

Myanmar: A Way of Expressing Public Opinion?

August 15, 2024

August 15, 2024: Yangon, **Myanmar**: On court orders, a second attempt to auction the family house of **Myanmar's** former leader **Aung San Suu Kyi** was made. But it also failed to find any buyer.

Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, had lived in the lakeside villa where she was under house arrest for 15 years.

ABOUT the VILLA: The Villa belonged to **Daw Khin Kyi**, a Diplomat and **Suu Kyi's** mother and a widow of **Suu Kyi's** father **Aung San**, who led the country towards independence.

The villa was first put up for auction by a court in March 2024, when **Suu Kyi's** brother **Aung San**, who claimed half of the value of the property from **Suu Kyi**, who was in prison, for political reasons.

The villa was on the market for 315 Bn **kyats** (\$97 Mn) and failed to attract bidders.

Ahead of the latest auction, Aung San asked "the court to reduce the price." But no bidders emerged, even for the reduced price.

www.DiGiNews360.com believes that the people of Myanmar are quietly showing that they are against the military junta and that they want **Aung San Suu Kyi** to be released and rule as their elected Leader. www.DiGiNews360.com hopes the Generals are able to listen to the voice of the people.

ABOUT SUU KYI: **Aung San Suu Kyi** played a critical role in **Myanmar's** political transformation during the 2010s. Although she didn't initiate the initial changes, she adjusted to the "*disciplined democracy*" and worked to transform the system from within. In 2015, she led her **National League for Democracy (NLD)** to victory in **Myanmar's** first openly contested election in 25 years, promising a peaceful transfer of power and ensuring the country's march toward greater democracy. However, in February 2021, the military seized control in a coup, arresting **Suu Kyi** and other political leaders. She faced charges related to illegal imports of walkie-talkies, inciting public unrest, and accepting bribes. In a closed-door military-court, the 78-year-old was sentenced to 33-year prison. She denies all of the accusations and rights groups have condemned the court trials as a sham.

After she had spent a year in solitary confinement, recently, on Monday August 12, 2024, she was moved from prison to house arrest in a government building in **Nay Pyi Taw** due to health concerns during a heat wave.

Despite her fall from grace internationally, she remains popular with Myanmar's Buddhist majority.

The daughter of independence hero **General Aung San**, she emerged as a leader of the pro-democracy movement against the military dictatorship. She co-founded the **National League for Democracy** (NLD), but was put under house arrest in 1989.

Awarded the Nobel PEACE PRIZE, Ms. **Suu Kyi** was one of the world's leading democracy icons. Her release from detention in 2010 was celebrated in Myanmar and around the world.

But she was later criticized for defending her country against allegations of genocide at the UN **International Court of Justice** (ICJ) after widespread claims that **Myanmar** had committed atrocities against Muslim Rohingya while her government was in power. Nearly a million of them have fled **Myanmar** in recent years, and now live as refugees in neighboring **Bangladesh**.

Don Pramudwinai, Thailand's outgoing foreign minister revealed that he had visited Myanmar civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Sunday, August 11, 2024 and she encouraged engagement with the country's military junta to settle the crisis there. "There was a meeting. She was in good health. We had a good meeting," Mr Don Pramudwinai told reporters on Wednesday on the sidelines of the Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Jakarta.

The military has arranged a meeting between Ms **Suu Kyi** and **T Khun Myat** (b. October 30, 1949), also known as **Tang Bao Khun Myat**, the **Speaker** of the lower house of parliament. However, the military has denied these talks are taking place.

T KHUN MYAT, SPEAKER of the ASSEMBLY of the UNION: T Khun Myat has been the Speaker of the Assembly of the Union since August 2018. This position makes him the head of Myanmar's bicameral joint parliament and Speaker of the House of Representatives, which is the lower house of the Assembly of the Union. T Khun Myat contested and won the **Kutkai Township constituency** in both the 2010 and 2015 elections. T Khun Myat hails from a prominent **Kachin traditional ruling Duwa family**. The "T" in his name comes from his family clan name, Tangbau.

He is a Christian and has a legal background, having served as the legal director at the Office of the Attorney General.

Additionally, he led the **People's Militia Forces in Kutkai Township**, which was under the control of the Burmese Army from 1990 to 2010.

