

How China safeguards its interests amid conflict in Myanmar

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With escalating military conflict between Myanmar's ruling junta and various ethnic armed organisations (or EAOs) in recent months, China is pursuing a delicate balancing act along their shared 2200 km border, juggling its economic interests, security concerns, and regional reputation. While Beijing has traditionally supported the junta, recent events have signalled the limits of such backing as the regime appears to weaken. In Northern Shan State, a region with a rich tapestry of ethnic groups and militias - many at odds with the central government - China has attempted to position itself as a mediator, convening peace talks and exerting pressure on various factions. Meanwhile, reverberations of the unrest have been felt across the border in China's Yunnan Province, impacting trade, border security, and prompting calls for a potential Chinese security presence in Myanmar. So what's really at stake for China as events in Myanmar become increasingly uncertain? How much do Beijing's aspirations in the region rely on continued support for the ruling junta? And what constructive role, if any, could Beijing play in a more peaceful future for Myanmar? Jason Tower, Myanmar country director for the United States Institute of Peace, and Dr Pascal Abb, China foreign policy analyst at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, examine the intersection of Myanmar's fate and China's interests with Ear to Asia host Sami Shah.

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Main image: (L-R) Dr Pascal Abb and Jason Tower. Listing image: A village in Shan State. Credit: Axel Drainville/Flickr.

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