exports. Third, the government is under review of ODA while continuing those with humanitarian purposes. Fourth, the government took measures to extend the stay of Myanmar nationals until the situation gets better; officials say it was one of the first measures taken by the Korean government. Fifth, the government raised travel advisory to all areas in Myanmar. Lastly, the government was in a consult with companies working with military related corporations, and businesses. One of them is POSCO. The steel producers decided to terminate the joint venture with military related businesses.

At the same time, the civil society is very active in supporting Myanmar. This can be divided into 5 different actors. First, there are religious organizations, especially Buddhists, but Christians also quickly made statements of support. About 240 organizations have created an umbrella network in Korea and now it is in work. This network along with individual citizens, local governments, and local parliaments are supporting the protestors and collecting funds. Second, democratic movement organizations are declaring solidarity with

protestors. Among them, the most active one is the May 15th Gwangju Democratic Movement Organization, the victim's association, and the citizens of Gwangju. It is mainly due to the similarity between the two events; the coup, resistance and massacres. But this link is not a sudden one. Between Myanmar and Gwangju there has already been established relations about a decade ago especially with the May 15th memorial foundation. Third, students and NGOS, and notably the PSPD, the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, are protesting in front of the companies whose investments are tightly linked with military businesses and also in front of the Myanmar embassy, and the Indonesia embassy because of the ASEAN link. They pressured these companies and embassies to disinvest from military related businesses. Fourth, both traditional and new media such as SNS are helping to spread the word and support the protestors. One of the media provided an outlet for the local Myanmar reporters and some SNS users who are active are usually activists who once worked in Myanmar. They are continuing to post first-hand stories. The NGOs, research institutes, and scholars show support of the democracy, signing petitions, publicizing their research on the fairness of the elections based on the survey research, and having various events supporting the protestors.

Q. Sook Jong Lee: Evan, your country has been very active in front-stage diplomacy and your president has mentioned after the end of the ASEAN meeting last weekend that the current situation is not acceptable; it is unacceptable for Min Aung Hlaing to represent the country despite the controversy and opposition. What is the current situation of your government?

A. Evan A. Laksmana: First of all, we have to understand that Indonesia, unlike some of its Southeast Asian neighbors like Singapore or Thailand, does not have significant leverage over Myanmar. We do not have significant investments both politically or diplomatically. We actually don't have a lot of leverage. We do believe, however, that Indonesia cannot just sit idly by and watch the whole thing unfold. This is why in the early days of the coup, the foreign minister has taken a very proactive role in trying to get support from regional powers from Japan, India, Russia, and China, as well as the US. Within that framework she still believes that the best way to address the crisis in Myanmar is through an ASEAN led framework or ASEAN led mechanism. At this point, there is no other international diplomatic option on the table. There is no UN option, there is no great power; this is it. This is the only option we have right now. The first and formal meeting for the Southeast Asian foreign ministers was organized about a month or so after the coup. This was very difficult to organize, because once we made a decision that it has to be done for ASEAN, we have to work within constraints and confines of ASEAN. There is no membership expulsion scheme or framework within the ASEAN charter. So, we cannot actually do that. We have been

talking about such as suspension of activities, dis-invitation, or reducing in terms of interaction; but there is no membership expulsion.

Secondly, Indonesia has taken the lead but the current chair of ASEAN is Brunei. The Secretary General of ASEAN is also from Brunei so everything depends on the role of the Secretary General and the ASEAN chair. Indonesia cannot call a meeting; it has to be the chair that issues the invitation so we have to work within constraints of ASEAN. This is why the whole process took three months before we had an ASEAN leaders meeting. Subsequently, I think with the ASEAN leaders meeting, this followed the call from President Jokowi himself on the third week of March that ASEAN needs to convene a special meeting. He has discussed that option with the chair, the Sultan of Brunei, but it took another round of negotiations because in the ASEAN system, you cannot convene a leaders' meeting without a preparatory series of meetings between senior officials and the foreign minister. So, there are a few rounds of negotiations.