CONTROVERSIES: T Khun Myat was accused of involvement in illicit drug trade and money laundering during his tenure as the leader of a militia in Kutkai Township. He was also a shareholder in the now-defunct **Myanmar May Flower Bank**, which was closed down due to money laundering related to the illicit drugs industry.

Since the coup, Myanmar has spiralled into a civil war, which has killed thousands of people. Sanctions imposed on the military have failed to stop the violence.

---- A BACKGROUNDER on MYANMAR ----

Please do read the Editorial Comments on the last page.

www.DiGiNews360.com brings to you *BACKGROUNDEERS* on (i) **Kokang and Palaung Self-Administered Zones**- pages - 8 & 9; (ii) *ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF MYANMAR* - pages -10 & 11; (iii) *SCAM CENTERS* - page – 12; (iv) *ROHINGYA INSURGENCY* - pages - 12 & 13; (v) **Wa State** - page - 13 & 14; (vi) **Aung San Suu Ky** - pages - 14 & 15; (vii) *A BRIEF HISTORY after INDEPENDENCE* - pages – 15 to 18.

The **Myanmar** army has been facing a series of reverses in the face of insurgencies in the North. Though the ethnic insurgencies have plagued **Myanmar** since 1948, the year the country gained independence from the **United Kingdom**, the conflict has escalated significantly in response to the 2021 military coup d'état and the subsequent violent crackdown on anti-coup protesters.

During the last few weeks, the military junta has suffered the most serious setback, since it seized power in February 2021. The BROTHERHOOD ALLIANCE of three insurgent groups (the Kokang **Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA)**, the **Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA)** of the **Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF)** and the **Arakan Army of Rakhine State**) has overrun dozens of military posts, and captured border crossings and the roads carrying most of the overland trade with China.

<p>MILITIAS fighting MYANMAR ARMY OPERATION 1027; NE of Shan: Three Brotherhood Alliance consisting of Arakan Army, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army was launched in June 2019. The group rose to prominence for resisting the Burmese junta in the wake of the March 2021 Myanmar coup d'état. During the Myanmar civil war, the group fought mainly in Rakhine State and the northern part of Shan State.</p> <p>On October 27, 2023, the Alliance launched Operation 1027, an offensive against the junta in northern Shan state.</p> <p>OPERATION 1107; South of Shan: Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF), launched by Karenni National People's Liberation Front, Karenni Army and People's Defense Forces</p> <p>Rakhine State: Arakan Army (AA)</p>	<p>ear; n stan, ki in t. ppy % in rket: to asier china le. wer; - med</p>
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Myanmar

Independence from UK: Jan 4, 1948

Population: 57 Mn (26th);

Area: 676,579 Km² (39th);

Density: 76.0/ Km² 125th);

GDP: \$74.86 Bn (90th);

GDP per capita: \$1,381 (167th)

Capital: **Naypyidaw**: the site of

- the Union Parliament,
- the Supreme Court,
- the Presidential Palace,
- the official residences of

After two-and-half years of battling the armed uprising it provoked with its disastrous coup, the military is looking weak, and beatable. It has responded with airstrikes and artillery bombardments, forcing thousands of people to leave their homes. But it has been **unable to recover the ground it has lost**. Among hundreds of troops killed is the commander of its forces in Northern Shan State, **Brigadier General Aung Kyaw Lwin**, the most senior officer killed in combat since the coup.

CHINESE INFLUENCE: China normally acts as a restraining influence on all the groups along its border with **Myanmar**. But, during the last 3 years, the insurgents have taken over large areas. It shows that **China is either** no longer able to help military junta in the civil war **or** the insurgents are serving **China's** policy.

During the war, **Chinese in Myanmar** have been **targeted by** the **armies of the Brotherhood**, as admitted by **China** on 7th November 2023.

It marks the first time that some of the insurgents have explicitly aligned themselves and their military operations with the wider **campaign to overthrow the junta and restore democratic rule**. The insurgents are also attacking the corruption in the army by promising to close down the “scam centers” in Shan State.

China's **dream of a direct path to the Indian Ocean** will also remain unrealized if a democratic regime is established in **Myanmar**.



China's Dream of a path through Myanmar to Indian Ocean

Back in 2021, when peaceful protests against the coup were violently crushed by the military and police, opposition activists decided to call for a nationwide armed uprising against the junta.

Many fled to areas controlled by ethnic insurgents along Myanmar's borders with Thailand and China, where they hoped to get access to the training and weapons most of them lacked.

