

Lib 6/2

**ASEAN's policies towards Myanmar**

*Dissertation submitted to School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**KHUMAN THEM ORLENDRO SINGH**



**International Politics Division**

**Centre for International Politics Organization and Disarmament**

**School of International Studies**

**JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY**

**New Delhi 110067**

**2013**



DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled *ASEAN's policies towards Myanmar* submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

*K.R. Orlendro Singh*  
Khumanthem Orlendro Singh

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

*Varun Sahni*

Prof. Varun Sahni

Chairperson

*Rajesh Rajagopalan*

Prof. Rajesh Rajagopalan

Supervisor



Chairperson  
Centre for International  
Organization and Disarmament  
School of International Studies  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi-110067

## **Table of contents**

**Chapter I: Introduction**

**Chapter II: Theoretical Approaches**

**Chapter III: Democratisation of Myanmar**

**Chapter IV: ASEAN's policies towards Myanmar**

**Chapter V: Conclusion**

**References**

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Neorealism argues that international institutions have limited power in world politics and cannot influence state interests and policies. States use institutions to serve their interests. On the other hand, neoliberal institutionalism claims that international institutions can influence and shape state policies and interests. Institutions can help states to cooperate in various issues which are beneficial to the cooperating states. Since early 1990s, the regional institution in the Southeast Asia i.e. ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), has been trying to influence the military junta of Myanmar to improve its human rights records and transform Myanmar into a democratic state as demanded by its own people. ASEAN has been facing various problems in implementing its policies towards Myanmar. Differences emerged among its member states at the time of admission of Myanmar in the association/institution. The divergent national interests of the member states have been causing ineffectiveness of the policies towards Myanmar. Limitations of its policies also arise due to its doctrine of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. Military junta finally introduced a semi-democratic system in 2010. Keeping in view the recent changes in Myanmar, this synopsis is going to study the effectiveness of ASEAN in its efforts in the democratisation of Myanmar. It also studies Myanmar's own interests in the democratisation process in its search for security and power. It also examines the external factors i.e. the role of external great powers like the US, the EU, China, India etc. in the democratisation of Myanmar.

During the cold war, Myanmar followed isolationist foreign policies. It considered the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), formed in 1967, as an imperialist institution designed by the Western powers to check the communist expansion in Southeast Asia. In the beginning period of first two decades, ASEAN could not focus on the internal problems of Myanmar. The changing geo-strategic environment in Southeast Asia after the end of cold war rekindled ASEAN's interests in Myanmar. ASEAN noticed the importance of Myanmar in its regional institutional framework as a means to strengthen its security, economic and political position. Economically, Myanmar was a fertile ground for both investments and source of raw materials for ASEAN economies. For Myanmar, due to diplomatic isolation and severe economic sanctions by the West, membership in ASEAN could provide access to investment, international funding and aid. ASEAN could also provide

Myanmar a platform to counterbalance the excessive China's increasing influence in the country. The military junta, therefore, liberalized foreign investments to improve the country's deteriorating economy. For the generals of the military junta, joining ASEAN would enhance their legitimacy. Due to the convergence of the interests of both Myanmar and ASEAN, Myanmar finally became a member of ASEAN in 1997.

ASEAN member states signed the Declaration of ASEAN Concord at its first ASEAN summit held in 1976. The document states that member states should act "in accordance with the principles of self-determination, sovereign equality, and non-interference in the internal affairs of nations." The document does not allow the member states to directly engage in each other's domestic affairs like the human rights violations in Myanmar. ASEAN engagement of Myanmar started with the policy of constructive engagement in 1991. The motivation behind the policy was that isolating Myanmar would be counter-productive in long terms. ASEAN's view was that isolation and pressure on the military junta would further engender the domestic problems. On the other hand, Myanmar had the option of turning towards China for help. Thus, ASEAN's preferred policy was to engage Myanmar economically and convinced the military junta of the benefits of integrating into the region and further to the international community.

The importance of the role of international institutions has been an on-going debate among mainstream theories of IR such as neorealism, neoliberalism, constructivism etc. Neoliberals agree with neorealist's view that it is difficult to achieve cooperation among states in international politics even if they could find out common interests among them. For neorealists, this is due to the anarchic structure of the international system that favour states to defect from cooperation if the issue of relative gain become significance. On the other hand, neoliberals argue that international institutions can help states to cooperate and they, therefore, play a very important role in international politics. In the book *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (1984), Robert Keohane agrees the importance of state powers and their interests in shaping international institutions. But his main claim is that international institutions can affect and shape the interests and practices of states. He argues that international institutions can help states to overcome the collective action problems. One of the problems states face in cooperation deals is the fear that others may cheat or defect from the deals. In such cases, institutions act as benign information

provider or distributor among the states thus allowing them to know each others' preferences, intentions and behaviour. This reduces misperceptions among the states and make possible to function the principle of reciprocity. Consequently, the institutions help to alter the systemic environment to a more favourable way in which cooperation among states is achievable. The continued existence of international institutions even after reduced state interests which created those institutions explains the importance of the institutions in promoting cooperation among states. Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin further highlight the importance of international institutions in the "The Promise of Institutionalist Theory" (1995). In the article, they argue that one of the barriers in states' attempt to cooperate is in finding the most desirable outcome to the cooperating states when the cooperation produces different outcomes of varying significance. In such cases, international institutions can help to find out the most beneficial cooperative outcome by providing "constructed focal points" where the distributional gains can be fairly divided among the states.

In the book *International Institutions and National Policies* (2007), Xinyuan Dai discusses how the international institutions indirectly influence states behaviour through victims of noncompliance and domestic mechanisms. He relaxes the state centric focus of the neoliberal institutionalism by incorporating the role of nonstate actors and domestic politics in assessing how international institutions influence states behaviour. He also discusses how weak international institutions which lack the authority to directly enforce or the capacity to directly facilitate states' compliance to international agreements, influence states' policies. He argues that a state' noncompliance to international agreements has implications on the domestic politics. The domestic actors which are pro-compliance to agreements are likely to put pressure on the governments thus influencing the government policies. The international institutions as valuable source of information can empower the pro-compliance domestic actors which could augment their leverage capacity over government policies thus altering the domestic environment that a government faces. This is particularly true in most of the democratic states. In authoritarian states where the domestic actors and politics are less institutionalised, he argues that the international institutions' role of information endowment can still influence the authoritarian regimes as the leaders need the moral support of the domestic actors for their survival and legitimacy. However, he does not fully explore the interactions between the international institutions and domestic political actors in authoritarian states where the authority has strict monitoring system of the domestic actors.

Neorealists disagree with neoliberals about the possibility of international cooperation among states. According to Kenneth Waltz, in the *Theory of International Politics* (1979), and John Mearsheimer, in the “The false promise of international institutions” (1994), the international institutions play a minimal role in world politics. For both Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer, states are the main actors in the international politics and they are self-interested entities. In the self-interested anarchic system of states, powerful states use institutions to advance their own interests and take advantages of others. Institutions cannot prevent states from engaging in power politics and they, therefore, play a marginal role in world politics. Joseph Grieco also argues, in the *Cooperation Among Nations: Europe, America and Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade* (1990), that states are preoccupied with power and security and as such states are more inclined towards conflict and competition. States follow self-help systems and are less likely to cooperate even if they could find out common interests because self-help systems create cooperation among states difficult. For Neorealists, states care about their relatives’ capabilities with other states and thus concern more about relative gains than absolute gains from cooperation.

In the book, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* (2001), Amitav Acharya studies how the norms of ASEAN have managed conflicts and order among the member states in the region, and how these norms led to the creation of a common identity in the region. One of main claims of the book is how ASEAN’s norms led to the emergence of a nascent security community in the region. He also brings out three kinds of polarization emerging recently among the members: the division between liberal and conservative groups in terms of promotion of human rights and democracy in the region; a division between ASEAN haves and ASEAN have-nots; and a division between a pro-interventionist group that supports “flexible engagement” and a pro-sovereignty group that still supports the traditional norm of non-interference in each other’s internal affairs. He concludes that ASEAN needs to reinvent itself in order to avoid such divisions and how this reinvention or transformation, will be vital in deciding the relevance of ASEAN in maintaining regional peace and security in future. Acharya’s claim of the emergence of a nascent security community is questioned by Nicholas Khoo in the “Constructing Southeast Asian security: the pitfalls of imagining a security community and the temptations of orthodoxy” (2004) and “Deconstructing the security community: a review essay” (2004). Khoo’s main arguments are: first, Acharya could not adequately explain the emergence of those norms he privileges as the dominant norms of ASEAN, and other kinds of norms i.e.

'perverse norms' could better explain the institution; second, the nascent security community has never existed in the region; third, Acharya does not entirely explore the alternative ways to understand ASEAN. Khoo highlights the importance of the institution in safeguarding the member states from the influence of the external powers and also at the same time, the increasing irrelevance of it in responding to regional issues. He disagrees both Kenneth Waltz's claim in the *Theory of International Politics* (1979) and John Mearsheimer's claim in the "The false promise of international institutions" (1994) that international institutions play a minimal role in world politics. Khoo's arguments are being responded by Alice Ba in the "On norms, rule breaking, and security communities: a constructivist response" (2005). Alice argues that the current crisis that ASEAN's norms face is due to the changing environment of the Southeast Asia region since the foundation of ASEAN in 1967. The Asian financial crisis, democratisation, membership expansion, East Timor issue etc. have questioned ASEAN's core norms and may transform ASEAN from being a nascent or ascendant security community into a 'sunset Institution'. But this does not mean the non-existence of the norms and lack of power of the norms during the evolution of ASEAN. Khoo's view of the existence of 'perverse norms' which he could not elaborate properly also means the existence some other forms of norms in the region.

Martha Finnemore in the book, *National Interests in International Society* (1996), argues that socialisation at the international level can affect and change state preferences and interests from the already existing interests. In this socialising process, international institutions can act as socialising teachers where states accept new norms, values and interests. Checkel (1999) also provides the importance of institutions in socialising states to accept certain norms. He examines the way how norms are internalised by states. However in the region like Southeast Asian which is dominated by authoritarian rules, socialisation by international institutions faces many obstacles. Mathew Davies, in "The Perils of Incoherence: ASEAN, Myanmar and the Avoidable Failures of Human Rights Socialization?" (2012), also discusses the unsuccessful of ASEAN as a socialising agent in promoting human rights standards in Myanmar. Due to the post-colonial setting of the institution, ASEAN has been upholding the principle of sovereignty in managing the regional issues and problems. ASEAN is, therefore, devoid of hard compliance mechanisms like courts and this has made ASEAN a weak socialising institution, unlike EU. However, he argues that ASEAN's rhetorical actions, through various public pronouncements and communiqués, can eventually and slowly socialise Myanmar if those actions are acted coherently. To effectively socialise Myanmar,



ASEAN needs to remove the protection provided to it from the western criticisms and also accept those criticisms.

In the book, *Multilateralism under challenge? Power, International Order, and Structural Change* (2006), the Edward Newman and Ramesh Thakur argue that the present functioning of multilateralism has several limitations and it is under challenge but it is not in crisis. They argue that multilateral processes work more effectively at the regional level based upon shared values, identity and regional leadership than at the international level. Challenges to multilateralism arise from several factors. The working models of multilateralism are based on relations amongst the sovereign states. However, the state sovereignty is being challenged due to inability of many developing states to uphold the institution of sovereignty inside their own territories. Many of the problems and challenges of today are transnational in nature and involve non-state actors like terrorists. The state-centric nature of contemporary multilateral processes cannot address these kinds of issues which have serious ramifications across borders. There is also lack of accountability, representation and transparency in decision and policy making in multilateral institutions. Non-state actors like NGOs whose policies reflect the need of the local contexts are increasing playing bigger role today, but they are hardly represented in decision making processes. The present manner of decision making through majoritarian and consensus rules is also being questioned in terms of legitimacy. In cases of multilateral institutions which include authoritarian states, the process of decision making particularly through consensus manner has become very problematic. This kind of problems is very much visible in institutions like ASEAN which has few members having authoritarian rules.

In the *Challenges to democratisation in Burma: Perspectives on multilateral and bilateral responses* (2001), the urgent need to bring human rights reform and political change in Myanmar are discussed. It also discusses the change in threat perception, due to the rise of China, to the security of ASEAN and also its sense of insecurity in political and economic realm. The expansion of ASEAN became necessary to make it an economically vibrant region and reduce China's more prominent role in Myanmar. The economic interests of some of the member states were the compelling factors behind ASEAN's policies towards Myanmar. It also discusses Myanmar's relations with other neighbouring countries like India, Bangladesh etc. The main motive of India's policy on Myanmar is to limit China's advances in Myanmar and to prevent a strategic position for China in the Southeast Asian and the

Indian Ocean region. Consequently, India have given up its earlier strategy of supporting democratic movement and established good relations with the military junta. For Myanmar, India provides another alternative way to reduce its overdependence on China. Similarly, David Steinberg in the “Myanmar: Regional Relationships and Internal Concerns” (1998), also brings out the necessity of opening up the country by the military junta due to concern over internal problems and the changing relationship with the neighbouring countries. Integration to ASEAN became a rational option to access to hard currency and external fund to improve the deteriorating economy. Becoming a member of ASEAN would increase the legitimacy of the military regime and also provide a protective shield to the possible intervention by the Western powers over human rights violations. He also addresses the different views held by the military junta and the NLD leaders in solving the internal problems. For the military junta, the military can only unite the country while the NLD leaders are of the view that a democratic government can only properly deal with the ethnic minority issues and solve them by allowing the ethnic minorities to participate in the decision making processes. Similarly in the “China’s “Client State”? China-Burma Relations and Burma’s Human Security in a Regional Context” (2009), Katherine Lindsay Suplick, argues that China, India and ASEAN are the main actors affecting Myanmar’s policies. She also highlights the interests of both China and India in their attempts to limit each other’s advances in Myanmar. In this power politics, normative concerns, such as the promotion of human rights conditions of the Myanmar’s people, are relegated to the back seat. Due to the ineffectiveness of policies of ASEAN, coupled with realist policies of both China and India, human rights conditions and democratic movements in Myanmar still remain insignificant.

In the book, *The International Relations of Southeast Asia: The struggle for Autonomy* (2009), Donald Weatherbee argues that in formulating policies by the ASEAN leaders, national interests play a bigger role than the regional interests. The regional interests do not transcend the national interests and they exist only if there is a convergence of the national interests of the member states. The reason is that in spite of existence of ASEAN, Westphalian nation-states system dominates the structure of the region. Its leaders have been constantly trying to prevent the hegemony and intervention by the external great powers in the region. Thus, ASEAN leaders prioritise regime security in the member states, either authoritarian or democratic, to enable states to maintain security and order. This makes ASEAN more of a state-oriented institution rather than a people-oriented institution. The practice of the ASEAN way does not provide scope for democracy and human rights promotion too. ASEAN, therefore, has become an institution of conservative illiberalism

where authoritarianism and human rights violations are acceptable. ASEAN support of military junta rather than the Burmese people is a result of the illiberal worldview of the institution. Similarly in the book *Human Security in Southeast Asia* (2010), Yukiko Nishikawa shows that in Southeast Asian countries security is mainly directed towards state and economic development. Threats to the security of the states are identified from state's perspective. Thus, people's perspective is neglected and issues like promoting human rights do not figure in state's security agenda as well as in regional security approach.

In "The ASEAN Charter: An Opportunity Missed or One that Cannot Be Missed?" (2008), Mely Caballero-Anthony brings out the shortcoming in the ASEAN charter and also the future prospects of it. The Charter has reinforced ASEAN tradition of decision-making through consensus by codifying it. It also does not provide scope for any effective compliance mechanism on the member states.

In the "Democratising Southeast Asia: Economic Crisis and Political Change" (1998), Amitav Acharya brings out the impacts of the Asian financial crisis on the democratisation process in the Southeast Asia region. The general acceptance of the positive relationship between authoritarian rule and economic growth has been questioned by the AFC. It has been argued that economic growth can be better delivered and managed through democracy. The AFC has brought a new democratic wave in the region. As democracy is advancing in the region, ASEAN may not be able to shield Myanmar from external pressures.

In "Beyond Non-Interference in ASEAN: The Association's Role in Myanmar's National Reconciliation and Democratization" (2006), Ruukun Katanyuu discusses the factors behind ASEAN's moves to intervene in the internal affairs of the member states through relaxing its non-interference policy. The factors can be classified into three categories: pressure from the individual members primarily the old founding members of the institution, ASEAN as a group and the international community mainly led by the US and the EU. ASEAN has been affected by Myanmar's domestic problems in its relation with its major trading partners-the US and EU which have been constantly pressuring ASEAN to take stronger actions upon Myanmar. The international pressure also compels ASEAN to relax its non-interference policy towards Myanmar. ASEAN needs these external powers in the maintenance of the security and order in the region. For fruitful dealings with these powers, ASEAN needs to actively engage the problems in Myanmar.

### **Rationale and Scope of Research.**

The rationale of this research is to understand the effectiveness of ASEAN's role in the democratisation of Myanmar. ASEAN has been playing a major role in the international relations of Southeast Asia. It has been successful in maintaining security and order in the region since the cold war period. Its adherence to the principle of sovereignty and norm of non-interference in each other's internal affairs has been crucial to its success. However, ASEAN is not free of problems. Those principles and norms that made it successful have also become obstacles in its efforts in the democratisation of Myanmar.

### **Research Questions.**

To be able to understand the role of ASEAN in the democratisation of Myanmar and evaluating its effectiveness, I would pose the following questions.

What is the role of the 'national interests' of the member states behind ASEAN's policies in the democratisation of Myanmar?

Are the policies of ASEAN effective towards Myanmar? Is the neoliberal institutionalism claim that institutions can change state interests and preferences hold true in the ASEAN-Myanmar relations?

1. What are Myanmar's interests in ASEAN? Are those interests related to its search for power and security using ASEAN as a platform?
2. What are the interests and the role of the external powers like the US, China, India etc., in the democratisation process of Myanmar?
3. Is multilateralism effective channel to address domestic problems of Myanmar like human rights violations?

### **Objectives.**

1. To understand the effectiveness of ASEAN institution in handling the domestic problems of Myanmar.
2. To understand the significance of the principles of state sovereignty and non-interference in ASEAN's management of the domestic issues Myanmar.
3. To understand the influence of the role of national interests of the member states in ASEAN's management of the domestic issues of Myanmar.
4. To understand the influence of external powers in the ASEAN's management of the domestic issues of Myanmar.

### **Hypotheses.**

The hypotheses to this research, regarding with several aspects that I have made in the research questions and supported by some literature review are as follows.

1. ASEAN can enhance the cooperation, maximize opportunities, and mitigate tensions among the member states. It can affect and change states preferences and interests.
2. The influence of the external great powers will continue in ASEAN's management of regional issues as well as domestic issues of member states.

### **Research Methodology.**

This research will be conducted through qualitative approach. It will deal about the changing ASEAN-Myanmar relations and ASEAN's role in the democratisation of Myanmar, exploring with various actions and efforts in the institutional management of the domestic issues of Myanmar. Keeping the above ideas and questions in view, the proposed research will employ secondary sources to get an extensive knowledge in the field. Along with this employment of secondary sources, this research would extensively rely on primary resources: statements of the institution, political speeches, treaties, interview reports, historical biographies and institutional policy papers, and reports of the institutional summits etc, to understand the questions pose in this proposal. Finally, I would be able to validate my hypothesis.

### **Tentative Chapters.**

The research would altogether be arranged to the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction.

In this chapter, main focus will be on the historicity of ASEAN in the cold war period. It will look into various factors and principles that make ASEAN a viable institution. It will also study the changing ASEAN-myanmar relations from the cold war period to the present day.

Chapter 2: Theoretical analysis.

This chapter will focus on the theoretical analysis of ASEAN-Myanmar relations in the context of ASEAN's role in the democratisation of Myanmar.

