

GLOBAL UP-TO-DATE

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The world around us is changing rapidly. Wars, new turn in global politics, human rights issues are occurring every day, posing new challenges and concerns. Global Up-to-Date is an initiative by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) which will work as a hub for explaining the contemporary global issues.

The regular briefs will focus and explain the issues related to International Politics, Economy, Security, Human Rights, and Development. There will be a monthly printed version newsletter containing briefs of all the contemporary global important issues. The online version contains regular updates of the pressing issues along with the PDF version of the newsletter.



Operation 1027: A New Ray of Light for Myanmar's Resistance

Roman Uddin



Myanmar, a Southeast Asian country surrounded by the borders of India, China, and Bangladesh, is one of the few maps in the world that are blood red most of the year. Despite being steeped in Buddhism, a religion that embodies the vision of peace promoted by Gautama Buddha, Myanmar has faced numerous defensive wars, riots, tyranny, and torture throughout its history since gaining independence in 1948. Ever since gaining independence, the people of this country have been striving for democracy, human rights, and freedom of speech, but progress has come to a standstill under the threat of the military regime. Aung San, the father of the nation, was assassinated before Myanmar gained independence, and the military has held power in various ways since then.

Due to the undemocratic process, dictatorship, and the violation of human rights, the international community-imposed sanctions on the Myanmar Junta Government. When Myanmar's economic situation began to deteriorate under the sanctions of foreign countries, especially western nations, they released the leaders of various political parties who were imprisoned. To convince the international communities, they declared 7 steps of the democratic process and formed a constitution. As a part of their process, Aung San Suu Kyi, who had been under house arrest for a long time, was also released. Later, her party came to power through the 2015 elections, and the people of Myanmar experienced democracy under her rule, though there was still a remarkable dominance of the military. However, in 2021, when she won for the second time, the military seized power and arrested Suu Kyi again, crushing Myanmar's democratic journey once more.

This junta government has been running the country dictatorially for ages, subjecting various ethnic groups from various states, including Shan, Kachin, Rakhine, Sagaing, and Mandalay, to inhuman oppression, torture, and tyranny. Many times, over the past few decades, armed groups from these regions have fought separately with the Tatmadaw forces, the armed forces of the junta government, but to no avail. A change has been noticed in the present time. These armed groups from different states of Myanmar have formed an alliance. The Arakan Army, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army have formed the Three Brotherhood Alliance.

The Three Brotherhood Alliance is already successfully carrying out their “Operation 1027,” conducting this operation throughout the month of November 2023. They jointly launched the anti-regime operation by attacking and seizing regime bases and towns across northern Shan, Kachin, and Rakhine states, as well as the upper reaches of Sagaing and Mandalay regions. Several resistance organizations, including the People's Defense Force groups (PDFs) under the civilian National Unity Government (NUG), the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF), and one of the country's most powerful ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), are coordinating with the Brotherhood Alliance's operation. Within a month, over 224 junta bases and seven towns across northern Shan, including some strategic centers on key Myanmar-China trade routes, have been seized from the junta.

Since the operation's launch, the resistance groups have managed to block many sections of two of the country's main trade arteries - the Mandalay-Lashio-Muse Road and the Mandalay-Lashio-Chin Shwe Haw Road, both of which pass through northern Shan State.

In the earliest days of the operation, the rebel groups managed to take complete control of Chin Shwe Haw, a trade hub on the Chinese border. Later, they seized another strategic town, Hseni, where the Lashio-Muse and Lashio-Chin Shwe Haw trade routes converge, as well as another trade gate - Kyin San Kyawt on the China border in Muse Township.

The most remarkable thing is that China, the closest friend of the junta government, is not helping them in this difficult time. Many believe that China is secretly supporting and supplying the rebel group with weapons. Meanwhile, Tatmadaw forces in various regions are surrendering to the resistance groups. In the overall situation, Army General Min Aung Hlaing has already expressed the fear that the country will be divided into different parts.

As the war rages on, it will be difficult for the junta government to retain this power. However, if the junta government is ousted, there are many fears about what Myanmar will look like after. The armed groups that are now uniting against the military Tatmadaw forces have conflicts among themselves, and not all of them have the same goals. Some want power, some want autonomy, and some want a free state. Therefore, it is challenging to predict where the future of Myanmar is headed. However, it is conceivable that the future of the junta government is going to be very difficult.

The Holy Land's Unholy War: Israel vs. Hamas

Depanjali Roy



Throughout history, the world has witnessed numerous wars, with many of them being driven by territorial power struggles. On October 7th of this year, Hamas initiated a missile attack on Israeli territory, marking a tragic event reminiscent of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Upon analyzing this Hamas attack, it appears that they had been planning it for months, carefully choosing the optimal time to strike, with the intention of shaking the foundations of Israel's authority from within.