In the meantime, I think it should be noted that publicly speaking, Indonesia, as well as a few others, have said that we build communications with all parties. We do not just talk with the SAC, but we talk to all parties. So, the issue of recognition is interpreted as confirmed legitimacy, when in fact, the whole goal of the ASEAN leaders meeting, first and foremost, is to end violence. Who is the party exercising violence? The military. So, we do not consider the military as the representative of Myanmar. In fact, when he arrived in Jakarta, the presidential press release referred to him as the commander of the armed services, not as the President of Myanmar. When he drove from the airport to the ASEAN secretariat, his car did not fly the flag of Myanmar. There is no legitimacy being conferred of any kind to the senior general. He was invited as the commander of the armed services because we want to convey, first and foremost, that violence must stop. So, the person or the entity doing the violence is the military not the National Unity Government. To invite the National Unity Government would not only prevent the summit from happening but it would be also quite difficult to end violence from that standpoint.

Secondly, I think where we are right now in terms of the Five-Point Consensus agreed to the meeting is obviously very tricky right now, because in the last few days, we've seen some wavering from both sides in Myanmar from the SAC as well as the from the NUG. But right now, nobody is saying that the ASEAN option is dead. The Five-Point Consensus is an opening gambit. We have to build on the opening gambit for an eventual breakthrough so the Five-Point Consensus. Three of those are the outcomes that ASEAN would like to achieve are (1) the ending of violence, (2) the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and (3) the beginning of an inclusive political dialogue of all the parties concerned. These are the three outcomes to achieve. The two points of consensus, apart, is the mechanics to deliver those outcomes, which is the role of the special envoy of the ASEAN chair yet to be announced as

well as a visit by the ASEAN chair and the envoy to Myanmar. Those two are the initial mechanics to deliver the three outcomes.

Right now, I think because of time we obviously need to announce who the envoys are and provide the framework as soon as possible, and then arrange visits. Before the visit can happen, they should end violence and release political prisoners. This is why a discussion on political prisoners was made at the leaders' meeting but was not part of the consensus because the main goal is the violence and we were thinking of how we could include the discussion on political prisoners as part of our next sequence before the visit. The problem with political prisoners is that some people or some parties in Myanmar consider, yes, the students and protestors should be released, but there are complications about the role of Aung San Suu Kyi. Whether or not she should be a part of this, whether or not her release would complicate the negotiations between the NUG and the ethnic armed organizations is something we should look out for. On the press releases of the NUG or representatives, they mention political prisoners, but there is no mention of Aung San Suu Kyi. The goal right now is for the parties in Myanmar to embrace the ethnic armed organizations and I think hopefully, the idea is that once we secure the ending of violence and release some prisoners, then an ASEAN delegation can come and visit, provide a needs assessment, talk to the parties on the ground beyond the SAC, and then establish a task force to provide both humanitarian aid delivery, observance of the succession of violence and then hopefully the beginning of a political dialogue. But the Five-Point Consensus is not a final resolution. It is wrong to present it as our way to address the issue; it is the beginning of how we can start a framework hopefully with the help and support of our regional partners as well as the international community. We can hopefully put this consensus into play soon.

Q. Sook Jong Lee: Niranjana, Evan has mentioned Indonesia does not have leverage to Myanmar, and neither does India, but your country has the largest democracy. Despite the rising number of COVID-19 infected people in India, does your government have the diplomatic energy to engage in Myanmar affairs?

A. Niranjana Sahoo: Almost half of the cities in India are affected and especially the last 15 days have been really bad in the sense that in major cities like Delhi and Mumbai, people are running out of medicine and hospitals. We are actually in a middle of a big crisis but I think our country is quite familiar to this sort of tragedy and it always somehow finds the right time to get out of it; so, hopefully we'll come out of it. This doesn't mean that we suspend our diplomacy because we are a large country and we have our own institutional mechanism to continue the paths that we have been pursuing with Myanmar.

India in the 1980s and India now are completely different. India has many liberal strategies, in fact, that's what I think I and my colleague wrote in a piece on Foreign Policy,

how India and Japan have a variety of liberal strategies with this country, not only with trade and the economy but also with issues regarding the proximity with the military junta and a long investment in terms of standing democratic institutions – both India and Japan have invested a lot especially since the opening of political space in 2011 and onward. This would come handy provided there is political will.

