

## Revolutionary challenges of the Myanmar Generation Z students and the impact on the rapidity of the 2021 spring revolution

### *Tantangan revolusi pelajar Generasi Z Myanmar dan dampak pesatnya revolusi musim semi 2021*

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#### Abstract

The Generation Z student revolutions in Myanmar that fight for democracy against the military coup in 2021 present challenges that limit the rapidity of the revolution. The research aims to explore Generation Z students' movements and challenges in anti-coup protests, armed struggle movements, and click movements as well as the impacts on the rapidity of the revolution. The study used a qualitative method by applying the social movement theory and revolutionary concept of Charles Tilly which reveal that Generation Z students are confronted with deaths triggered by violent crackdowns, illegal arrests, and imprisonment, difficulties with the environment and livelihoods, financial matters, weaponry issues, and internet outages in conducting movements against the coup. Challenges, however, simply dragged down the protest movement's rapidity; armed movements and online click movements are still escalating on their own rapidity. The research concludes that the outcome of the revolutionary movement is unpredictable except the conflict between the military and armed resistance is gradually expanding day by day during a two-and-a-half-year post-coup period.

**Keywords:** anti-coup protests; armed movements; online click movement; Generation Z students; military coup

#### Abstrak

Revolusi mahasiswa Generasi Z di Myanmar yang memperjuangkan demokrasi melawan kudeta militer pada tahun 2021 menghadirkan tantangan yang membatasi kecepatan revolusi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi gerakan dan tantangan mahasiswa Generasi Z dalam protes anti kudeta, gerakan perjuangan bersenjata, dan gerakan klik serta dampaknya terhadap pesatnya revolusi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan menerapkan teori gerakan sosial dan konsep revolusioner Charles Tilly yang mengungkapkan bahwa siswa Generasi Z dihadapkan pada kematian yang dipicu oleh tindakan keras, penangkapan dan pemenjaraan ilegal, kesulitan terhadap lingkungan dan mata pencaharian, masalah keuangan, masalah persenjataan, dan pemadaman internet dalam melakukan gerakan menentang kudeta. Namun, tantangan yang ada hanya memperlambat kecepatan gerakan protes, gerakan bersenjata dan gerakan klik online masih meningkat dengan kecepatannya sendiri. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa hasil dari gerakan revolusioner tidak dapat diprediksi, kecuali konflik antara militer dan perlawanan bersenjata yang secara bertahap meluas dari hari ke hari selama periode dua setengah tahun pasca kudeta.

**Kata kunci:** protes anti kudeta; gerakan bersenjata; gerakan klik online; mahasiswa Generasi Z; kudeta militer

## Introduction

The 2021 Spring Revolution in Myanmar was initiated against the 2021 military coup which was launched by the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) led by General Min Aung Hlaing on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021 following the results of the general election held in November 2020 (Bynum 2021, Goldman 2021). Myanmar military claimed that the National League for Democracy party (NLD) had committed electoral vote fraud in the 2020 election. Conversely, the National League for Democracy (NLD), won 83 percent of seats in the parliament over the military back party the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) (Bynum 2021, Gunawan et al. 2021).

Regarding the country's political history, four coups have occurred since the country achieved independence in 1948 which are the 1960 and 1962 coups led by General Ne Win, the 1988 coup led by General Saw Maung (Steinberg 2021), and the fourth coup, the 2021 coup, was led by General Min

Aung Hlaing (Gunawan et al. 2021). The younger generation who realized the tragedy and harshness of the military dictatorship started to against the 2021 coup through street demonstrations (Jordt et al. 2021). Young generation students in Myanmar who proudly identify as “Generation Z” those between the ages of 16 and 30 (Subedi & Garnett 2021), have actively participated in the anti-coup protest movement since the military take-over in the first week of February (Waa 2021).