Chapter 3: Democratisation of Myanmar.

This chapter will look into the democratisation process of Myanmar. The main focus of it will be on the domestic factors which led to the democratisation process. It will also study historical policies of Myanmar towards ASEAN and motives of Myanmar in becoming a member of ASEAN.

Chapter 4: ASEAN's role and external powers' influence in the democratisation of Myanmar. The main focus of this chapter will be on examining the various factors which led to the expansion of ASEAN to include politically trouble countries like Myanmar and its interests in the transformation of Myanmar from a military rule to a democratic state. It will also discuss the role of external powers behind ASEAN's policies towards Myanmar.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

An analysis of the research findings will be conducted in this chapter, and would be able to validate the research hypothesis. Finally, conclusion would be drawn.

## Chapter 2

### Theoretical Approaches

The importance of the role of international institutions in world politics has been debated by mainstream theories of international relations like neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, constructivism etc. This theoretical chapter provides the key arguments of these contending theories.

#### **Neoliberal institutionalism**

Neoliberals agree with neorealist's view that cooperation among states is difficult in international politics even if they could find out common interests among them. Neorealists argue that the anarchic structure of the international system favour states to defect from cooperation if the issue of relative gain become significance. On the other hand, neoliberals argue that cooperation is possible to achieve in the presence of international institutions and they, therefore, play a very important role in international politics. Keohane, in the book *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (1984), agrees the importance of state powers and their interests in shaping international institutions. However his main claim is that the interests and practices of states can be affected by international institutions. In the existence of international institutions, states find it possible to overcome the collective action problems. The importance of institutions is that they can help states to overcome the problem of cheat or defect in cooperative deals. Institutions are a source of rich-information. The information functions of institutions allow states to know each others' preferences, intentions and behaviour. This certainly help to reduce misperceptions among the states thereby making it possible to function the principle of reciprocity. The importance of the institutions in promoting cooperation among states can be understood by the fact international institutions continued to exist even after reduced of the state power and interests which created those institutions. The importance of international institutions is further explained by Keohane and Martin in the "the Promise of Institutional Theory" (1995).

Charles Lipson states that "significantly different institutional arrangements are associated with international economic and security issues" (Lipson,1984,2). The degree of cooperation between these two issues is different where there is greater possibility for strategic cooperation in world economy characterise by stronger development of rules, norms, and political institutions but lesser possibilities in security affairs. He argues that "cooperation

can be sustained among several self-interested state” when states are involved in economic relations (Lipson,1984,18). The neoliberal institutionalism thus assumes that the international politics can be divided into two spheres i.e. security and political economy, where it focuses mainly on the political economy.

The neoliberal institutionalists state that any cooperative agreements among states cannot guarantee the adherence to promises as states “cannot cede ultimate control over their conduct to any supra- national sovereign” (Oye,1985,1). The possibility of a breach of promise presents a kind of cheating on the parts of states and this become an obstacle to cooperation among states. The literature of neoliberal institutionalism, extensively use the game of famous ‘Prisoners’ Dilemma’ to explain how states can overcome the problem of cheating and facilitate cooperation among states. States usually face the problem of either to cheat or cooperate in any agreement like in the situation of ‘Prisoners’ Dilemma’. As the gains from cooperation are not equally distributed among states, each state tries to gain more than the others and adopt such strategy to achieve it. Each state does not care about others as long as it gains more than others. However, each state begins to worry about others if others’ strategy is likely to affect its advantages. In such situation, the best option for each state is to tempt others to cooperate and then cheat. Thus, the best outcome for each state is “to “sucker” the other into thinking it is going to cooperate and then cheat” (Mearsheimer,1994/1995,17). The problem here is that each state tries to adopt such strategy. When the states cheat each other the result is the worst outcome for the states which they could avoid if they mutually cooperate. The outcome of mutual cooperation is less favourable to states than the strategy to tempt others to cooperate and cheating, but it is still the better outcome than the mutual cheating which is the worst outcome for all the states

The strategy to avoid the worst outcome to states is the dilemma that states usually face when they enter into cooperation. The international institutions can help states to overcome such dilemma and facilitate cooperation. There are broadly two types of international institutions. First is the type of strong institutions which have compliance and monitoring capabilities upon the actions of the member states. Another is those types of weak institutions which are lack of the capabilities like strong institutions.<sup>1</sup> There are certain rules and regulations associated with the strong institutions which the member states cannot take them for granted.

---

<sup>1</sup> International institutions are broadly classified as strong and weak by Xinyuan Dai (2007) in *International Institutions and National Policies*.



The rules and regulations can help states “to make short-term sacrifices needed to resolve the prisoners’ dilemma and thus to realize long-term gains” (Mearsheimer,1994/1995,18).

The neoliberal institutionalism argue that the existence of institutions increase the transactions and interactions among the member states through their rules and principles. In the presence of institutions, the interactions among states become more and more iterative in nature. This *institutionalised iteration* help states to avoid cheating in cooperation in broadly three ways. Firstly, “it raises the costs of cheating by creating the prospect of future gains through cooperation, thereby invoking “the shadow of the future” to deter cheating today” (Mearsheimer,1994/1995,18). In the well-known article “Achieving cooperation under anarchy” (1985), Robert Axelrod and Robert Keohane highlight the importance of “the shadow of the future” in facilitating cooperation among states. They argue that “in Prisoners’ Dilemma, concern about the future helps to promote cooperation” (Axelrod & Keohane,1985,232). Due to increased interdependence, states are frequently engage in economic activities. As no state is self sufficient on its own and with increased interdependence among states, states also expect to continue their interaction in future. Thus, states also concern about the future of their relationship with others. The nature of interaction thus becomes iterative thereby increasing the length of “the shadow of the future”. The importance of “the shadow of the future” becomes more prominent when its nature is more lengthen i.e. extended. There are particularly three attributes associated with iterated economic interactions among states. First, “states must expect to continue dealing with each other.” Most of the interactions in international politics is characterised by this feature except the case of thermonuclear war. Second, it is utmost important that the “payoff structure must not change substantially over time.” It means that every interaction from the beginning should not change the structure of the interaction in future. Third, the iterated interaction is affected by the importance that each state gives to the size of the discount in future interactions. “If a government places little value on future payoffs, its situation has many of the characteristics of a single-play game. If it places a high value on future payoffs, its situation may have many of the characteristics of an iterated game” (Oye,1985,12-13). “The shadow of the future” plays a very important role in promoting the likelihood of cooperation. In a single (or one time) interaction among states, there is high temptation to defect from cooperation because defection provides each state the most favourable strategy even though the outcome/immediate gain is not the best. States do not have to worry about what the others will react. In the absence of higher sovereign authority, “adherence to agreements is often irrational” as states can “neither turn to a central authority for enforcement of an agreement to

cooperate nor rely on the anticipation of retaliation to deter present defection” (Oye,1985,13). It means that in a single cooperative situation, there is less chances for cooperation. But in iterative interactions, states are more tempted to think of the future gain which will give them better overall benefit. States thus face the option to choose either the immediate gain obtain from a single interaction or the future gain obtain from iterative interactions. In between these two choices, the latter become more favourable to states. The underlying logic is that once a state is caught of cheating, it will lose “its prospects of benefitting from future cooperation, since the victim would probably retaliate” (Mearsheimer,1994/1995,18). Institutions (both weak and strong) have the potential to increase the length of “the shadow of the future” (Donnelly,2000,150). (Donnelly, Jack. *Realism and international relations*. Cambridge University Press, 2000). It is this potential that makes it possible for institutions to play an important role in facilitating cooperation among states.

Secondly in iterative interactions, the cheater cannot run away freely. The victim usually gets the opportunity to retaliate the cheater i.e. the reciprocating strategy of Tit for Tat. The strategy of Tit for Tat establishes “a direct connection between an actor’s present behaviour and anticipated future benefits” (Oye,1985,14). It thus has the potential to change the preferences and interests of the states in the present condition. The underlying logic is that if a state cheats others in the present others are likely to cheat in the future. The result is that there is likelihood of mutual cheating in the future and thus lesser chances of cooperation in the future. In other words, the chances of mutual cheating in the future are higher. It is likely that states being rational actors do not want to continue mutual cheating over a period of time which will certainly reduce significant amount of benefits to them which they can get if they cooperate at the present. There are basically two types of reciprocity: specific reciprocity and diffuse reciprocity. In specific reciprocity, self-interest governs states’ strategy and they are likely to adopt the strategy of Tit for Tat (Keohane,1986,19). Norms of obligation are weak in cooperation but there is the possibility of mutually beneficial cooperation. Institutions have the potential to make “specific reciprocity more effective by providing information to the players, reducing transaction costs and limiting strategic options” (Keohane,1986,24-25). In the case of diffuse reciprocity, states are likely to cooperate if some norms of obligation exist. Here, it is important for states to expand their conceptions of self-interest and put confidence in the good faith of others (Keohane,1986,25). The importance of diffuse reciprocity is that it increases the confidence on states towards each other. It may help states to expect reciprocal cooperation in future. The presence of institutions can help states to avoid misperceptions and

increase their faith in the goodness of each other through mechanism like providing accurate information. However, institutions are not “substitute for reciprocity; rather, they reinforce and institutionalize it.” Institutions which incorporate norm of reciprocity make defection more costly through delegitimizing it. They “make it easier to establish a reputation for practicing reciprocity consistently” (Axelrod & Keohane,1985,250). The importance of reputation is that once a state acquires a good reputation in cooperation, others will be more tempted to cooperate in future. In other words, it reinforces the strategy of cooperation to cooperation. Here, institutions can reward good reputation to those states which practice reciprocity consistently. ( LIPSON ).

Issue-linkage is another area where institutions can help states to cooperate. The linkage of several issues created a kind of interdependence among states. It creates difficulty for a state to cheat on one issue as others are likely to retaliate similarly in another issue area (Mearsheimer,1994/1995,18). It also bring elements of iteration on linkage issues. The significance of it is that if one (or some) of the issues is of very important to a state, it will be less likely for the state to cheat on another issues in the hope of getting benefit in its desire issue(s). It thus reduces the incentive to cheat. For example, the 1982 Law of the Sea was reached through linkage of several issues, “ranging from innocent passage through international straits to mining the deep seabed, that probably could not have been achieved in a series of separate negotiations. The temptation to defect on one issue was overcome by the need to acquire cooperation on another issue in the package deal” (Donnelly,2004,151). Issue of human rights promotion in a state with records of human rights violations can be link with issues like trade and investment. If the state value trade and investment very highly, it may cooperate to promote human rights standard. Issue linkage is also of very important in cases where states confront a single-play game on one issue of overriding importance. Present decision in a single-game can be linked with future benefits in an iterate game thereby creating an increased “the shadow of the future” in a single-play game. Here in such cases, Oye argues that “present defection may be deterred by threats of retaliation on other iterated issues. In international monetary affairs, for instance, a government fearing one-time reserve losses if another state devalues its currency may link devaluation to an iterated trade game” (Oye,1985,17).

Institutions are source of valuable information to the participating states. The rich information provided by institutions can enable states to know the behaviour of each other. It

may “alter states’ understanding of their interest” (Oye,1985,11). Keohane argues that “human beings, and governments, behave differently in information-rich environments than in information poor ones” (Keohane,1984,245). The informational functions of institutions reduce uncertainty about the policies and actions of the states. Reducing uncertainty may help to achieve some mutually advantageous bargains through converging states’ expectation around some cooperative outcome (Johnston,2001,490). It can enable states to closely examine the activities of others. “The issue of identifying defectors is one aspect of a fundamental problem besetting efforts to cooperate in world politics” (Axelrod & Keohane,1985,235). Rich-information timely provided by the institutions can help to identify the defectors.

Institutions also reduce the transaction costs of the states entering into agreements. Under the platform of institutions, states can come and negotiate together which may otherwise be very difficult and costly. They provide economical advantages to states in dealing with additional issues thus making them attractive to self-interested states (keohane,1984,89-92).

### **Complex Interdependence**

Theory of Complex Interdependence by Keohane and Nye (1977) in their book “Power and Interdependence” soot up as a critical reaction to the school of Realism. According to Keohane and Nye, the foundation on which Realism rests i.e. the state are only actor in the international politics which are authorized to use force, military and security parameters dominant the international politics, anarchy is the rule of the game, are partially true in explaining the reality in the anarchical international politics. Keohane and Nye provided a theory which also helps in explaining the reality in world politics which they called as “Complex Interdependence”. They see their theory as ideal type and do not see the theory as comprehensive and explanatory in all circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

According to Complex Interdependence, states are not the only dominant actor in International Politics but different communities and races are also the actors in International Politics. This school has three main characteristics: Societies are connected by multiple channels. These channels are interstate,

- 1) transgovernmental, and transnational relations. Interstate channel are channels as assumed by Realists i.e. formal ties between the institutions of state.

---

<sup>2</sup> The whole section is taken from chapter 2, Keohane & Nye (1977), *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Transgovernmental channels are channels of non-governmental institutions. Transnational channels are channels of transnational organizations like the multinational banks or corporations.

- 2) Multiple issue connects interstate relations which are not in clear hierarchy, which means that single issues do not dominate as Realism has assumed. Many issues came up due to domestic politics and as such blurred came up between the domestic and foreign issues. Different issues generate different coalitions and different degrees of conflict.
- 3) Military force is not used in the same region or on issues of complex interdependence prevails. However, military force became relevant for alliance's political and military relations with a rival bloc.<sup>3</sup>

On the global issues of economic and ecological interdependence, the three characteristics of complex interdependence are well approximated, and come close in defining the relationship between nations. Distinctive political processes arise because of the three conditions of complex interdependence, which translates resources into outcomes.

1. Linkages Strategies: Distinctive political processes and patterns of outcomes vary from one issue to another as the distributions of power are different. In the traditional model, militarily and economically powerful states dominate a variety of organizations and various issues through linking their favorable policies on some issues to others' policies on some issues. In this system, they cover for their weak issues using their overall dominance. Under complex interdependence, it will be difficult for them to cover their weak issues due to the decreased role of military. As the role of force becomes negligible, linkage issues will become problematic.
2. Agenda Setting: The politics of agenda formation and control become more important as there are lacks of hierarchy among issues under Complex Interdependence. "Discontented domestic groups will politicize issues and force more issues once considered domestic onto the interstate agenda. Shifts in the distribution of power resources within sets of issues will also affect agendas"(P.27)
3. Transnational and Transgovernmental Relations: Multiple channels blur the distinction between domestic and international politics. Multinational corporations

---

<sup>3</sup> The whole section is taken from chapter 2, Keohane & Nye (1977), *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

TH22145

played a very important role as independent actors as well as dependent actors of their government. National interests differ with different issues, times and actors.<sup>4</sup>

### **Role of International Organisations:**

The roles of International Organisations become very important in political bargaining in the world of multiple issues in which coalitions are formed trans-nationally and trans-governmentally. These international organisations help in setting the international agenda and also act as a catalyst for coalition's formation and "as arenas for political initiatives and linkages by weak states". International organisations generate flow of business and government must organise to cope up. Such international organisations help government determine priorities and nature of departmental committees and other arrangements within the governments by defining the salient issues, and deciding which issues to be grouped.

International organisations played a significant role in bringing together the representatives of the less developed and weak countries, and their agendas and interest in the international forum. It also allowed weak states to pursue linkages strategies. As such "complex interdependence yields different political structure as does the realist conception of the world."<sup>5</sup>

### **Neorealism**

Realism take different view of institutions in world politics. According to realism, anarchy has been the defining feature of international politics which means that there is no superior authority above the sovereign states which can enact and enforce rules of behaviour. In this anarchic structure, the sovereign state "decides for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems" (Waltz,1979,96) and understands the limitations on its freedom of activities upon taking assistance and commitment to other states. States remain like units but they are differentiated according to their capabilities (Waltz,1979,97). An important feature of the anarchic structure is that states follow the self-help system for their own survival. The anarchic structure of international politics limits cooperation among states in two ways: firstly, states concern about the relative gains from any cooperation. Gains from any cooperation are not equally distributed among states. A state worries that other states may

---

<sup>4</sup> The whole section is taken from chapter 2, Keohane & Nye (1977), *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

<sup>5</sup> The whole section is taken from chapter 2, Keohane & Nye (1977), *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

gain more than itself in any cooperation and if it happens it will be disadvantages for itself considering the uncertainty of others' future intentions. Secondly, a state worries that any cooperation may result in dependence on other states (Waltz,1979,106). Consequently, states "must rely on the means they can generate and the arrangement they can make for themselves" in order to achieve their objectives and thus maintain their security (Waltz,1979,111).

John Mearsheimer in his article 'The False Promise of International Institutions' argued that Realism is based on five assumptions that: the international system is anarchic; great powers inherently possess some offensive military capability, and accordingly can damage each other; states can never be certain about other states' intentions; survival is the primary goal of great powers; and great powers are rational actors. These five assumptions provide states incentives to act aggressively. As such, three main patterns of behavior emerged: that great powers fear each other; that they can rely only on themselves for their security, and that the best strategy for states to ensure their survival is the maximization of relative power.

According to the Realist's School, cooperation does occur between the states, but difficult to achieve and sustain. States under cooperation are always motivated by relative gains. As such, sustaining cooperation become more problematic when states engaged in such cooperation are interested in relative-gains logic than absolute-gains logic. Moreover, the concerns for cheating between states when they are in cooperation also make states reluctant to enter into agreements. However, states cooperate in forming alliance against the common enemies following the balance of power-logic.

### **Constructivism**

The social theory of constructivism also recently contributes in the study of the importance of institutions in world politics. Unlike the above mentioned theories, social constructivists look at the importance of social relations among human beings. For them, "socialization is a central concept" (Johnston,2001,492). As Onuf argues that "social relations *make or construct* people-ourselves-into the kind of beings that we are" (Onuf,1998,59).

Finnemore in the book, *National Interests in International Society* (1996), argues that socialisation at the international level can affect and change state preferences and interests from the already existing interests. In this socialising process, international institutions can act as socialising teachers where states accept new norms, values and interests.

Checkel (1999) provides in detail how a certain norm is accepted by a state. The diffusion of new norm depends on the social and domestic settings of the state. He states that there two kinds of norm diffusion: bottom-up and top down. In bottom-up, “non-state actors and policy networks are united in their support for international norms; they then mobilize and coerce decision makers to change state policy. Norms are not internalized by the elites.” In top-down, social learning, not political pressure, leads agents-typically elite decision makers-to adopt prescriptions embodied in international norms” (Checkel,1999,88). In states having statist structure, top-down diffusion very important.



## Chapter 3

### Democratisation of Myanmar

The military junta of Myanmar known as the State Peace and Development Council democratised Myanmar by holding general elections on November 7, 2010. But the military forces continue to hold power in the changing political structure. It was the first general elections in Myanmar in 20 years. In the 1990 general elections, the military regime refused to honour the results of the election. The democratic system flourished in Burma in the post independent period. But the democratic government could not handle the various issues which were threatening the country. The military regime came to power through a coup d'état in 1962, replacing the democratic government, in the name of saving the country from disintegration and since then, the military forces continue to control the political scenario of the country. This chapter will focus on the long and slow process of coming back of democracy in Burma. The historical events during the British rule had a deep impact on the nation building process of Myanmar. How the British rule impacted the ethnic problems on Myanmar is discussed in the chapter. The coming of military was largely to save the country from disintegration from ethnic problems. The chapter provides the historical roots of the causes of the present problems that Burma face today.

#### **Ethnic composition of Burma**

The modern “nation-state” of the Union of Burma is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural country. It is composed of 135 different ethnic groups, each having its own distinctive history, culture and language. The Burman (Bamar) ethnic group is the majority and dominant group, making up about two-thirds of the population. The Burmans control the military and the government. The minority ethnic nationalities make up the remaining one-third of the population. The seven largest minority nationalities are the Chin, the Kachin, the Karenni (sometimes called Kayah), the Karen (sometimes called Kayin), the Mon, the Rakhine, and the Shan. There is one ethnic group known as the Rohingya people who live mostly in the Rakhine state. They are not recognised by the government as the ethnic nationality of Burma (Oxford Burma Alliance).<sup>6</sup> The following table shows the composition of main ethnic groups of Burma.

