

# MYANMAR

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- (i) capital- Seat of government moving to Naypyidaw, also known as Pyinmana, from Rangoon (yangon)
- (ii) Other Large Cities - Mandalay, Bassein.
- (iii) Area - 676,553 Sq.Km.
- (iv) Population - 47,382,633. (July 2006)
- (v) Languages - Burmese, Karen, Shan.
- (vi) Religions - Buddhist,89%, Christian-4%, Muslim-4%, Animist-1%, Others-2%
- (vii) Literacy - 85.3%
- (viii) Life Enpectancy - 60.97.
- (ix) Currancy - Kyat. (\$1=6.42)
- (x) GDP (Per capital income in ppp \$) = \$ 1,700, GDP
- (xi) Date of Indepondance - 4th January, 1948
- (xii) Government Type - Military Regime
- (xiii) Prsident - Gen. Shan Shwe.
- (xiv) Prime Minister - Gen. Soe Winsina (19.10.2004)

“Myanmar, officially, Union of Myanmar, republic in Southeast Asia, is bounded on the west by Bangladesh; on the northwest by India’s Assam state; on the northeast by China’s Yunnan province; on the east by Laos and Thailand; and on the southwest by the Andman Sea and the Bay of Bengal. The longest land border is shared with China. Myanmar (pronounced myahn-mah) was known as Burma until 1989; the English version of the country’s name was changed by the military government that took over in 1988. Yangon (formerly known as Rangoon) is the capital and the largest city.”<sup>1</sup>

## **2. THE PHYSICAL AND HUMAN GEOGRAPHY**

## **(i) LAND AND RESOURCES**

“The total area of Myanmar is 676,553 sq km (261,218 sq mi). From north to south, Myanmar stretches about 2085 km (about 1295 mi); from east to west the distance is about 930 km (about 575 mi). The coastal region is known as lower Myanmar, while the interior region is known as Upper Myanmar. A horseshoe-shaped mountain complex and the valley of the Irrawaddy River system are the country’s dominant topographical features. The mountains of the northern margin rise to 5881 m (19,296 ft) atop Hkakabo Razi, the highest peak in Southeast Asia. The two other mountain systems have northern to southern axes. The Arakan Yoma range, with elevations between 915m (3000 ft) and 1525 m (5000 ft), forms a barrier between Myanmar and the subcontinent of India. The Bilaukaung Range, the southwestern extension of the Shan Plateau, lies along the boundary between southwestern Thailand and southeastern Lower Myanmar. The Shan Plateau, originating in China, has an average elevation of about 910 m (about 3000 ft).

Generally narrow and elongated in the interior, the central lowlands attain a width of about 320 km (about 200 mi) across the Irrawaddy Sittang delta. The deltaic plains, extremely fertile and economically the most important section of the country, cover an area of about 46,620 sq km (about 18,000 sq mi). Both the Arakan (in the northwest) and the Tenasserim (in the southwest) coasts of Myanmar are rocky and fringed with islands. The country has a number of excellent natural harbours.”<sup>2</sup>

## **(ii) PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE**

“Forests and woodland cover about half of Myanmar. In lower Myanmar, the dense tropical forests contain extensive stands of timber and oil-bearing trees, including commercially valuable teak forests. Other trees include rubber, cinchona, acacia, bamboo, ironwood, mangrove,

coconut, betel, palm, and chiefly, in the northern highlands, oak, pine, and many species of rhododendron. Tropical fruits such as citrus, bananas, mangoes, and guavas grow in the costal regions. Vegetation in the arid regions is sparse and stunted. One consequence of Myanmar's slow economic growth has been the preservation of much of the natural environment.

Jungle animals such as the tiger and leopard are common in Myanmar. Among the large native animals, found mainly in the highlands of Upper Myanmar, are the elephant, rhinoceros, wild buffalo, wild bear, and several species of deer and antelope. Elephants, tamed or bred in captivity, are used as work animals, particularly in the lumber industry. Smaller animals include the gibbon, which is a small species of ape that live in trees, several species of monkey, the wildcat, the flying fox, and the tapir. Myanmar has more than 1200 known varieties of birds, including parrots, peafowl, pheasants, crows, herons, and paddy birds. Among typical reptiles are crocodiles, geckos, cobras, pythons, and turtles. Many edible species of freshwater fish are plentiful.”<sup>3</sup>

### **(iii) NATURAL RESOURCES**

“The most important resources of Myanmar are agricultural. There are approximately 250 commercially useful kinds of trees, 50 of which have been exploited. The most important forest resource is teak, of which Myanmar holds the majority of the world's remaining supply. Important mineral resources are petroleum and natural gas, along with tin, antimony, zinc, copper, tungsten, lead, coal, and small amounts of marble and limestone. Myanmar is an outstanding source of jade and natural rubies.

Myanmar's richest soils are found in a narrow alluvial strip along the Bay of Bengal, where mountain streams irrigate the land in the wide Irrawaddy and Sittang river valleys. These deep deposits form a vast, fertile belt especially suitable for rice cultivation because of the abundant moisture.”<sup>4</sup>

#### **(iv) CLIMATE**

“The climate of Myanmar and other countries in South and Southeast Asia follows a monsoon pattern. During the half of the year that the sun’s rays strike directly above the equator, the land mass of Asia is heated more than in the Indian ocean. This draws moist hot air from over the ocean onto the land bringing the rains of the southwest monsoon. When the tilt of the earth brings the direct sun rays south of the equator, the heating of the Indian Ocean draws the cooler dry air of the northeast monsoon from the highlands of Asia across the countries of South and Southeast Asia. As a result, Myanmar has three seasons: hot and wet, warm, and very hot. During the hot, wet season, from Mid-May to October, rain usually falls every day and sometimes all day. Almost all of Myanmar’s annual rainfall falls during this time. In the cooler season, which runs from late October to mid-February, the temperature for January averages 25° c (77° f) in Yangon in Lower Myanmar and 20° c (68° f) in Mandalay in Upper Myanmar. The hottest season runs from late February to early May. At the end of this season, the average monthly temperature reaches the upper 30°C (lower 100°.F.) in many parts of Myanmar. By July rains have brought the average temperature down to 29° c (84° f) in Mandalay and 27° c (81°f) in Yangon. Average annual rainfall varies from about 5000 mm (about 200 in) on the Tenasserim coast to about 760 mm (about 30 in) at Mandalay.”<sup>5</sup>

#### **(v) PEOPLE OF MYANMAR**

“The population of Myanmar is about 47,382,633. The overall population density is about 70 persons per square km (176 per sq mi), one of the lowest in East Asia. The population is more than 75 percent rural, with almost half the urban population found in the three largest cities: Yangon, Mandalay, and Moulmein.

More than two-thirds of the people of Myanmar are Burman, ethnically akin to the Tibetans and the Chinese. In addition, several native

minorities with their own languages and cultures inhabit the country. The most important of these groups are the Karen and the Shan, each of which comprises less than 10 percent of the population. There are also several smaller groups such as the Arakanese (Rakhine), Mon, Chin, and Kachin, as well as numerous even smaller minorities. The Karen are found primarily in delta villages and along the Thailand border, the Shan throughout the vast Shan Plateau, the Mon along the Tenasserim coast (this groups largely assimilated within the Burman Majority), the Arakanese along the Arakan coast next to Bangladesh, the Chin on the western border with India, the Kachin on the northern border with China, and many of the smaller groups along the Chinese border intermingled with the Shan. Large Chinese and Indian minorities dominated the urban population during the British rule of Myanmar (1826-1948); however, many of the Chinese have since assimilated as Sino-Burmans and most of the Indians have emigrated, though many Indian Muslims remain in their traditional homeland on the Arakan coast.”<sup>6</sup>

## **(vi) LANGUAGE AND RELIGION**

“Most of the linguistic groups of Myanmar are monosyllabic and polytonal, similar to those of Tibet and China. The official language of Myanmar is classified by linguists as Burmese, although government officials often call it the Myanmar language. It is spoken by the great majority of the population, including many of the non-Burman ethnic minorities. About 15 percent of the population speaks Shan and Karen. English is spoken among the educated, and the country contains a sizable number of speakers of Chinese.