Some well-established ethnic armies, like the Karen, the Kachin, the Karenni and Chin, decided to ally themselves with the **National Unity Government (NUG)**, which was set up by the elected administration that was deposed by the coup.

Others did not, notably the various groups in Shan State, a huge, lawless region bordering Thailand and China. Perhaps best known as one of the **world's biggest producers of illicit narcotics**, Shan State has also recently begun hosting a booming business in **casinos** and **scam centres**. The State is now fragmented into the **fiefdoms of different warlords, drug bosses** or **ethnic rebels** who have been fighting each other and the army.

BORDER WITH INDIA: China has maintained a continuous supply of arms to the separatists in the North Eastern parts of India. They have found sanctuaries and been trained in use of arms by China.



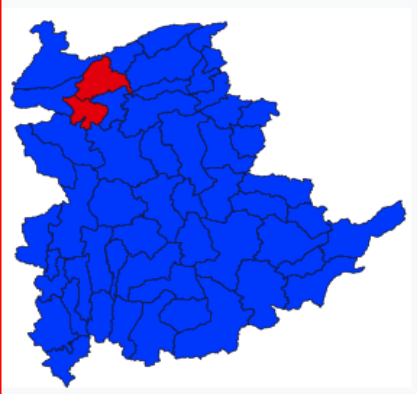
*Path for supplying **arms to separatists** in North Eastern India*

Chins have an affinity with Mizos in the **State of Mizoram** in India. **A few hundred Chins from Myanmar have taken a refuge in two villages in Mizoram** and the Government of India is trying to stem the incursions into India. India also wants to avoid the entry of illicit narcotics into India.

There are several ethnic armed groups fighting Myanmar's armed forces, the **Tatmadaw**, for self-determination. The conflict has largely been ethnic-based, and has been ongoing

---NOTES for the BACKGROUNDER on MYANMAR----

NOTES: 1. Kokang and Palaung Self-Administered Zones:



*Pa Laung (Red)
within Shan State (Blue)*

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After the British conquest of Upper Burma in 1885, Kokang was ceded to British Burma in an agreement signed in February 1897.

The **Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA)** traces its roots to the **Palaung State Liberation Army** formed in 1963. After the latter signed a ceasefire with the military government in 1991, remnant forces moved through China to **Kayin State** and continued to fight against the military together with the **Karen National Union** as the **Palaung State Liberation Front**. The Front was largely inactive, however, until 2009, when it established the TNLA as its new armed wing, under the patronage of the **Kachin Independence Organization**. The TNLA has fought regularly against not only the Myanmar military but also militias allied to the military, such as the **Pansay militia**, and the Shan State's **Army-South** & the **armed wing of the Restoration Council**.

Palaung Self-Administered Zone consists of two **townships** in Shan State: **Namhsan** and **Mantong**. It was created as a unit by the 2008 Constitution. Its **capital** is the town of **Namhsan**. It is administered by a **Leading Body**, which has ten members, including Shan State **Hluttaw** (Assembly) members elected from the Zone and

NOTES: 2. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF MYANMAR: Myanmar is divided into 21 administrative subdivisions. These include 7 regions, 7 states, 1 union territory, 1 self-administered division, and 5 self-administered zones. Here is a list of the states in Myanmar.

Reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Administrative_divisions_of_Myanmar

The regions are **Sagaing** (capital: Monywa), **Mandalay**, **Magwe**, **Bago**, **Yangon**, **Ayeyarwady** (capital: Patheingyi) and **Tanintharyi**. The regions can be described as ethnically predominantly **Burman** (Bamar). The 7 regions have a population of 35.23 Mn out of 57.53 for whole of Myanmar.

The **Naypyidaw Union Territory** has a population of 1.16 Mn.

Wa Self-Administered Division (Capital: Hopang) of Shan State: Population: 0.56 Mn. **Self-Administered Zones (SAZ): Pa'O** (capital: Hopong); **Danu** (capital: Pindaya); **Kokang** (capital: Laukkai); **Pa Laung** (capital: Namhsan) of **Shan State with** Population of 0.38 Mn, 0.16 Mn, 0.12 Mn and 0.11 Mn respectively. The population of **Naga SAZ** (capital: Namhsan) of **Sagaing State** is 0.12 Mn. (Please see map of Myanmar, including all its administrative units, on page 5.)



