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GLOBAL UP-TO-DATE

A Monthly Newsletter by Centre for Governance Studies

Photo: Myung J. Chun/Getty

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The world around us is changing rapidly. Wars, new turn in global politics, human rights issues are occurring every day, posing new challenges and concerns. Global Up-to-Date is an initiative by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) which will work as a hub for explaining the contemporary global issues.

The regular briefs will focus and explain the issues related to International Politics, Economy, Security, Human Rights, and Development. There will be a monthly printed version newsletter containing briefs of all the contemporary global important issues. The online version contains regular updates of the pressing issues along with the PDF version of the news letter.

Beyond the Script: How the Oscars Turned into a Political Stage

Depanjali Roy



Photo: Myung J. Chun/Getty

Oscar is one of the prestigious award events that honors artists who work in the movies. This award event includes cinemas and artists from all over the world and honors cinema in different languages, but only in English. So, it has been seen as one of the biggest platforms for artists of every genre to present their work and opinions. Oscar is mainly known for fashion, glamour, and the most recent addition is glambots. However, this year, the Oscars were seen as a platform, as actors, actresses, artists, and comedians raised their voices to promote peace over violence. During hosting, award giving, receiving, and even on the red carpet, attendees have shown their gestures through badges and opinions to speak out against the war in Palestine, Iran, and, obviously, against Donald Trump's harsh immigration policies.

A silent protest against the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was seen on the red carpet. ICE was established to conduct criminal investigations, enforce immigration laws, preserve national security, and protect public safety. Although during the Trump administration, the activities of ICE have gone too far, according to 6 out of 10 Americans. Shooting and raids are conducted without any judicial warrant, and innocent people are being killed as well. Sara Bareilles was wearing an "Ice Out" pin, and other reporting noted that Malgosia Turzańska also wore one. It has been shown that the Oscars had fewer such protest accessories than the Grammys, but the symbolism was still strong enough to mark the ceremony as part of a wider entertainment-industry protest season.

There are also pins worn by celebrities that symbolize calling for an end to the wars in Iran and Gaza. The most visible named example was Javier Bardem. The red-carpet coverage showed him wearing a “Palestine” pin and an anti-war patch, and news media later reported that he wore both “NO A LA GUERRA” and “Free Palestine” pins. Onstage, while presenting Best International Feature, Bardem made the politics explicit, saying: “No to war and free Palestine.” It is also seen that he linked his appearance to the anti-war slogan he had worn years earlier in protest of the Iraq war. Not only that, even a Palestinian stance was seen in the award ceremony, when *The Voice of Hind Rajab*, inspired by true events in Gaza, was a Best International Feature nominee. The film's director was disappointed when Motaz Malhees, a Palestinian actor in *The Voice of Hind Rajab*, said he could not attend because of a U.S. travel ban imposed under the Trump administration. The artists of the film wore a new red Artists4Ceasefire pin on the red carpet. That added another layer to the event, not just generic anti-war language, but a highly identifiable symbol tied to Gaza and to a specific film about Palestinian loss.

Host Conan O'Brien opened with jokes that carried a political edge, including a remark that viewers who disliked them could watch another show hosted by Kid Rock. Presenter Jimmy Kimmel also brought politics into the ceremony through humor, making jokes about free speech and taking a swipe at Donald Trump.

Another strong statement was made at the award ceremony when “All the Empty Rooms,” which won Best Documentary Short, was presented. The documentary was based on the Uvalde school shooting, which took place on May 24, 2022. A mass shooting occurred at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, United States, where 18-year-old Salvador Ramos, a former student at the school, shot 19 students and 2 teachers, while injuring 18 others. Ramos was killed by law enforcement officers later. The award was received by Gloria Cazares, mother of 9-year-old Jackie Cazares, who was killed during the school shooting. While receiving the award, she spoke about her son and also spoke out against gun violence to draw attention to this serious issue.

Here, it is shown that artists from all over the world paid a lot of attention to raising their voice against wrongdoings. Celebrities were wearing pins to show their protest against the war. Even “Mr. Nobody Against Putin” won Best Documentary Feature, a film about a Russian schoolteacher resisting Russia's war on Ukraine. While receiving the award, co-director and protagonist Pavel Talankin said, “stop all of these wars now,” and co-director David Borenstein spoke about how countries are normalizing the wrongdoings, and it is giving courage to the powerful ones to do whatever they want. He also said how the so-called influential and wise. Those strong remarks made the documentary win one of the night's most overtly political acceptance moments.