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.oxfordburmaalliance.org/ethnic-groups.html>

Ethnic group	Proportion of population	Location
Burman	69 percent	Lower Myanmar
Karen	7 percent	Kayin State in eastern Myanmar bordering Thailand
Kachin	1.5 percent	Kachin State in the north, bordering China
Karenni	0.75 percent	Kayah State, on the border with Thailand
Chin	2.5 percent	Chin State in western Myanmar, bordering India
Mon	2 percent	Mon State in southern Myanmar
Rhakine	3.5 percent	Rakhine State in western Myanmar
Shan	9 percent	Shan State, bordering Thailand
Wa	0.16 percent	Wa Special Region, on the border with China
Rohingya	0.15 percent	Northern townships of Rakhine State, bordering Bangladesh

Table. Main ethnic groups and their composition.<sup>7</sup>

### **Background of coming of military rule in Myanmar**

The military came to power for first time in Myanmar in the form of a “caretaker government” in 1958. The “caretaker government” was led by Ne Win, Chief of the Burma Defense Forces. The main purpose of the military government was to maintain law and order and prepared the ground for national elections within six months. The Constitution adopted in 1947 was strictly followed in administration (Martin Smith, 1999, 178). The national elections were held after 18 months in which the party of U Nu, former Prime Minister won the majority seats winning almost 80 percent parliamentary seats in the 250-man Chamber of Deputies, the more powerful chamber in the bi-cameral parliament (Trager, 963, 1). The coming of the military government was the result of the failure of the parliamentary democracy. Myanmar was in the state of a fractured nation after gaining sovereignty from the British rule.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95195/Briefing-Myanmar-s-ethnic-problems>

U Nu became the first Prime Minister of Burma after independence. It was during his third tenure as Prime Minister that the military staged a coup in 2 March, 1962 and military regime started in Burma. Economic conditions were very good during his time. But politically various issues started to damage Burma. Various insurgencies rose up, particularly among the Karen National Defense Organisation (KNDO). The remnants of the active Kuomintang (KMT) nationalist troops in the Shan state added more problems to the deteriorating situation. The demand for federalism also got stronger among the minorities. The secessionist demand by the ethnic groups like the Chins, the Arakanese, and the Mons etc. got stronger too (Trager,1963). The political developments in the early post-independent period and the coming of the military rule in Burma had origin during the British rule. The following section is focussed on how the British rule and its legacy led to such deteriorating situations in Burma.

### **Burma under the British rule**

The current problems facing Burma today are related to the British colonial rule. The British rule in Burma began from 1824 and lasted up to 1948. After victory over Burma in the first Anglo-Burmese war (1824-1826), the British annexed Arakan and Tenasserim portion. After victory in the second Anglo-Burmese war (1852), the Lower Burma was added. The British completed the conquest of Burma in 1886 after which Burma was included as a part of British Indian Empire (Smith,1999).

Until the British occupation, the Burmese political scene was dominated by the Kings. The Burmese monarchy was characterised by three defining features: the sacrosanctity and central positions of Kingship, absolutism, and the undifferentiated functions of Kingship (Maung, 1983, 18). The Burmese system of government and administration was centred on Kingship. The Kingship assumed absolute power over its subjects. The Burmese accepted the absolutism of the Kingship because they believed that it prevented anarchy and terror. In the long tradition of the Burmese monarchy, obedience to Kings became a quasi-religious duty (Silverstein, 1996, 213) and thus the people accepted the authoritarian rule by the Kings.

The British administration brought several changes to the traditional system of administration in Burma. The traditional system of power and authority of the Burman Kings was damaged. Rangoon became the new economic and political centre of Burma (Smith, 1999, 27). The British administered Burma through a combination of both direct and indirect rule. They

imported experienced Indian officials to administer in the central region, but they engaged traditional leaders in the outlying areas. They divided Burma into two parts for administrative convenience: Ministerial Burma to be administered from Rangoon and the Frontier Areas. The Ministerial Burma covered the regions along the central river valleys and deltas as well as the portions of the upper Burma where the majority of the population were inhabited by the ethnic Burmans group. The Frontier Areas were the region inhabited by the ethnic minorities and included Shan state and areas inhabited mainly by the Chin and Kachin (Walton, 2008, 893). The administrative areas were mostly un-demarcated. These territorial divisions of Burma reinforced the long standing tensions between the peoples of the hills and plains (Smith, 1999, 27). The communal feelings have been existence in Burma for a long time even before the arrival of the British. Traditionally the Burman Kings treated the minorities unkindly. Among the minorities the Karens suffered the most under the Burmans. They therefore welcomed the British to help and protect from the atrocities of the Burmans. They naturally became a kind of allies. In the Anglo-Burmese war of 1885-1886, for instance, they helped the British in overthrowing the Burmese Kings (Sleth,1986,488).

The British did not institutionalise democratic state apparatus like a representative assembly, elections, and cabinet system in Burma. They only changed the bureaucratic absolutism to constitutional bureaucracy guided by rational-legal principle. These two were basically and ideologically different. As Maung Maung observes, in the British case, its bureaucracy drew inspiration from the liberal traditions of constitutional monarchy and high principles of public service. By and large the chief administrative officers were guided by the lofty principles of fairness, equity, justice, and fair play. On the other hand, the Burmese bureaucracy was a creature of despot, and as such reflected to a great degree the evils attendant on a despotic regime (Maung,1983,70). In the early years of British rule, the Burmese people enjoyed peace and prosperity. The oppressive rule of the Burmese governors was abolished. Law and order were restored in the society. However, they did not fully reconcile to it. The Burmese intellectuals resented the degradation of their own race, religion and literature under an alien rule (Maung,1983,76).

The political structure of a nation is the result of a series of development over a long period of the political experiences of the people of the nation. It is a reflection of the nature of the role that the people are likely to take part in the political order of the nation. The political traditions, values, culture, myths, symbols, religious teachings etc. acquired over a long

period are internalised into the minds and thoughts of the people and therefore, they cannot be easily erased. They form a complex network in the development of political structure of a nation (Maung,1983,7-9). The British introduced many changes in the early administration of Burma but the results did not bring about fundamental changes in the Burmese minds. The British administration showed features of liberalism such as the rule of law, fair play, respect for human dignity, speedy justice etc. but their main concern was in maintaining peace, security, law and order so that their commercial and financial interests could be achieved successfully. They did not interfere in the social traditions and culture of the Burmese people. They did not try to eliminate the roots of the existing Burmese political culture. Thus, the traditional political values of the Burmese people remained very much alive. On the other hand, the liberal policies of the British paved the way for alien economic institutions, agencies and forces to dominate the economic activities. The younger Burmese generation were affected in the open labour market system resulting in the loss of their land and properties. The nature of the British administration left the Burmese completely out of touch to the new political settings. Most of them continued to stick to the traditional political values (Maung, 1983, 7-69). This later played a huge role in the political development in the post-independence period especially the coming of military role in the national politics.

### **The British religious policies**

In Southeast Asia religion has been playing an enormous role in the social, political and economic lives of the people of the region. It is one of the most religiously diverse regions of the world. Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam are the main religions in the region. Buddhism, however, dominates other religions in terms of followers and spread in the region. From time to time, religion and religious personalities have been a powerful force either in supporting or opposing the policies of the states. The legitimacy of the state government also depends upon the support of these religious personalities as these people have the capacity to mobilise mass people in case of any wrong policies of the states (Aljunied,2010).

Historically in Burma, Buddhism has been closely related to the national identity and functioning of the central authority. The establishment of the first Burmese dynasty in 11<sup>th</sup> century AD coincided with the adoption of Buddhism as the state religion (Smith, 1965,83). Buddhism had been the most important tool in binding ethnically diverse groups together which professed Buddhism such as Burman, Mon, Shan and Rakhine. In the relations between religion and state, Buddhist monks occupied prominent positions. In old Burma,

monks performed several social functions like education of the young people and writing of the most noted law books. In modern states these are the main responsibility of the central authority. They were very valuable in nurturing the manners and morals of the villagers. They assisted the central authority through advising the people to obey laws and pay the taxes. The sangha (the Buddhist monks) thus became a powerful social agency to control and culture the people (Smith,1965,1-37). They were also the representatives of the people whenever there were any disagreement between the King and common people and on such occasions, the King could not neglect their views and were generally accepted. They were the only people who were immune from the brutal actions of the King. They in fact balanced and checked the absolute powers of the King. They could cancel the seizure of land of the people by the King. In case a monk was involved in any offensive actions against the state he was to be tried firstly by the Thumada Sadaws and if found guilty he was to be handed over to the civil authorities (Maung,1983,25).

During the British rule Buddhism decline badly in Burma. In the traditional monarchy system, the Kings were the promoter and protector of it. But the colonial government acted just the opposite. They were not the patron and promoter of it. No pagodas were built by the British. About 90% of the Burmese professed Buddhism. In Buddhism, there is an ecclesiastical structure which maintains the unity and discipline of the monkhood (Smith,1965,43). In the old monarchy system, the King was the main pillar of Buddhism. He was the chief benefactor and defender. He controlled the discipline of the religious order through a clerical hierarchy with thathanabaing (head of the order) as its head (Maung,1983,75). Under the British rule, Buddhism became a headless ecclesiastical religion making it more and more vulnerable. The British education policy also affected Buddhism. The monastic school under the old regime was the heart of moulding Burmese social, cultural and religious life. The Christian missionaries played a big role in the introduction of western education system which seriously undermined the traditional monastic school (Smith,1965,38-80). As Shelby Tucker observes, “very few *Burmans* converted to Christianity, but, increasingly, they entrusted the education of their children to the missionaries and resorted to mission doctors for their medical care.” It led to decline of monks as teachers and their importance and influence in the society. This weakened the harmonious relations between them and the people (Tucker, 2001,32). Thus the coming of the British rule seriously damaged the importance of Buddhism in Burma and consequently the traditional social norms and values get eroded.

## **British recruitment policy and its effects**

In addition to the territorial divisions of Burma into Ministerial and Frontier regions, the colonial military recruitment policies further exacerbated the already existing divisions among the Burmese. The recruitment policies solidified the ethnic identity of the minorities. The British started excluding the Burmans in the armed forces after the complete annexation in 1886 and this opened up various opportunities for the ethnic minorities which were previously denied to them (Walton,2008,893). The ethnic minorities became closer with the British. For them the British were their protector from the domination by the majority ethnic Burmans and they were ready to assist the British whenever opportunities came. Karens, for instance, were a great source of military manpower when they defeated the Burman King in 1886 (Sleth,1986,488). Karen soldiers were instrumental in the bloody suppression of the Burmans in the Saya San rebellion of the 1930s. In 1925, the British formally adopted the policy of recruiting only Chins, Kachins and Karens and all Burmans previously serving in the army were disarmed (Walton,2008,894). By 1938 the Burma Army comprised 1587 Britons, 1423 Indians and Gurkhas, 3040 'other indigenous races' (Karens, Kachins and Chins) and 159 Burmans-one Burman for every 39 non-Burmans. Officers included 163 British, 36 Indians, 75 other indigenous races and four Burmans-one Burman for every 69 non-Burmans (Tucker,2001,32). The Burmans viewed it as a mechanism to ease their oppression by the British through the hands of the ethnic minorities. Consequently the relations between the Burman majority and ethnic minority groups get more and more deteriorated.

The incidents during the WWII in search of independence also had a big impact in the making of modern state of Burma. With the help of the Japanese, the Burmese Independence Army was formed. Aung San was one of founders of the Burmese Independence Army. It consisted mainly of a mixed of some 200 Shans and expatriate Burmans recruited in Bangkok. They marched along with the Japanese invasion in 1941. By the time they reached the Rangoon, their number rose to around 10,000, mostly consisted of the Burmans. But ethnic minorities were not attracted to BIA (Sleth,1986,490). With the help of the Japanese, they successfully ousted the British from the Burmese territory by the beginning of 1942. However, as the Japanese control of Burma was not effective in Chin, Kachin or Shan territory, the ethnic minorities remained under-represented in BIA (Walton,2008,494). To strengthen the army, many people were recruited as they marched on. Due to the lack of

proper training and guidance, many turned out to be undisciplined. The activities of many members of the BIA turned out to be a racial conflict with the minorities especially the Karens. They started to torture the Karens, girls and women were molested and raped, and houses and villages were looted and destroyed. The Christians Karens were forced to pay homage to some Buddhists monks (Tucker,2001,44). Later, Aung Sun attempted some reconciliation with the Karen leaders but the horrific incidents remained in the memory of the Karens (Tucker,2001,45).

After the successful ousting of the British, Burma was declared independent on August 1, 1943. But Burma remained as a de-facto colony of the Japanese. It severely hurt the Burma nationalists and consequently a new anti-Japanese resistance was soon formed (Walton,2008,894). The Japanese rule also fuelled racial tensions among the Burmese. They treated the Burmans as allies but the ethnic minorities with suspicion. In their propaganda, they highlighted the 'glorious past' of the Burmese and hailed them as 'fellow Buddhists'. It increased the fears of the Christians, Muslims and animalist peoples who had experienced the brutalities of the Burman majority. For the British, it was the idle situation to utilise the minorities as well as the disaffected nationalist Burmans against the Japanese (Sleth,1986,494).

In the struggle for complete independence, there were two kinds of anti-fascist resistance in Burma. One was the resistance against the Japanese by the Burmese National Army (later manifestation of BIA) and its allies and the second was the wider nationalist struggle against the British which they got in 1948. The united nationalist front known as Anti-Fascist Organisation (AFO), then later known as Anti-Fascist Peoples Freedom League (AFPFL) was formed by Aung Sun and his fellow nationalists. They were supported by vast majority of the people including the ethnic minorities. The Karens joined them in 1944(Sleth,1986,495). However, the Burmans and ethnic minorities had different visions of a future Burma. They were united by certain common feeling as their enemy was common i.e. the Japanese. While preparing for the resistance movement against the Japanese, ousting the Japanese from Burma was given the priority, but little attention was paid to what would be the future of the Union, in particular how and by whom Burma would be ruled in future (Walton,2008,495). After the ousting of the Japanese, the British prioritised the Burmans over the ethnic minorities in the negotiations for complete independence. The delegation to London in January 1947 to discuss independence terms did not include any representatives from the



frontier hill peoples. The ethnic minorities deeply resented the new political development. However, Aung Sun managed to hold the ethnic minorities together. He was a leader broadly accepted by large numbers of people including the ethnic minorities. His desire for a future federal Union and a secular state convinced the ethnic minorities to sign the Panglong Agreement (Sleth,1986,506).

### **Panglong agreement**

The Panglong agreement of 1947 was a historic agreement in the making of modern nation-state of Burma. It settled the form of association to be achieved among the various ethnic groups after independent. It enunciated certain principles to the frontier peoples like guarantee of democratic rights, full autonomy in the internal affairs, to receive certain assistance from the revenues of the Ministerial Burma. According to the agreement, the Federated Shan state and Kachin Hills would be formed as two constituent states and the Karenni state possibly as another constituent state (Weller,1993,36-41). However it had certain limitations. It was not agreed by all the frontier peoples. The Karens were not a part of it (Weller,1993,37). Aung Sun played a prominent role in the signing of the Panglong agreement. He enjoyed the trust of all the ethnic minorities and he was possibly the right figure to unite all the minorities. At the time of signing the Panglong Agreement, he knew the political situation of the country and thus he favoured Federalism in the soon to be formed Union of Burma. He insisted that the right to self-determination of the ethnic nationalities who signed the agreement should be respected. He said:

“The right of self-determination means that a nation can arrange its life according to its will. It has the right to arrange its life on the basis of autonomy. It has the right to enter into federal relation with other nations. It has the right to complete secession” (Sakhong,2005,16).

Aung San drafted the Union Constitution based on the Panglong Agreement. According to this constitution, the National states would have their own separate constitutions and separate organs of state viz. Parliament, Government and Judiciary (Sakhong,2005,17). After the assassination of Aung Sun the original version of the constitution was changed. The new constitution authorised the Burman ethnic group to be in command of the sovereign power of the Union where the National states of other nationalities almost became like “vassal states” of the Union. Thus full autonomy of ethnic minorities was ignored. Separate state

constitution for each state did not come into reality and as such state affairs came under Union affairs. The non-Burman nationalities were also marginalised in the weaker Chamber of Nationalities at the Union Assembly. According to the original version of constitution each ethnic national state was to send equal number of representatives to the Chamber of Nationalities to signify equality among the ethnic groups who had signed the Panglong agreement. But the new version allowed the non-Burman nationalities to send their local tribal chiefs or princes but on the other hand, proper Burma was allowed to elect and send representatives on the basis of population. Having already dominated in the powerful Chamber of Deputies in the Union Assembly, the Burman being majority in population began to dominate even in the weaker Chamber of Nationalities. This structure of the new constitution allowed the Burman to serve their interests above the interests of other ethnic minorities (Sakhong,2005,15-17).

### **The Myths of Panglong**

The 1947 Panglong Agreement and its legacy are still visible in the present political development of Burma. The current troubles face by the ethnic minority groups of Myanmar is related to its effects. A return to the spirit of Panglong has been called many times to solve the problems face by the ethnic minority groups. However it is interpreted differently by various groups. Presently there are three kinds of “myths” of Panglong existing in the minds of the Burmese.

Among the three “myths” of Panglong, its interpretation by the government of the Myanmar state has been the dominant “myth”. From the stand point of the government of Myanmar state, the spirit of Panglong is in preserving the unity of the state and safeguarding against both internal and external forces which are trying to destroy the unity of the state. It stands for the creation of a strong central government and hence the political structure of the state based on federalism is neglected. It highlights the unity of the ethnic groups during the freedom struggle. The government, with the help of the military forces, has been successful in institutionalising this myth. The various policies and actions of the government towards ethnic minority groups have been interpreted in the spirit of this dominant “myth” (Walton,2008).

The second myth is the one understood by the democratic opposition group leading by the National League for Democracy party. Like the first myth its goal is in preserving the unity

and independence of Burma but disagree with the first myth in the way how to achieve it. They argue that the government as an institution has wrongly implemented the true spirit of Panglong. They hold the government responsible for plunging the country into ethnic armed conflict. The ethnic armed conflict started with the rewriting of the state constitution which reduced the substantial autonomy of the minorities groups. According to this myth, the present ethnic problems could be solved by recognising the rights of the ethnic minorities as agreed upon the Panglong agreement. Sharing power among the ethnic minorities could be a way in solving the long standing ethnic armed conflict (Walton,2008).

The third myth is the interpretation held by the ethnic minority groups. Unlike the first two myths, it questions the feasibility of the unity among the ethnic minority groups in the modern Myanmar state. It acknowledges the difficulty in implementing the promises of the Panglong from the very beginning. The ethnic groups were economically very backwards at the time of signing the agreement. They were motivated to a large extent by the economic incentives to be gained through living under the Union of Burma for time being. However this myth does not reflect unified positions among the minorities groups. Only three main ethnic groups participated in the Panglong agreement. There were many disagreements within those ethnic groups. The issues of ethnic minorities in the Ministerial Burma were neglected. The AFPFL also aligned with the less democratic traditional leaders over more democratic allies in its efforts to achieve complete independence. Voices of many dissenters were suppressed to create this myth. The diversity within the ethnic communities has been ignored to construct a distinct identity for them. But in the long term process intra-ethnic conflict arises thus weakening the movement overall (Walton,2008). Jessica Harriden argues, for instance, that “Karen identity as espoused by KNU leaders is singular and exclusive, with an emphasis on pan-Karen solidarity in opposition to other ethno-cultural, politico-ideological, and religious movements.” The ignorance of diversity within Karens by the KNU leadership has created rift within Karens thus weakening their movement. Thus similar myths are suppressed and excluded in creating this myth (Harriden, 2002, 86)

### **The formation of modern nation-state of Burma**

After gaining sovereignty from the British in 1948, the formation of a viable nation-state became the main concern of the Burmese. Burma began to face the problem of dual process of “nation-building” and “state-building”. “Nation building” and “state building” are two different political processes. “Nation building” is based on one set of homogeneous ethnic

group sharing the same cultural and religious values as its political values. It results in the formation of only a nation-state made of one homogeneous group. Thus it leaves out multiculturalism and diversity in its formation. It can accept and integrate the others through assimilation or change of cultural identity of the others. On the other hand, 'state-building' is the process of bringing all its citizens equally before the law and providing equal rights for them. 'Nation building' and 'state-building' can be same process if the state is made of only one homogeneous ethnic group (Sakhong,2005,11-27).