India like not many countries, shares a long border with Myanmar – more than 1,300 km of its border. We have a thousand years-long relationship, especially in Northeastern states like Mizoram and Nagaland; they have ethnic and family relations and thousands everyday go to the other side, work, and go back. It is a difficult situation to tackle. Since the crisis in February, India has, in a crisis like this, India for a long time has been taking either an activist or agnostic kind of stance. In this case, it has taken an agnostic, passive stance. It has quietly doing a lot of things, but then if try to analyze and understand India's role, being one of the biggest regional powers and sharing so much with Myanmar, India hasn't done enough. In February, soon after the coup, it made a statement, a very official statement saying that it expresses deep concerns and appeals for restoration of democracy and peace.

It played significant role in bringing both Russia and China and the UNSC to issue a statement because it was not possible for several days as Russia and China were against any kind of condemnation to the coup. India played a role in issuing a statement, which doesn't help but it was at least possible because of India's active role. It has been playing quite a significant role in the UNHRC as it pushed assistant secretary to visit and start the process in Myanmar. So, behind the scene India has been doing quite a bit. Also, it is also in many ways, trying to get Indonesia and other countries to play a more corrective role in the peace process, and especially India is thanking a lot on the Five-Point Agenda. It also believes that ASEAN centrality will hopefully play an instrumental role like it played in the earlier case of making a peaceful transition. India is hoping that some countries like Indonesia will play major role.

India's role is limited largely because of geopolitical concerns. In 1988, India played major role – the coup, struggle that happened – India was openly supporting the people who were protesting and fighting for democracy. That laid severe consequences when the junta finally ruled the country. India had to pay a heavy price because in many ways, India was neglected and silenced. India placed a lot of uncertainty in its bordering states. The junta supported many Chinese initiatives that were against India's interests. Geopolitically, separate interests made India draw a line and change it. It basically became an observer.

But in this particular incident, India is ready to play a role and it wants to be seen as a counterforce to China as a democratic force. But then, we have our problems in the domestic setup. For the last 6–7 years, the political sphere has been nationalistic, we have a government that actually would like to take risks, we want to help democratic forces – it is conscious of the incidents like 1988. It does not want to lose the political space it has

regained over the years vis-à-vis China. So, realpolitik and geopolitics is playing a major role. But there are a couple of interesting developments that puts India in a tight spot. However, there has been a call on Myanmar and India cannot just sit idly and expect others to play the role. For instance, our Northeastern states, especially Mizoram, share a long border with Myanmar. Thousands of refugees landed there. At least 25 NLD lawmakers are camping there. This posed a problem between the junta and the Indian government – the junta wants them. The Indian government initially was thinking what to do given the pressure from the military. But when news that India might send them back spread in Delhi, there were massive protests from the media, civil society, and the opposition party saying that it would be bad to send them back and we should not just accept the junta's demand because many of these people would be persecuted, penalized, and killed. What's happening in Mizoram, which is part of the ruling coalition under New Delhi, has gone against the political domain and said that it will openly support the peace process and democratic protests there. Other small states like Nagaland there have joined. The regional forces, states, and the national identity is taking a prominent place on the national domain. It will be seen in ways to come in how India will actually issue a more proactive stance. But at the moment, we are depending on quiet diplomacy and aligning with other states of the Quad, Indonesia, and others to see if there is a breakthrough.

Q. Sook Jong Lee: This is a kind of moment for the concerned stakeholders to think about not only just Myanmar, but also the democracy in the region, because if we cannot stop this military governance, we would fail to put back Myanmar to the previous track for democratization. We will see another blow of the backsliding of democracy in our region because the military will be emboldened to wage another coup. Also, authoritarian and autocratic governments can strengthen their power because they see that regional organizations and the international community, including the UN, is incapable of stopping their ambition. This is a very critical moment. For the second round of discussion, we ask: what else should we do? Obviously, there is no coordination of policymakers across the government. I think we need to scale up concerted actions to support the people in Myanmar and restore democracy in Myanmar.