Generation Z students primarily took part in nonviolent anti-coup protest campaigns and movements later incorporating the armed struggle movement with the approval of the National Unity Government (Bynum 2021). In the non-violent protest movements, Generation Z students protests to get attention from international society by using viral online jokes and memes, dressing up like movie action heroes, bridesmaids, ball gowns, and other interesting and eye-catching characters (Waa 2021). Along with the protest movement Generation Z students were involved in various strikes, online campaigns, petitioning campaigns against the coup, and tweeting updated information about the ongoing protests. Additionally, Generation Z students participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) by not going to campus and boycotting the education system under the military regime. Since the coup commence, thousands of Myanmar Generation Z students joined the frontlines of the revolutionary protest movements against the military (Kapi 2021, Frontier 2023).

As soon as the Myanmar military commenced its violent crackdown by using live bullets, and grenade weapons, Generation Z students were confronted with challenges like mass executions, arbitrary arrests, and illegal imprisonment. Generation Z protestors faced numerous challenges, including mass executions, arbitrary arrests, torture, sexual violence, and other forms of abuse (Regan et al. 2021, Bangkok 2022). The activist group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners reports that security forces killed at least 3819 students during the crackdown and 23980 were imprisoned (Prisoners 2023). Generation Z students who had been arrested were subjected to severe torture, sexual violence, other forms of abuse, and violations of fundamental human rights while being interrogated as a result of the subsequent struggle of the protest movements. Generation Z students decided that the nonviolent tactic failed which led them to change their strategy to engage in armed struggle movements (Bynum 2021). After the challenges that occurred as a result of the severe crackdowns, the rapidity of the protest movement came to an end at this particular moment.

Generation Z students become members of the People’s Defense Forces (PDF) to conduct the armed movement with the assistance of Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) (Head 2022, Frontier 2023). In the armed movement, Generation Z students mainly performed ambush and mine missions, bombing missions targeting police stations, and battle missions with troops (Bynum 2021). Challenges regarding livelihood, lifestyles, routines, new environments electricity, internet connection, financial issues, and other fundamental stuff arose as Generation Z students became People’s Defense Forces members.

Generation Z students experienced a variety of challenges in their lifestyles, routines, and new environments during the training and armed movement. As the People’s Defense Forces groups (PDF) are newly formed numerous difficulties occur regarding livelihood, electricity, internet connection, financial issues, and other fundamental stuff. On the other hand, the click movement invented by Generation Z youth associations such as Click to Donate and Padaytha Pin emerged in order to solve the financial issues of the PDF groups subsequent to the armed movement. The click movement is a fundraising campaign to acquire digital income for the revolution through games, applications, websites, and YouTube channels (Military Coup Myanmar 2022, Matters 2023). Due to widespread internet outages, the click movement generates insufficiently, has inadequate funding, and only relies on youths and a small percentage of adults.

In the preceding 8888 Pro-democracy Uprising, also known as the Four-Eight Democratic Movement, students who participated in the demonstration were targeted by repression; as a result, the protest movement collapsed and the armed revolt movement persisted (Renaud 2009). The previous study expresses that the All-Burma Federation of Students’ Union (ABFSU) formed local ethnic armed groups in the border rural region and got involved in underground movements, legal political parties, and armed revolution. Numerous students joined carried on the armed rebellion movement, but their contributions were insufficient, and the revolution evolved less rapidly as an outcome (Oo 993).

As in the case of South Korea’s 1980 Gwangju uprising, Korean students and citizens switched the movement strategy from nonviolent protest to armed rebellion due to the repression in opposition to the violent crackdown of the military on the students and martial law. The previous study pointed out that the leading organization of the uprising, the Citizen-Student Struggle Committee confronted death challenges regarding armed movement, yet, fought against the military soldiers. The challenges confronted during the revolution are not dragging it down although the revolution took 20 years of effort to achieve democracy (Kahn-Chae 2003).

In the 2021 Spring Revolution of Myanmar, Generation Z students mobilized two different movements strategy: A nonviolent peaceful protest movement, and a violent armed struggle movement during the two-and-a-half-year period after the 2021 military coup. Numerous difficulties appeared in each movement, causing the revolution to endure for more time. Even though the revolution is in a long-term phase due to a variety of challenges and barriers, it moving forward steadily among challenges. The research paper effort to clarify in detail what challenges Myanmar’s Generation Z students combated in each movement they took part in. Particular challenges include violations of fundamental human rights and human dignity, which is an intriguing area for additional investigation.