The formation of nation-state of Burma like many other newly independent third world countries was the result of the colonialism. It is different from the way nation-states began to form in Europe. In Europe the boundaries of "nation" and "state" were very closed even though there were no ideal nations (Saikhong,2012). Two principles defined the nation-state sovereignty- territoriality and exclusion of external actors from domestic authority structures (Corrected proof,1981,2)<sup>8</sup>. Territorialisation enabled the nation-states to exercise sovereignty over the entire population. Exclusiveness resulted in the homogenisation of the national population. There are two views on the emergence of the likely homogenisation of the population of nation-state. One view is that the nature of the economic activities of the industrialised societies led to the development of a single national culture which consequently homogenised the people (Gellner,1983). Another view is the way the European states-building process impose different cultural variation procedure within and outside the states. The European rulers sought to minimise the cultural variation within states but maximise variation among states. As Charles Tilly argues that:

"Homogeneity had many compensating advantages: within a homogeneous population, ordinary people were more likely to identify with their rulers, communication could run more efficiently, and an innovation that worked well in one segment was likely to work elsewhere as well. People who sensed a common origin, furthermore, were more likely to unite against external threats. Spain, France, and other large states recurrently homogenised by giving religious minorities-especially Muslims and Jews-the choice between conversion and emigration" (Tilly,1990,106-7).

In Burma where there is multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-nations, the boundaries of "state" and "nation" are not coincided. This has created serious problem in the making of

---

<sup>8</sup> OUP CORRECTED PROOF – FINAL, 23/4/2011, SPi, Oxford University Press, 1974-1981, <http://fds.oup.com/www.oup.com/pdf/13/9780199603602>

modern nation-state of Burma based on the national identity of the majority Burman group (Sakhong,2012,4). In signing the Panglong agreement the visions of the minorities particularly Chin, Kachin and Shan was to form a federal Union or Pyi-daung-shu in Burmese which could guarantee their right to national self-determination and autonomous status of their nations. The agreement was the coming together of different “nations” and “national states”. These minorities groups aimed to achieve their own freedom, together with the Burman and other nationalities. They did not want to integrate within a nation-state dominated by the Burman. In Burmese Pyi-daung-shu means the nations coming together to build a state or a Union with the purpose of sharing and ruling the Union together. The nations are autonomous enough to maintain internal “self-rule” to achieve “shared-rule” for all ethnic nationalities (Sakhong,2005).

Since independence, the successive government of the Union of Burma have tried to build the nation-state based on “one ethnicity, one language and one religion”. Amid various issues facing the country, U Nu enacted the State Religious Promotion Act in 1961 which declared Buddhism as the state religion of Burma (Sahliyah,1990,39-40). He wanted to create a homogeneous nation of *Myanmar Naing-ngan*, by drawing its political values from the cultural and religious values of *Mynamar-lumyo*, *Maynmar-batha-ska* and *Myanmar-thatana* of Buddhism. Similarly, Ne Win after coming to power, imposed the national language policy of *Myanmar-batha-ska* as a means of creating a homogeneous unitary state (Sakhong,2012,4). Aung Sun, during his time before the independence of Burma, clearly demarcated the boundaries between religion and politics. He was against religiously oriented ethno-nationalism which mixed religion and politics. He rejected the “nation building” process in the form of “one race, one religion and one language”. He was against making Buddhism as the state religion. In the traditional Burmese society of pre-colonial period, Buddhism had been a powerful integrative force among the ethnic groups. But in the post independent Burma, various ethnic groups became conscious of their own traditional culture, religion, language etc. U Nu might have believed that Buddhism could still integrate ethnic groups in some aspects (Saikhong,2012,22-23). Thus for the ethnic minorities groups, the reintroduction of cultural and religious values into political system by U NU violated “the Panglong spirit” (Trager,1963,314).

### **The democratisation of Myanmar.**

Almost all the states of Southeast Asia were colonised by the western powers for a long time. The colonial powers introduced democratic system in the colonial governments to some extent. It was a whole new system for the colonised peoples. The peoples of the region accepted it even though it was not fully a democratic system. After the end of cold war, the democratic major powers have taken various measures to spread democracy all over the world. The impact of the third wave of democratisation has also reached the Southeast Asia region. The introduction of democratic principles and norms led to the end of political impasse in some countries of the South East Asian region. Cambodian problem, for instance, was solved through adoption of democratic process. Similarly in Myanmar, there have been continual attempts by the people since 1988 to democratise the country to solve the problems of the country. The process is very slow and frustrating. The question is why the democratisation process in Southeast Asian region has been facing tough challenges like in Myanmar. The answer lies in their history. Most of the region states got independent around 1940s and 1950s. The state apparatus was very weak to fully adopt democratic system. In Myanmar the upsurge of various ethnic insurgents and communists challenged the unity and integrity of the state. The military had to interrupt repeatedly in the administration of the states. The military/authoritarian regimes have been justifying their rule on the ground of preserving the unity and integrity of the country. Therefore, a democratic system in region could not function completely like in the West. The democracy in the region is a democracy characterised with Southeast Asia values and societal needs (Keling, S.S. et al.,2010,135-137).

Ne Win after taking the power on March 2 1962 announced that the armed forces had "taken over the responsibility and the task of keeping the country's safety owing to the greatly deteriorating conditions in the Union." (Trager,1963,321). He introduced the "Burmese Way to Socialism" as a design for economic development. He initiated a series of programs which reduced foreign influence in the country while increased the role of the military in the social and economic development (Holmes,1967). The result of the Burmese Way to Socialism was that it turned one of the most prosperous nations in Southeast Asia in the early post-independent period with abundant natural and mineral resources into one of Asia s most isolated and impoverished states (McGowan, 1993). Due to the failure of the "Burmese Way to Socialism", economic conditions became much deteriorated in the 1980s.

The prodemocracy movement became very stronger and prominent in the late 1980s. The year 1987 saw a series of changes in the outlook of the military government. In August of the year, Chairman of the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) U Ne Win criticised the cabinet ministers and advisors for failure in the national development programs and called for new economic policies. The government announced to relax its control over most economic activities of production, transportation, and the distribution of rice and other staple crops. At that time government was facing serious shortage of rice for export. Rice has been the main export item for the government income. New tax system was introduced to assure the government rice needs. Land tax on the part of the growers and additional tax on “processors” (storage and distribution entrepreneurs) were levied. On 5th September, government implemented second demonetisation in less than two years. All 75, 35, and 25 kyat notes were removed from circulation and new 45 and 90 kyat denominations were introduced. The removed notes were not allowed to convert. The policy affected 80% of the country's money supply. As majority of the people savings were in 25 kyat note, the policy affected their lives. The policy was aimed mainly at two objectives. Firstly, it was to control inflation by reducing the amount of money in circulation. Secondly, it was aimed at destroying the value of vast amount of the designated notes hold by the insurgent groups, black marketers in Burma and Thailand, and including wealthy Burmese merchants attempting to control and monopolise the newly free rice market. The policy turned out to be a failure. The shortage of petroleum became more acute thus affecting power supplies and transportation of goods and people. Many major industrial units were closed or curtailed. It also affected the import and export business. Debt service increased to around 70% from about 60% of export revenues. Inflation increased over 20%. The affected people held demonstrations at various places (Haseman,1988).

By March 1988, Burma saw the first major violent student demonstrations near the Rangoon Institute of Technology (RIT) and Rangoon University campuses in a decade. The government used special anti-riot police forces known as Lon Htein led by General Sein Lwin to suppress the demonstrations. On March 14, the Lon Htein forces sealed the campuses and arrested hundreds of students. By March 16, Lon Htein forces brutally crushed down the demonstrators leading to several deaths and injuries on the students. The incident is known as “The White Bridge Incident”. By March 18, the unrest spread to other areas of Rangoon. The army forces were deployed to assist the Lon Htein and police forces to suppress the increasing unrest. This day is known as “Black Friday”. The government suspended all

schools, including universities and colleges in the midst of exams to defuse the situation. The demonstrations again broke out when the Universities were reopened by 15 June. By June 21, the enraged students were joined by Buddhist monks (Egreteau,2009,2). The demonstrations became very violent and burnt down a police station, destroyed few cinema halls and several quarters of a police station. Five police personals and one protestor lost their lives and several others suffered severe injuries (Weller,1993 , 142). All educational institutions were closed indefinitely. In an attempt to control the increasing outrage of the people, Chairman U Ne Win held meetings of the ruling Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) and the Pyitthu Hluttaw (national assembly) in late July. To the surprise of the people, Chairman U Ne Win resigned both the party and state posts by July 23. Both the posts were filled by General Secretary Sein Lwin of the BSPP (Burma Watcher,1989,175). He was the most hated figure in the country at the time after the March and June incidents and he was known as “Rangoon’s Butcher” by the people. He was the man responsible for the brutal suppression of March and June demonstrations as well as the deaths of students in 1960s and 1970s student demonstrations (Haseman,1993,20). His appointment as the BSSP chairman and president of the country was followed by immediate and widespread outrage. People from various sections joined the demonstrations initiated by the students demanding his resignation. The protests called for an end to one-party system run by the BSSP and return to democracy. The government imposed the martial law on August 3 and army troops lining up against Karen insurgents were directly diverted to patrol the streets of Rangoon (Burma Watcher,1989,175-176). On August 8 beginning from 8:00 am, huge peaceful mass rallies began all over Rangoon. Students, monks, women, civil servants and even the lower rank soldiers gathered at Sule Paya and in the surrounding streets. The protestors gathered throughout the day in spite of several efforts by the military forces to disperse them. At 11:00 pm, the forces started shooting at the protestors killing thousands of them (Egreteau,2009, 2-3). According to foreign diplomats and journalists based in the capital, during the first night of the repression around 100 to 200 were killed (Egreteau,October/2009,6). According to hospitals and crematorium reports, the overall number of deaths was figured around 2000. This did not include “disappeared”, but not officially “dead” victims (Egreteau,2009,4). Thus the exact or near figure is very difficult to estimate. The incident became more and more violent the next few days. Troops were deployed all over Rangoon. They terrorised the people at their will. Unarmed and peaceful demonstrators were chased and fired indiscriminately. In one of the worst cases, troops even started shooting at hospitals. The violent suppression ended on August 12<sup>th</sup> (Burma Watcher,1989,177). From the government point of view, the



demonstrators were communist insurgents and their sympathisers disguised as students and monks. The senior officers misled the young officers to blow up “enemies of the state” from the streets of Rangoon (Haseman,1993,20). It still remains unclear who were responsible for the brutal crushing of the 8-8-88 uprising. Four men were supposed to play key role in the incident: General Sein Lwin (Head of the State since July 23, Chairman of the BSPP, known as the “Butcher of Rangoon”), General Saw Maung (Tatmadaw Chief of Staff since 1985 and Defense Minister of Sein Lwin), Brigadier-General Myo Nyunt (Rangoon’s Martial Law Administrator) and General Ne Win. The Directorate of Defense Services Intelligence (DDSI or Military Intelligence), headed by Colonel Khin Nyunt also participated in the suppression after August 8<sup>th</sup> (Egreteau,2009,4).

On 13<sup>th</sup> August, Sein Lwin resigned as Head of the State and BSPP Chairman. Dr. Maung Maung, a civilian and close intimate of U Ne Win's inner circle took the posts. The change to a civilian President brought hope to the people for a better situation. He removed the troops from the street of Rangoon and consequently the killing came to stop (Burma Watcher,1989,177). But the situation remained tense. Dr. Maung Maung announced a planned referendum to decide whether or not to adopt a multiparty system. The demonstrators rejected the announcement as they argued that the referendum had already taken. They became more organised and began to hold peaceful demonstrations on daily basis. The embassy of the United States became an important site for demonstration after the US denounced the regime for killing the demonstrators (Burma Watcher,1989,177). Call for democracy reached the entire country. All economic activities were affected. Normal life came to halt throughout the country. People’s struggle for democracy came to an end on 18 September when the military forces led by General Saw Maung staged a fake military coup (Burma Watcher,1989,179). The coup renewed fresh outcome of street violence. Hundred of peaceful and non-violent demonstrators were killed and wounded and arrested. Those arrested before and during the 18<sup>th</sup> September remained under detention without any charge or trial (Amnesty International, 1988). The coup was an attempt to regain the loss of military’s control on political power and it was done in the name of saving the country (Maung,1990,617).

The military government announced on the state-run radio that the military had taken power to timely halt the deteriorating conditions of the country and it was in the interest of the people. New repressive measures such as curfew and the ban of gathering of more than five

people were introduced to control the situation.<sup>9</sup> By September 21, the military government successfully regained control of the situation (Ferrara,2003,313-4). Following the coup, the BSSP was dissolved and renamed as the National Union Party retaining the same leaders and members as the BSSP (Maung,1990,617).

By October 1988, people's hope for democratic elections became visible. The Election Commission was established. The Political Parties Registration law was enacted on 26<sup>th</sup> October allowing the registration of all civilian parties. A total of 233 separate political parties were registered before the closing date of 16 February, 1989(Maung,1990,617-618).

By November 7, 1988, the military government firmly established itself as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). There were no major changes in its formal structure from the previous government. It was made up of 19 top military commanders with Saw Maung as Chairman and its most influential member, Brigadier General Khin Nyunt, as the secretary. Saw Maung, when he visited Thai Army Commander Chaovalit on December 14, put forward four objectives of the Council. They were, in order of priority: law and order, secure transportation and smooth communication, economic stability, and a multiparty democratic general election(Maung,1990,617-618). However by June of 1989, the military regime showed sign of reluctance to hand over power through multiparty elections. In the 43rd SLORC Press Conference held on 9 June 1989, he stated that:

“power would be transferred as soon as possible to a government that would emerge in accordance with law after the elections..... *We cannot transfer power as soon as the elections are held.* The government would be formed according to a constitution. If the state power is hurriedly transferred, it would lead to a shaky and weak government. This can be worked out by any person with intelligence. Stability can be achieved only by systematically forming a government based on a constitution”.<sup>10</sup>

In the Electoral Law of 31 May 1989, only the technical and administrative requirements for holding the elections were mentioned, but there were no provisions about how and when the National Assembly would be convened and what its powers might be (Tonkin,2007,39). The intention of the military rulers was to hold on power as long as possible. The proposed

---

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Announcement\\_2-88.htm](http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Announcement_2-88.htm).

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Statements.htm>.

transfer of power after the elections was never discussed with the main political parties. Brig Gen Khin Nyunt at the 49th SLORC Press Conference on 17 July 1989 said that:

“Changing a country’s political and economic systems cannot be done overnight. It must be done gradually. Please do not ask for a dialogue, because what has to be done will be done when the time is right. This does not mean we will not meet any political party. In Kyauktan, I said that when the time is right we will meet political parties that do not oppose the SLORC and that will co-operate in the holding of elections”.<sup>11</sup>

By the time elections were approaching, the military leadership began to realise that if the outcome of the elections went against them they would not be able to control it. The transfer of power to the eligible party/coalition of parties after the elections became conditional on the drafting of a new constitution (Taylor,2012,230). To clarify their position that elections would not lead to successful transfer of power, the State LORC Secretary (1) Major General Khin Nyunt, in the course of an address to Yangon officials, said on 12 April 1990 that:

“the party that wins in the 27 May elections will have to form a government. Only if a firm Constitution can be drawn up and a government formed in accordance with it will the government be a strong one. Only a strong government can lead the State for a long time. The Law and Order Restoration Council at different levels will continue to carry out the responsibilities of the State while the Constitution is being drafted. So we will continue to carry out the responsibilities even after the elections. We will continue to do so till a strong government has been formed”.<sup>12</sup>

In the April of 1988, Aung San Suu Kyi returned to Burma to visit her ailing mother. Her coming to Rangoon coincided with the trouble times of protests by people and brutal suppression by the military government. The 8-8-88 uprising incident propelled her to join politics. She delivered her first political speech to a mass rally on 26 August, 1988 at the Shwedagon Pagoda at Rangoon. From there on she emerged as a powerful leader of the pro-democracy opposition group. She co-founded the National League for Democracy on September 24 and became its General Secretary (Mehta,2009). Since then she has become the face of the Burmese struggle for democracy in Myanmar. After entry into politics, she began to criticise strongly against the SLORC and the Tatmadaw. On July 20 1989, she was

---

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Statements.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Statements.htm>.

put under house arrest along with several leaders of the NLD, the biggest opposition party critical of the military government (Tonkin,2007,43).

### **Democratic struggle and achievement after 1990 elections**

On 27 May 1990, the general elections were held in Burma. It was the first multi-party elections since 1960. The SLORC strictly monitored the activities of the opposition parties. There were several reports of considerable restrictions on freedom of speech. Some opposition leaders were detained during the campaigning period. However, the elections were generally considered as conducted honestly (Taylor,1991,199). Aung San Suu Kyi was not allowed to contest in the elections. The military regime denied her candidature on two grounds: her alleged connections with England and contacts with some insurgent groups, especially the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO). The former General Tin U, another notable key leader of the NLD, was barred from contesting the elections. He also remained in jail throughout the election period and beyond (Taylor,1991,200). The number of seats for the new Pyithu Hluttaw was figured at 491. A total of 2310 candidates from 100 parties plus 82 independent candidates were nominated. The results of the elections came on 27 May. The NLD won the majority of the seats winning 392 out of 491 seats. The Shan national League for Democracy, NLD's ally, came second with 23 seats. The National Union Party, the NLD's nearest rival came on third winning only 10 seats (Taylor,1991,200).

The landslide victory for the NLD and the possibility of forming a civilian government created fears in the minds of the military leaders. During the very critical time for the military leaders, the disaffected young monks and others opposed to the regime claimed for the reduction for the army into smaller regionally based units as well as the removal of the currently serving officers of colonel ranks (Taylor,1991, 202). With the opposition parties winning by big margin, they considered such actions as attacking on them. The military leaders were most frightened by the possibility of a Nuremberg style trial in Rangoon for the military leaders if the civilian government came to power. According to EC chief ex-General Tin Aye, the NLD threatened the military regime with 'Nuremberg-style' Trial and because of this, the military regime refused to hand over the power to NLD (Kuang,2011). The mention of 'Nuremberg-style' Trial came up in an interview of NLD leader Kyi Maung, taken by a foreign journalist in early July 1990, in which he said that there would be no 'Nuremberg-style' Trial if NLD came to power and that the average Burmese would not fight the soldiers and the level of threat to the military leaders was vastly exaggerated. However, he did

mention that “people such as Khin Nyunt might reasonably feel themselves pretty insecure”.<sup>13</sup> The official reason the military leaders refuse to transfer power in 1990 was that “the regime said that the election was only intended to choose representatives to a committee to draft a new national constitution” (Kuang,2011).