A. Maiko Ichihara: I think other panelists would have much to say about the government's policies. Let me focus on the civil society. Let me make three proposals focused on the civil society's roles. First, continued civil society advocacy and financial support for the people in Myanmar would be key. Although none of the Asian democracies are willing to endorse the Tatmadaw led government, open support for the National Unity Government and the CDM is considered sensitive by our governments. Therefore, in the event our governments hesitate to take an open role, the civil society should play complementary and

supportive roles for the government. One of the biggest challenges for the CDM is financial. This is exactly where civil society help is needed. For example, there is the fundraising campaign called One-to-One CDM campaign, which supports the salaries of civil servants in Myanmar participating in CDM. I encourage all of us to consider participating in such campaigns. Secondly, continually demonstrating the messages of solidarity and support for the people of the CDM is crucial. They are under repression and are forced to hide. They feel extraordinary fear and it is important to express solidarity with them so that we can continue to support their courage. Finally, I would like to propose to all of us that we set up a network of researchers and scholars in Asia who can share information and contact each other to see if there are universities among our network that can accept young refugees as students. There have been a series of raids by the Tatmadaw against democrats and ethnic armed forces. A great number of people are crossing the border into Thailand and are internally displaced. Their lives should be respected. If there is something we, the private actors, can do for them, that government actors cannot do, we should cooperate with the government. In particular, young people in Myanmar, Generation Z, are at the core of the movement and their lives are in danger. As university faculty members who are in charge of people in this age group, we can work together to set up a system to accept them into our universities. This will help globalize our universities and our domestic students as well.

Q. Sook Jong Lee: Many Korean people are asking: we'd like to help, how can we help? So, your idea of one-to-one funding and sending resources is a good idea. I think we need a certain organization that can play a mediating role.

A. Hun Joon Kim: I think measures can be divided into bilateral and multilateral; diplomatic and economic options. First, there are three bilateral options. Human rights are a broad concept and each country has a specific focus in human rights diplomacy. Korea focused on the protection of the vulnerable population such as women, children, and refugees. Due to the widespread nature and complexity of the issue, the Myanmar case cuts across various fronts. Therefore, democratic countries in Asia should consider the division of labor in supporting Myanmar depending on their emphasis. Second, due to harsh conditions in Myanmar, every country can legitimately adjust their migration or refugee policy applied to Myanmar students, workers, and residents who are already in their country. The Korean step could be the first step, which guaranteed Myanmar people's safety by extending their stay. A concerted migration and refugee policy by democratic countries will send a strong message to the military. Third, bilateral ODA is another way in which an individual country can send message to the military and the civil society. The economic situation is worsening in Myanmar. Countries should direct their ODA to support the civil society and democratic

movement groups directly. It has the monitoring mechanism through ASEAN envoy or other regional partners or international organization to oversee ODA.

Second, there are some multilateral options. The first and best way is to start from the international human rights conventions, which Myanmar themselves is a state party. The first, is of course, the 2012 ASEAN Human Rights Declaration. The next step is the ICESCR, CEDAW, CRC, and CRPD, which Myanmar is a state party too. The commonality in both the regional and international conventions is women and children. The proportion of women in the protests is high. The number of women and child victims are also high. The international society should eventually hold the military accountable for all atrocities since February. But first, they can start from documenting and pressuring what Myanmar itself has committed to comply. Second, the body with the most effective tool to address this issue, the UNSC is in a gridlock due to China and Russia. China has specifically pronounced their objection to the UNSC's involvement in the "Three Supports and Three Avoids" statement. Democratic countries should press the UNSC to act further by using other UN human bodies such as the General Assembly, the UNHRC, or treaty bodies. UN's inability to issue a meaningful resolution condemning the Khmer Rouge in Cambodian genocide is clearly remembered throughout history, and this should not be repeated in the Myanmar case. Last multilateral option is to have democratic countries pressure both the US and China on the issue so that both countries can change their current course of action. In the US, there is increasing outcry to take more effective measures, such as sanctioning Myanmar gas and oil enterprises and this involves Chevron, second largest energy company in the US, who is actively lobbying the government not to take further action. Only public pressure is hope at this point in the US and as the US takes middle class diplomacy depending on middle class opinions, therefore, democratic countries should persuade the so-called middle class in the US. China on the other hand should be further pressured and shamed of their inaction and obstruction at the UNSC.