More than 85 percent of all the people of Myanmar are Buddhists, most of whom adhere to the Theravada school of Buddhism, as do Buddhists in neighbouring Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia. Theravada (the way of the Elders) Buddhism is sometimes called Hinayana (the Lesser Vehicle) by contrast with Mahayana (the Great Vehicle) Buddhism, a later and more elaborate form that is practiced



largely in China, Korea, and Japan.”<sup>7</sup>

## **(vii) EDUCATION**

“Education is free and compulsory for children from the age of 5 to 10. Secondary education consists of four years of middle or vocational school and an additional two years for high school. Middle and vocational schools are also free, but fees are charged for high school. About one-fifth of the secondary school age population is enrolled in school. Instruction in primary and secondary schools is in Burmese; English is the second language taught in many secondary schools. Four-fifths of the adult population are said to be able to read and write. However, the Myanmar government claimed that less than one-fifth of the population was truly literate when it was seeking United Nations (UN) status as a “least developed country” in the late 1980s.

Yangon and Mandalay have a variety of long-established universities and postsecondary educational institutes. In order to disperse the political protests by students in these two cities, regional colleges were set up in the late 1960s in a number of principal towns. Rangoon University (founded in 1920) and Mandalay University (1925) are the premier institutions in arts and sciences. A bachelor’s degree is also granted by the Defense Services Academy (1955) in Maymyo. An emphasis on science and technology since the 1960s led to the expansion of the Yangon Institute of Technology (1964) and the establishment of the Mandalay Institute of Economics (1964) in Yangon. Medical doctors are trained at two institutes of medicine in Yangon and Mandalay. There are numerous teacher-training institutes through out the country. As a result of periodic political disturbances universities have been mostly closed since 1988.”<sup>8</sup>

## **(viii) CULTURE**

“The major population groups in Myanmar migrated into the Irrawaddy River Valley from the north, bringing their spoken languages,

their gender roles, and several varieties of food and medicine. From India on the west came the institutions of religion and government, but without the Indian caste system of social hierarchy. India was also the source of Pali, the sacred language, and of the devanagari script in which the popular language is written, along with astrology and some kinds of food. The firm grounding of Buddhism in Myanmar culture contributed over the years to the building of many pagodas (towering temples) throughout Myanmar.”<sup>9</sup>

### **3. ECONOMY**

“Myanmar is primarily an agricultural country. About two-thirds of the working population is engaged in growing or processing crops, while about one-tenth work in industry. Before world war II Myanmar was the world’s major rice exporter. After the war, the area of land devoted to agriculture slowly recovered, but as the population grew the surplus available for export never reached the earlier level. For a while forestry was the major export earner. Today, tourism, though small by international standards (there were about 61,000 visitors a year in the early 1990s), is the major source of foreign exchange. From 1962 to 1988 the government attempted to develop the economy following a “Burmese Way to Socialism,” with nationalisation of most industries. The policy was a failure, however, and in the 1990s the government has opened the economy to market forces, particularly inviting foreign investment. Still, many state economic enterprises continue to lose money, the black market flourishes, and heavy government spending for the growing military budget feeds inflation, running at 38% in 1994. By the end of the 1994-95 fiscal year, after several years of significant growth, the levels of gross domestic product (GDP), agricultural output, consumption, and investment in Myanmar were about one-tenth higher than they had been in 1985-86, the best year before the military coup d’etat and political unrest of 1988. Since the population had grown in the interim, this means that the average person, remained worse off than

a decade before. Purchasing power in U.S. dollars was estimated at \$ 41.4 billion in 1994, or about \$930 per capita.”<sup>10</sup>

## **(i) AGRICULTURE**

“Myanmar is one of the few developing nations that is a net exporter of food, which accounted for 20% of its foreign exchange earnings in 2001. About 15% of the land is under cultivation. Agriculture generated roughly two-thirds of employment and 42% of the recorded GDP in 2000.

Rice, by far the most important agricultural product, in 1999 covered about 5.5 million hectares (13.5 million acres) of land in the fertile Irrawaddy delta region, the lower valleys of the Sittang and Salween rivers, and along the Arakan and Tenasserim coasts. Prior to World War II (1939-45), Myanmar was the world’s leading exporter of rice; annual production ranged between 13 million and 14 million tons, of which about three million tons were exported. However, the war caused extensive damage to the economy, and Myanmar did not achieve prewar levels of rice acreage and output until 1964. Rice production totaled 10.77 million tons in 2000/01. Farmers have been instructed by the government to double-crop wet season paddy and triple-crop in areas with year-round access to water. In some areas near the sea, multiple cropping brings saltwater intrusion, high flood risks, and seasonal pest problems. New high-yield varieties of rice have contributed to the increases in recent years, along with the completion of new irrigation systems and flood-control dams in the Irrawaddy delta during the early 1980s.

Other crops in 1999, grown mainly in central Myanmar and the state of Shan, included 5,429,000 tons of sugarcane, 562,000 tons of groundnuts, 303,000 tons of corn, and 210,000 tons of sesame. The use of high-yield varieties of seeds helped to more than triple the output of wheat, corn, and sunflower seeds and to double cotton production during 1976-86. Tobacco and jute are also produced, and rubber is

grown on small plantations in the Tenasserim and Irrawaddy delta regions. Myanmar is the world's largest producer of opium and heroin. In 2001, opium poppy production was estimated at 865 tons.

The total amount of land under cultivation declined in the 1970s, but the amount of paddy land increased. The Mu Valley irrigation project, implemented in north-central Myanmar with UNDP aid in the 1970s, irrigated 1.7 million hectares (4.2 million acres) of farmland. With the completion of the Nawin Dam in 1982, about 40,000 hectares (99,000 acres) of new irrigated land in the Prome region, north of Yangon (Rangoon), were added to the cultivated area. With IBRD and Asian Development Bank aid, new rice storage facilities, a system of drainage canals in the heavy-rainfall paddy land of lower Myanmar, and gravity irrigation systems in dry zones were constructed.”<sup>11</sup>

## **(ii) Forestry and Fishing**

“The forests of Myanmar are an important source of wealth, especially in teak and natural rubber. The timber extraction in 2004 was 39.8 million cu m (1,406 million cu ft). In the early 1990s the teak harvest along the border with Thailand, which had banned its own harvest in order to preserve the future supply, greatly exceeded the sustainable yield and the government had to cancel contracts with Thai loggers. Important tree products, in addition to rubber, are a sticky gum called lac, from which lacquerware is made, quinine, and cutch, the source of a dye.

Fish, including shrimp, are caught for local consumption and are a main source of protein in the diet. Freshwater fish are preferred, but the government is now encouraging saltwater fishing. In 2001 the total catch in the Indian Ocean was estimated at 900,492 metric tons. Much of that catch was caught by Thai trawlers.”<sup>12</sup>

## **(iii) Mining**

“Myanmar has a rich and varied supply of minerals. Most of the

mines are located in the mountainous areas in the west and along the Tenasserim coast. Such precious stones as jade, rubies, and sapphires are mined, as are copper, nickel, silver, lead, and zinc. Since some of the resources were located in rebel-controlled areas, the political stabilization of the early 1990s has increased foreign investor interest in mining these natural resources.