After the shock results of the elections the military leaders, the SLORC issued its Declaration No. 1/90 on 27 July in an attempt to retain its political position. The Declaration became the post-election strategy for the SLORC. It stated that:

“the SLORC will in no way accept the drawing up of a temporary constitution for forming a government to take over State Power and that it will take effective action if it is done so, and that in the interim period before a government is formed in accordance with a new firm constitution drawn up according to the desires and aspirations of the people, the SLORC (Tatmadaw) will defend and safeguard:

(a) the three main causes, such as the non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and ensuring perpetuity of the sovereignty;

(b) of the four main tasks mentioned in the SLORC Declaration No 1/88 such as the prevalence of law and order, the rule of law, regional peace and tranquillity, ensuring safe and smooth transportation and communication, easing the food, clothing and shelter problems of the people and holding Multi-Party Democracy General Election, the first three main tasks (with the exception of the task of holding the multi-party democracy general election) and

(c) the task of bringing about the development of the national races of Myanmar Naing-Ngan”.<sup>14</sup>

It also stated that the constitution of 1947 was drafted before independence and had some flaws and no longer workable. At the Panglong agreement upon which the 1947 constitution was drafted, only three major ethnic groups i.e. Shans, Kachins and Chins were present and as such it did not discuss the views and problems of other ethnic groups notable among them the Mons and Rakhines. On the other hand, the constitution of 1974 was drafted through a national referendum. Thus, in drafting a new constitution according to the needs of the

---

<sup>13</sup> <http://networkmyanmar.org/images/kyi%20maung>.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Declaration%201-90.htm>.

ongoing problems that Burma faced, the wishes and views of 135 ethnic groups must be included. One very important statement of the declaration was the right of the military government to exercise its legislative, executive and judiciary powers.<sup>15</sup> It was more of a pre-emptive declaration before the NLD put forward more demand for the transfer of power as the SLORC already knew that the NLD representatives were meeting on 29 July (Tonkin, 2007, 46). The NLD put forward its declaration on 29 July known as the Gandhi Hall Declaration.<sup>16</sup>

One of the very important consequences of the elections was the increased recognition of political legitimacy of the NLD internationally. The NLD wanted the transfer of power through the Interim Constitution drafted by them. The Interim Constitution was a draft revision of the 1947 constitution which had been lying out-dated for a long time. This came into conflict with the view of the military rulers that the 1947 constitution had serious flaws. By mid-September, the NLD changed their strategy to break the impasse between the elected representatives and the military government. The NLD's caretaker leadership accepted to start drafting a new constitution as demanded by the military rulers. But the NLD's decision was not fully accepted by many members from local areas who wanted to transfer power to them immediately. This created an internal split in the party (Hlaing,2010,35). On 12 November 1990, State LORC Chairman Senior General Saw Maung declared that "many of the parties have signed pledges that they will abide by Declaration 1/90 issued by us".<sup>17</sup>

The prodemocracy movement get the support of democracy advocates of the international community particularly the US and the European Union. But the military regime resisted their pressures to honour the results of the 1990 election (Hlaing,2010,36). In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for "Tripartite Dialogue" amongst the three main political forces i.e. the military led by the SLORC / SPDC, 1990 Election-winning Parties led by the NLD and the Ethnic Nationalities, to resolve Burma's "Three Issues". First, it focuses on how to demilitarise the Armed Forces and transform them into normal civil service as well as how to integrate all the armed ethnic groups which have been fighting 60 years of civil war into civil service. Second, it focuses on how to transform

---

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Declaration%201-90.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> Details of the declaration is available at [http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Gandhi\\_Hall\\_Declaration.htm](http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Gandhi_Hall_Declaration.htm).

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Statements.htm>

the country into a democratic system. Third, it focuses on how to solve the ethnic civil war which has been going on the last 60 years (Sakhong,2011,12). The reason behind the need for a “Tripartite Dialogue” is that the “Burmese problem is a constitutional problem- not just a minority or even an ethnic problem which can be resolved at a later date once democracy is established. The question of democracy, military rule and the constitutional arrangement with the non-Burman ethnic nationalities are intrinsically intertwined and cannot be resolved one without the other.” (Yawnghwe&Sakhong,2003). The essence of the “Tripartite Dialogue” was the “inclusiveness” and “recognition” of the interests of the three main political stakeholders (Sakhong,2003).

After the military regime’s brutal crackdown on 8-8-88 uprisings and its violations of various human rights, the international community especially the US and the EU imposed several types of economic sanctions on Burma. The US administration declared Burma as a drug-producing and/or drug-trafficking country under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 on February 28, 1990, which required the United States to oppose loans to Burma by international financial institutions. The US also terminated the Bilateral Textile Agreement with Burma on August 5, 1991 and several broad ranges of sanctions followed in the later years (Michael,2012). The EU soon followed the US and adopted the Common Position 96/635/CFSP which included measures such as banning arms export to Burma, visa restrictions on members of the regime, their allies and families, limiting diplomatic contacts and freezing officials’ offshore accounts, and suspending non-humanitarian aid or development programmes (Council of the European Union,2009). However, the economic sanctions failed to pressure the military regime for political reforms. After the economic reforms and liberalisation of the FDI laws in late 1988, Burma began to receive large FDI in the country (Htay,2007,29). Most of the FDIs came from the ASEAN countries, China, Japan, Korea, India etc. However, the amount of FDI reduced substantially in the late 1990s. But the cash inflow in the early-to mid-1990s provided enough economic resources and confidence to the military regime to retain their power (Yawnghwe,2004,8).

The change of an authoritarian regime to a democratic system might happen under some favourable conditions. It might happen when the regime is seriously weakened by internal crisis or a social pro-democracy movement become sufficiently stronger to topple the regime; when the regime senses that it is losing its power hold and can no longer survive under tight political control; or if the reformers from within the regime and liberals from the movement

agree on some conditions to work together (Huntington,1991). Since coming to power in 1962, the military regime in Burma has been able to preserve its unity. It has not suffered any serious mutinies along ideological or ethnic lines since the late 1940s. However, due to the lack of proper institutional arrangement for power succession there have been many cases of the emergence of intra-military groupings based on personal and institutional ties vying for power. This threatened the unity of the regime and led to several purges at several times. In 1961, for instance, Brigadier General Maung Maung was removed from his post on the pretext of developing close ties with the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). However the truth was that he was the second or third ranking officer within the military regime and he was becoming a threat to Ne Win. Many regional commanders were also sacked on the ground of their disobedience to the central command by meddling in the 1960 elections. These commanders were very powerful and if they found a way to work together they could seriously challenge Ne Win. Despite the problems of groupings, the top military leaders understand the importance of the military forces in preserving the unity and integrity of the state, the very reason on which the legitimacy of their rule is based on and as a result they always tried to prevent any serious split within them. At the same time, the military generals feel that if they give up their economic and political power they may face trials for their past human rights abuses. Thus, they are against any political reforms which may bring bad consequences in their future lives (Win Min,2008). Since coming to power in 1962, Ne Win had banned any political opposition to the military government. Any dissident against the government had always faced severe response from the government. Most of the dissidents were jailed. As a result, an effective opposition leadership could not emerge easily for a long time. The 1988 movement was, for instance, very slowly organised due to the lack of an effective leadership and the military forces could repress it effectively (Haseman,1993,19). It was only after the entry of Ang San Suu Kyi that this void space was filled. However, the NLD was very much politically inexperienced in the beginning. After winning the elections in 1990, they did not have a clear cut game plan to persuade the military regime to transfer the power (Tonkin,2007,48). Thus, the opposition movement remained not so strong enough at the time to challenge the military regime at the time. Thus, the economic reforms in the late 1980s, the weakness of the opposition party as well as their ability to remain unity contributed the military regime to retain power.



General Than Shwe became head of the junta and Prime Minister in 1992. On the 23 April 1992, the SLORC announced to hold a National Convention to lay down the basic principles for the drafting of a new firm and stable Constitution. The basic principles were:

1. Non-disintegration of the Union;
2. Non-disintegration of national unity;
3. Perpetuation of national sovereignty;
4. Promotion of a genuine multiparty democracy;
5. Promotion of the universal principles of justice, liberty and equality;
6. Participation by the Defense Services in a national political leadership role in the future state (Sakhong,2011,3).

On 28<sup>th</sup> May, 1992 the National Convention Convening Commission was formed to write the new constitution. The committee included 14 SLORC officials and 28 people from seven different political parties. It was chaired by Rangoon Military Commander Lt. Gen. Myo Nyunt. On 10 July 1992 the National Convention's delegates were announced. It consisted of 702 delegates; only 99 of them were members of the National Assembly from the 1990 election (about 15% of all delegates). The majority of delegates were township-level officials selected by the SLORC.<sup>18</sup> The national Convention was suspended few times due to differences between the ethnic national delegates and the military regime. The ethnic national delegates demanded for a federal system of the Union while the SLORC proposed for a centralised political structure. In the end 104 principles were agreed for the draft constitution despite opposition from many elected representatives. One of the principles that attracted strong opposition was the requirements for the post of President of the country. The approved draft stated that the president of Burma must have been a continuous resident of the country for more than 20 years, have political, administrative, military, and economic experience, and not have a spouse or children who are citizens of another country. It was a deliberate attempt to remove leadership role for Aung San Suu Kyi in future Burmese politics (Sakhong,2011,3). She was released from the house arrest on 10 July 1995 after 6 years<sup>19</sup>. The working procedures of the National Convention were highly censored by the military

---

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.mizzima.com/political-background/history-of-burmas-transition.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.burma-center.org/en/burma/famous-burmese-persons/aung-san-suu-kyi/>.

regime and those found of criticising the regime were punished with criminal charges. Due to this, the National Convention was boycotted by the NLD and many delegates of the party were arrested on the ground of disturbing the proceedings of the National Convention.

The NC was suspended for an infinite time without any date set for reconvening. On 30 August 2003, PM Khin Nyunt announced the seven-step Roadmap to democracy at a meeting of top government leaders. The seven steps were:

1. Reconvening of the National Convention that has been adjourned since 1996.
2. After the successful holding of the National Convention, step by step implementation of the process necessary for the emergence of a genuine and disciplined democratic system.
3. Drafting of a new constitution in accordance with basic principles and detailed basic principles lay down by the National Convention.
4. Adoption of the constitution through national referendum.
5. Holding of free and fair elections for Pyithu Hluttaws (Legislative bodies) according to the new constitution.
6. Convening of Hluttaws attended by Hluttaw members in accordance with the new constitution.
7. Building a modern, developed and democratic nation by the state leaders elected by the Hluttaw; and the government and other central organs formed by the Hluttaw (Sakhong,2011,3).

On September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2000, Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest again when she tried to travel to Mandalay to hold political meetings in defiance of travel restrictions.<sup>20</sup> Under the mediation of UN Envoy on Burma, Razali Ismail who did not have without significant political backing from the UN itself or the international community, Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest unconditionally with freedom to travel around the country on May 6, 2002. In the secret meetings between the military and Aung San Suu Kyi facilitated by Razali Ismail, both agreed to adopt confidence building measures. But the military refused to move forward from confidence building meetings to any meaningful dialogue. Razali Ismail, as a low level envoy, was unable to persuade the Generals to move

---

<sup>20</sup><http://www.burma-center.org/en/burma/famous-Burmese-persons/aung-san-suu-kyi/>,  
<http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/index.php/burma/about-burma/about-burma/a-biography-of-aung-san-suu-kyi>;  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11685977>.

the dialogue forward.<sup>21</sup> On May 30 2003, clashes between the supporters of the military government and the NLD members occurred at Depayin in upper central Burma (Ad hoc Commission on Depayin Massacre, 2003).<sup>22</sup> After the incident, the military kept her under custody for more than 3 months and later kept her under house on May 30 2003.<sup>23</sup>

By April 2007, Myanmar's National Convention, convened to formulate basic guidelines to draft the country's constitution, had finally come to a close after 14 years. Held in Hmawbi Township, it was supposed to be the first in a seven-stage process on the "road map to democracy" established by the military regime.<sup>24</sup> On August 15 2007, the government without any prior notice suspended the fuel subsidies in the country. As a result, petrol price rose to 66% and price of the natural gas rose to 500%. Initially students and democratic supporters led the non-violent protest against this act of the government. On 18 September, thousands of Buddhists monks joined the protests and the protest became much stronger. The protest was known as the Saffron Revolution. The military junta began to violently crack down the protesters by the beginning of 26 September. The growth of technological communications like cameras, video cameras, phones etc., enabled the protestors to expose the atrocities of the military junta to the world. The military junta cut off all the internet access and international phone calls. The international community strongly condemned the actions of the military government and called for peaceful solution to the situation. But the military junta did not change their policies. However, it was announced that Senior General Than Shwe would meet Aung San Suu Kyi if she stopped supporting economic sanctions on Burma.<sup>25</sup>

In February, 2008 the SPDC announced that the national referendum for the newly drafted constitution would be held on May 10. On May 2 few days before the referendum day, Cyclone Nargis struck Burma. The Cyclone turned out to be natural disaster for Burma. Around 140000 people were considered to be killed and at least 3.4 million people were directly affected by it. The relief policies and programs of the military government towards the Cyclone affected people were highly criticised both domestically and internationally. The junta put limits on humanitarian assistance from independent Burmese NGOs and citizens,

---

<sup>21</sup><http://www.burma-center.org/en/burma/famous-Burmese-persons/aung-san-suu-kyi/>;  
<http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/index.php/burma/about-burma/about-burma/a-biography-of-aung-san-suu-kyi>

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Depayin\\_Massacre](http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Depayin_Massacre).

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.burma-center.org/en/burma/famous-Burmese-persons/aung-san-suu-kyi/>.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/National-convention-ends-after-14-years-10215.html>.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1565226/Aung-San-Suu-Kyi-leader-offered-meeting.html>

and humanitarian assistance coming from other countries and international entities were not allowed to enter Burma.<sup>26</sup> The state media run by the military regime did not properly broadcast the severity of the approaching storm and instructions on how to prepare for it (Martin & Margesson, 2008,3). The military regime used the devastating situation to turn the referendum into its favour. The referendum was held as planned earlier on 10 May. The newly draft constitution was released to the people only five weeks before the vote. Many people were not fully aware of the details of it. It was released in limited Burmese and English and as a result people in rural and ethnic regions who could not understand English and Burmese were totally uninformed of the details of the new draft constitution.<sup>27</sup> The devastation by the cyclone added more difficulties to the people in shaping their opinions about the draft constitution. The cyclone disaster became the immediate concern of the people. Voting in the hardest-hit areas was delayed until later of the month. Many irregularities happened in the voting, with people voting multiple times and there was lack of the privacy of a truly secret ballot.<sup>28</sup> After the final round of voting, 98% of the 27 million eligible voters took part in the referendum and the draft constitution was overwhelmingly approved by 92% of the votes.<sup>29</sup> The pro-democracy groups inside Myanmar and international community criticised the way the national referendum was carried out. The referendum failed short of basic international standards for a free and fair referendum. The SPDC manipulated voter lists and even prevented some voters from casting their ballots. The international election observers were not allowed to enter Burma. No independent election committee was formed to supervise the referendum process. It clearly showed that the referendum was not held up to the international standards for a free and fair referendum (PILPG Report,2008).

The general election which forms the fifth step of the seven-step “road to democracy” proposed by the SLORC in 2003 was held on 7 November 2010. The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) backed by the military regime and led by Prime Minister Thein Sein came out victorious winning 883 of the 1,154 parliamentary seats, or 76.5 percent. The USDP won of 259 out of 325 seats in the House of Representatives, or 79.6 percent; 129 out of 168 seats (76.7 percent) in the House of Nationalities; and 495 of 661 seats (74.8 percent)

---

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/center-for-public-health-and-human-rights/locations/asia/BurmaCyclone.html>.

<sup>27</sup> <http://newsinside.wordpress.com/previous-volume/vol3-issue-1-burma-referendum-votes-and-karen-idps-situation/volume-3-issue-1/>.

<sup>28</sup> <http://jurist.org/paperchase/2008/05/myanmar-holds-constitution-referendum.php>.

<sup>29</sup> <http://jurist.org/paperchase/2008/05/myanmar-constitution-overwhelmingly.php>.

in regional and state parliaments. The National Unity Party (NUP) came in second with a total of 63 seats. The Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP) won 57 seats and the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party won 35 seats. The National Democratic Force (NDF) and the All Mon Region Democracy Party (AMRDP) each won 16 constituencies.<sup>30</sup> The NLD did not participate in the elections. The NLD claimed that the new constitution of 2008 gave the military regime mandate to retain their power and control in a future government as well as the blocked Aung San Suu Kyi from becoming the head of the State.<sup>31</sup> The NLD participate only in the 2012 by-elections. The NLD contested in 44 out of 45 vacant seats winning 40 seats.<sup>32</sup> According to 2008 Constitution, 25 percent of the seats in all legislative chambers are reserved for the military personnel. Thus a total of 386 military personnel will be appointed as lawmakers; (110 out of 440 seats for lower house; 56 out of 224 seats for Upper house; and 220 out of 883 seats for 7 states, 7 regions and 3 autonomous regions). This ensures the military to control the legislative power at both the Union and State and Regional Assemblies. The “state of emergency” in the new constitution provides a means for the military forces to control the state. The political struggle for power has been going in Burma for many years between the military forces and pro-democracy groups. By the end of 2012, the military forces continue to retain the power even after democracy has been introduced.

## Summary

Burma/Myanmar have come a long way to adopt democratic system in the country. The recent political development is still dominated by the military forces. But, there is also the possibility that the country might fully adopt political reforms in near future. This is not the first time that the country has experienced a democratic system. Soon after independent, Burma adopted the parliamentary system. But the government was unable to control the various issues which were threatening the country. The issues are related to both the constitutional crisis and ethnic problems. These problems are related and found their origin in both before and during the time of British rule. The British rule in Burma cemented the ever widening gap between the majority Burman ethnic group and other ethnic minorities. The weak democratic government was soon replaced by the military forces in the name of shaving

---

<sup>30</sup> <http://election.irrawaddy.org/news/612-usdp-wins-765-percent-of-vote.html>.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asiapacific/2010/03/2010394417778884.html>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/elections-04022012160808.html>

the country from disintegration. After coming to power, the military forces have continued to rule the country till today.

## Chapter 4

### ASEAN policies towards Myanmar

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) began engaging Myanmar in the early 1990s. The changing economic and security structure of the Southeast Asian region after the end of cold war compelled ASEAN to focus on Myanmar. Myanmar has been of strategic interest to ASEAN. However from the very beginning, ASEAN has been handicapped by its principle of non-interference in internal affairs of member states. ASEAN failed to pressure the military junta in Myanmar for political reforms on many occasions. The importance of ASEAN to Myanmar grew over time to avoid overdependence on China. Myanmar could not avoid ASEAN completely and turned blindly to China. This caused Myanmar to listen to ASEAN on various issues. Myanmar democratised finally in 2010 after a very long time. ASEAN played a big role in the process, but it was not the result of ASEAN's effort only. The chapter studies the policies of ASEAN towards Myanmar in this process. The first section of the chapter provides a brief account of the norms of ASEAN and their importance in the Southeast Asian region. The second section studies the Myanmar-ASEAN relations and the beginning of "constructive engagement" policy of ASEAN towards Myanmar. The third section studies the change in ASEAN policy after the region was hit by the Asian financial Crisis. The fourth section studies the pro-active actions of ASEAN towards Myanmar.