The Hamas-led operation has been dubbed "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood." According to Hamas military commander Mohammed Al-Deif, this offensive is a response to the suffering endured by Palestinians at the hands of Israeli military forces. It is also considered a form of retaliation for the events that transpired at Al-Aqsa Mosque on May 10, 2021. Regarding the recent attack, on the morning of October 7, Hamas launched a barrage of 5,000 missiles aimed at Israeli territory.

Even Israel's advanced defense system, the "Iron Dome," proved unable to intercept all of the incoming missiles. Hamas's strategy was highly coordinated, involving simultaneous attacks from land and air. Many Palestinians, along with Hamas commanders, breached the Gaza Strip border using bulldozers, seized Israeli military tanks, took hostages, and initiated violence across the region. As of now, several foreigners and Israeli citizens remain held hostage by Hamas, and videos depicting their actions have circulated widely on social media.

Following the startling attack, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced a military operation called "Iron Sword." He emphasized the need to respond resolutely to the actions of Hamas, stating, "They initiated the conflict, and we will bring it to a conclusion." This declaration represents a decisive offensive stance by the prime minister, as there appeared to be no alternative but to respond robustly. It's worth noting that the failure of Israeli intelligence agencies is apparent in this situation. Israel possesses three intelligence organizations equipped with cutting-edge technology and networks. The surprise attack also highlights a certain level of negligence on the part of the Israeli government.

Several factors contributed to this: Firstly, the government, under Benjamin Netanyahu, is currently grappling with challenges related to the reformation of the judicial system and facing accusations of corruption. These internal issues have diverted the government's attention from external threats. Additionally, these reforms have implications for the Israeli military, leading to protests and meetings among citizens and defense forces, further diverting the government's focus from security matters.

Secondly, The Israeli government thought that the relations between Israel and Palestine are getting stable as no conflicts are taking place for the last few months. Also, some Palestinians from Gaza also got the work permit to work in Israel and no tensions were witnessed. The Israeli government took it lightly and this ignorance cost them sudden destruction.

Thirdly, Israel, as a formidable nation, boasts state-of-the-art intelligence capabilities, well-equipped armed forces, and strong alliances, notably with countries like Egypt and the United States. Nonetheless, the Israeli government opted to disregard critical intelligence provided by the Egyptian authorities just days before the attack. This heedless decision led to significant and regrettable consequences.

The loss continued even after 23 days of the conflict. The Israeli Army initiated a ground operation in Gaza while simultaneously continuing missile launches. They had issued warnings to Palestinian civilians to relocate from the north to the south of the Gaza Strip, but tragically, even the southern region came under attack by the Israeli military. Basic necessities such as food, water, electricity, and medical assistance were severed from Gaza, a dire violation of human rights that drew sharp criticism from the United Nations. It was viewed as an inhumane act. After 23 days, relief trucks finally entered Gaza to aid civilians. The death toll had already risen to 8,000 Palestinians during this war. Despite the considerable loss of life, Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the proposal for a ceasefire with Hamas, expressing the belief that such a move would be seen as Israel's defeat in the conflict.

Other than that, if we see a bigger picture involving other countries, like allies of Israel and Palestine can make the war go even worse. Not to mention it will impact the world economy as well. Escalating the war will benefit not Israel, nor Palestine but mainly Iran. There is a high possibility that Iran helped and funded Hamas, to carry out the attack on the 7th October. Every country in the Middle East knows that Iran, a Shia country, supports Hamas ideology of occupying the whole Israel territory and making their land "Jewish-less". Their support is getting stronger after Saudi Arabia and Israel are about to sign a peace agreement to normalize their relations. During this prolonged war even Lebanon and Syria also making their hands dirty. On October 29, Lebanon and Syria launched rocket on Northern Israel attacking their air base. Though no injuries took place. But its clear sign from their sign to Israel to stop the war. In response Israel attacked their targets included "infrastructure for directing terror, and military infrastructure", by which they mean Hezbollah influenced territories. As more parties engaged in the war, the situation will get bad to worse.

In these circumstances both of the parties of the war should only think of their own good by making a possible ceasefire to stop the civilians from suffering. Before the war turns into a global crisis, institutions like the United Nations and other super powers should come forward to resolve this conflict, with soft power or if needed hard power. As this is the era of globalization, this war will not only affect these two countries but others with a "domino effect".

However, in 2009, the reparations movement took a turn when the Civil Rights Congress of Nigeria openly requested African chieftains to apologize for their roles in the Atlantic slave trade. Not only were European traders, industrial officials, mine owners, banks, and emperors responsible for the transatlantic slave trade, but African leaders (chiefs) were also involved in that historical crime. Surprisingly, the reparation movement activists have not fully acknowledged the dark role of African leaders in those 400 years of exploitation history.

Former President Barack Obama opposed reparations for slavery in 2008. In 2015, British Prime Minister David Cameron rejected the reparations arguments, and the current British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak continues in the same tone. It is evident that political parties holding power in the West are resistant to the reparations call.