## **Research Method**

As for the research strategy, qualitative research is applied to evaluate the situation, and the phenomenology research method approaches is utilized for collecting data, employing Creswell and Poth as references (Creswell & Creswell 2017). By utilizing the phenomenology research approach, the study clarifies the actual confrontations of students, focusing on how students engage with particular phenomena, events, and objects of the movements. The research also looked at the students’ movements, along with the Social Movement Theory and revolutionary concept of Charles Tilly. Charles Tilly claimed social movements as organized groups of people who have a common interest continuously expressing grievances against the authorities by conducting protests and demonstrations, rallies, and petition campaigns with the characteristics of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (Tilly 2004). The revolutionary concept of Charles Tilly characterized the public people acting together in pursuit of a common objective from demonstrations and brawls to strikes and revolutions, in the book *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Tilly 1978).

For this study, interviews were conducted with a total of 10 informant students who are all university students between the ages of 19 and 27. Only one informant student is female among the ten informant students. One student is from Magway University, three students are from Yadanabon University, two students are from Mandalay University, one is from Sagaing University of Education, one is from Pakokku University, one is from the University of Computer Studies (Pakokku), one is from Lashio University and Lashio Nursing and Midwifery Training School. Two categories of students were interviewed. The first category includes students who have been arbitrarily arrested while participating in the protest. And the second category includes students who become members of the People’s Defense Force (PDF) and engage in armed struggle movements. The researcher applied an in-depth interview technique and conducted one-by-one interviews through online meetings with student informants. And the sections of the interview and discussions took time around fifteen to twenty minutes for each person.

The author methodically and accurately evaluated the collected interview data from informant students after taking comprehensive notes. The research also combines secondary data from sources like books, news, articles, and websites alongside primary data from informant students to fill in the gaps. The research process involves examining certain themes of analysis, systematically organizing information, and step-by-step data analysis by applying the qualitative approach. The research data were analyzed descriptively, contrasting theory with the data collection to acquire a generalizable analysis (Creswell & Creswell 2017). The research reveals specific Generation Z student movements, challenges with the crackdown, and obstacles with armed movements in the 2021 Spring Revolution. The subsequent challenges of Generation Z students after being arrested following the protest movement were additionally addressed in this research.

## Result and Discussion

The discussion of the results of this study focuses on two main subs, namely: Related explanations revolutionary movements of the Generation Z students; and Challenges of Generation Z students and the rapidity of revolution. The existing explanations are supported by research data through interview results and also discussed with relevant studies according to the topic of discussion.

### Revolutionary movements of the Generation Z students

In accordance with the data acquired, Generation Z students participated in three movements: the Protest movement, an Armed movement, and a Click movement. The first protest movement was initiated by the students in front of the University of Medicine in Mandalay and was spearheaded by Dr. Tay Zar San (Walker 2021). KIT participated in the first protest led by Dr. Tay Zar San. He and his Student Union members took part in organizing the multi-University Protest. Additionally, he specifies that he participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) because he has no desire to be a component of the military-backed education system. According to Bynum, all students took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) by boycotting the education system under the military regime when the military council reopened university campuses (Bynum 2021).

“On 4<sup>th</sup> February, we began to demonstrate in front of University of Medicine Mandalay accompanied by Dr. Tay Zar San, friends, and some teachers. By the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, protests had erupted throughout the city of Mandalay. Later, all of our Student Union from 22 universities in Mandalay City organized and performed a collaborative demonstration. We call it multi-University Protest. Not only the protest movements we all engaged in the CDM movement when schools and universities were reopened after the coup. Our students stopped taking classes because we did not willing to participate in the military-backed education system.” (Informant KIT).

Informant EDI revealed that the Student Union and the students use social media groups to have discussions and get information about protests. Informant EDI stated “Student Union led and share the movement’s activities with us and our students follow and distributed the information in the Facebook group. We gathered together with our friends according to our majors for the protest.” Regarding the data acquired, Generation Z students rely on online group conversations, and social media posts to obtain information about the activities they would carry out following the lead of the Student’s Union members in the initial collective process for the protest movement.