#### ASEAN's norms and their importance

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed on August 8, 1967 at Bangkok. The five original founding member states were Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines. The founding members were very diverse in terms of physical size, ethnic composition, socio-cultural heritage and identity, colonial experience and postcolonial politics. Before its formation, ASEAN members lacked experience in multilateral cooperation and were also involved in a number of serious disputes among themselves. War-like tensions existed among many states. The small states like Singapore and Brunei felt very much vulnerable at the hands of bigger neighbours (Acharya,2003,47-49). During the three year period of *Konfrontasi* (1961-1963), Indonesia and Malaysian were engaged in territorial dispute over Borneo (Lee,2009,12). During such difficult times, ASEAN founders realised the need to form the association to manage the intra-regional

relations. Thus one of the purposes behind the establishment of ASEAN was to create a mechanism for war prevention and conflict management to ensure lasting peace in the region. ASEAN states defined “security” in comprehensive terms consisting of “political, military, economic and social factors interacting together at all levels of analysis” (Shaun,1998,196). The formation of ASEAN was aimed to achieve three mutually reinforcing security functions: first, creating platform for political and economic interactions to lessen the lingering tensions left over from *Konfrontasi* among the members; second, providing better economic environment which would alleviate the domestic social conditions nurturing communist insurgency thereby ensuring internal security in the member states and the overall political stability in the region which, finally, to make the members less vulnerable to the influence of the outside major powers. ASEAN states also recognised that the influence of the external major powers has been a source of conflict in the region (Shaun,1998,196). Since the end of the Second World War, the region had seen the Great Power rivalry particularly among the USSR, the US and China. ASEAN’s formation was thus seen as a useful way to “enhance the bargaining power of small and weak states in their dealings with the Great Powers” (Acharya,2003,52).

The intra-relations among ASEAN members have been maintained by its normative principles. ASEAN’s normative principles were principally established at the First ASEAN Summit held in Bali in 1976, at which the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) was signed. The article 2 of chapter 1 of the TAC included the following fundamental principles:

- a) Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations;
- b) The right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion;
- c) Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another;
- d) Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means;
- e) Renunciation of the threat or use of force;
- f) Effective cooperation among themselves (Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia,1976).

Observing the non-interference in the internal affairs of the member states has been the most important principle, and attribute of ASEAN since ASEAN’s creation (Ramcharan,2000,60). At the time of forming the ASEAN, the member states were new political entities having



'weak' state structures (e.g. lack of a close congruence between ethnic groups and territorial boundaries) and an equally problematic lack of strong regime stability. The internal threat to the states was stronger than the external threat (Acharya,2001,57-58). The member states were concerned of the 'spillover' effect of the domestic instability on the interstate relations. To ensure the internal stability and regime security of the member states, the principle of non-interference became utmost important. Thus, ASEAN's non-interference principle recognised "refraining from criticising the actions of a member government towards its own people, including violation of human rights, and from making the domestic political system of states and the political styles of governments a basis for deciding their membership in ASEAN; and criticising the actions of states which were deemed to have breached the non-interference principle" (Acharya,2001,58).

### **ASEAN -Myanmar relations**

At the time of formation of ASEAN, the military regime in Myanmar followed neutral and isolationist foreign policy. Myanmar also viewed ASEAN as an imperialist organisation designed by the West to contain the communist movement in the region. Even though Myanmar also faced communist problem in its own territory, it did not join the organisation mainly due to its neutral foreign policy. For the next 20 years, relations between Myanmar and ASEAN remained very low (Aung,2001,38).

The beginning of late 1980s saw a change in political, economic and security environment in the Southeast Asian region. The snowball effect of the third wave of democracy also reached the region (Huntington,1992). The surge in Free Trade Agreements and regional economic institutions in the world due to the globalisation of trade and commerce brought new challenges to ASEAN countries whose economic prosperity depended very much on accessing industrial raw materials and securing overseas markets (Urata,2002). The end of cold war and subsequent demise of communist ideology had repercussions on the security of the ASEAN states. The withdrawal of the US military forces from the Philippines created power vacuum in the region. Many contentious issues have remained unresolved between ASEAN and China. Thus, ASEAN began to worry about the unpredictable nature of Chinese actions in the region in future (Leszek,1992,834-835).

In Myanmar, economic reforms were introduced in late 1980s to improve the stagnant economy. FDI laws were relaxed to attract foreign investors which subsequently increased in

the first half of the 1990s (Badgley,1990). After the 1988 incident, Myanmar was diplomatically isolated particularly by the West and the United States, the European Union, Japan and multilateral aid organisations all suspended official development assistance and some Western countries imposed weapons embargoes on Myanmar too. Due to necessity, Myanmar changed its policy of neutralism and moved closer to China to seek military and economic assistance (Toshihiro,2008,88).

Since then China became the most important partner for Myanmar in foreign trade and arms deals. The coming together of China and Myanmar was due to the convergence of national interests of both the countries. For China, Myanmar was a source of abundant raw materials needed for its industries. China has provided 90% of the regime's military equipment since 1989<sup>33</sup> After the legalisation and formalisation of once illegal border trade in 1988, Myanmar-China trade increased and Myanmar's export to China accounted for 8.1% of total export and import from China stood at 20.6% of total imports in 1990 (Toshihiro,2008,90). Between 1996 and 2005, the Myanmar-Yunnan border trade accounted for about 55 per cent of Myanmar's total trade value; over 80 per cent of its exports to China and about 40 per cent of Myanmar's imports go through the border trade. Myanmar is the largest trading partner of Yunnan (Billy,2010). Besides economic benefits, China's policy towards Myanmar also aimed to reduce India's influence in Myanmar (Katherine,2009). Myanmar's neighbours in ASEAN, Japan as well as India considered that China's increasing economic and military presence and its influence over Myanmar was likely to cause destabilising effects in the region. This propelled ASEAN as well as India to improve security, diplomatic and economic relations with Myanmar (Malik,53,1997).

### **Constructive Engagement**

The deepening relation between Myanmar and China as well as India's attempt to reduce China's domination in Myanmar after the end of cold war has been of particular concern to ASEAN. ASEAN have been trying to reduce external influence in the region since its formation. Engaging and bringing Myanmar within the association was thus given priority by ASEAN. However, engaging Myanmar presented challenges to ASEAN particularly the issues of human rights violation by the ruling military junta, continued suppression of democracy after the 1990 elections etc. ASEAN had to deal with these challenges.

---

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.altsean.org/>; accessed on 15, June, 2013.

ASEAN began engaging Myanmar for political reforms through the policy of “constructive engagement”. “Constructive Engagement” was a policy which advocates the maintenance of an economic and diplomatic relationship with an authoritarian state as opposed to imposing sanctions and embargoes on it” (Minn,2000,1). The objective of the policy was to pressure for democratic reforms, open markets and human rights through promoting economic and political ties. The advocates of the policy argue that the opening of a country to foreign investments assist in accessing to more information which could increase the influence of western liberal values thereby promoting greater awareness of human rights and democratic values (Minn,2000,1).

At the ASEAN-EU ministerial meeting in Luxembourg in May 1991, the EU asked ASEAN to give an assessment on the political situation in Myanmar which ASEAN was not prepared at all. The possibility of the Western interference in the region on account of the political situation in Myanmar caused enormous concern within ASEAN. To avoid possible Western interference in the region, Thailand took the initiative in engaging Myanmar (Kavi,2001,122). The policy was adopted at two levels: at bilateral engagement level between Myanmar and particular ASEAN member states and at the regional level between ASEAN and Myanmar. As the leading state in framing the policy, the introduction of the policy was to bridge the gap between particular Thai interests and the Western condemnation of the military regime in Myanmar (Leszek,1998,290). Thailand shares 2400 kilometre long border with Myanmar and as such any unrest within Myanmar had effects within Thailand (Mann,2002,122). Thailand had particularly three related issues originating from Myanmar. First, the minorities particularly the Wa ethnic group have been using opium and other drugs as the source to finance their arms. The porous border with Thailand is the main smuggling route of this illicit trade. This creates problems for Thailand’s security and human resources (Ruukun,2006,827-828). “By 2012, eradicating illicit drugs has become a national priority for Thailand” (Statement of Prime Minister of Thailand on Drug abuse resistance campaign,2012) Second, Thai authorities face serious problems of the Burmese soldiers crossing the border in search of minorities whenever clashes occurred between them along the border. Third, the problem of influx of refugees whenever there is crackdown on minorities by the military junta (Ruukun,2006,828).

The “constructive engagement” was an attempt by ASEAN to keep Rangoon in contact and build economic and political ties to Rangoon. It deviated from the usual US policy of economic sanctions for political reform. ASEAN observed that harsh pressure and economic sanctions would only increase the insecurity of the military regime which might increase repression and oppression on the democratic movements at home and move closer to China. The ASEAN policy was mainly driven by the desire to counteract the Chinese influence in the region directing through Myanmar. Thus engaging and drawing Myanmar closer to ASEAN became the priority for ASEAN (Rotberg,1998,74). It is also argued that harsh pressure might push Myanmar into isolationist policy like the former times during the cold war period. Thus, the policy of providing economic incentives through trade and investment which could economically benefit the common people of Myanmar became the better option for ASEAN (Li-ann,1999,45). ASEAN, in fact, wanted to bring Myanmar to the regional organisation. By 1990s, ASEAN came to be regarded as a successful regional organisation. It has also been believed that ASEAN has transformed into a “bulwark against overweening foreign influence in Southeast Asia” (Rotberg,1998,74). This policy of “constructive engagement” also served other benefits to the ASEAN member states. ASEAN wanted to solve the regional problems according to ASEAN’s terms (Mann,2002,123). On many occasions, ASEAN has been rejecting economic sanctions as a tool to improve human rights and democracy in the region. As Mahathir said that “both at the national and regional levels, peace and security, democracy and freedom as well as stability are possible and sustainable only when the people are free from economic deprivation and have a stake in the national life” (Twenty Fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting,1991). He also stated that “when the issue of human rights is linked to trade, investment and finance, ASEAN cannot but view it as added conditionality and protectionism by other means” (Twenty Fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting,1994) ASEAN’s view was that human rights issues were the domestic problems of the member states and other states should not interfere in such domestic affairs. ASEAN recognized the diversity in economic, social and cultural settings across the member states and as such human rights in the national context should be implemented according to the competence and responsibility of each country( Ibid) Interfering in domestic problems of others “undermines state sovereignty and violates the sacred principle of non-intervention in internal affairs” (Li-ann,1999,2). The policy of “constructive engagement” also shielded ASEAN states from their own human rights abuse from international scrutiny. As Li-ann argued that member states considered ASEAN as a platform to increase their legitimacy but not to exposed their own failures in human rights records (Li-ann,1999,46). The “constructive

engagement” thus did not seriously address the political problems of Myanmar and remained a policy only to maintain relation between Myanmar and ASEAN.

Differences emerged among ASEAN members on the issue of bringing Myanmar as a member in ASEAN. At the Twenty-fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) of July 1992 held at Manila, the Philippines proposed observer status for Myanmar in ASEAN, but Malaysia objected to the proposal. Malaysia was against the SLORC's eviction of some 170,000 Muslims (Rohingyas) from the state of Arakan who fled into Bangladesh in 1991-92. Thailand, however, pursued the issue and endorsed the idea of bringing Myanmar as a member in ASEAN (Leszek,1998,295). By 1994, Indonesia supported Thailand's proposal and subsequently Myanmar was admitted as an observer status in 1995. Ali Alatas, Indonesia's Foreign Minister played key role in the process. He wanted to end the isolationist policy of Myanmar by bringing her into ASEAN thereby reducing its increasing dependence on China (Leszek,1998,295). Finally, Myanmar was admitted as a member at the 30th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting held at Subang Jaya, Malaysia in July 1997 and ASEAN asked its Dialogue Partners to support them (The 30th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting ,2013).

ASEAN was criticised for admitting Myanmar as a member on the ground of Myanmar's several records of human rights violation. The SLORC's suppression of 1988 democratic movement was the clear example of violation of human rights. The failure to transfer power to the democratically elected representatives after the 1990 national elections attracted several criticisms from across the world. ASEAN's admittance of Myanmar as a member would, as it was argued, meant the recognition of the legitimacy of the military regime with such huge records of human rights violations. The Western countries went to the extent of applying economic sanctions to pressure the military junta for political reforms. The United States unilaterally adopted economic sanctions on Myanmar. The US used economic sanctions as a primary tool in foreign policy in promoting democratic values (Leon,1998). The United States has been the most consistent voice in keeping human rights on the international Agenda, but in the case of Myanmar, the US failed to get the support of ASEAN (Seth,1997). However, ASEAN preferred to engage Myanmar economically through trade and investment which they believed would lead to gradual integration of Myanmar into the world economy. ASEAN hoped that such processes would peacefully lead to political stabilisation in Myanmar. Singapore, for instance, promoted economic co-operation with Myanmar and has been top investor in the country (Toshihiro & Fumiharu,2007). ASEAN's

admittance of Myanmar as a member created major hurdle in the EU-ASEAN relations too. Before Myanmar became member of ASEAN, the EU adopted the Common Position on Myanmar on 28 October 1996 with “a view to promoting progress towards democratisation and securing the immediate and unconditional release of detained political prisoners” (The Common Position,1996) The Common position was strengthened in October 1998, by widening the visa ban to include explicitly transit visas and to cover the tourism administration in Myanmar (EU’s relations with Myanmar/Burma,2003) . However, the soft stand taken by ASEAN on Myanmar neutralised the tougher actions adopted by the Western governments. As Mann observed “human rights was just one of many complex issues that had to be assessed and balanced against a host of other regional interests before a workable and coherent policy solution could be initiated” (Mann, 2002,122). In response to the Western pressure, particularly the US, on the issue of admitting Myanmar as member, ASEAN reiterated that they had already decided to admit Myanmar and would not impose economic sanctions. Datuk Ajit Singh, the secretary-general of ASEAN at the time said that “ASEAN stands by its policy of constructive engagement. We do not believe economic sanctions are going to change anything in Myanmar. We are neither for sanctions nor will we join them” (The Burma Net News,1997). Later ASEAN was left to decide whether to admit Myanmar or not on its own. The US decided not to intervene in the decision taken by ASEAN but expressed that it would be premature for ASEAN to admit Myanmar (*US wont press ASEAN on Myanmar membership*,Burma Net News,1997).

On the part of ASEAN, the domestic problems of Myanmar were not considered as a threat to the regional stability. ASEAN viewed that even though the SLORC violated several human rights and brutally controlled the domestic problems, those actions prevented domestic problems of Myanmar from causing regional instability (Li-ann,1999,43). As Yukiko observes that in Southeast Asian countries, security is mainly directed towards state and economic development. Threats to the security of the states are identified from state’s perspective. There exist a wide gap between the government and the people regarding threat perceptions and security approaches. Thus, people’s perspective is neglected and issues like promoting human rights do not figure in state’s security agenda as well as in regional security approach (Yukiko,2010). In fact, ASEAN has been not an organisation composed of only the democratic countries. Some of member states were under autocratic governments when Myanmar membership issue came up and thus, they could not deny membership to Myanmar on the ground of its notorious human rights records (Li-ann,1999,43). The world view held

by ASEAN also created its own problem. ASEAN has been dominated by illiberal worldview where “concerns over political stability, regime security, and state sovereignty provide the foundations for peaceful inter-state relations” (Erik,2006,338). ASEAN leaders have been strong adherents of the paramount value of sovereignty in maintaining political stability and regime security in the region.

The different positions of the EU and ASEAN towards Myanmar led to the cancellation of several EU-ASEAN Meetings (David,2008,21). The Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) in the ASEAN-EU Dialogue, for instance, which was to be held in 1997, was cancelled. The European Parliament refused to fund in any of the Myanmar participated ASEAN-EU projects. The ASEAN-EU JCC was finally held at Bangkok in 1999 with the participation of Myanmar (Termsak,1999). ASEAN strongly stood for Myanmar’s participation in the meeting. S. Jayakumar, the Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs, insisted that all the ASEAN member states were equal and must participated on equal terms in the dialogue. He further stated that “ASEAN had to adhere to the principle of non-discrimination on the question of participation of ASEAN countries at bloc-to-bloc meetings with the EU” (*Singapore reiterates Myanmar must be represented at ASEAN-EU Dialogue*, Xinhua news, 20 February, 1999). The importance of the meetings to both the groups finally resolved the differences allowing Myanmar to participate as a non-signatory country. The EU also decided to keep any superfluous political issues from the scope of the JCC (Termsak,1999).

The enlargement of ASEAN through inclusion of Myanmar along with Laos and Cambodia also increased the political and economic diversity of ASEAN. With increasing membership, the decision making process become harder due to the organisational tradition of decision through consensus. The newly added countries were economically backward and thus, resources from the original members had to be diverted to support the new members. This created additional problem to the rich original members especially after the Asian Financial Crisis hit the region. However, it was the addition of Myanmar which created serious problem to ASEAN more than the Asian financial Crisis due to the strong opposition from the its dialogue partners (Zakaria & Baladas,1999,771).

### **The failure of Constructive Engagement**

The policy of “constructive engagement”, however, failed to produce noticeable political reforms in the case of Myanmar. The policy could not pressure Myanmar to reduced

violation of human rights. In 1997, the SLORC changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and indicated to pursue “disciplined democracy”. It provided a glimmer of hope to the people for a change (Mann,2002,125). But, the military junta continued severe and systematic violations of human rights and failed to cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar. The Special Rapporteur reported that “the absence of respect for the rights pertaining to democratic governance is at the root of all the major violations of human rights in Myanmar” (Commission on Human Rights resolution,1997). In August 1998, NLD started campaign to convene a new parliament based on the 1990 elections. Many supporters of the NLD were arrested to stop the campaign. In response to the international pressure, three high-profile prisoners were released namely, Ohn Myint after the visit of the United States congressman Tony Hall; Dr. Ma Thida on “humanitarian ground” and Nyi Pu Lay, a Burmese writer. On May 6 1999, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was allowed to operate. The ICRC was allowed to visit all of Myanmar’s prisons and the ICRC reported the number of prisoners at nine prisoners around some 18000 (The Human Rights Watch,2013). Forced labour of the ethnic minorities and Burman villagers as well as forced child labour were prevalent throughout the country (Mann,2002,126). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) put restrictions on Myanmar in 1999 and 2000 for failure to “act on the recommendations of an ILO Commission of Inquiry, which had been set up to examine whether the country was complying with its obligations under Convention 29” (102nd International Labour Conference,2013). The continued violation of human rights, arresting of several political activists, forced labour of ethnic minorities and children, suppression of democratic movements etc., clearly showed that the “constructive engagement” policy of ASEAN had failed in dealing with various political issues of Myanmar.

### **Change in ASEAN’ policy**

The major policy change of ASEAN towards Myanmar occurred after the region was devastated by the Asian Financial Crisis (AFC) in 1997. The impact of the AFC on the region raised serious questions on ASEAN’s long cherished non-interference doctrine. Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan questioned the relevance of non-interference doctrine in each other’s domestic affairs. He said “the economic crisis in the region has led to a loss of ASEAN’s ‘best bargaining power’ in its dealings with other regions” ( Kyodo News international,1998). ASEAN leaders realised the need to modify the non-interference doctrine. The crisis turned out to be blessing in disguise for ASEAN. The crisis pushed



ASEAN to gradually modify overall the non-interference doctrine, not just in relation to Myanmar but to ASEAN's overall approach to regional problem solving (Acharya,2012). The AFC brought overall two major changes in ASEAN's concept of security. First, ASEAN began to put more attention on domestic issues and their regional ramifications. Internal threat to the regional stability was thus recognised. Second, concept of threat to the regional security got expanded and included economic disruption, in addition to military issues, as a threat to the regional security. The image of ASEAN as a successful regional organisation was questioned after the AFC. The crisis showed "the disunity and lack of a political will among the member states to make ASEAN a truly meaningful regional organization" (Yongwook,2008,8). ASEAN realised to develop a strong sense of oneness and unity to face the regional problems, but all the members were not equally interested in taking forward actions to realise it. ASEAN's emphasis on state sovereignty and the principle of non-interference prevented ASEAN from intervening in domestic policymaking and thus became obstacles in creating an imagined Southeast Asian community (Yongwook,2008,8).