In a podcast in 2021, Barack Obama revealed that 'white resistance' stopped him from pushing for reparations during his presidency, indicating that taxpayers may not fully support the reparations call either. The debate revolves around how global powers should compensate to the nations whose labor fueled the economic rise of Western countries. Reparation activists argue that the essence of the movement lies in repairing the harm caused by centuries of exploitation.

Today's developed Europe, built on over 400 years of exploitation history, acknowledges human rights violations during those centuries but has yet to publish a thorough report on the issue. In the latter part of the twentieth century, European countries approached CARICOM and African Union countries with various development aids and agendas, resulting in the ongoing debt of The Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and African Union countries exceeding 55% of their GDP to these external nations. The reparations movement aims not only to address historical wrongs but also to challenge the existing world system order.

The prime focus of the reparation movement is the acknowledgment of the wealth amassed through exploitation. This global movement represents a significant step towards addressing historical wrongs and dismantling entrenched inequalities rooted in centuries of exploitation. As nations grapple with the moral imperative of reparations, the debate transcends monetary compensation to encompass broader issues of development, education, and systemic change. The world watches as the reparations movement unfolds, questioning whether it can indeed break the chains of the existing world system and pave the way for a more just and equitable future.

Despite the challenges, there is hope. In August, UN Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted the need for global action to address the long-standing injustice of slavery. He emphasized that it is a critical issue - no country has fully addressed the 400-year-long historical enslavement of people of African descent.

The pivotal question remains: Can this reparations movement break the high politics of the loan and development agenda, which results in small countries becoming peripheral to core developed countries? As the world grapples with this question, the reparations movement stands as a beacon of hope for a future built on justice, acknowledgment, and genuine equity.

Sam Altman Returns to OpenAI Amidst Turbulence

Aong Cha Ching Marma



Sam Altman, the renowned figure in the AI community, has made a comeback to OpenAI after a series of tumultuous events following his ouster from the company he co-founded. In his return, Altman unveiled a new board of directors, featuring prominent figures such as Larry Summers, former U.S. Treasury Secretary, and Adam D'Angelo, along with former Salesforce co-CEO Bret Taylor as chair.

OpenAI, the developer of ChatGPT (Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer), a powerful language model-based chatbot, offers both free and commercial versions. ChatGPT Plus, the subscription-based commercial version, operates on the generative pre-trained transformer (GPT) versions 3.5 and 4.0 for the free and paid versions, respectively.

Notably, ChatGPT achieved remarkable success, garnering one million users within its first week of release on November 30, 2022, earning OpenAI the title of the fastest-growing startup globally. Fast forward to November 2023, ChatGPT boasts over 180.5 million regular users, with 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies incorporating it into their daily corporate operations.

By January 2023, ChatGPT secured a valuation of an astounding \$29 billion, becoming the fastest-growing consumer software application in history. With its growing user base, the prediction stands that ChatGPT will generate a revenue of \$200 million by the end of 2023.

Sam Altman, OpenAI's co-founder and CEO, played a pivotal role in the company's success until his unexpected ouster on November 17, 2023. The decision, orchestrated by board members Adam D'Angelo, Helen Toner, Tasha McCauley, and Ilya Sutskever, triggered a series of events and raised questions about their motives and competence in managing the world's most high-profile AI startup.

OpenAI's unique structure, outlined in a concise 500-word charter, aimed to ensure that artificial general intelligence benefits all of humanity. However, as investors and influential figures became involved, complications arose.

Satya Nadella, Microsoft's CEO became furious hearing the news related to the ouster of OpenAI CEO, Sam Altman. Microsoft has invested 19 billion dollars in OpenAI since 2019. ChatGPT service was integrated into Microsoft's products such as Microsoft's Bing search engine, sales and marketing software, GitHub coding tools, Microsoft 365 productivity bundle, and Azure cloud. After being fired by OpenAI, Sam Altman was poached by Microsoft to lead its new in-house advanced artificial intelligence research team. Greg Brockman, another co-founder of OpenAI, was also called to lead the team.

In response to Altman's ouster, over 650 of OpenAI's approximately 770 employees threatened to resign unless the board directors stepped down and reinstated Altman. After a series of developments, Altman emerged victorious, and on November 21, OpenAI announced an agreement in principle for his return as CEO.

Altman, in his initial statements after returning, expressed unwavering commitment to OpenAI's mission. However, concerns linger among some about the fair use of AI and its governance under Altman's leadership. The recent reshuffling of leadership and the introduction of a new board of directors mark a critical juncture for OpenAI and its future endeavors.

As OpenAI navigates this pivotal chapter with Sam Altman back at the helm and a new board of directors in place, the company stands at the intersection of technological innovation and ethical responsibility. The resurgence of ChatGPT, coupled with Altman's return and the reshaping of leadership, signals a renewed commitment to advancing artificial intelligence for the benefit of humanity. However, as the company moves forward, the doubts and concerns surrounding AI governance persist, emphasizing the ongoing need for transparent and ethical practices in the ever-evolving landscape of artificial intelligence.