In the early 1900s the Burma Oil Company was a major world producer of petroleum. Because petroleum production fell during the 1980s, the government invited foreign companies to prospect for oil both on land and in the sea. Signing bonuses paid by oil companies were one of the main sources of foreign exchange for the government after the collapse of the economy following the 1988 rebellion. So far searching on land has produced no great finds and several of the companies, along with the principal company, Amoco Corporation, have withdrawn. In 2004 some 5.5 million barrels of crude petroleum were produced. Also, after extensive natural gas resources were discovered in the Bay of Bengal, French and American companies joined in a venture to construct a pipeline from the Andaman Sea to Thailand across Myanmar's Tenasserim region."<sup>13</sup>

#### **(iv) Tourism**

"The tourism industry in Myanmar has attracted funds from investors in volume second only to oil exploration. Investors from Thailand and Singapore are constructing world-class hotels and restoring airline connections. In 1989 the government loosened visa restrictions, allowing tourists on package tours to stay in the country for up to two weeks. However, the government restricts tourists to officially approved sites. In 2004, 241,938 tourists visited Myanmar, a substantial increase over the annual number of tourists that visited in the years before the 1988 rebellion. Although tourism is Myanmar's leading source of foreign exchange, the political climate in the country has hindered any efforts to

promote tourism there.”<sup>14</sup>

### **(v) Foreign Trade**

“All foreign trade is controlled by the government, but since 1990 firms have been able to directly participate in trade. By making cross-border trade with China, Thailand, and India legal, the government has been able to collect more taxes and lessen black market trade with Thailand by rebel groups. Since the exchange rate for the official currency is high and a number of regulations remain, much illegal trade still takes place. In 2000 exports were valued at \$1.39 billion. Exports typically consist of beans, rice, and teak and other hardwoods. The United States, India, China, Japan, Singapore, Germany, and France are the main purchasers. Imports are mainly machinery, transportation equipment, chemicals, and food. In 2000 they totaled \$2.4 billion. Singapore, China, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, and Indonesia are the primary suppliers. In 1991 the United States and the member nations of the European Union (EU) imposed trade sanctions against Myanmar in response to alleged human rights violations. Strong, additional trade sanctions were imposed by the United States in 1997, again in response to human rights abuses by Myanmar’s military government. The sanctions restricted new investment in Myanmar by U.S. companies. In 2000 the EU also increased sanctions against Myanmar. Meanwhile, Myanmar expanded trade with its Asian neighbours, especially member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).”<sup>15</sup>

### **(vi) Transportation**

“The railroad system has been owned and operated by the government since British times; it includes 3,955 km (2,458 mi) of track. The railroad links Moulmein, Yangon, Pegu, Mandalay, and the other major cities but does not connect with railroads outside of Myanmar. Far more important for moving domestic passengers and cargo are the inland waterways, which total about 12,800 km (about 8,000 mi) of

navigable rivers and canals, about 3,200 km (about 2,000 mi) of which are open to large commercial vessels. Most of Myanmar's larger towns and cities are river ports; Yangon and Pegu are near the mouths of the Irrawaddy River, Bassein is on one of the mouths of the Irrawaddy, Mandalay is on the upper Irrawaddy near the branching of the Chindwin River, and Moulmein is located at the mouth of the Salween River. There are 27,966 km (17,377 mi) of roads in Myanmar, of which 78 percent are paved, two-thirds are gravel, and the rest passable most easily by jeep or ox cart. In the 1990s the government has focused considerable energy on reconstructing roads, often with volunteer or forced labor. Altogether, however, the amount of new road added since 1990 has averaged less than 200 km (120 mi) per year, compared to an average of 970 km (603 mi) per year in previous years. There are extensive road links and several bridge links with Thailand and China. The Burma Road, which extended from northeast of Mandalay into China, played an important role in World War II.

Myanmar Airways, the government-owned airline, has international service from Yangon to Hong Kong, Bangkok, and Kolkata. Other international carriers provide direct flights to Mandalay and the tourist site at Pagan. Domestic flights have also been modernized by joint ventures with Singapore companies.”<sup>16</sup>

### **(vii) Communications**

“All postal, telegraph, telephone, and broadcasting systems in Myanmar are controlled by the government. In 2004 the country had 8 telephone mainlines for every 1,000 people; most of the telephones were in Yangon. There were 65 radio receivers and 7 television sets for every 1,000 inhabitants. There is one government TV channel.”<sup>17</sup>

## **4. HISTORY**

### **(i) Early History**

“The history of what is now Myanmar has been made by a succession of peoples who migrated down along the Irrawaddy River from Tibet and China, and who were influenced by social and political institutions that had been carried across the sea from India. First came the Mon, perhaps as early as 3000 BC. They established centers of settlement in central Myanmar, in the Irrawaddy delta, and farther down the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal. They constructed irrigation systems and developed commercial and cultural contacts with India, while maintaining loose ties with other Mon civilizations in the Chao Phraya Valley of *Siam* (now Thailand). The Pyu followed much later, moving down the western side of the Irrawaddy and founding a capital near present-day Prome in AD 628. The Burmans entered the Irrawaddy River valley in the mid-9th century, absorbing the nearby Pyu and Mon communities. Later waves brought in the Shan and Kachin, who, along with the native Karen, have all played a part in the country’s development.

The first unified Myanmar state was founded by king Anawrahta (reigned 1044-1077) at Pagan in upper Myanmar and was brought to its height by his son, Kyanzittha (reigned 1084-1112). Their domain advanced from the dry zone to incorporate the delta Mon centers at Pegu and Thaton; they extended political and religious ties overseas to *ceylon* (now Sri Lanka) and fought off a Chinese invasion from the north. The internal structure of the state was similar to that of a Hindu kingdom, with a court at the capital supported by direct house-hold taxes or service obligations drawn from villages, which were under the guidance of hereditary *myothugis* (township headmen). In time an increasing proportion of the land was donated to Buddhist monasteries in the form of slave villages for the maintenance of the *sangha* (monkhood). Kingship was legitimated by both Hindu ideology and the King’s role as defender of the Buddhist faith. During 250 years of relative peace, the *devout* rulers built the many pagodas for which Pagan is known today.

In 1287 Pagan was conquered by the Mongols under Kublai Khan. This was the beginning of a turbulent period during which upper



Myanmar led an uncertain existence between Shan domination and tributary relations with China, while Lower Myanmar reverted to Mon rule based at Pegu.

In the second quarter of the 16th century, a new Burmese dynasty emerged from the sleepy principality of Toungoo in central Myanmar. With the aid of Portuguese adventurers, the Toungoo dynasty established what became under its third king, Bayinnaung (reigned 1551-1581), a reunified and precariously prosperous state. After his death, succession squabbles and encroachment by the Portuguese along the coast, by the Thais on the east, and by Manipuri horsemen from the west brought on the decline of the dynasty, although the system itself endured until the mid-18th century. Its survival was made possible by a stable administrative and legal system at the central and local levels. The dynasty was finally toppled by a Mon rebellion in 1752.