According to Ingrid Jordt, Generation Z students used social media extensively for sharing photos and videos record of the ongoing protest movement visuals contrary to previous movements in Myanmar’s history (Jordt et al. 2021). KGY participated in all kinds of protests and shared the movements on social media. He took part in multi-University protests, bike protests, Mandalay youth protests, and motorbike protests, other strikes, online campaigns and performed numerous offline guerrilla activities.

“I joined all kinds of protests not only with students but also with the local community. I joined in multi-University groups, bike groups, Mandalay youth groups, and motorbike groups. Later on, I joined many strikes in many forms such as an Easter strike for Easter Day, the Three Finger Strike, the Flowers Strike, Flash Light Strike, and strikes that supported CRPH and NUG. I also joined together with my schoolmates and other friends and performed a lot of offline guerrilla strikes and share them on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. I also participated in petitions not approving the coup, petitions which support CRPH (Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw), and petitions which accepted U Kyaw Mo Tun as the UN ambassador and mail requesting aid to the United Nations and tweeting information about the demonstrations on Twitter.” (Informant KGY).

In the armed struggle movement, Generation Z students who attended military training from Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) subsequently became People’s Defense Force soldiers (PDF) to carry out an armed struggle against the military coup (Bynum 2021). EAOs such as KIA, KNU, TNLA, and

KNPP enable students to form their own resistance armies and numerous groups of youth become PDF to conduct armed revolution (Kapi 2021, Egreteau 2022). So as in the Four-Eight Democratic Movement, a large number of students joined the local ethnic armed groups in the border rural region and conducted the armed revolution to fight the policies of the military junta. According to Oo, Myanmar was the first place the Students’ Army existed that did not previously exist anywhere else in the world at that time (Oo 1993).

According to the data acquired, all Informant students accomplish military training in KIA and TNLA which take two and half months and become PDF in their relevant battalions. Informants MOR and WGY serve in Dog Killer Task Force (DKTF), and Informants PSI and KCH serve in Northern Shan State Alliance Army. On the other hand, Informant KGY serves under Northern Shan State Battalion No. 515 of the Ministry of Defence, and Informant KIT serves in Battalion No. 511 of The Ministry of Defence. For now, the National Unity Government (NUG) has established approximately 300 battalions, with each PDF unit comprising around 200 troops (Aung 2023).

Observing the duty, Informant KGY is responsible for serving in the anti-terrorist and combat troops and participated in around thirteen battles so he experienced both large and small weapons in the battles. Informant MOR participated in several mining missions which bomb the military truck. Informant WGY was responsible for handling weapons and explosive mines in his group. Informant PSI conducted bombing missions to several military-relate places by collaborating with other student PDF networks. Informant KCH formerly participated in bomb blast missions within the Lashio Urban Guerrilla Group; at the moment, he is in charge as a medical officer in the battalion. Informant KIT coordinated with the Board of Education to improve the CDM students’ online education. On the other hand, KIT also guides and trains other group members in self-defense training.

“I served in the anti-terrorist and combat troops. During my service, I confront approximately 13 battles in a year. In every battle I’ve ever experienced, both huge and minor weapons were employed in attacks.” (Informant KGY).

“I had involved in several vehicle-mining missions. My team and I make a shadow movement attack with mine when the military’s vehicles carrying enforcement are passing through on the way.” (Informant MOR).

“As for my duty, I am participates and reinforce in the area where weapons are made. I carried out and managed everything, including handling a gun and gunpowder and making our own percussion lock firearms step by step and hand-made mines.” (Informant WGY).

“We bombed the city hall by entering secretly a city that Min Aung Hlaing had visited and places where civilians were being committed to illegal violence. Our mission basically consists of bombing and clashes against the military’s main command centers. We also collaborated on several other missions with other student PDF networks” (Informant PSI).

“I founded the Urban Guerrilla Group in Lashio and I used to do bomb blasts. When I arrived at Northern Shan State Alliance Army, I serve as the Deputy Medical Officer taking care of the health of members and war injuries.” (Informant KCH).

“As a student, I coordinated the Board of Education for each district and township, as well as Interim University Governing Councils, to facilitate students’ education during this period. We worked for education on one hand and we coached and practiced with other members for self-defense training.” (Informant KIT).