In the past, the actors were often expected to stay within the roles written for them, both on and off screen. The industry encouraged them to entertain, not to engage, certainly not to take any political stance, which can divide the audience and also affect their career. But at the 2026 Oscars, artists did not limit themselves to scripted lines or safe expressions. They spoke openly, wore their beliefs, and used one of the world's most visible cultural stages to reflect their personal opinions. This shift conveys that actor today are no longer just performers. They also uphold public voices shaped by the realities around them. Here, it is clear that silence is no longer the default expectation. Now the artistes cannot be a character in the movies, because they can also be an individual and the voice of many.

Why South Asia Needs a Regional Cyber Accord?

Md. Saiful Islam Shanto



The escalating frequency of cyber operations in South Asia demonstrates a severe deficit in infrastructure defense. In March 2026, an advanced threat group known as "Sloppy Lemming" successfully breached the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh, Pakistani telecommunications infrastructure, and Sri Lankan government networks. This pattern of targeting essential civilian services is supported by prior data. In May 2025, the Power Grid Corporation of India experienced a major infrastructure breach, followed by targeted ransomware campaigns that rendered hospital servers in Delhi inoperable.

South Asia is currently undergoing rapid digital transformation, driven by national frameworks such as "Digital India" and "Smart Bangladesh 2041." However, this developmental trajectory contains a critical structural flaw: the digitization of essential sectors, including finance, healthcare, and energy is vastly outpacing the implementation of corresponding cybersecurity frameworks. This disparity creates a highly asymmetric threat landscape. Non-state actors or small, well-equipped syndicates can now inflict levels of national disruption previously limited to conventional military strikes. To safeguard civilian infrastructure and prevent digital incursions from escalating into physical conflicts, South Asian states must urgently formalize a Regional Cyber Accord.

Compounding this vulnerability is the region's volatile geopolitical environment. South Asian states frequently operate within the "grey zone", conducting hostile operations that remain purposefully below the threshold of declared warfare. Cyber operations are increasingly the primary instrument for

these tactics due to their low cost, high impact, and plausible deniability. Yet, this strategy carries severe risks of miscalculation. If a state-aligned actor inadvertently disables a critical civilian asset, such as a medical network or energy grid, during heightened political tensions, the targeted state may interpret the disruption as a kinetic attack. In a region comprising nuclear-armed powers, such inadvertent escalation poses an immediate threat to global strategic stability.

At present, there are no established regional protocols to mitigate this risk. Institutional integration in South Asia remains fundamentally weak, with bodies like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) persistently paralyzed by bilateral political deadlocks. Consequently, states are attempting to manage a transnational threat through isolated, unilateral defense postures. This fragmented strategy is inherently unsustainable. Cyber threats bypass physical borders, necessitating a defense architecture that does the same. A pragmatic, cohesive regional policy is essential to navigate the digital security challenges of the coming decade.

The foundational component of this policy must be a comprehensive South Asian Cyber Accord. This multilateral treaty would explicitly codify civilian critical infrastructure, specifically medical facilities, water management systems, and energy distribution networks, as prohibited targets for state-sponsored digital interference. Establishing this unambiguous regional "red line" will create a crucial operational buffer to prevent accidental military escalation.

Furthermore, the accord must mandate the creation of an apolitical Cyber Threat Intelligence Sharing Hub. Currently, transnational ransomware syndicates and non-state actors capitalize on the informational silos existing between South Asian security agencies. A centralized, technical hub would enable experts across Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and neighboring states to exchange real-time intelligence regarding malware signatures, network vulnerabilities, and threat vectors. For instance, if an advanced persistent threat targets an Indian technology firm, the hub would facilitate immediate alerts allowing networks in Nepal and the Maldives to implement defensive patches. Reframing cyber-crime from a classified state secret to a mutual regional hazard is critical to neutralizing these syndicates.

Skeptics will invariably highlight the historical mistrust between South Asian administrations as a barrier to intelligence sharing. While this assessment is accurate, it can be bypassed by restructuring the intelligence apparatus. The proposed hub must operate autonomously from traditional defense or political ministries. By utilizing multilateral financial institutions, such as the Asian Development Bank, to sponsor and moderate the facility, participating states can ensure that cross-border cooperation remains strictly technical, neutral, and exclusively dedicated to civilian defense.