Increasing European commercial and political pressure set the context for the rise and demise of the last Burmese dynasty. During the 1600s and early 1700s competing British, Dutch, and French interests had established commercial ventures at Syriam, near present-day Yangon, and elsewhere on the coast. In 1752 Alaungpaya founded the Konbaung dynasty by restoring Burmese rule first at Ava and later in the delta. He moved against the British at the Negrais trading post and then initiated another attack on the Thai, whose capital at ayutthaya was later destroyed by his son king Hsinbyushin (reigned 1763-1776). Another son, Bodawpaya, lost control of Siam but captured the Arakan, a rich coastal province bordering on Bengal. By the early 19th century, political friction on an Arakanese independence movement based in Bengal was compounded by the military successes of the Burmese general Maha Bandula in Assam. The British responded by sea in the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826). The ensuing Treaty of Yandabo left the British in control of Arakan to the west and Tenasserim to the east of the Irrawaddy delta. The production of rice and timber flourished in these two areas under the British, while their relative political stability induced massive population growth, a general pattern that was repeated

after the remainder of the delta was annexed in the Second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852. Commercial ambition and political pretext, heightened by Anglo-French regional rivalry, precipitated the final annexation, when Mandalay fell after a brief battle in 1885. These extensions of British rule were progressively less popular with the resident population and each in turn required a period of pacification. In the longer run, British rule brought widespread administrative and social modernization to a land that, except for the benign efforts of King Mindon, the builder of Mandalay, had been swamped in reclusive policies and wracked by court intrigues.”<sup>18</sup>

## **(ii) The British in Burma (1885-1948)**

“The Third Anglo-Burmese War lasted less than two weeks during November 1885. The Myanmar people never expected the speed with which the capital would be taken. The hopelessly outmatched royal troops surrendered; quickly, although armed resistance continued for several years. The Myanmar also believed that the British aim was merely to replace King Thibaw with a prince who had been sheltered and groomed in India for the throne. This belief seemed to be confirmed when the British commander called upon the High Court of Justice to continue to function. The British finally decided, however, not only to annex all of northern Myanmar (which they called Upper Burma) as a colony but also to make the whole country a province of India (effective Jan. 1, 1886). Rangoon became the capital of the province, after having been the capital of British Lower Burma.”<sup>19</sup>

### ***(a) The initial impact of colonialism***

“This chain of events was a bitter blow to Myanmar society. The loss of independence was painful enough; worse still were the British decisions to eliminate the monarchy—in the process sending Thibaw into exile—and to stay out of religious affairs, thus depriving the church of its traditional status and official patronage. The demise of these twin

pillars of Myanmar society was perhaps the most devastating aspect of the colonial period.

Many refused to accept the British victory as final and resorted to guerrilla warfare against the British army of occupation. The guerrillas were led mainly by former officers of the disbanded royal army, former officials (including village headmen), and royal princes, and they considered themselves to be royal soldiers still fighting the Third Anglo-Burmese War. To the British, however, the war had ended legally with the annexation of the kingdom; those opposing them, therefore, were considered rebels and bandits. For the next five years the British military officers acted as both judge and jury in dealing with captured guerrillas. Villagers who aided the rebels also were sternly punished. British troops carried out mass executions and committed other atrocities.

As the guerrillas fought on, the British adopted a “strategic-hamlet” strategy: villages were burned, and families who had supplied villages with their headmen were uprooted from their homes and sent away to Lower Burma (which had been under British control since the Second Anglo-Burmese War). Strangers loyal to the British were appointed as headmen for the new villages established by the British. The guerrillas resorted to desperate measures against the new village officials. By 1890, with more than 30,000 British troops engaged in the campaign, the military part of the struggle was over.”<sup>20</sup>

### *(b) The religious dilemma*

“The colonial period was one of relative civil order, but it also was one of great social disintegration. Chief among the reasons for this was the British-imposed separation of church and state. The British did not wish to touch the issue of religion—given their experience in India that had led to the revolt of 1857-59—and thus were unwilling to patronize Burmese Buddhism as the monarchy had done.

Under the monarchy, church and state had shared a symbiotic relationship. Royal patronage of Burmese Buddhism had included both financial and moral support, and this had extended legitimacy and

authority to the church. The king had had the right to appoint the primate, who exercised supervision and discipline among the ranks of the clergy. In addition, the king had been given the right to attach two royal officials to the primate: a commissioner of ecclesiastical lands and an ecclesiastical censor. The duty of the commissioner had been to see that ecclesiastical lands were exempted from payment of taxes, at the same time ensuring that bogus and illegal endowments did not escape taxation. The duty of the censor had been to maintain a register of monks, which had given the king indirect control over the clergy. The power to defrock a wayward monk had rested largely with the primate, but the same result could be achieved if the king declared the monk to be “impure,” which was one of the king’s prerogatives. This arrangement was designed to prevent the abuse of the exemptions granted to the clergy.

The British refusal to heed a plea by the clergy and church elders to continue the traditional church-state relationship resulted in the decline of the sangha and its ability to instill discipline in the clergy. This, in turn, lowered the prestige of the clergy and contributed to the rise of secular education and of a new class of teachers, depriving the sangha of one of its primary roles. Added to this, the colonial government of India founded secular schools teaching in both English and Burmese and encouraged foreign Christian missions to found schools by offering them financial assistance. Many mission schools were founded; parents were compelled to send their children to these schools, as there were no realistic alternatives. The teachers were missionaries, and the lessons they gave were marked by repeated criticism of Buddhism and its culture. In the government schools the first teachers, British and Indian, were mere civil servants, unable and unwilling to continue the older traditions.”<sup>21</sup>

### *(c) The colonial economy*

“The traditional Myanmar economy had been one of redistribution—an early form of the modern command economy—a concept that was embedded in society, religion, and politics. Prices of

the most important commodities were set by the state, and in general the mechanism of supply and demand was relatively unimportant. Agrarian self-sufficiency was vital, while trade was only of secondary importance. The British impact on this system proved disastrous, as Burma's economy became part of a vast colonial export economy tied to global market forces. The cause of this was not so much the usual economic exploitation of a country by a foreign ruler as it was the effects of an economy designed to benefit the colonial power.

The British dream of a golden road to China through Burma could not be realized, but the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 created a much higher international demand for Burma's rice than had previously existed. The Irrawaddy delta was swiftly cleared of its mangrove forests and in a matter of decades became covered with rice fields. Even in 1857 the price of rice had increased 25 percent; by 1890 the price had more than doubled from 1857 rates, and it continued to increase until the worldwide economic depression of the 1930s. The area of productive rice fields in Lower Burma rose from approximately 60,000 acres (24,000 hectares) in the 1850s to nearly 10,000,000 acres in 1939. This tremendous increase in production created a significant shift in population from the northern heartland to the delta, shifting as well the basis of wealth and power.

In order to prepare the land for cultivation, however, the farmers had to borrow capital from Indian moneylenders from Madras at exorbitant interest rates. The British banks would not grant mortgage loans on rice land, and the British government had no policy for establishing land-mortgage banks or for making agricultural loans. Prevailing prices were high in the international market, but the local price was kept down by a handful of British firms that controlled wholesale trade and by Indian and Chinese merchants who controlled retail trade. With land values and rice prices soaring, the Indian moneylenders foreclosed mortgages at the earliest opportunity.

The dispossessed farmers could not find employment even on their lost lands because, with a higher standard of living, they could not compete with the thousands of Indian labourers who came to Burma. Burmese

villagers, unemployed and lost in a disintegrating society, took to petty theft and robbery and soon acquired the reputation of being lazy and undisciplined. The level of dysfunction in Burmese society was revealed by the dramatic rise in homicides: during the early decades of the 20th century, Burma's annual homicide rate was second only to that of the United States.