According to Bociaga, an estimated 100,000 people have joined the armed movement (Bociaga 2022). The armed movements of Generation Z students include ambush and mine missions, bombing missions targeting police stations, and battle missions with troops. The missions targeted and operated significant military-related buildings and police stations notorious for brutally suppressing civilians in the protest period (Bynum 2021). On the other hand, the production of handmade firearms and weapons, handling the gun’s powder, automatic firearms, and other explosive weapons are included in the armed movements (Bociaga 2022). Somehow, Generation Z students carried out educational programs for CDM students as well by collaborating with the Ministry of Education of the National Unity Government during the revolutionary period.

Click Movement is a new support movement that emerged alongside the armed struggle movement. Generation Z youth invented innovative approaches and strategies to earn digital income and distribute the income to PDF organizations for organizational funds. Generation Z youth created channels, websites, games, and applications to make a direct income from internet users (clickers) (Military Coup Myanmar 2022, Matters 2023). Generation Z students who are unable to join and participate in the armed struggle movement are involved in clicking movements. Additionally, merely Wi-Fi and the Internet are necessary to take part in the click movement, which is comparable to social media activities. Informant BRA involves in the click movement by playing video games, seeing videos, and reading articles that the Click Association provided.

“I also involves in the click movement in which our revolutionary Generation Z youth members are running as campaigns to get permanent funding and we call it “Click Movement”. For instance, there are some Online Click Associations established apps called Click to Donate, Padaythar Pin, We Click, Tha Din, Eain Pyan Lann, The PDF Game, War of Heroes, etc.... It provides knowledge articles, watching videos or football matches, or listening to audiobooks on YouTube channels. As I cannot be involved in the armed movement I support the armed movement by clicking, playing games, accessing the web, and watching videos or reading articles when I get free time. The reason why I like click movement is I only need Wi-Fi or Internet and it is like using social media” (Informant BRA).

All Click Associations such as Click to Donate, Padaythar Pin, etc., accumulate income and provide funding for PDF battalions (Matters 2023). Informant KGY affirms that his PDF organization had already received funding from the Online Click Association twice.

“Regarding the click movement for funding, our PDF group has twice received funding from the Online Click Association for our fundamental expenses. As I know the Click to Donate Association donated 10 million kyats to our battalions for the second time.” (Informant KGY).

Charles Tilly argued an organized group of individuals with a common objective consistently organizing and attempting for changes through protest and demonstrations by expressing their grievances against a targeted body is a social movement (Tilly 2004). Generation Z students mobilized by consistently participating in movements against the coup that began with protests, a variety of strikes, campaigns against the coup, petitions which support Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, the Civil Disobedience Movement, and online clicking for fundraising from Click to Donate. Furthermore, in his revolutionary concept, Charles Tilly emphasizes public people collaborate in attempts to achieve a specific objective, from mobilizing to revolting, from marches and brawls to strikes and revolutions (Tilly 1978). Generation Z students continue against the coup from mobilizing to resisting by engaging in bombing missions and battles with military forces in the 2021 Spring Revolution. Besides, the opposition movements of Generation Z students in the Spring Revolution were seen in different strategies which are extraordinarily inventive and impassioned; yet, a variety of challenges exist in every movement.

### **Challenges of Generation Z students and the rapidity of revolution**

In the 2021 Spring Revolution a variety of challenges and difficulties were confronted by Generation Z students in all of the movements against the military coup; protest movement, armed struggle movement, and click movement. As the challenges of the protest movement, EDI reveals that student protesters were threat by weapons like sound bombs in the repression of the late protest. He also expose that many students were arrested, threatened, and abused, some students were shot in their thighs, some students were beaten until sore, and some students were crushed in their heads during the crackdown.

“In the late protest, the military suppress and oppress the student protesters and our student protesters faced a threat with weapons and bomb detonation. On 7 March 2021 in the multi-University protest, some students were beaten when they were arrested, threatened, and abused in various ways. The police and soldiers attacked with the sound bomb and many students were injured because of that. Some students were shot in the thigh. Some of the students were beaten and their faces were sore and their heads crushed. I also run and try to escape from the suppression but I got arrested by the soldiers” (Informant EDI).