Q. Sook Jong Lee: Actually, China has leverage in Myanmar affairs, as it is the largest country that Myanmar is exporting to and importing from. It also has investments in Myanmar, but they are very strong about their non-intervention principle. The countries are not engaging or talking to China at all about this Myanmar issue. After the ASEAN summit, military violence has strengthened. Was this a good, legitimate idea?

A. Evan A. Laksmana: First of all, we have to try something. This is not the solution yet. This is the beginning of a potential solution. We could just all go home and not do anything as well, that's an option. If we simply sit back, let things unfold, and feel good by condemning people and supporting one side or the other, we can do that as well. But there is no guarantee of a potential diplomatic breakthrough. So, I am the first person to

acknowledge that the Five-Point Consensus is far from perfect. It is only the foundation for a potential framework. Time is of the essence for us to immediately announce a special envoy and get them to commit to the framework. As of today, it's the only option on the table. If we give up, in terms of the fact that ASEAN cannot do anymore, then we can admit that ASEAN has failed. But up until this point, it is true that there are concerns that the regime can walk back its commitment implicitly accepted at the meeting and balance can continue. This is why I think the whole point of the next step is to get support for ASEAN's efforts to announce the framework as soon as possible, to get support as soon as possible in terms of funding, and aid delivery. The whole point right now is to make sure that the junta doesn't take back its commitment and that we can actually, first and foremost, end violence. I think this goes back to the earlier discussions. At the Track-2 level aside from civil society, what I would like to suggest is that there is a long-established network both in Southeast Asia and East Asia of policy think tanks and policy experts working closely with Track-1 to formulate options. This has been activated before the summit and hopefully this can continue after the summit. Aside from the personal and civil society support, I think feeding options on how we can move forward is something that's worth trying as well.

Right now, I'm afraid there is no option that is too bad. We have to try everything we can and make sure we leave no stone unturned. At the Track-1 level, we have seen this game before. This is not our first stance with the Myanmar issue. Sanctions have been tried before in various ways; they did not work. Nobody wants to invoke the R2P because nobody can deliver the UNSC. China has endorsed ASEAN's option because it saves them from doing the hard work themselves. Russia is certainly not going to care about reputational costs, no matter how many times you shame them; so does China. For now, I'm afraid pressure should be fine in different ways but pressure alone without providing an offer of how we can actually negotiate and end violence would also be pointless. If I can plead for the Track-1 support, right now, if the goal is to end violence and start dialogue, the best of the worst options right now is ASEAN. If Japan, South Korea, Russia, India, China, even the US and European countries can get behind the ASEAN efforts to at least try to support and implement the Five-Point Consensus, then maybe we can get somewhere. If that doesn't work, we have to find other options. In fact, one of the things we were discussing at the Track-2 level before the summit is what happens if the summit fails? How do we save the package of humanitarian aid, cause, and dialogue through non-ASEAN means? We should not get hung up on the mechanics, but we should be focusing on the outcomes that we want to achieve. If ASEAN can deliver, great, but if not, we have to find other options. Right now, I think it is important to find ways to increase support for the ASEAN option but also make sure that we can do it effectively, correctly, and as quickly as possible, precisely because the ideas that we proposed today may be obsolete in 2 months if violence escalates even further. We fully agree that time is of the essence.

Q. Sook Jong Lee: I think most of us would agree to your suggestion that ASEAN must be the central stage to negotiate and to engage dialogue with the military in Myanmar. However, there is the Quad, the network of US, Japan, India, and Australia. The Quad is discussing not only about the security, but also on the pandemic and the rule of law. Niranjana, any sign of talk inside the Quad about this situation in Myanmar?