Thus, although the Burmese economy and transportation infrastructure developed rapidly from 1890 to 1900, the majority of Burmese people did not benefit from it. A railway had been built through the entire valley of the Irrawaddy, and hundreds of steamboats plied the length of the river; but the railway and the boats belonged to British companies. Roads had been built by the government, but they were meant for the swift transport of troops. A British company worked the ruby mines until they became nearly exhausted. The extraction of oil and timber was monopolized by two British firms. The balance of trade was always in favour of Burma, but that meant little to Burmese people or society.”<sup>22</sup>

#### *(d) The emergence of nationalism*

“Those Burmese who attended the new schools managed to gain admission to the clerical grades of government service, but even in those lower grades they encountered competition from Indians. Because science courses were not available, the professions of engineering and medicine were closed to the Burmese. Those who advanced to the government liberal arts college at Rangoon entered the middle grades of the civil service, while a few went on to London to study law. When these young barristers returned to Burma, they were looked upon by the people as their new leaders. Their sojourn in the liberal atmosphere of London had convinced these new leaders that some measure of political independence could be regained by negotiation.

The new leaders first gave their attention to the national religion, culture, and education. In 1906 they founded the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) and through it began establishing a number of

schools supported by private donations and government grants-in-aid (the YMBA was not antigovernment). Three years later the British, attempting to pacify the Indian National Congress, introduced some constitutional reforms in India. Only a few minor changes were made in the Burmese constitution, but these confirmed the young leaders' faith in British liberalism. In 1920, however, when it was found that Burma would be excluded from new reforms introduced in India, the barristers led the people in a nationwide protest, which involved a boycott of British goods.

Also in 1920 Rangoon College was raised to the status of a full university; yet, because its control was vested in a body of government nominees, its students went on strike. Younger schoolboys and schoolgirls followed suit. The strikers camped in the courtyards of monasteries, reviving memories of days when education was the concern of the monks. The general public and the Buddhist clergy gave full support to the strike. The University Act was amended and the strike settled, but many strikers refused to go back to mission and government schools. The YMBA schools, now calling themselves "national" schools, opened their doors to the strikers.

Constitutional reforms were finally granted in 1923, but the delay had split the leaders, some of whom, like the masses, were beginning to doubt whether political freedom could be attained by peaceful protest. In the University of Rangoon itself, students began to resent their British professors. A radical student group began organizing protests, which came to be known as the Thakin movement. The name for this movement was purposely ironic: the Burmese word *thakin* ("master") was the term that the Burmese were required to use when addressing the British.

In late 1930 Burmese peasants, under the leadership of Saya San, rose in rebellion. Armed only, with swords and sticks, they resisted British and Indian troops for two years. The young Thakins, though not involved in the rebellion, won the trust of the villagers and emerged as leaders in place of the British-educated Burmese elite. In 1936 university students again went on strike, and two of their leaders, Thakin Nu (later called U Nu) and Aung San, joined the Thakin movement. In 1937 the

British government separated Burma from India and, granted it a constitution, but the masses interpreted this as proof that the British planned to exclude Burma from the next phase of Indian reform.”<sup>23</sup>

### **(iii) World War II and after**

“When World War II broke out in Europe in 1939, the Burmese leaders wanted to bargain with the government before giving their support to the British. A warrant was issued for the arrest of Aung San, but he escaped to China, where he attempted to contact radical groups for support. Japanese assistance was offered instead. Aung San returned to Burma in secret, recruited 29 young men, and took them to Japan, where the “Thirty Comrades” received military training. The Japanese promised independence for Burma; hence, when Japanese troops reached Bangkok (Thailand) in December 1941, Aung San announced the formation of the Burma Independence Army (BIA). The Japanese advanced into Burma and by the end of 1942 had occupied the country. They subsequently disbanded the BIA and formed a smaller Burma Defense Army, with Aung San still as commander.

Ba Maw, the first prime minister under the 1937 constitution and later the leader of the opposition, was appointed head of state by the Japanese, with a cabinet including Aung San and Thakin Nu. In 1943, when the tide of battle started to turn against them, the Japanese declared Burma a fully sovereign state. The Burmese government, however, was still a mere facade, with the Japanese army ruling. Meanwhile, Aung San had contacted Lord Mountbatten, the Allied commander in Southeast Asia, as early as October 1943 to offer his cooperation, and in March 1945 Aung San and his army—renamed the Burma National Army (BNA)—joined the British side.

During the war Aung San and the Thakins formed a coalition of political parties called the Anti-Fascist Organization—after the war renamed the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL)—which had wide popular support. After the defeat of the Japanese in Burma in May 1945, the British military administration and members of the prewar



government who had returned from exile demanded that Aung San be tried as a traitor. Mountbatten, however, recognized the extent of Aung San's hold on the BNA and on the general populace, and he hastily sent the more conciliatory Sir Hubert Rance to head the administration. Rance regained for the British the trust of Aung San and the general public. When the war ended, the military administration was withdrawn, and Rance was replaced by the former civilian governor, who formed a cabinet consisting of older and more conservative politicians. The new administration arrested Aung San and charged him with treason. Surprised and angered, the Burmese people prepared for rebellion, but the British government in London wisely replaced the governor with Rance. Rance formed a new cabinet, including Aung San, and discussions for a peaceful transfer of power began. These were concluded in London in January 1947, when the British agreed to Burma's independence; by June the decision also had been made to leave the Commonwealth.

The communist and conservative wings of the AFPFL were dissatisfied with the agreement. The communists broke away and went underground, and the conservatives went into opposition. In July Aung San and most members of his cabinet were assassinated by gunmen sent by U Saw, a former prime minister and now a conservative. Rance asked Thakin Nu to form a new cabinet. A new constitution was written, and on Jan. 4, 1948, Burma became a sovereign, independent republic.”<sup>24</sup>

### *(a) The country since independence-Parliamentary government*

“With its economy shattered and its towns and villages destroyed during the war, Burma needed peace. A foreign policy of neutrality was decided upon, but, because of internal strife, no peace resulted. The communists were the first insurgents, followed by some of Aung San's veterans and then the Karen, the only ethnic minority on the plains; but the other minorities—Chin, Kachin, and Shan—who had been ruled separately by the British but who had enthusiastically joined the union, stood firm.

A division of Chinese Nationalist troops occupied parts of the Shan Plateau after their defeat by the Chinese Communists in 1949, and, because of the general support given to Nationalist China (Taiwan) by the United States, Myanmar stopped accepting U.S. aid and rejected all foreign aid. At the United Nations Myanmar endeavoured to show impartiality. It was one of the first countries to recognize Israel and also the 'People's Republic of China.

By 1958 Burma was well on the road to internal peace and economic recovery, but the ruling AFPFL had become divided by personal quarrels between U Nu and his closest associates. Amid rumours of a military takeover, U Nu invited the army chief of staff, Ne Win—who had been a Thakin, one of the Thirty Comrades, and Aung San's second in command—to take the premiership. Ne Win established internal security, stabilized the military situation, and prepared the country for general elections, which took place in February 1960. U Nu was returned to office with an absolute majority.”<sup>25</sup>

### *(b) The socialist takeover*

“In March 1962 Ne Win led a coup d'état and arrested U Nu, the chief justice, and several cabinet ministers. His justification for this was that it was a means of keeping the union from disintegrating. He suspended the 1947 constitution and ruled the country with a Revolutionary Council consisting of senior military officers. Ne Win's stated purpose was to make Burma a truly socialist state. A one-party (Burma Socialist Programme Party [BSPP]) system was established, and measures were introduced to decentralize the administration. In April 1972 Ne Win and other members of the Revolutionary Council retired from the army, but they retained their positions of power in the BSPP. Land had been nationalized in U Nu's administration, and now much of the country's commerce and industry were nationalized as well. These measures did not improve the economy, however, particularly as investment in agriculture generally was sacrificed in favour of industrial growth.