Likewise, BNG experienced where student protesters were attacked with chemical water cannons, sound bombs, and rubber bullets in repression. He is a member of the students’ defense team to safeguard the students and assisted them in escaping during the crackdown. He experienced running among bullets and saw some students being beaten, dragged, arrested, and shot to death.

“Military crackdown started by spraying with chemical water cannons, using sound bombs, and shooting with rubber bullets at the protest sites. So, Student Union organized a defense team, of which I became a member, not to fight back against the police and soldiers, but to safeguard the protesting students in order to enable them to escape. The strength of us and military soldiers is completely different, thus our iron and steel shield cannot protect the students during the crackdown. Students who ran were also beaten, dragged into police vehicles, and arrested during the crackdown. As later crackdowns increased, real ammunition and guns were used in a series of shootings. I experienced bullets passing over my head and near around my body. The students were dead in the demolitions of the protests. Among the youths who were murdered, Kyal Sin’s death earned a reputation.” (Informant BNG).

As Egreteau mentioned that the protesters were violently crushed using shock weapons, tear gas, and real bullets, and hundreds of demonstrators, prominent political leaders, and protesters leaders were captured and imprisoned by the police (Egreteau 2022). The Myanmar military’s brutal repression is always the same as their response to the Four-Eight Democratic Movement in 1998 (Renaud 2009). According to AAPP (Assistance Association for Political Prisoners), at least over 17000 civilian protesters have been killed due to the gunshot during the crackdown and 10000 were imprisoned (Paddock 2022). Similar challenges and difficulties such as being killed during a crackdown, arrested illegally, and imprisoned long-term were also encountered by Indonesian students under the New Order Regime (Saunders 1998, Sastramidjaja 2019).

Subsequent to the arrest Generation Z students endured challenges of being beaten by cables, serious torture, and sexual harassment in the interrogation center and police custody (Regan 2021). Informants BNG and PTE were subjected to examination before being transferred to prisons which involve violation of human rights and human dignity such as serious torture, beating until bleeding from their ears, hitting the knee with a hammer, and being sexually harassed by staring or verbally by the polices and soldiers.

“On 24<sup>th</sup> April, I was taken to Intelligence Center 16 and investigated. When I arrived I was punched by the soldiers in the inspection room. My entire face was in so much suffering that I would not feel another punch. I was repeatedly punched at the beginning of the inquest when I answered that I did not know where Dr. Tay Zar San and student leader Ei Mon Khin were located. The inspector told me that he hit me with his hand already hurt, so he used a rubber slipper to hit my cheek and head. At night, I had to sleep on the floor and also my blood coming out of my ear. The next day, my face was inflamed, so the inspector punched me in the ribs and hit my knees with a hammer which anguished me a lot. I was investigated for exactly fifteen days in the inspection room.” (Informant BNG).

“After I was arrested, I was beaten all night in police custody. And I have got sexual harassment either verbally or physically by the soldiers and police. If I had to say, they sexually harassed me with sensitive words by removing my hair tie and staring at me, and saying “We have a lot of singles among us, can we hook you up?” The person who manages us in the custody is not a policewoman, but a policeman, so we especially girls have suffered sexual harassment either by staring or verbally. LGBT boys are physically assaulted. They slap, punch, and say to them “Try to speak like a man” and “Try to act like a man”. As for me, I was fat so they body-shame me. Also, we are not comfortable bathing and defecating because of having CCTVs in custody. These incidents happened in police custody.” (Informant PTE).

The crackdown challenges and subsequent struggle after the arrest were inherently risky for student protestors who continued to be affected by the tumors even after their release. Due to the numerous challenges that emerged during the harsh crackdown the nonviolent protest mobilization put an end to the expansion and led to the de-escalation. Throughout the anti-coup movement in Egypt in 2013, the authorities employed excessive and violent force against hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood members and supporters in the Rabaa massacre, resulting in a phasedown of protests and mobilization (Al-Anani 2019).