7 STATES:

Kachin State: (northernmost part of Myanmar); home to the **Kachin people**; includes **snow-capped mountains** of Himalayas and the **Irrawaddy River**.

Shan State: (eastern Myanmar); home to the **Shan people**; known for **Inle Lake** and **Shan Hills**.

Kayah State: (eastern Myanmar); home to the **Kayah people**. shares **Inle Lake** with Shan State. It also has the **Loikaw region**.

Kayin State: (southeastern Myanmar); home to the **Karen people**; includes the **Hpa-An region** and the **Kyauk Ka Lat Pagoda**

Mon State: (southeastern Myanmar); home to the **Mon people**; The **Kyaiktiyo Pagoda** and the **Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery** are in this State.

Rakhine State: (western Myanmar); home to the **Rakhine people**; includes the **Ngapali Beach** and the **Mrauk U Archaeological Site**.

Chin State: home to the **Chin people**; includes the **Chin Hills** and the **Mount Victoria region**.

Reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Administrative_divisions_of_Myanmar

NOTES: 3. SCAM CENTERS: According to an article by Alastair McCready and Allegra Mendelson of the Pulitzer Center, jointly with Hein Thar, scam centers in Myanmar are **criminal enterprises run by Chinese gangs**. that are conning people around the world 1. These centers are located in **southeastern Kayin state** along the Thai border and **Kokang Self-Administered Zone**, and the **Wa-administered city of Mong La in Shan state** on the Chinese border.



Kayin State, shown in red, in the map of Myanmar

*The Dock for boats at Gate 25, north of Myanmar’s **Myawaddy township**, in the **Kayin State**, southeastern **Myanmar**, close to the border with Thailand*

The centers are involved in cyber scams, and their victims are often trafficked from other countries such as **Malaysia, Taiwan, Indonesia, India, Kenya**, and **Nepal** with promises of high-paying work. Once they arrive, they are trapped for months or years, and are subjected to severe physical abuse and torture. The scams are run by Chinese criminals, and the victims are forced to defraud strangers online.

NOTES: 4. ROHINGYA INSURGENCY: The Rohingya insurgency is one of the most well-known insurgencies in Myanmar, which has been ongoing since 2017. The Rohingya are a **Muslim minority group** in Myanmar, which wanted to join Pakistan in 1947. The well-armed Rohingyas committed **atrocities on Buddhist villagers and took over some of the villages, by driving out the Buddhists from their ancestral homes**. The action by the Myanmar army has led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas, many of whom have fled to neighboring Bangladesh.

The conflict has been condemned by the international community, with the United Nations describing it as a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing”. The conflict has also led to the imposition of sanctions on Myanmar by several countries, including the United States and the European Union.

ROHINGYAS in INDIA: **Organized gangs of Muslim radicals** in India have tried to bring Rohingyas from Bangladesh and to settle them illegally at various places in India. Groups of Rohingyas, in the illegal settlements, have also been used, by radical Islamists, to foment riots at various places in India including the **riots in North East Delhi, between February 23-29 February 2020**, during **President Trump’s visit to India on February 24-25, 2020**.



Feb 23-29, 2020: North Eastern Delhi: Empty Street during riots

NOTES: 5. The **Wa State** is an **autonomous self-governing polity in Myanmar**, which is de facto independent from the rest of the country and has its own political system, administrative divisions, and army. The Wa agreed a ceasefire with the Myanmar military back in 1989. The Wa State government **recognizes Myanmar’s sovereignty over all of its territory**. The 2008 Constitution of Myanmar officially recognizes the **northern part of Wa State as the Wa Self-Administered Division of Shan State**.

As a **one-party socialist state** ruled by the **United Wa State Party (UWSP)**, Wa State is divided into three counties, two special districts, and one economic development zone. The administrative capital is **Pangkham**, formerly known as Pangsang. Wa has **sophisticated modern weapons and around 20,000 troops** backed by China.



Myanmar: Wa Special Region

The Wa State is located in the eastern part of Myanmar, bordering China's Yunnan province to the north and Laos to the east.

The Wa ethnic group, who speak an Austroasiatic language, are the largest ethnic group in the Wa State. The Wa State has been in conflict with the Myanmar government for decades, and the conflict has escalated significantly in response to the 2021 military coup d'état and the subsequent violent crackdown on anti-coup protesters.