U Ne Win (as he was called after leaving the army) had promised a new constitution, and in September 1971 representatives of the party's central committee, of the country's various ethnic groups, and of other interest groups were appointed to draft a document. A referendum to ratify the new constitution was held in December 1973, with more than 90 percent of eligible voters signifying approval, and the constitution was promulgated in January 1974. Elections to the People's Assembly (Pyithu Hluttaw)—the supreme legislative, executive, and judicial authority—and to local People's Councils were held early in 1974; the new government took office in March with U Ne Win as president.

After the establishment of the new political organization, Burma's economy grew steadily at a moderate pace. A notable policy change was a partial relaxation of the ban on foreign financial aid, and considerable funding was received from the Asian Development Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. By the early 1980s, however, growth increasingly was being hindered by mounting trade deficits caused largely by falling commodity prices and rising external debt payments. A series of economic reforms were proposed in 1987-88 that would reverse the socialist policies enacted in the early 1960s. Chief among these were the further encouragement of foreign investment and a considerable liberalization of foreign trade.

Communist and ethnic insurgency continued in the eastern and northern parts of the country throughout the BSPP period. In May 1980 U Ne Win offered full amnesty to all political insurgents inside or outside Burma who reported to authorities within a 90-day period. Most notable among those accepting was U Nu, who, after having gone into exile in India in 1969, returned to enter a Buddhist monastery. Most insurgents, however, chose to continue opposing the government, and repeated attempts by government troops to suppress them met with only limited success. After four decades, insurgency had become a way of life."<sup>26</sup>

### *(c) The military regime*

“U Ne Win retired as president and chairman of the Council of State in November 1981 but remained in power until July 1988, when he resigned as chairman of the BSPP amid violent protests. Student and worker unrest had erupted periodically throughout the 1980s, but the intensity of the protests in the summer of 1988 made it seem as if the country was on the verge of revolution. In September the armed forces, led by General Saw Maung, seized control of the government. The military moved to suppress the demonstrations, and thousands of unarmed protesters were killed. Martial law was imposed over most of the country, and constitutional government was replaced by a new body called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). Saw Maung became chairman of the SLORC and prime minister.

The SLORC implemented the economic reforms drafted by the previous government and called for elections for a new Constituent Assembly to revise the 1974 constitution. In May 1990 Myanmar held its first multiparty elections in 30 years. Of the dozens of parties that participated, the two most important were the government’s National Unity Party (NUP), which was the successor of the BSPP, and an opposition coalition called the National League for Democracy (NLD). The result was a landslide victory for the opposition NLD.

The SLORC, however, would not permit the Constituent Assembly to convene immediately. In addition, the NLD’s leaders, U Tin U, a former colleague of U Ne Win, and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of the nationalist leader Aung San, had been under house arrest since July 1989, while another leader, U Sein Win, remained in exile in the West. International condemnation of the military regime was strong and widespread, both for its bloody repression of the demonstrations in 1988 and for its actions in connection with the 1990 elections. Worldwide attention remained focused on Myanmar after Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. In April 1992 Saw Maung was replaced as chairman of the SLORC and prime minister by General Than Shwe. The SLORC permitted the new assembly to convene for the first time in January 1993.”<sup>27</sup>

#### (iv) The Modern Nation

“After the war, the returning British discovered that the AFPFL, led by former BIA head Aung San, had nearly monopolized native political power. The AFPFL negotiated with Britain to gain Myanmar’s independence by 1948. It also compelled the inclusion into a “federal” republic of such peripheral groups as the Shan and Karen, thought to have had special British protection. In elections held in April 1947, Aung San’s AFPFL won an overwhelming majority of seats in the constitutional assembly. In July 1947, U Saw, a nationalist political rival of Aung San, had him and six ministers of the new government assassinated. U Nu, a former student leader and the foreign minister in the wartime government of Ba Maw, was asked to head the AFPFL and the government.”<sup>28</sup>

#### (a) *Constitutional Democracy*

“Myanmar’s new independence confronted the AFPFL government of U Nu with a series of political and ethnic insurrections, which continued over the next three decades. During the 1950s a major threat created by the Karen revolt was blunted, and the Communist insurgents were forced to retreat into the hills. U Nu, along with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India, President Sukarno of Indonesia, and President Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, helped establish a group of nonaligned nations that accepted aid but refused alliance with either the Western bloc of nations led by the United States or the Communist bloc led by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Some decades later, when the movement became too much aligned with the USSR, Myanmar quit. After the establishment of the nonaligned foreign policy, economic reconstruction was begun and some new growth undertaken with multilateral foreign aid. AFPFL rule was validated in national elections in 1951-1952 and 1956. By 1958, however, a party split required the constitutional intervention of a caretaker army government for 18 months. General Ne Win’s government tightened administrative discipline to promote modernization and curbed separatist tendencies in the Shan states,

where some of the traditional rulers wanted to exercise the right to secession that was available during the first ten years under the 1947 constitution. The 1960 election gave a resounding victory to U Nu's faction, based largely on respect for his personal piety. U Nu's return to power was short-lived, however. His promotion of Buddhism as the state religion and his tolerance for ethnic separatism precipitated a bloodless coup that reestablished military rule under Ne Win in March 1962."<sup>29</sup>

### ***(b) The Ne Win Regime***

“During the 1960s and 1970s Ne Win attempted to build an effective totalitarian government, establish legitimacy with the Myanmar people, and maintain autonomy on the world scene. The military Revolutionary Council which was established after the 1962 coup, abolished independent political parties; independent newspapers were also banned, being replaced by a single paper, *The Working People's Daily*. The military leaders formed the Burmese Socialist Program Party and nationalized the economy through a plan called the “Burmese Way to Socialism.” Students protesting in the early months of the revolutionary government were shot with machine guns and the Yangon University Student Union building, where the Thakin movement had been launched decades before, was dynamited. During the radical first dozen years foreign contacts were curbed. Tourist visas were limited to 24 hours, foreign newspaper reporters were barred, and most foreign assistance was terminated. The economy declined as the consumer goods distribution system became mired in chaos (leading to a booming black market) and agricultural production fell. A combination of urban food shortages and the spillover from China's Cultural Revolution ignited strikes and anti-Chinese riots, compelling a rethinking of economic policy. Following modest liberalization of trade, a raising of the official price paid peasants for their rice, and the acceptance of international aid for fertilizer and other technical improvements, the economy recovered marginally.

A new constitution was put into effect in 1974, transferring power by referendum and single-party election from the military Revolutionary

Council to a People's Assembly, commanded by Ne Win and other former military leaders. Student strikes still erupted at intervals, as when U Thant, a political figure of the constitutional democracy period and former UN secretary general, died and was returned to Myanmar for burial in 1974.

Ethnic insurrections, which broke out in the Kachin and Shan states after the army coup, continued to deny major areas to government control, including Myanmar's part of the Golden Triangle (a major supplier of the world opium market). The Karen insurrection moved to the Thai border where it benefited from the black market trade. The Burma Communist Party insurrection migrated from the central Pegu Yoma region to the northeast border with China, where it retained official support from China. When that support was withdrawn in the late 1980s, the aging Myanmar leadership became dependent upon ethnic minority foot soldiers, who mutinied in order to be able to run their own opium business and eventually worked out a cease-fire with the central government. In 1981 Ne Win relinquished the presidency to San Yu, a retired general, but continued as chairman of the ruling Burma Socialist Program Party.

A new citizenship law was gradually implemented during the 1980s designating as "associate citizens" people whose ancestors were not of the "original races" of Myanmar. Its principal target was the Sino-Burman and Indo-Burman community. These groups were permitted to vote but could not be elected nor could they hold appointed office above a certain level in the government.

