

# CIVIL UNREST

## CHINA



**China**  
Civil Unrest  
**3.3**  
severe

### Tension in Hong Kong

The main issue driving protests in Hong Kong is the nominating procedures for the 2017 Chief Executive elections. Beijing is extremely unlikely to compromise, and so the protests are likely to continue into 2015. Their impact is likely to be limited for a number of reasons, however. Most importantly, at present there is no clear consensus among protesters. The students have vacillated in their demands for dialogue with the government. While most protest leaders insist that the framework for nominating procedures must be revoked,



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many protesters privately suggest they would also accept a more representative nominating committee. In the end, opposition party leaders will probably accept such a compromise, since the 2017 election will revert to the current method if the new framework cannot be passed. We assess that the economic impact of the protests will be relatively minor and limited to the current quarter. The overall impact on annual GDP growth is likely to

be less than one per cent. As a result, the Hong Kong government can afford to be patient and is unlikely to use heavy force to disperse the protesters given the backlash such a move would likely produce. Once a resolution is reached between the main student groups and the government, or protest fatigue leads to numbers dwindling significantly, the police are likely to intervene to remove the few radical fringe groups who are likely to reject any compromise and refuse to leave the protest sites. Once the majority of protesters have departed, any such forcible removal is unlikely to trigger a strong public reaction. Mainland security forces are unlikely to intervene directly unless the Hong Kong police appear unable to manage the situation. As at present the situation appears to be under control, the likelihood of a direct intervention by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) or other mainland Chinese security forces is low.

## MYANMAR



**Myanmar**  
Civil Unrest  
**3.0**  
high

### Political protests to escalate

The 2015 Myanmar elections are likely to drive political protests, including fighting between police and protesters. Protests over constitutional change are also likely to intensify in the lead-up to the 2015 elections if the military refuses to relinquish its veto over constitutional amendments, or if no power-sharing arrangement is reached between the conservative ruling faction and opposition leaders.

On 27 October 2014, opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi rejected the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party's

(USDP) proposal to introduce a proportional representation voting system to replace the first-past-the-post system. The government is seeking to introduce the new system ahead of the 2015 elections to prevent Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) from winning a landslide victory. The military also recently announced its opposition to any constitutional amendments that would dismantle its 25 per cent parliamentary representation or its veto over constitutional amendments.

These developments indicate that a conservative faction within Myanmar's ruling elite remains firmly opposed to political liberalisation that would change the status quo. If no consensus can be achieved, there is a risk opposition groups will stage peaceful sit-ins and labour strikes to compel the government to amend the charter.

Min Ko Naing, leader of the pro-democracy 88 Generation Students group, has already warned that his party may launch a "mass

movement" pressuring the military to relinquish its veto. In January 2014, the group organised a 1,000-strong sit-in at downtown Yangon's Sule Pagoda to protest against "restrictive" laws.

Protests are likely to begin peacefully. If they continue for several weeks, however, there is an increased risk that authorities will forcibly clear protest sites near state buildings in Yangon.



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# T IN ASIA

**Omar Hamid** examines the rising risk of civil unrest across Asia

## BANGLADESH



**Bangladesh**  
Civil Unrest  
**4.5**  
severe

### Intensifying anti-government demonstrations

The Awami League (AL) retained power in the January 2014 election; the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led opposition boycott meant that the result was a foregone conclusion. The BNP's protest movement has eased since the election but, with no parliamentary representation, the party has little option but to continue street protests to maintain its relevance and to press for another election.

On 29 October, Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal sentenced Motiur Rahman Nizami, leader of the opposition Islamit Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) party, to death for war crimes committed during the country's independence war in 1971. The JI party called for nationwide shutdowns on 30 October and 2-3 November following the verdict. JI supporters are likely to continue to engage in protests against the tribunal's activities in 2015.

In 2015, the BNP will probably attempt to consolidate its support by gradually increasing the frequency of protests, particularly in Chittagong and Dhaka, as well as Khulna Division and Bogra district in Rajshahi Division. Strikes, known as hartals, are unlikely to be used until more momentum has been built. When strikes are called they will probably

entail opposition workers blockading highways and major roads leading to Dhaka. Road connections between the port city of Chittagong and the capital would also probably be disrupted for several days at a time, as well as transport to and from ports.



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Omar Hamid is Head of Asia Analysis for IHS Country Risk

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