NOTES: 6. Aung San Suu Ky, (born 19 June 1945), sometimes abbreviated to **Suu Kyi**, is a Burmese politician, diplomat, author, and a 1991 Nobel Peace Prize laureate who served as **State Counsellor of Myanmar** (equivalent to a **Prime Minister**) and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 6th April 2016 to 1st February 2021. She has served as the general secretary of the **National League for Democracy** (NLD) since the party's founding in 1988 and was registered as its chairperson while it was a legal party from 2011 to 2023. She played a vital role in **Myanmar's** transition from military junta to partial democracy in the 2010s.



Aung San Suu Kyi: State Counsellor of Myanmar

The youngest daughter of **Aung San**, Father of the Nation of modern-day Myanmar, and **Khin Kyi**, Aung San Suu Kyi was born in Rangoon, British Burma. After graduating from the University of Delhi in 1964 and St Hugh's College, Oxford in 1968, she worked at the United Nations for three years. She married **Michael Aris** in 1972, with whom she had two children.

NOTES: 7. A BRIEF HISTORY after INDEPENDENCE: Burma was granted independence on January 4, 1948 by UK.

When the non-Burman ethnic groups pushed for autonomy or federalism, alongside having a weak civilian government at the centre, **General Ne Win staged a bloodless coup d'état on 2nd March 1962.**

8888 UPRISING: In 1988, unrest over economic mismanagement and political oppression by the government led to widespread pro-democracy demonstrations throughout the country. Security forces killed thousands of demonstrators.

General Saw Maung staged a coup d'état and formed the **State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)**. In 1989, SLORC declared martial law after widespread protests.

SLORC changed the country's official English name from the "Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma" to the "**Union of Myanmar**" on **18 June 1989**.

In May 1990, the government held free multiparty elections for the first time in almost 30 years, and the **National League for Democracy (NLD)**, the party of Aung San Suu Kyi, won earning **392 out of a total 492 seats**. However, the military junta refused to cede power and continued to rule the nation.

General Than Shwe took over the Chairmanship – effectively the position of Myanmar's top ruler – from **General Saw Maung** in 1992 and held it until 2011.

The Military ruled, first as SLORC and, from 1997, as the **State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)** until its dissolution in March 2011.

On 23 June 1997, Myanmar was admitted into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

On 27 March 2006, the military junta, which had moved the national capital from Yangon to a site near **Pyinmana** in November 2005, officially named the new capital **Naypyidaw**, (*meaning "city of the kings"*).

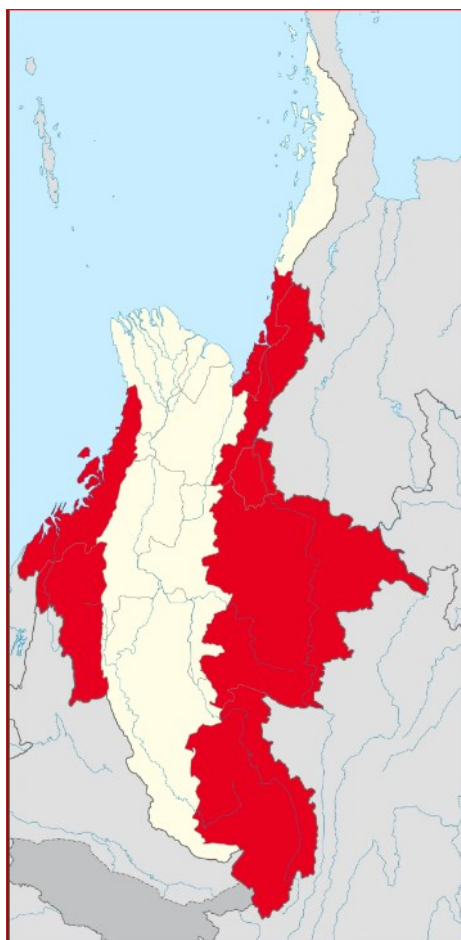
SAFFRON REVOLUTION: In August 2007, an increase in the price of fuel led to the Saffron Revolution led by Buddhist monks. The government cracked down on them on 26 September 2007, with reports of barricades at the **Shwedagon Pagoda** and monks killed. The military crackdown against unarmed protesters was widely condemned as part of the international reactions to the Saffron Revolution and led to an increase in economic sanctions against the Burmese Government.