After a quarter of a century, the Ne Win regime seemed to reach stagnation. The insurrections had been successfully pushed to the periphery and no hostile neighbour actively threatened the independence of the nation, but the economy was declining again. This led the government to apply to the UN for "least developed nation" status and to begin market liberalization in hopes of reviving the domestic economy. In the autumn of 1987 a surprising devaluation of the currency eliminated any savings most people had, resulting in antigovernment riots. The following spring a series of critical public letters to Ne Win from a former



military comrade. Brigadier Aung Gyi, and escalating student protests triggered violent repression. As a result of antigovernment riots in March and June 1988, Ne Win officially retired from politics and suggested that a multiparty system might be better for the nation.”<sup>30</sup>

*(c) Rebellion and Military Restoration*

“Following Ne Win’s retirement in July 1988, Myanmar endured three months of political turmoil. The head of the riot police took control of the government and the resulting protesting, looting, and police response left an estimated 500 to 1000 people dead in Yangon and several thousand dead elsewhere in the country. Leadership then shifted to a civilian associate of the military, Maung Maung, who tried to both appease and restrain the growing, but peaceful, opposition to military rule, which included groups ranging from the Yangon Bar Council to nurses and dock workers. Some shape *was* given to this movement by an alliance of Brigadier Aung Gyi with General Tin U, a former defense minister, and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of U Aung San, whose portrait was carried by protesters. When it appeared that parts of the armed forces might join in, the military staged a coup against the government that it had created. On September 18, 1988, Defense Minister General Saw Maung announced the formation of a State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) that pledged to restore law and order; repair transportation and communication; meet the food and shelter needs of the people; and hold free and fair multiparty elections. Meeting the first goal required several months and cost 560 lives according to government reports, though outside sources estimated the loss at more than 1000 lives.

Campaigning was restricted and the two top leaders of the main opposition, the National League for Democracy (NLD), were taken off the scene; in July 1989 Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was put under house arrest and General Tin U was put in prison. The NLD won the May 1990 elections in a landslide, taking 80 percent of the seats with 60 percent of the vote in contrast to the parties favored by SLORC, which received 2 percent of the seats with 25 percent of the vote. When



the winners of the election made moves to organize a government, the SLORC responded by arresting many of them and declaring that there could be no civilian government until after a new constitution had been written. Some of the elected representatives fled to the Thai border and set up an alternative National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma at the base camp of the Karen resistance movement. A national convention selected by SLORC to draft a new constitution began meeting in January 1993 and received instructions from SLORC to grant the military a dominant role in any future government, along the lines of the Indonesian constitution. The work of the convention was occasionally suspended, and no constitution emerged after more than three years of labor.

International pressure on the SLORC intensified in October 1991, when Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her commitment to nonviolent change. The military's control was relaxed slightly in the ensuing years. General Than Shwe replaced General Saw Maun as SLORC chairman, prime minister, and minister of defense in the spring of 1992. The last democratically elected prime minister of Myanmar, U Nu, was released from prison, as were a number of other political prisoners. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was permitted visits by family members in 1992 and two years later by a U.S. congressman, a UN official, and an American reporter. By the autumn of 1994 she was having discussions with the top two SLORC leaders, generals Than Shwe and Khin Nyunt, but since she refused to accept exile from Myanmar, her detention continued beyond a series of deadlines set by laws, which then had to be changed. In August 1995 Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was finally released from house arrest and was allowed to remain in Yangon, where she held weekly public conversations outside her front gate with gatherings of several thousand citizens and foreigners.

The SLORC's relations with the Buddhist *Sangha* (monkhood) have been uneasy since pongyis (monks) had played a role in the 1988 rebellion and even helped administer the town of Mandalay. Several years later pongyis in Mandalay protested against military rule by refusing to accept alms from military households. The SLORC responded by

pressing the Sangha authorities to discipline the young monks. Relations with ethnic insurgents on the borders have been skillfully handled. General Khin Nyunt negotiated separate cease-fire agreements first with the smaller, largely Chinese, hill tribes and then with the Kachin, adopting their armed forces as an autonomous militia and offering economic development aid along with tolerance of their border trading activities (including opium). . As the Karen gradually lost the informal support that Thailand had given their independence movement (it had long acted as a buffer zone for the historic hostility between Myanmar and Thailand), the Myanmar Army was able to take the Karen's main base at Mannerplaw in the spring of 1995. By the end of 1995, the Karen National Union asked to begin peace talks with the Myanmar government. However, in January 1996, active fighting still existed between the Karen rebels and the Myanmar military. The major opium warlord, Khun Sa, faced with a U.S. drug indictment and reduced business connections through Thailand, remained in control of a key section of the eastern Shan state until December 1995, when Myanmar troops freely marched into his base of Homong, and Khun retired to Yangon.

The SLORC's reconvening of its constitutional convention in late 1995 was boycotted by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party because it lacked democratic principles. Tensions between the SLORC and the NLD heightened in May 1996 when the SLORC arrested more than 200 delegates headed toward a NLD party congress. A similar crackdown occurred in May 1997, when the SLORC again arrested NLD members and put Aung San Suu Kyi under virtual house arrest to thwart a meeting intended to commemorate the 1990 election. Myanmar continues to face difficulties with its economy and criticism by the UN for human-rights violations and the stifling of democracy.”<sup>31</sup>

## **5. MYANMAR SINCE 2000**

### **(i) Government**

“Myanmar was governed according to the provisions of the constitution

of 1948 until the *coupetat* of 1962, after which the existing form of government was eradicated. In 1974 a new constitution was adopted. The document served as the basis of government organisation until its suspension after the military coup of September 1988.

The military set up a State Law and order Restoration Council (SLORC) to rule Myanmar until elections could be held. When the SLORC lost overwhelmingly in elections held in 1990, it delayed turning over government to civilian control until it could write a new constitution . The SLORC’s reconvening of its constitutional convention in late 1995 was boycotted by Daw Aung San Suu Kui’s NLD heightened in May 1996 when the SLORC arrested more than 200 delegates heading toward a NLD party congress. A similar crackdown occurred in May 1997, when house arrest thwarted a meeting intended to commemorate the 1990 elections.”<sup>32</sup>

“The generals are drawing up a new constitution that seems likely to entrench the role of the armed forces in political life permanently. Their plan seems to be to call another election once the NLD has been sufficiently dismembered. This time, they think, they will be able to get the result they want. That will allow them to claim the legitimacy to govern, which in turn will cause foreign aid investment to resume.

The pressure on Myanmar is now coming from the East as well as the West. Following a meeting between the Japanese Prime Minister, Keizo Obuchi, and the chairman of Myanmar’s ruling council of generals, General Than Shwe, on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in November 2001, Japan indicated that it might resume some aid if there were signs that Myanmar was ready to undertake political and economic reforms. Myanmar welcomed the Japanese initiative, but tried to make it look as though Japan was breaking ranks with the West.”<sup>33</sup>

“On February 17, 2005, the government reconvened the National Convention, for the first time since 1993, in an attempt to rewrite the Constitution. However, major pro-democracy organisations and parties,

including the National League for Democracy, were barred from participating, the military allowing only selected smaller parties. It was adjourned once again in January 2006.

In November 2005, the military junta started moving the government away from Yangon to an unnamed location near Kyatpyay just outside Pwintmana, to a newly designated capital city. This public action follows a long term unofficial policy of moving critical military and government infrastructure away from Yangon to avoid a repetition of the events of 1988. On Armed Forces Day (March 27, 2006), the capital was officially named Naypyidaw Myodaw (lit. Royal City of the Seat of Kings).

In 2005, the capital city was relocated from Yangon to Naypyidaw.