So, accelerating digital infrastructure without proportional defensive capabilities constitutes a severe strategic liability. A successful cyber intrusion extends far beyond data theft; it can incapacitate public utilities, suspend emergency responses, and paralyze economic output. As South Asia advances its digital integration, cybersecurity must transition from a secondary concern to a primary strategic directive. Implementing a Regional Cyber Accord transcends basic technology policy; it represents a foundational prerequisite for sustained regional stability and security in the twenty-first century.

Min Aung Hlaing: A Presidency Shaped by Military Power

Jahanara Jaba



Photo: Reuters

As Myanmar's former commander-in-chief, on March 30, 2026, Min Aung Hlaing officially became a presidential candidate in the country, marking a new stage in the political transition in Myanmar since the 2021 coup. His resignation was occasioned by the fact that a new parliament had just started the constitutional process of a new president being elected after a contentious general election that was won by the military-supported Union Solidarity and Development Party. Later that day, Ye Win Oo, an inner circle loyalist of Min Aung Hlaing, assumed the role of commander-in-chief, suggesting continuity in the military as power was being rebalanced through civilian office. Far from signaling normalization, this latest development reflects the junta's attempt to consolidate power, seek a degree of international legitimacy, and institutionalize military rule through constitutional theater.

Analysts described the move as the culmination of Min Aung Hlaing's long-held ambition to become president, shifting from direct military rule to a nominally civilian administration without changing the underlying power structure. The presidential election was carried out within the parliamentary system of Myanmar and not in a popular vote. Presidential candidates would be nominated by the military bloc and the two houses of parliament via different avenues, and then one of the nominees would be elected to the position of the president, leaving the rest to be the vice presidents. The parliamentary balance that was formed by the general election was the core of the presidential race. The resignation of military office by Min Aung Hlaing was also a necessary procedure, as the constitution prohibits a civil servant in service to run against the presidency.

Ever since the military overthrew the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar has been stuck in a long-lasting crisis of conflict, repression, and displacement. The 2025-2026 election, in that environment, was a step backwards to constitutional governance yet the political environment was highly controlled.

The parliamentary election held in phases during December 2025 and January 2026 was widely criticized for lacking credibility. Reuters reported that the polls were condemned by the United Nations and many Western governments, while also noting that Suu Kyi's party and other opposition groups were excluded from participation, effectively clearing the way for the military-backed USDP to dominate the outcome. The Guardian similarly described the vote as a "sham" election that served to provide formal cover for continued military influence rather than to open real democratic competition.

Under these conditions, parliament was created, which made the way of Min Aung Hlaing to the presidency even more obvious. On March 30, he was nominated in the lower house as a vice-presidential candidate, and the other nominations would be finalized through the other channels of the parliament before the final vote. This phase was more of an administration-led transition process than a competitive political battle. The parliamentary election was, in fact, not only important in the result of the seats, but in the manner, it organized the playing field to the presidential result that would come afterward.

What is more important about this change is the insight about the junta survival strategy. Ever since the coup overthrew the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021 Myanmar has been plunged into a catastrophic civil war. According to a report by Reuters, the war has claimed the lives of almost 93,000 individuals and displaced over 3.6 million. Based on estimates given by the UN, indicate that at least 6,800 civilians have been killed and approximately 40 percent of the population is now short of food and aid, an important point to note on the extent of the humanitarian meltdown.

Collectively, a chain between the resignation to presidential election is an indication of a controlled shift in form but not the change in content. The step of Min Aung Hlaing out of the military command and the appointment of a loyal successor, the arrangement of a parliamentary election under limited circumstances, and the final vote in a pro-military parliament all indicate an attempt to establish the power of the junta through civilian means instead of its dissolution. Here the presidency does not seem the onset of a new democratic era, but the extension of military hegemony, in a new constitutional form.

The real question, however, is not whether Min Aung Hlaing currently uses a civilian title. Whether Myanmar is any nearer to peace, accountability, pluralism, or democratic restoration. It is no on the evidence so far. His presidency seems tailored to centralize power, control elite loyalties and to ease the image of the regime in the outside world, rather than to liberate political space in the domestic arena. As long as opposition forces are not permitted meaningful participation, political prisoners are freed, and the military control over the institutions of the state is truly weakened, it will continue being what it is today, not a democratic transition, but a managed rebranding of military rule.