

## The Impact of the Constitution of Myanmar on the Political Power of Aung San Suu Kyi and the Rohingya Conflict

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**Abstract :** The objective of this paper is to offer an insight on how political power inequality has contributed and exacerbated the political violence towards the Rohingya ethnic group in Myanmar. In particular, this paper attempts to illustrate how power inequality in the country has prevented Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi from taking effective measures on the issue. The research centers on the question of why Aung San Suu Kyi has been seen as not doing enough to stop the persecution of the Rohingya ethnic group ever since she was appointed the State Counsellor to the Myanmar government. As a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Suu Kyi's lack of action on the matter has come under severe criticism by the international community. Many have seen this as Suu Kyi's failure to establish democracy and allowing mass killing to spread in the country. The real question that many perhaps should be asking, however, is how much power Suu Kyi actually holds within the government which is still heavily controlled by the military or Tatmadaw. This paper argues that Suu Kyi's role within the government is limited which hinders constructive and effective measures to be taken on the Rohingya issue. Political power in this research is being measured by 3 factors: control over events such as burning of Rohingya villages, control over resources such as land ownership and media and control over actors such the Tatmadaw, police force and civil society who are greatly needed to ease and resolve the conflict. In order to illustrate which individuals or institution have control over all the 3 above factors, this paper will first study the constitution of Myanmar. The constitution will also be able to show the asymmetrical power relations as it will provide evidence as to how much political power Suu Kyi holds within the government in comparison to other political actors and institutions. Suu Kyi's role as a state counsellor akin to a prime minister is a newly created position as the current constitution of Myanmar bars anyone with a foreign spouse from holding the post of a president in the country. This is already an indication of the inequality of political power between Suu Kyi and the military. Apart from studying the constitution of Myanmar, Suu Kyi's speeches and various interviews are also studied in order to answer the research question. Unfortunately, Suu Kyi's limited political power also involves the Buddhist monks in Myanmar who have held significant influence throughout the history of the country. This factor further prevents Suu Kyi from preserving the sanctity of human rights in Myanmar.

**Keywords :** Aung San Suu Kyi, constitution of Myanmar, inequality, political power, political violence, Rohingya, Tatmadaw

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