### **Flexible engagement**

The failure of the "constructive engagement" led Thailand's Foreign Minister Purin Pitsuwan to introduce the idea of "flexible engagement". The policy of "flexible engagement allowed ASEAN governments to publicly comment on and collectively discuss fellow members' domestic policies when these would have cross-border implications i.e. adversely affect the disposition of other ASEAN states" (Haacke,2005,189). It also directed ASEAN to enhance the democratization and human rights promotion in ASEAN countries (Haacke,1999,587). Thailand as a neighbour of Myanmar as well as the initiator of the policy of "constructive engagement" was at the centre of criticism by the Western countries for being soft on its relationship with Myanmar. During this period, Thailand needed to maintain its relation with the West as the recovery of its economy was heavily dependent on the support of the US and the EU investors. This compelled Thailand to readjust its policy towards Myanmar. Surin Pitsuwan was quoted in a statement in 1998 that "a more flexible approach to political and social issues within ASEAN will also lead to greater support from other countries which will help to make up for the loss of the 'clout' as a result of the economic crisis" (Kyodo News International,1998) Thus it was considered that Thailand's initiative was an attempt to reduce Western criticisms and show sensitivity to ASEAN's dialogue partners (Haacke,1999,588).

However, the policy was rejected by all ASEAN members except the Philippines due to the inability of Thailand to properly demonstrate the feasibility of the policy. Thailand's initiative was driven by its concern over the problems at the border with Myanmar and such problems were not considered as ASEAN's problems (Haacke,1999,593). As Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia said in the opening statement of 31st ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, "problems existing between two countries are best settled at the bilateral level. There is no need to transform such problems to become an ASEAN issue" (31st ASEAN Ministerial Meeting,1998). Flexible engagement was rejected because it, in principle, directly challenged the long-standing norm of ASEAN that the bilateral disputes should not become ASEAN issues (Haacke,2005,189). It was likely to cause trouble to the 'ASEAN way' which had attributed three decades of peace and stability in Southeast Asia. ASEAN leaders thus feared that the adoption of flexible engagement would create mistrust and resentment among ASEAN members (Haacke,1999,593).

On the part of Myanmar, it was natural that such a policy would be rejected. The SLORC held the view that the policy of flexible engagement would undermine the hard-gained legitimacy of the regime within the international society gained through admission into ASEAN. It would open the military regime to greater pressure and criticisms by ASEAN of the violation of human rights record, its slow and unwilling process of political reforms as well as questions regarding its nature of dialogues with the opposition leaders mainly Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) (Haacke,1998,597).

After rejecting the policy of "flexible engagement", ASEAN governments put forward the policy of "enhanced interaction". The new policy made few changes from the "flexible engagement" where individual member states could comment on the internal matters of other members if the issues had cross-border implications but ASEAN as a whole could not comment (Haacke,2005,190). The application of "enhanced interaction" was visible by 2000 where ASEAN began to discuss the situation of political reforms in Myanmar. On the sideline of APEC summit held in 15-16 November 2000, the Sultan of Brunei proposed to the head of governments of ASEAN to discuss the situation of Myanmar when they met again in Singapore. Subsequently, at the time 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Informal Summit held at Singapore 22-25 November 2000, "Myanmar's president was asked to give a progress report on his country's political situation" (Acharya,2012,2). By July 2001, there was progress in talks between the opposition and junta. ASSK was released from jail but placed under house arrest. Two

prominent leaders of National League for Democracy party were also released on 26 August, 2001.<sup>34</sup> Surin Pitsuwan proclaimed that the release of ASSK was the result of the policy of “flexible engagement” which was rejected by other members (Acharya,2012,2).

### **Pro-active role of ASEAN**

ASEAN faced unprecedented pressure from the international community after the Depayin incident of 30<sup>th</sup> May 2003. ASSK along with many NLD supporters was put into custody after the incident. Immediately ASEAN leaders became more assertive in disapproving the actions of the military junta and called for the release of ASSK. ASEAN secretary-general Ong Keng Yong said on the re-arrest of ASSK that “we should let the Burma/Myanmar authorities come and use ASEAN channels to tell us what is happening.” However, he realised the limitations of ASEAN at the same time and said that “you cannot go in and tell your family member ‘you cannot do this, you cannot do that’” (Acharya,2012). Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said, “we have made our stand known that ASSK is to be released immediately”. He also said that ASEAN would not apply pressure like economic sanctions upon Myanmar for ASSK to be released (Bernama,*Malaysian premier urges immediate release of Burma’s Aung San Suu Kyi*,Burma Net News,10 June ,2003); In another statement, Syed Hamid Albar, Malaysian Foreign Minister, said that “whether we like it or not, it is an internal affair of Myanmar but it (Suu Kyi’s detention) has implications for the region” (Kyodo News Servicem,2013) Despite various calls by ASEAN leaders to release Aung San Suu Kyi, the military junta remained unmoved.

At the 36<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting 2003, ASEAN leaders “hailed ASEAN for taking a pro-active stand on Myanmar for the first time on the record” (ASEAN foreign ministers,2013). However, UN Special Envoy to Myanmar Tan Sri Razali Ismail strongly criticised the lack of political will on the part of ASEAN to change the status quo. He said, “constructive engagement is just an excuse for perpetuating the status quo. ASEAN should be very embarrassed at what is happening.” He further added that “ASEAN has continually insisted on a hands-off policy vis-a-vis its neighbours” (Malaysiakini,2003). The responses of ASEAN leaders in the aftermath of the incident had shown the responsibilities and pro-active actions towards Myanmar, but they did not give up their traditional system of diplomacy. When the SPDC extended the Aung San Suu Kyi’s house arrest for another one year on 29<sup>th</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Biography of Aung San Suu Kyi, available at <http://www.abitsu.org/>; accessed on 28 June 2013.

November 2004 (BBC News,29 November,2004) ASEAN could not take robust actions upon the SPDC to release Aung San Suu Kyi. Relating to the extension of house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi, the Prime Minister of Thailand said “it is not easy to push Myanmar in terms of saying, oh, release Aung San Suu Kyi. That makes the target harder if u push on a particular point.” He however urged the military rulers to reform before taking the Chair of ASEAN to be held in 2006 (*Thailand says Myanmar must reform before 2006 ASEAN summit*,Burma Net News,2005). The Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, on the other side, refused to give any comment on the extension of house arrest of ASSK (*Thailand says Myanmar must reform before 2006 ASEAN summit*,Burma Net News,2005). The actions of ASEAN leaders showed lack of collectiveness and irregularities on their part. The ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Caucus on Myanmar criticised the actions of ASEAN as “too soft for too long” with Myanmar (*ASEAN too soft on Myanmar*, New Straits times, 29<sup>th</sup> Nov,2004)

In the aftermath of the Deyapin incident, the SPDC faced criticisms from the international community-particularly the US, the EU, the UN and Japan. Economic sanctions were imposed on Myanmar due to its failure to release ASSK and other NLD leaders. In the US, the Congress approved the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 which placed restrictions on the issuance of visas to certain Burmese nationals (Martin,2013,9-10). The European Union imposed sanctions on Myanmar by adopting Council decision 2003/461/CFSP of 20 June 2003. The new sanction amended the earlier Common position 2003/297/CFSP adopted in April 2003 (EU Council,2003). Japan also threatened to suspend economic aid to Myanmar. At the time, Japan was the largest economic aid donor to Myanmar (2.1 billion yen of grants-in-aid was provided in fiscal year 2002). The economic aid from Japan comprised mainly of yen loans, grants and technical assistance (Is Japan Really Getting Tough on Burma?,2008)

General Than Shwe responded to the criticisms that ASSK was setting up an uprising and encouraging the armed ethnic rebel groups, most of which had signed ceasefire agreements with Rangoon, to join the planned uprising. General Than Shwe argued that it was a threat to the national security and thus the government was compelled to contain it (Burma defends Suu Kyi custody,2003). Few days later, Malaysian Prime Minister said that ASEAN had been forced to criticise Myanmar because the acts of the government of Myanmar had caused problems and embarrassment to its neighbours. He also cautioned Myanmar of the possibility of expulsion from ASEAN, as a last resort, if Myanmar failed to release ASSK on time. At

the same time, he also hoped that trade and political engagement could bring changes in Myanmar (*Burma 'faces ASEAN expulsion'*, BBC news, July 20, 2003); ASEAN members, however, were divided on the issue of expelling Myanmar from the association. Thaksin Shinawatra rejected the action endorsed by Malaysia arguing that such action was premature and suggested to give the military rulers of Myanmar enough time "to demonstrate their sincerity in returning to the process of national reconciliation, and pushing for development of a democratic system in their country"(ASEAN split over Burma, 2003).

After the Deyapin incident, ASEAN's image deteriorated due to its inability to adequately pressure the SPDC to release the arrested leaders. Subsequently the political issue of Myanmar became a feature in ASEAN Ministerial Meetings. At the 36<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, political developments in Myanmar, particularly the aftermath of the Deyapin incident, was discussed. The joint ministerial communiqué stated that:

"We noted the efforts of the Government of Myanmar to promote peace and development. In this connection, we urged Myanmar to resume its efforts of national reconciliation and dialogue among all parties concerned leading to a peaceful transition to democracy. We welcomed the assurances given by Myanmar that the measures taken following the incident were temporary and looked forward to the early lifting of restrictions placed on Daw ASSK and the NLD members. We also reaffirmed our continued support for the efforts of the UNSG Special Representative Tan Sri Razali Ismail" (The 36<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, 2003) .

At the 37<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting held at Jakarta 2004, the political situations of Myanmar were further discussed. The joint ministerial communiqué stated that:

"We noted the briefing given by Myanmar on the reconvening of its National Convention and the development thereon. We acknowledged the potential of the Convention in paving the way for new constitution and the holding of elections in keeping with it. We recalled and emphasized the continued relevance of the Joint Communiqué of the 36th AMM and the Chairman's Press Statement of the 9th ASEAN Summit. In this regard, we underlined the need for the involvement of all strata of Myanmar society in the on-going National Convention. We encouraged all concerned parties in Myanmar to continue their efforts to effect a smooth transition to democracy. We recognized the role of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-

General in assisting Myanmar to achieve this goal” ( The 37<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting,2004).

The various proclamations by ASEAN leaders for political reforms in Myanmar could not bear fruits. ASSK remained under house arrest for another one year which was further extended for one more year on May 2006.

### **Myanmar as ASEAN Chair 2006**

ASEAN faced a tough task when Myanmar was supposed to become Chair of the regional grouping in 2006. ASEAN was particularly worried about the likely impacts of the issue on their relationships with dialogues partner particularly the U.S. and the European Union. The U.S. and the European Union objected to Myanmar as Chair of ASEAN and even threatened to boycott ASEAN meetings if Myanmar took the chair (Kylie,2005). Initially, the SPDC stated that it would not step down due to pressure from the US and the EU (Siang 2005) For the SPDC, ASEAN chair was the question of military regime’s credibility and prestige. At the time the Burmese economy was in the state of stagnation. The ASEAN summit was seen as a chance to revamp the economy and increase the unemployment level. Thus Senior General Than Shawe tried to play China card in order to secure the Chair (ALTSEAN,2005). The SPDC, however, began to face increasing pressure from ASEAN parliamentarians and civil society, particularly from the founding members of ASEAN (Lim,2005). Differences emerged among the ASEAN leaders on whether Myanmar should be allowed to chair ASEAN or not. The newer members i.e. Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam supported Myanmar while the Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia opposed such a move (*Burma will not take ASEAN chair*,BBC News,26 July,2005) Those opposed to Myanmar’s chair of ASEAN viewed that such a move would reduce ASEAN’s credibility. As Malaysian opposition leader Lim Kit Siang said, “in terms of international relations it will be hurtful for ASEAN. Economically, it will also have an adverse impact in terms of attracting investment to ASEAN” (AFP,2004). ASEAN’s critical moment was finally saved when Myanmar decided to step down on its own. Myanmar decided at last “to relinquish its turn to be the Chair of ASEAN in 2006 because it would want to focus its attention on the ongoing national reconciliation and democratization process” (Statement of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Vientiane,2005). Foreign Minister U Nyan Win of Myanmar explained that 2006 was a critical year and that the Government wanted to give its full attention to the ongoing democratisation process. The foreign ministers of ASEAN appreciated Myanmar’s decision “for not allowing its national

preoccupation to affect ASEAN's solidarity and cohesiveness." However, Myanmar was assured that it could take the chair whenever it was ready to do it (Ibid) Myanmar's decision to step down from the ASEAN chair was also due to its necessity to maintain cordial relation with its neighbours. ASEAN has been a large source of direct investment and trade with Myanmar. ASEAN countries account for more than 50% of "Foreign Investment of Permitted Enterprises" as of 30 September 2004 (Thandar,2008). Having already under the economic sanctions by the West and flooding of cheap products from China, ASEAN has been the alternatives trade destination for Myanmar (ALTSEAN,2005).

### **Suppression of Saffron Revolution**

The incident of 18<sup>th</sup> September 2007 presented ASEAN another tough task to face. On 18<sup>th</sup> September 2007, the military regime violently cracked down on peaceful demonstrators known as the Saffron Revolution. The violent suppression showed that "neither sanctions-the preferred policy tool of the United States-nor the continued approach of constructive engagement advocated by the members of ASEAN have been successful. That was due in part to the failure of the United States and ASEAN to coordinate a policy that centres on a unified, coordinated, and multilateral approach to change in Myanmar" (Burma Needs United Front ). The US tightened its economic sanctions and imposed a new round of sanctions and called on China, India and other regional powers to pressure upon the military junta to "stop their vicious persecution." The Bush administration began to recognise the limited effect of the economic sanctions and therefore urged Myanmar's neighbours in the region as well as China and India to review their own laws and policies to effectively pressure the military junta for political reforms (*Bush Sets New Sanctions Against Burmese Military Junta* ,Washington Post,20 October,2007). The US senate called on ASEAN to consider "appropriate disciplinary measures, including suspension, until such time as the government of Myanmar has demonstrated improved respect for and commitment to human rights." However, ASEAN rejected the call from the US Senate arguing that Myanmar can be disciplined and socialised through proper dialogue (*ASEAN rejects US call to suspend Myanmar*, Washington Post,18 Nov,2007). In the statement issued by the foreign ministers meeting of ASEAN held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly's ministerial meeting 2007, they "expressed "revulsion" to Myanmar's foreign minister at the violent repression of demonstrations." They called upon the military junta to engage all the concerned parties in the national reconciliation process. ASEAN "strongly urged Myanmar to exercise utmost restraint and seek a political solution" (Christopher,2007). The statement saw that ASEAN

had taken some far reaching actions on the political developments inside Myanmar. ASEAN members were united on this issue to save ASEAN's image in front of the international community. As George Yeo, Singapore Foreign Minister, said in an interview with Straits Times,

“if here at the UN we had no common response, how could we face the Secretary-General? Or what do we say to the other countries? We would have lost all credibility.” He also said that ASEAN had “very little leverage over the internal development there. What we have is moral influence as members of the ASEAN family. We can't do what the big powers can do in terms of trade embargo or freezing of bank accounts.”<sup>35</sup>

The UNSC also condemned the actions of the military regime on the peaceful protestors. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Mon said, in the Security Council statement, “the use of force against peaceful demonstrators is abhorrent and unacceptable.” The Security Council members agreed that reconciliation and democratisation were essential to resolve the political impasse in Myanmar. Some members also stated that harsh external pressure on the military junta would be counterproductive (UN Security Council,2007). It was the first time that China agreed to a Security Council statement, but refused to condemn Myanmar and ruled out imposing economic sanctions (Christopher,2007).

### **Turmoil during Cyclone Nargis**

On 2 May 2008, Myanmar was devastated by the Cyclone Nargis. The Cyclone came at the very crucial time for the people of Myanmar. The national referendum for a new drafted constitution was held on 10 May. The military junta took the advantage of the suffering of the people caused by the cyclone to turn the referendum into their favour. ASEAN played key role during the crisis in ensuring effective co-ordination of international assistance to Myanmar. The international community responded with immediate humanitarian assistance to Myanmar. Initially the military regime accepted the assistance only through international NGOS or the UN agencies and search and rescue teams or journalists from foreign countries were not accepted. The military regime's way of taking assistance created confusion to the international donors. The situation was further worsened due to the presence of a United States naval ship from its Marine Expeditionary Strike Group and a French Amphibious

---

<sup>35</sup> Press Statements and Speeches, [http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/overseasmission/washington/newsroom/press\\_statements/2007/200710/press\\_200710\\_08.html](http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/overseasmission/washington/newsroom/press_statements/2007/200710/press_200710_08.html); accessed on 2 July 2013.



Assault Ship that were both stocked with supplies off the coast of Myanmar (Selena,2010,25). The presence of the warships created fear in the minds of the military leaders about the possibility of intervention by the US and its allies (Sleth,2008). In such moments of confusion and uncertainty, ASEAN took the lead in allowing the flow of assistance and international relief workers into Myanmar. ASEAN provided assistance according to the framework of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER). On May 9, ASEAN Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ERAT), made up of government officials, disaster management experts and NGOs from member countries was deployed in the affected areas (Selena,2010,34).

On 19 May, a special meeting of the ASEAN foreign ministers was held at Singapore. An ASEAN-led coordinating mechanism was agreed to be established. Singapore meeting also stated that “international assistance to Myanmar, given through ASEAN, should not be politicised. On that basis, Myanmar will accept international assistance.”<sup>36</sup> The latter point reflected the inability of ASEAN to force Myanmar to accept international assistance without any condition. It was also agreed that the “ASEAN-led approach was the best way forward” (Ibid). Consequently, Myanmar accepted the immediate dispatch of the medical teams from the ASEAN countries.

Myanmar conducted the general election on 7 November 2010. The November 7 election was highly criticised as being undemocratic. The NLD, the main opposition party, boycotted the election (Kudo,2011). The NLD boycotted the election in protest against the new election laws which prohibited ASSK and other political dissidents from contesting the election. The Western powers were surprised by the NLD’s decision to boycott the election at the time when they were starting to engage the military junta. One year ago in September 2009, the US stated that the economic sanctions alone had failed to change the military junta’s behaviour. The Obama administration decided to diplomatically engage Myanmar along with continued economic sanctions (Montero,2009) ASEAN was urged to ensure a free and fair election, but ASEAN continued its policy of non-interference. ASEAN failed to pressure the military regime to change the election laws on time. ASEAN foreign ministers only observed the situation in Myanmar and gave suggestions to their Myanmar’s counterpart

---

<sup>36</sup> Statement of Chairman for Special ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting Chairman; available at <http://www.asean.org/news/asean-statement-communiqués/item/special-asean-foreign-ministers-meeting-chairman-s-statement-singapore>; accessed on 3 July 2013.

(Simon,2010). Indonesia, on its own part, urged the military junta to allow the media coverage of the election process to ensure free and fair election. As an institution, ASEAN could not adopt a formal institutional mechanism to pressure the military junta. Ensuring the smooth democratisation of Myanmar and protection of human rights was very vital to ASEAN in realising their common goal of creating a Political and Security Community by 2015 (The future of Myanmar and ASEAN after the elections,2010) But, ASEAN missed the rare opportunity to show their credibility to the world. In the latest by-election held in April 2012, the NLD party won 43 out of 44 seats it contested. ASEAN praised the 2012 by-election as free and fair and called upon the international community to lift the sanctions on Myanmar (*ASEAN leaders applaud Myanmar elections*, Aljazeera,3 April,2012).

### **Conclusion**

ASEAN got mixed results in their effort for political reforms in Myanmar. From the very beginning, ASEAN was criticised for lack of political will for genuine political reforms in Myanmar. ASEAN efforts have been handicapped by its non-interference principle. Admittance of Myanmar as a member brought tougher job for ASEAN due to strong objection from its dialogue partners. Due to the importance of the principle in maintaining the association as well as among members, ASEAN could not step outside of the principle and strongly pressure the military junta in Myanmar for political reforms on time. ASEAN bear patience for a long time for political transition in Myanmar and finally get their result in 2010. In this process, the role of the outside major powers particularly the US and the EU could not be neglected. The economic sanctions applied by its dialogue partners compelled Myanmar indirectly to focus on ASEAN for trade and investment. Myanmar had the option of turning towards China, but remaining within ASEAN turned out to be the better option. Therefore, Myanmar could not neglect ASEAN completely and had to listen to ASEAN on many occasions. The relation between Myanmar and ASEAN could be described as convenience of marriage of their interests.