Generation Z Students realized that their objective of the 2021 Spring Revolution cannot be achieved by a nonviolent peaceful protest movement and chose the violent armed path (Head 2022). Accordingly, the violent opposition armed movements continue to be escalating in many regions of the country (Horsey 2022). In accompanying the armed struggle movements, Generation Z students encountered three challenges which are lifestyle and environmental challenges, weapons challenges, and financial challenges. Informant KGY expresses that his battalion set up nothing the first time and that all of the members were responsible for building the tank, obtaining drinking water, and arranging for electricity and internet connectivity. He also encountered challenges with the environment because he was incapable to handle the clod in the mountain area of his battalion that was continuously raining. Furthermore, he encounters survival challenges while battling with the armed force on the battlefield.

“Before we became NUG’s PDF, our battalion is in a temporary position. We must all perform all tasks such as constructing a tent to live in, getting water to use, making electricity available, and facilitating Internet connection. As my duty is serving as an anti-terrorist and combat troop, which is quite difficult while I am engaged in battle. I could not stand the cold in the mountainous region which is always rainy where our battalion was located. During battles, warm clothes and blankets are insufficient, and we cannot carry them to the battlefield since we must also carry raincoats, food, weapons, and ammunition. My difficulty during the battle, I had to live and eat only in the jungle, drink steam water, endure mosquito bites, and sleep in the rain. Also, if we are engaged in battle, there is no time for food and drink because combat that began in the morning may not end until the afternoon. We were not hungry during the combat, but we were unable to prepare food when we left the battlefield. If the military side’s soldiers discover the smoke while we cook, the combat may begin again. These are the difficulties for me.” (Informant KGY).

The second challenge is the weaponry issues since the students had no experience in handling and creating. Informant WGY expresses that he has no idea of the weapons as he is a student and some of his group members sacrificed their lives by testing the mining weapons.

“As I am a student, I have almost no experience with weapons. Additionally, I’ve never seen or handled weapons, so this is very strange and unusual, and I’ve never heard of some of the weapon’s equipment. Several students risk their life as a result of the accidents caused when attempting to create handmade mine weapons.” (Informant WGY).

Furthermore, Informant PSI explain the drone weapons challenge that had faced in his battalion. He expressed his concern about the military drone that could find their battalion and eliminate their camp base again.

“Our PDF camp has been seized a few times before. When we were moving around like a nomadic life. It is due to the continual presence of military drones, we were indeed concerned that the military drones may discover our location and destroy our battalion camps again. We were constantly concerned the military would discover our location while delivering supplies.” (Informant PSI).

The third challenge is the financial issue that arose since the PDF groups are established. Informant MOR and his member sell their own property in order to collect funds by selling their own property when their PDF group first forms. He mentioned some portions of an organization’s finance and supplementary were contributed by citizens for the first time. Due to the decreased economic situation of the state, citizens cannot support PDF groups, resulting in inadequate food, drinks, and weapons expenses.

“When we started to become the PDF, we sell our own property for weapons and group expenses. And we accept donation funding from a few people in the initial time. Our team worked in a UG format (Underground) and we only work with a few people we trust. As our team is a team not upload and not share photos and videos of our mission on social media or Facebook, the public people had doubts about us “Is this group really revolting or not”. Later on, my team had a little difficulty earning the funds from public people because we do not post any photos and videos on social media. And another reason is because of the economic situation of the country. So, our group has a financial issue lately for our own food, drinks, and essential weapons for revolution.” (Informant MOR).



## **Thein et al.: “Revolutionary challenges of the Myanmar Generation Z students”**

In conducting the armed struggle movement, Generation Z students are struggling with the jungle environment, survival matters, organizational financial issues, and weaponry challenges. In the initial situation of the establishment of the People’s Defense Force groups, Generation Z the students were confronted with the conditions of no water supply, no Wi-Fi, no tent, no electricity, and no internet facilitation whatsoever. Even though the armed struggle movement is a rigorous movement, Generation Z students still remain to confront challenges in combat against the 2021 military coup. The extent of the ongoing armed movement in the Spring Revolution is incomparable. Since the coup, over 8,000 battles have been documented, and the enthusiasm among armed resistance organizations is strengthening (Aung 2023). Informant WGY reveals that he desires to persist and never give up the armed struggle, even if it requires risking his life since he can’t survive under the military dictatorship that has destroyed previous generations and will continue to harm future generations.