In May 2008, Cyclone Nargis caused extensive damage in the densely populated rice-farming delta of the Irrawaddy Division. It was the worst natural disaster in Burmese history with reports of an estimated 200,000 people dead or missing, damages totaled to 10 billion US dollars, and as many as 1 million were left homeless. In the critical days following this disaster, Myanmar's isolationist government was accused of hindering United Nations recovery efforts. Humanitarian aid was requested, but concerns about foreign military or

intelligence presence in the country delayed the entry of United States military planes delivering medicine, food, and other supplies.

In early August 2009, a conflict broke out in Shan State in northern Myanmar. For several weeks, junta troops fought against **ethnic minorities including the Han Chinese, Wa, and Kachin**. During 8–12 August, the first days of the conflict, as many as 10,000 Burmese civilians fled to Yunnan in neighbouring China.

CIVIL WARS: Civil wars have been a constant feature of Myanmar's socio-political landscape since the attainment of independence in 1948. These wars are predominantly struggles for ethnic and sub-national autonomy, with the areas surrounding the ethnically **Bamar central districts of the country** serving as the primary geographical setting of conflict. Foreign journalists and visitors require a special travel permit to visit the areas in which Myanmar's civil wars continue.



Myanmar
consisting of

- Red areas and
- pale Yellow areas.

BAMAR areas are shown in pale Yellow.

In October 2012, the ongoing conflicts in Myanmar included the Kachin conflict, between the **Pro-Christian Kachin Independence Army** and the government; a civil

war between the **Rohingya Muslims** and the government and non-government groups in **Rakhine State** (*in the northern part*); and a conflict between **the Shan, Lahu, and Karen minority groups**, and the government in the eastern half of the country. In addition, al-Qaeda signaled an intention to become involved in Myanmar.

Armed conflict between **ethnic Chinese rebels** and the Myanmar Armed Forces resulted in the **Kokang offensive in February 2015**. The conflict had forced 40,000 to 50,000 civilians to flee their homes and seek shelter on the Chinese side of the border. During the incident, the government of China was accused of giving military assistance to the **ethnic Chinese rebels**. Clashes between Burmese troops and local insurgent groups have continued, fueling **tensions between China and Myanmar**.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS from www.DiGiNews360.com: The situation in Myanmar is complex. During the last few weeks, the Brotherhood Alliance of three insurgent groups seems to be winning over the Myanmar Army. China has always been supporting the military juntas in Myanmar since 1962 and it continues to support the Myanmar Army.

However, it is to be remembered that all the insurgent groups in Myanmar were also sustained by China with arms, training and refuge, when necessary. It is the first time that under the rubric of Brotherhood Alliance, three insurgent groups have joined hands with democratic forces in Myanmar. China did try to constrain the Groups but has not yet succeeded in persuading them to stop their onslaught on the Myanmar Army.

While China, after 75 years, finds that the insurgent groups are not accepting China's advice, www.DiGiNews360.com notes that USA or ASEAN do not have any leverage with either the Brotherhood Alliance or the Army junta. It is to be seen whether China would agree to give up its efforts of 75 years and permit a democratic regime to be established in Myanmar.

India seems to be using its moral influence in favor of a democratic regime in Myanmar. But www.DiGiNews360.com knows that India does not have adequate military resources in Myanmar. Hence if the civil war does lead to full-scale hostilities, www.DiGiNews360.com can only wish for the victory of democratic forces.

Note: Please see information about the Population, the GDP, the Area and the **capital** (Nay Pyi Daw) of Myanmar, along with a map, showing the States, on page 2 of “Biden saving Taiwan; China trying to take over Myanmar” dated November 16, 2022 at <https://diginews360.com/biden-saving-taiwan-china-trying-to-take-over-myanmar/>

Notes: 1. PLEASE READ “Myanmar: Is the military junta losing to the brotherhood alliance?” dated December 29, 2023 at <https://diginews360.com/myanmar-military-junta-losing-to-the-brotherhood-alliance/> .

2. Please read “Biden saving Taiwan; China trying to take over Myanmar” dated November 16, 2022 at <https://diginews360.com/biden-saving-taiwan-china-trying-to-take-over-myanmar/> . Please see pages 2 and 3 for the Brotherhood Alliance.

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