



Special Advisory Council for MYANMAR

China's Intervention Behind the Junta's Shameful Reoccupation of Lashio From the MNDAA

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China's intervention in Myanmar's northern Shan State shows that it continues to put its own interests first, at the expense of genuine peace and stability for the Myanmar people, despite its repeated claims of a non-interference policy.

On 23 March 2025, under intense pressure from the Chinese Government, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) agreed to withdraw from Lashio city in northern Shan State, according to local media reports.

Lashio, home to the military's northeastern regional military command, was captured in a major coordinated offensive by the MNDAA, the Bamar People's Liberation Army and the People's Liberation Army in August 2024. It was one of the most significant defeats ever inflicted on the Myanmar military, though it came at a heavy cost for revolutionary forces. At least 500 resistance troops were killed and 1000 wounded during the month-long siege, according to reports.

The victory in Lashio was part of a series of nationwide offensives that saw revolutionary forces seize control of vast swathes of territory from the junta, including lucrative international trade routes, key Chinese-backed infrastructure, dozens of towns and cities and hundreds of military outposts.

The MNDAA's decision to hand Lashio back to the Myanmar military junta is a betrayal of the sacrifices made by hundreds of revolutionaries who gave their lives to liberate the city. It sets a dangerous and destructive precedent that undermines the MNDAA's stated commitment to the revolutionary struggle and to achieving total victory against the junta — a commitment it made to the Myanmar people and all other revolutionary forces. It also places Lashio city residents — scores of whom have already been killed in targeted junta air attacks — at greater risk of junta reprisals and atrocities.

China used coercive measures to pressure the MNDAA into ceasing its military operations against the junta and withdrawing from Lashio city. Chinese authorities shut border crossings and cut electricity and internet service to MNDAA-controlled areas. China has also supplied the junta with fighter jets used to carry out relentless airstrikes on towns and cities across Myanmar, including Lashio and others under MNDAA



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control. China's interventions give the lie to its regular assertion of the principle of non-interference in the affairs of other states.

The surrender of Lashio is the Chinese Government's most direct intervention in the Myanmar conflict since the junta's attempted power grab in February 2021. Over 19 and 20 April, China's Special Envoy to Myanmar led a Chinese delegation to Lashio to oversee the return of junta troops to the city and monitor the ceasefire, according to local media reports.

While China might be seen as hedging its bets in Myanmar, it is acting against its own interests in backing the junta. The junta has plunged Myanmar into a political, humanitarian and economic crisis that has destabilised the region. These crises have derailed Chinese projects and business interests in Myanmar. What is more, the junta has repeatedly conducted aerial attacks in border regions with China, in some cases impacting Chinese territory. Last month, in a reckless display of a shoot-first policy, junta troops opened fire at a Chinese Red Cross convoy providing earthquake relief in Shan State.

Events in Lashio have further exposed how weak the junta has become after four years of revolution. As its losses continue to mount, the junta is now totally dependent on foreign intervention to regain nominal control of key strategic assets it has lost and surrendered to revolutionary forces.

China's military support for the brutal junta and its brazen intervention in Myanmar is a misplaced bet. It will not save the junta, it will only prolong the suffering of the Myanmar people and delay the arrival of genuine peace. And when the junta finally falls - as it inevitably will - the people of Myanmar will remember exactly where China stood.