### **Conclusion**

ASEAN has got mix results in bringing political reforms in Myanmar as its policies, either constructive or flexible engagement or, enhanced interaction, were adopted with a strict adherence to non-interference doctrine. Most of the engagement has been focussed on economic activities. Two important interests guided the ASEAN's approach to Myanmar.

First and foremost, it was a policy tool to protect Myanmar from becoming a Chinese client state and counteract the Chinese influence in the region through Myanmar. Achieving regional autonomy has been one of the goals of ASEAN since the cold war period and by integrating Myanmar, ASEAN could prevent China's influence in the region through Myanmar. Another reason was for the better image and prestige of ASEAN. Successful integration of the remaining states in the region would further enhance its prestige and cemented a sense of regional cohesion. This could help in attracting higher FDIs in the region.

The mixed results of ASEAN's engagement of Myanmar are mainly due to its non-interference policy. As an institution set up during the hey-days of cold war, ASEAN favours the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in maintaining the peaceful inter-state relations. ASEAN worldview is also centred on illiberalism where authoritarianism and human rights violations are acceptable. Promoting human rights and democracy do not figure in ASEAN's regional agenda. These have undermined the democratic aspirations of the section of people opposing the military rule in Myanmar. Recently, Myanmar has experienced limited democracy in 2010. Apart from the efforts of ASEAN, two factors play crucial role in the introduction of limited democracy in Myanmar. Firstly, the increasing pressure of the international community mainly led by the US and the EU compel ASEAN to take stronger actions on Myanmar. Consequently, ASEAN have started criticising the actions of the military rule at several meetings and conferences of ASEAN. These actions indirectly put pressure on the military junta to democratise the country. Secondly, the military junta have realised the need for political and economic reforms for the survival of the regime and the security of the state as the social and economic conditions became more and more deteriorated under the military rule.

The suppression of democracy for a long time by the ruling military regime show that state continues to hold power over institution. On many occasions, Myanmar refused to accept the policies from ASEAN. This shows the relevance of neorealists claims. However, the importance of ASEAN continues to hold for Myanmar. Myanmar cannot neglect ASEAN for various economic reasons which show the relevance of neoliberal institutionalism claims that institutions matter in world/regional politics. The role of ASEAN as socialising teacher can be verified from the fact that the various proclamations of ASEAN indirectly teaches Myanmar to accept certain human rights norms.

## References

Acharya, A. (1998), "Democratising Southeast Asia: Economic Crisis and Political Change", *Asia Research Centre*, 87 (1): 1-19.

ASEAN (2005), Association of Southeast Asia Nations (Vientiane), "Statement by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Vientiane ", Accessed 25 November 2012, URL:<http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-political-security-community/item/statement-by-the-asean-foreign-ministers-vientiane-25-july-2005-2>.

ASEAN (2010), *Compassion in Action: The Story of the ASEAN-led Coordination in Myanmar*, ASEAN Secretariat: Jakarta, August: 1-98.

ASEAN (2010), *Bringing ASEAN Closer to the People: The Experience of ASEAN Volunteers in Myanmar*, ASEAN Secretariat: Jakarta, August: 1-80.

ASEAN (2010), *A Humanitarian Call: The ASEAN Response to Cyclone Nargis*, ASEAN Secretariat: Jakarta, July: 1-134.

Badgley, J. (1990), "The *Burmese* Way to Capitalism", *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 229-239.

Bunyanunda, M (Mac) (2002), "Burma, ASEAN , and Human Rights: The Decade of Constructive Engagement, 1991-2001", *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, 2: 118-135.

Buszynski, L. (1992), "Southeast Asia in the Post-Cold War Era: Regionalism and Security", *Asian Survey*, 32 (9): 830-847.

Buszynski, L. (1998), "Thailand and Myanmar: The Perils of 'Constructive Engagement'", *The Pacific Review*, 11 (2): 290-305.

Katanyuu, R. (2006), "Beyond Non-Interference in ASEAN: The Association's Role in Myanmar's National Reconciliation and Democratisation", *Asian Survey*, 46 (6): 825-845.

Kuhonta, E. M. (2006), "Walking a Tightrope: Democracy Versus Sovereignty in ASEAN's Illiberal Peace", *The Pacific Review*, 19 (3): 337-358.

Malik, J. M. (1997), "Myanmar's Role in Regional Security: Pawn or Pivot", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 19 (1): 52-73.

Naraine, S. (1998), "ASEAN and the Management of Regional Security", *Pacific Affairs*, 71 (2): 195-214.

Nishikawa, Y. (2010), *Human Security in South East Asia*, London: Routledge.

Skidmore, M. and T. Wilson (eds.) (2008), "Dictatorship, Disorder and Decline in Myanmar", ANU E Press.

Ramcharan, R. (2000), "ASEAN and Non-Interference: A Principled Maintained", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 22 (1): 60-88.

Selth, A. (2008), "Even Paranoids Have Enemies: Cyclone Nargis and Myanmar's Fear of Invasion", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 30 (3): 379-402.

Urata, S. (2002), "Globalization and the Growth in Free Trade Agreements", *Asia-Pacific Review*, 9 (1): 20-32.

Christopher Roberts (2010), *ASEAN's Myanmar Crisis: Challenges to the pursuit of a Security Community*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian studies.

David I. Steinberg (1998), "MYANMAR: Regional Relationships and Internal Concerns", *Southeast Asian Affairs*, pp: 179-195.

David M. Jones (2008), "Security and democracy: the ASEAN charter and the dilemmas of regionalism in South-East Asia", *International Affairs*, 84(4): 735-756.

David Shambaugh and Michael Yahuda (2008), *International Relations of Asia*, Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Deepak Nair (2011), "ASEAN's Core Norms in the Context of the Global Financial Crisis" *Asian Survey*, 51 (2): 245-267.

## REFERNCES

- Acharya, A. (1998), "Democratising Southeast Asia: Economic Crisis and Political Change", *Asia Research Centre*, 87 (1): 1-19.
- Badgley, J. (1990), "The Burmese Way to Capitalism", *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 229-239.
- Bunyanunda, M (Mac) (2002), "Burma, ASEAN , and Human Rights: The Decade of Constructive Engagement, 1991-2001", *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, 2: 118-135.
- Buszynski, L. (1992), "Southeast Asia in the Post-Cold War Era: Regionalism and Security", *Asian Survey*, 32 (9): 830-847.
- Buszynski, L. (1998), "Thailand and Myanmar: The Perils of 'Constructive Engagement'", *The Pacific Review*, 11 (2): 290-305.
- Katayanyuu, R. (2006), "Beyond Non-Interference in ASEAN: The Association's Role in Myanmar's National Reconciliation and Democratisation", *Asian Survey*, 46 (6): 825-845.
- Kuhonta, E. M. (2006), "Walking a Tightrope: Democracy Versus Sovereignty in ASEAN's Illiberal Peace", *The Pacific Review*, 19 (3): 337-358.
- Malik, J. M. (1997), "Myanmar's Role in Regional Security: Pawn or Pivot", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 19 (1): 52-73.
- Naraine, S. (1998), "ASEAN and the Management of Regional Security", *Pacific Affairs*, 71 (2): 195-214.
- Nishikawa, Y. (2010), *Human Security in South East Asia*, London: Routledge.

Skidmore, M. and T. Wilson (eds.) (2008), "Dictatorship, Disorder and Decline in Myanmar", ANU E Press.

Ramcharan, R. (2000), "ASEAN and Non-Interference: A Principled Mainatained", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 22 (1): 60-88.

Selth, A. (2008), "Even Paranoids Have Enemies: Cyclone Nargis and Myanmar's Fear of Invasion", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 30 (3): 379-402.

Urata, S. (2002), "Globalization and the Growth in Free Trade Agreements", *Asia-Pacific Review*, 9 (1): 20-32.

ASEAN leaders applaud Myanmar elections - Asia-Pacific - Al Jazeera English. (n.d.). *Al Jazeera English - Live US, Europe, Middle East, Asia, Sports, Weather & Business News*. Retrieved July 3, 2013, from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/04/2012434202253849.html>.

BBC NEWS | Asia-Pacific | Asean split over Burma. (n.d.). *BBC News - Home*. Retrieved June 28, 2013, from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3083415.stm>.

BBC NEWS | Asia-Pacific | Burma 'faces Asean expulsion'. (n.d.). *BBC News - Home*. Retrieved June 30, 2013, from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3081557.stm>.

BBC NEWS | Asia-Pacific | Burma defends Suu Kyi custody. (n.d.). *BBC News - Home*. Retrieved June 28, 2013, from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3062655.stm>.

ALTSEAN Burma - Homepage. (n.d.). *ALTSEAN Burma - Homepage*. Retrieved June 15, 2013, from <http://www.altsean.org/>.

BBC NEWS | Asia-Pacific | Burma will not take Asean chair. (n.d.). *BBC News - Home*. Retrieved July 1, 2013, from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4715283.stm>.

BBC NEWS | Asia-Pacific | Suu Kyi's house arrest 'extended'. (n.d.). *BBC News - Home*. Retrieved June 28, 2013, from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4051235.stm>.

Burma Net Â» 2007 Â» September Â» 28. (n.d.). *Burma Net* . Retrieved July 2, 2013, from

<http://www.Burma Net .org/news/2007/09/28>.

Prime Minister : drugs problem a national priority, urges creation of immunity among students and youth (5/3/2012). (n.d.). *www.thaigov.go.th*. Retrieved June 18, 2013, from <http://www.thaigov.go.th/en/news-room/item/69176-prime-minister--drugs-problem-a-national-priority-urges-creation-of-immunity-among-students-and-youth-5/3/2012.html>.

Straits Times' Interview with Singapore Foreign Minister George Yeo, published October 2-3 2007. (n.d.). *Redirecting to main page ....* Retrieved July 2, 2013, from [http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/overseasmission/washington/newsroom/press\\_statements/2007/200710/press\\_200710\\_08.html](http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/overseasmission/washington/newsroom/press_statements/2007/200710/press_200710_08.html).

The Burma Net News, May 8, 1997. (n.d.). *Online Burma Library*. Retrieved June 24, 2013, from <http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199705/msg00158.html>.

The Burma Net News, May 8, 1997. (n.d.). *Online Burma Library*. Retrieved June 24, 2013, from <http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199705/msg00158.html>.

The Burma Net News, May 8, 1997. (n.d.). *Online Burma Library*. Retrieved June 21, 2013, from <http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199705/msg00158.html>.

The Burma Net News, May 8, 1997. (n.d.). *Online Burma Library*. Retrieved June 24, 2013, from <http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199705/msg00158.html>.

The EU's relations with Myanmar / Burma. (n.d.). *ibiblio - The Public's Library and Digital Archive*. Retrieved July 26, 2013, from <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/EBO2003-06-23-EU.htm>.

The EU's relations with Myanmar / Burma. (n.d.). *ibiblio - The Public's Library and Digital Archive*. Retrieved June 21, 2013, from <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/EBO2003-06-23-EU.htm>.

The Stanley Foundation. (n.d.). *The Stanley Foundation*. Retrieved July 2, 2013, from



<http://www.stanleyfoundation.org/articles.cfm?id=452>.

The future of Myanmar and ASEAN after the elections | The Jakarta Post. (n.d.). *Home | The Jakarta Post*. Retrieved July 3, 2013, from <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/11/16/the-future-myanmar-and-asean-after-elections.html>.

U.S., t., E.U., & Japan would, ". i. (n.d.). Pressured: Japan reluctantly suspends ODA. *ibiblio - The Public's Library and Digital Archive*. Retrieved July 28, 2013, from [http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/bi\\_on\\_oda.htm](http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/bi_on_oda.htm).

U.S., t., E.U., & Japan would, ". i. (n.d.). Pressured: Japan reluctantly suspends ODA. *ibiblio - The Public's Library and Digital Archive*. Retrieved June 28, 2013, from [http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/bi\\_on\\_oda.htm](http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/bi_on_oda.htm).

US to engage Burma (Myanmar): Clinton - CSMonitor.com. (n.d.). *The Christian Science Monitor - CSMonitor.com*. Retrieved July 3, 2013, from <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-News/2009/0924/us-to-engage-burma-myanmar-clinton>.

Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia Indonesia, 24 February 1976; available at <http://www.asean.org/>; accessed on 15 June 2013.

Statement of Prime Minister of Thailand on Drug abuse resistance campaign, 5-3- 2012; accessed on 18 June 2013; <http://www.thaigov.go.th/en/news-room/item/69176-prime-minister--drugs-problem-a-national-priority-urges-creation-of-immunity-among-students-and-youth-5/3/2012.html>. accessed on 18 June 2013.

the opening statement of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia at the Twenty Fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting; Joint Communiqué of the Twenty Fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, 19-20, July, 1991; <<http://www.asean.org/>>. Accessed on 21, June 2013.

Joint Communiqué of the Twenty Fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, 19-20, July, 1991; <<http://www.asean.org/>>. Accessed on 21, June 2013.

Joint Communiqué of the 30th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM), <http://www.ASEAN.org>, accessed on 21 June, 2013.

The Common Position adopted on 28 October 1996; available at <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31996E0635:EN:HTML>, accessed on 21 June 2013.

the EU's relations with Myanmar/Burma; available at <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/EBO2003-06-23-EU.htm>. accessed on 21 June 2013.

<sup>1</sup> "US can forget about lobbying ASEAN 'on Myanmar'", Kuala Lumpur, the Star, May 4, 1997; available at <http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199705/msg00158.html>; accessed on 24 June 2013.

<sup>1</sup> "US won't press ASEAN on Myanmar membership", Japan Times, May 8, 1997; available at <http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199705/msg00158.html>; accessed on 24 June 2013.

Singapore reiterates Myanmar must be represented at ASEAN-EU Dialogue, Xinhua news, 20 Feb., 1999, Singapore: available at <http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives>; accessed on 24 June 2013.

<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k/Asia-1.htm>; accessed on 25 June 2013.

<sup>1</sup> Press release, 102<sup>nd</sup> International Labour Conference; [http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/102/media-centre/news/WCMS\\_216355/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/102/media-centre/news/WCMS_216355/lang-en/index.htm); accessed on 25 June 2013.

Thailand calls for 'flexible engagement' in ASEAN, Kyodo News international, Inc. Bangkok, 26-6-1998; available at <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/>; accessed on 27 June 2013.

Surin's statement mentioned in Kyodo News International, Inc. 1998; available at <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/>; accessed on 27 June 2013.

31st ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, was held at Manila, 24 July 1998; available at <http://www.asean.org/>; accessed on 27 June 2013.

Biography of Aung San Suu Kyi, available at <http://www.abitsu.org/>; accessed on 28 June 2013.

<sup>1</sup> Malaysian premier urges immediate release of Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi, 10 June 2003; available at [http://www.burmanet.org/bnn\\_archives/](http://www.burmanet.org/bnn_archives/); accessed on 28 June 2013.

<sup>1</sup> Kyodo news service, June 12, 2003; available at [http://www.burmanet.org/bnn\\_archives/2003/20030612.txt](http://www.burmanet.org/bnn_archives/2003/20030612.txt); accessed on 28 June 2013.

<sup>1</sup> ASEAN foreign ministers call for Suu Kyi's release, 16 June 2003; available at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2003-06-16/ASEAN-foreign-ministers-call-for-suu-kyis-release/1871136>; accessed on 28 June 2013.

UN envoy lashes out at ASEAN inaction over Burma, Malaysiakini 16 June 2003  
[http://www.burmanet.org/bnn\\_archives/2003/20030616.txt](http://www.burmanet.org/bnn_archives/2003/20030616.txt), Accessed on 28 June 2013.

Suu Kyi's house arrest 'extended', 29 Nov 2004; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4051235.stm>; accessed on 28 June 2013.

Thailand says Myanmar must reform before 2006 ASEAN summit, Agence France Presse, 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 2004; available at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/>; accessed on 28 June 2013.

Thailand says Myanmar must reform before 2006 ASEAN summit, Agence France Presse, 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 2004; available at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/>; accessed on 28 June 2013.

ASEAN too soft on Myanmar, New Straits times, 29<sup>th</sup> Nov 2004; available at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/>; accessed on 28 June 2013.

<sup>1</sup> Is Japan Really Getting Tough on Burma? (Not likely), 28 June 2003; available at [http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/bi\\_on\\_oda.htm](http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/bi_on_oda.htm); accessed on 28 June 2013.

Burma defends Suu Kyi custody, 13 July 2003; available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3062655.stm>; accessed on 28 June 2013.

Burma 'faces ASEAN expulsion', BBC news, July 20, 2003; available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3081557.stm>; accessed on 30 June 2013.

ASEAN split over Burma, 21 July, 2003; available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3083415.stm>, accessed on 30 June 2013.

The 36<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting was held at Phnom Penh, 16-17 June, 2003. The joint ministerial communiqué is available at [www.ASEAN.org](http://www.ASEAN.org); accessed on 30, June, 2013.

The 37<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting was held at Jakarta, 29-30, June, 2004. The joint ministerial communiqué is available at [www.ASEAN.org](http://www.ASEAN.org); accessed on 1 July 2013.

Available at <http://dapmalaysia.org/all-archive/English/2005/apr05/lks/lks3410.htm>, accessed on 1 July 2013.

Burma will not take ASEAN chair, 26 July 2005; available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4715283.stm>; accessed on 1 July 2013.

ASEAN headed for disaster by handing chair to Myanmar in 2006, 28 Nov 2004; available at <http://www.ASEANmp.org/?p=1103>; accessed on 1 July 2013.

1

Statement of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Vientiane, 25 July 2005; available at [www.asean.org](http://www.asean.org); accessed on 1 July 2013.

<sup>1</sup> Burma Needs United Front; available at <http://www.stanleyfoundation.org/articles.cfm?id=452>; accessed on 1 July 2013.

<sup>1</sup> Bush Sets New Sanctions Against Burmese Military Junta, the Washington Post, 20 Oct 2007; available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2007/10/19/AR2007101901668.html>; accessed on 2 July 2013.

ASEAN rejects US call to suspend Myanmar, the Washington Post, 18 Nov 2007 ; available at [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/11/18/AR2007111800164\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/11/18/AR2007111800164_pf.html); accessed on 2 July 2013.

BurmaNet News, The Associated Press: China refusing to condemn Myanmar, pleads for clam; ASEAN nations express 'revulsion', available at < <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2007/09/28>>; accessed on 2 July 2013.

Press Statements and Speeches, [http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/overseasmission/washington/newsroom/press\\_statements/2007/200710/press\\_200710\\_08.html](http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/overseasmission/washington/newsroom/press_statements/2007/200710/press_200710_08.html); accessed on 2 July 2013.

<sup>1</sup> Statement of Chairman for Special ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting Chairman; available at <http://www.asean.org/news/asean-statement-communicues/item/special-asean-foreign-ministers-meeting-chairman-s-statement-singapore>; accessed on 3 July 2013.

Statement of Chairman for Special ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting Chairman; available at <http://www.asean.org/news/asean-statement-communicues/item/special-asean-foreign-ministers-meeting-chairman-s-statement-singapore>; accessed on 3 July 2013.

David Montero, "US to engage Burma (Myanmar): Clinton", 24 Sep 2009; available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-News/2009/0924/us-to-engage-burma-myanmar-clinton>; accessed on 3 July 2013.

The future of Myanmar and ASEAN after the elections, 16 Nov 2010; available at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/11/16/the-future-myanmar-and-asean-after-elections.html>; accessed on 3 July 2013.

ASEAN leaders applaud Myanmar elections <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/04/2012434202253849.html>; accessed on 3 July 2013.