A. Niranjana Sahoo: Whether the Quad still remains a concept or whether it can really bring some result remains uncertain and Myanmar could be a fine case as it involves democracy. In a sense, the Quad finally had a summit level meeting and the foreign minister meeting also happened. Several other Quad meetings are actually in the process and this will eventually happen. But this also depends upon the political will. Political will of the individual country, like India or Japan. Ultimately, the US might use it in its capacity with its global presence to boost certain things, but that stays far away. It is not affected by what is happening in Southeast Asia or Asia. We are the primary stakeholders. Asia centrality, apart from ASEAN playing a central role, is necessary in Asia. This could be intensified at different levels. As Evan said clearly, one should not put all the eggs in the ASEAN basket and wait for some miracle to happen; that will not happen. It must diversify.

Micro-level initiatives also hold a lot of hope. Not a lot of people are appealed by this. For instance, I would say in the Indian case, one thing that India can leverage and build pressure on the junta is the Northeast factor. The several states that share the border with Myanmar in many ways are used by India to put pressure because more than two dozen NLD MPs are settling. A lot of initiatives by the NUG are taking place in Mizoram. There is also a placar that can build through the civil society and many groups, especially the Mizoram council and a number of youth groups are active in those states and are openly supporting similar movements that happened in the 1980s. So, India can use it as sort of a bargaining chip with the junta. If you don't find a solution and things go out of hand, India can control this. Refugee problem made the headlines in February and March when thousands started pouring in.

Second, India and many other countries that have been selling arms to Myanmar can play a role in a sense that for several years, the junta is not comfortable buying Chinese arms. They think they are of low quality and dependence could reduce their power. It has diversified its arms suppliers to Russia and other countries. Actually, this can play a role to put pressure on the junta.

Third, the most important thing that is happening in the context of the Quad is that both India and Japan with their long linkages with the military as well as the civilian government had the opportunity to diversify their investment. Not necessarily only with the junta, but with the NLD and with ethnic groups that play a prominent role. In India, there is

lively debate on why India should not actually talk to ethnic groups and ethnic armies who are raising the issue. Today, we are looking at a situation that almost looks like the state is collapsing in Myanmar. To prevent that, Asian powers can actually use their cards proactively and judiciously. They should not just wait, watch and expect that outside powers, especially the US or the EU, will play a role. I do not think that this will happen at any point; the context is very different. A lot of them are preoccupied with their domestic troubles. I think Asian countries should take a more proactive role and the Myanmar situation provides a rare opportunity to do that. Apart from democratic the level through think tanks and organizations, governments must also be concerned and the comments should come from the governments.

Q. Sook Jong Lee: A question from the audience is: is there any reaction of resistance from the Burmese embassies and communities based in your countries?

A. Hun Joon Kim: As far as I know, there has been no official reaction from the Burmese embassy regarding the protest, but I think in terms of the community, the Burmese students, residents, workers are very active in promoting and feeding first-hand information from the locals, friends, and families to the Korean community. They are very upfront on various occasions. They are actively raising their voices.

A. Maiko Ichihara: The Burmese community in Japan has been very active from the very beginning, trying to persuade the Japanese government to play a role to solve the crisis in Myanmar. Over the time, it is becoming more critical, unhappy about the very slow move on the side of the Japanese government. They have been meeting Japanese diet members and Japanese policy makers to push policy makers directly. But it seems that the amassing criticism is becoming traumatic for the Japanese policy makers as well. A better way would be to provide support or warm message to the Japanese government to hope for it playing a role as well as keeping it accountable.

Q. Sook Jong Lee: Since we do not have further questions, let me ask Evan: Many Asian democracies understand that dialogue and diplomacy is important over harsh sanctions in order to induce the Myanmar military to engage in dialogue and look forward to an exit solution. However, has there been any effort from your government or the ASEAN secretariat office in Jakarta to reach other Asian countries like Japan, Korea, or India? Then you could have a wider network from Asia on this matter.