“Even though challenges exist, the main objective that makes me continue the revolution is “I can’t survive under the military regime; I desire to live with freedom and I want democracy.” The dictatorial system is not good for the next generation and it was not good for the previous generation, so we, Generation Z, have defined ourselves as the sacrificed generation. In order to benefit the country and future generations, we must be able to withstand criticism and be killed, so we remain by doing our best. This is the reason why I decided I chose to continue and would never quit the revolution until its end.” (Informant WGY).

Regards, the click movement, the inadequacy of the funding issue is found and resulting in some Generation Z students’ battalions apart from receiving funds for expenses. Informant KGY expose that some of his friends’ organizations have not received any funding. He also stated it is because the clickers are underperforming and some clickers cannot engage in click movement because the Internet and Wi-Fi have been cut off in many regions by the military. And he believed that the internet outage headed to a decrease in user clickers.

“I heard from some of my friends from other PDF Student groups that they have not received funding from the Online Click Association. I used to see a post in which all of the Online Click Associations announced that the insufficient funding distribution is due to a low proportion of user clickers. Actually, the associations mainly rely on Generation Z youths and a small percentage of adults. In my opinion, I assume the user clickers are getting fewer because of the internet breakdown in several regions, and a significant proportion of adults are unfamiliar with the click movement.” (Informant KGY).

Based on the research outcome, the challenge of the click movement indicated inadequate clickers which only rely on youth, and Internet outages in many areas across the nation. Despite the Click Associations’ efforts to obtain more clickers, such efforts are ineffective because the Internet is unavailable in many regions. In comparison to having nothing, having Online Click Associations and clickers strengthened the anti-coup revolutionary movement in several ways.

Revolutionary movements of Generation Z students challenges commenced from protest movements ultimately to armed movements, and click movements. Afterward, the suppression and oppression of the protests and demonstrations decline, intensifying the armed struggle movement throughout the nation. The 2021 Myanmar Spring Revolution is moving ahead properly. Although time has passed, the rapidity of the revolt against the dictator from all corners of society has not slowed down (Agency 2022). The intensity between the military and the civilians remains strong, with no outcome other than the fact that individuals passionately continue to oppose the military coup and struggle for democracy.

## **Conclusion**

The 2021 Myanmar Spring Revolution Movement was initiated in response to an illegitimate coup launched by the Myanmar Military led by General Min Aung Hlaing. The inaccurate allegation of electoral vote fraud was the beginning of the anti-military coup protest movement, eventually the armed struggle movement. Generation Z students organized and struggle for common changes as the social movement and revolutionary concept of Charles Tilly. Generation Z student movements against the

coup incorporated nonviolent and violent strategies in the 2021 Myanmar Spring Revolution. A variety of protest movements such as strikes and online campaigns, Civil Disobedience Movements, armed operations and combat against soldiers, and click movement by using click platforms with Wi-Fi and the internet are comprised along with the challenges. In the protest movement, Generation Z students endured challenges and struggles during escaping the military crackdown, and in interrogation centers as the challenges of the protest movement. While escaping the protest crackdown students faced harshness arrested, serious injury, and death. Even after the arrest, students experienced such as being seriously tortured and sexually harassed by the police and soldiers in interrogation centers and police custody. And these challenges have an impact on the protest movement's enlargement, which ultimately results in the end of the nonviolent movement.

In the challenges of the armed movement Generation Z students encountered rough environmental conditions and livelihood and survival difficulties during the battles, life-risk mission weapons, drone weapons of the military, and financial difficulties of the group. On the other hand, a new online fundraising click movement has emerged in order to alleviate the financial issue of People's Defense Force groups. The click movement is comfortable as social media, however, insufficient clickers and the outages of Internet and Wi-Fi in numerous regions led to a decrease in the earnings of digital income, which cause inadequacy of funds to share to all PDF organizations. Nonetheless, the armed movement of Generation Z students keeps on functioning and expanding without impacting the rapidity of the revolution. To put it simply, political circumstances under military regimes are unpredictable, and the revolutionary movement of Generation Z students has yet to display results. The tension between the military and citizens continues substantially during the two-and-a-half-year post-coup period, with no clear solution other than individuals being vehemently opposed to the military and struggling for democracy.

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