A. Evan A. Laksmana: Yes, we did from the beginning of the coup. Our foreign minister had various phone calls and meetings online as well as on site to get support for the ASEAN

approach. When we visited Japan, we met with the Japanese special envoy for Myanmar, the chair of the Nippon foundation, and we had a phone conversation as well with Secretary of External Affairs. With India we had various phone calls. With the Chinese as well. We also made outreach and communication with Russia. The issue is that a lot of these outreach and communication before the ASEAN leaders' meeting was still quite broad. It wasn't very detailed in terms of the proposal because that is what we're trying to get at right now. But we were conveying that we would like your support for ASEAN approach. As far as the public statements are concerned, there is that support. After the summit as well, Japan, the US, and China made statements of support. I do think there is an outreach of communication. Australia has also pledged 5 million dollars to support the Five-Point Consensus through the ASEAN humanitarian center. There is a deliberate effort before and after the meeting to engage a wider set of countries beyond ASEAN. There are two issues: first, can the countries we reached out to actually use their leverage when things do not work out? China supporting the ASEAN does not mean that it will put pressure on Myanmar. It's not the same as Japan or India trying to put pressure if things do not work out. Support vs. use of leverage is something we do not know yet. Secondly, we hope that in the framework that ASEAN will develop in the coming days, if not weeks, is that there is going to be a significant role of the international community beyond ASEAN to facilitate this process, whether it's through ASEAN's special fund. This will allow us to pull resources to help the people of Myanmar or do we see this in terms of a future dialogue in which we can create a mechanism for ASEAN with international community to facilitate dialogue, or whether we reach out to a specialized UN agency to provide support during the humanitarian system phase. This depends on how soon or quickly a special envoy can be announced, the framework of engagement decided upon, and how quickly we can act on this. Then, this would help address the first question of whether support from regional countries equals to them actually using leverage to put pressure on the Myanmar side.

Q. Sook Jong Lee: There are two more questions: How can civil society organizations influence their governments to demand for action? In case of South Korea, South Korea CSOs were very active in demanding their government to respond and demand POSCO to divest their investment. They are very active. Another question is whether there are additional sanctions as economic sanctions don't seem to work. Are there alternative ways to press the military in Myanmar?

A. Niranjan Sahoo: I would like to address the civil society question. As I said earlier, India had policy that was passive in the initial weeks is now taking a far more proactive direction largely due to the CSOs' pressure from the Northeastern states – the Mizoram council, the Mizoram students' organization are actively pressuring the government, especially

their subnational domains to pressure the political domain to take a proactive stance, to take the protestors' side and support them financially and morally. The national media has also picked up these stories and highlighted issues on refugees. When the government issued a statement, months back, stating that those people should not be encouraged to enter India, it led to a lot of backlash. This should be handled with more sensitivity because people are not jumping borders for fun; they are coming because their lives are under threat. It actually made a lot of changes in the government's stance and it also brought the Supreme Court to the scene because the Supreme Court does not have a refugee law. This means that it makes us morally and, in many ways, legally bound to support such people because otherwise, their lives in danger. It also led the political domain not to take any stance that jeopardizes their lives. The civil society can play a great role. Mainly we have all thought many of these stories and problems can be only brought by the great powers, involving regional organizations. In the civil society level, there are a lot of things that can be moved, provided that there are collective and joint efforts with seamless coordination among different actors involving several Asian democracies. I think that's what we should aim for and we should take this example and bring more unity in purpose and intensify such initiatives.

Sook Jong Lee: I have three takeaways from our discussion. Firstly, in Asian democracies, both the government and the civil society actually were wakening up to the crisis in Myanmar. There are of course different types of engagement. Japan is taking quiet diplomacy, while Korea is taking more assertive and very vocal diplomacy. Nevertheless, we see that there is a lack of coordinated action across democratic governments in the region. Secondly, we are glad to see that the civil societies of the four countries are attentive to this situation and that they want to help the people in Myanmar to restore democracy. There must be a lot of support from civil society organizations and individuals. Thirdly, for regional organization, we all agree that ASEAN must be the center of constructive engagement with the military in Myanmar. Of course, other Asian democracies should support and back these diplomatic efforts of ASEAN. However, we also need to expand our democratic support network to European countries; EU and America outside the region of Asia.