In November 2006, the International Labour Organization (ILO) announced it will be seeking - at the International Court of Justice, "to prosecute members of the ruling Myanmar junta for crimes against humanity" over the continuous forced labour of its citizens by the military. According to the DLO, an estimated 800,000 people are subject to forced labour in Myanmar."<sup>34</sup>

## **(ii) Release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Events in Myanmar up to 2008**

"The military government released Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest in July 1995 but made it clear that if she left the country to visit her family in the United Kingdom, it would not allow her return. When her husband, Michael Aris, a British citizen, was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1997, the Burmese government denied him an entry visa. Aung San Suu Kyi remained in Burma, and never again saw her husband, who died in March 1999. She remains separated from their children, who live in the United Kingdom.

The military junta repeatedly prevented Aung San Suu Kyi from meeting with her party supporters and in September 2000, it put her under house arrest again. On 6 May 2002, following secret confidence

building negotiations led by the United Nations, the government released her. A government spokesman said that she was free to move “because we are confident that we can trust each other”. Aung San Suu Kyi proclaimed “a new dawn for the country”. However on 30 May 2003, a government sponsored mob attacks her caravan in the northern village of Depaijin, murdering and wounding many of her supporters. Aung San Suu Kyi fled the scene with the help of her driver, Ko Kyam Soe Lin, but was arrested upon reaching Ye-u. The government imprisoned her at Insein Prison in Yangon. After she underwent a hysterectomy in September 2003, the government again placed her under house arrest in Yangon.

In March 2004, Rayali Ismail, U.S special envoy to Myanmar, met with Aung San Suu Kyi. Ismail resigned from his post the following year, partly because he was denied re-entry to Myanmar on several occasions.

On 28 May 2004, the United Nations Working Group for Arbitrary Detention rendered an opinion that her deprivation of liberty was arbitrary, as being in contravention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and requested that the authorities in Burma set her free, but the authorities have so far ignored this request.

In 2004 Myanmar’s growing isolation and international pressure for political reform created fissures inside the military junta, known as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), forcing it to consolidate its control over power and neutralize domestic and external threats. After 14 months in office, the intelligence chief and Prime Minister, General Khin Nyunt, was sacked on October 19, 2004 and put under house arrest on corruption charges. He was replaced by a hard-liner, Lieutenant General Soe Win.

Khin Nyunt had promoted a “road map to democracy” in UN – brokered contacts between the government and Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy. The talks reached a statement, however, and critics accused the junta of using stalling tactics to retain its monopoly over power. Despite repeated assurances, the junta excluded the political parties from the constitutional drafting process and kept Suu Kyi under

detention. Yangon also refused entry to both Kofi Annan's special envoy for political reform in Myanmar and the UN Human rights envoy for Myanmar. The junta sentenced three Burmese citizens to death for having contacted representatives of the International Labour Organization.

In 2004 the United States and the European Union imposed tough new sanctions that extended a visa blacklist for all of Myanmar's military leaders, froze their overseas assets, and banned all commercial links. These measures had a severe impact on the garments and textiles sector. Myanmar's Association of Southeast Asian Nations neighbours, China and India, refused to cut off commercial ties with Yangon, however.

Regional trade gave the military government just enough income to maintain its hold on power. Myanmar exported nearly a billion dollars a year in natural gas well U.S. or E.U. In early 2004, rice exports were banned, apparently to curb inflation. Industry continued to suffer from acute power shortage. On the positive side, opium production in Myanmar was expected to fall in 2004 by 50%, largely owing to a combination of factors such as bad weather, police crackdowns, and public-awareness campaigns. Following a last minute compromise whereby the government agreed to send a lower-level delegation to the Asia-Europe Meeting held in Hanoi in early October, Myanmar was finally admitted into the ASEM.

A series of coordinated bomb attacks in May 2005 killed about a dozen people and wounded more than 100 in Rangoon. The Military junta blamed the Karen National Union and the Shan State Army. The ethnic rebel groups, however, denied any involvement.

On November 13, 2005, the military junta — in a massive and secretive move — relocated the seat of government from the capital Rangoon to a mountain compound called Pyinmana. The move perplexed many, and the junta was vogue in its explanation, saying, "Due to changed circumstances, where Myanmar is trying to develop a modern nation, a more centrally located government seat has become a necessity."

On 28 November 2005, the National League for Democracy confirmed that Suu Kyi's house arrest would be extended for yet another

year. Many Western countries, as well as the United Nations, have expressed their disapproval of this latest extension.

On 20 May 2006, Ibrahim Gambari UN Undersecretary General (USG) of Department of Political Affairs, met with Aung San Suu Kyi, the first visit by a foreign official since 2004. Suu Kyi's house arrest term was set to expire 27 May 2006, but the Burmese government extended it for another year, flouting a direct appeal from U.N. General Secretary Kofi Annan to Than Shwe. Suu Kyi continues to be imprisoned under the 1975 State Protection Act (Article 10 b), which grants the government the power to imprison persons for up to five years without a trial.

On 9 June 2006, Suu Kyi was hospitalized with severe diarrhea and weakness, as reported by a UN representative for National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma. Such claims were rejected by Major-General Khin Yi, the national police chief of Myanmar.

On 11 November 2006, USG Gambari, who was undertaking a mission to Myanmar for four days to encourage greater respect for human rights there, met with Suu Kyi. According to Gambari, Suu Kyi seems in good health but she wishes to meet her doctor more regularly. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has urged the Burmese government to release Aung San Suu Kyi, as it released 2,831 prisoners, including 40 political prisoners, on 1 January 2007.

On 18 January 2007, the state-run paper *The New Light of Myanmar* accused Suu Kyi of tax evasion for spending her Nobel Prize money outside of the country. The accusation followed the defeat of a US-sponsored United Nations Security Council resolution condemning Myanmar as a threat to international security.

The military junta detained eight people on Sunday, April 22, 2007 who took part in a rare demonstration in a Yangon suburb amid a growing military crackdown on protesters. A group of about ten protesters carrying placards and chanting slogans staged the protest Sunday morning in Yangon's Thingangyun township, calling for lower prices and improved health, education and better utility services. The protest ended peacefully after about 70 minutes, but plainclothes police took away eight



demonstrators as some 100 onlookers watched. The protesters carried placards with slogans such as "Down with consumer prices." Some of those detained were the same protesters who took part in a downtown Yangon protest on February 22, 2007. That protest was one of the first such demonstrations in recent years to challenge the junta's economic mismanagement rather than its legal right to rule. The protesters detained in the February rally had said they were released after signing an acknowledgment of police orders that they should not hold any future public demonstrations without obtaining official permission.

The Burmese military government stated its intention to crack down on these human rights activists, according to an April 23, 2007, report in the country's official press. The announcement, that comprised a full page of the official newspaper, followed calls by human rights advocacy groups, including London-based Amnesty International, for Burmese authorities to investigate recent violent attacks on rights activists in the country.

Two members of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters, Maung Maung Lay, 37, and Myint Naing, 40, hospitalized with head injuries following attacks by more than 50 people while the two were working in Hinthada township, Irrawaddy Division in mid-April. On Sunday, April 22, 2007, eight people were arrested by plainclothes police, members of the pro-junta Union Solidarity and Development Association, and the Pyithu Swan Arr Shin (a paramilitary group) while demonstrating peacefully in a Rangoon suburb. The eight protesters were calling for lower commodity prices, better health-care and improved utility services. Htin Kyaw, 44, one of the eight who also took part in an earlier demonstration in late February in downtown Rangoon, was beaten by a mob, according to sources at the scene of the protest.

Reports from Burmese opposition activists have emerged in recent weeks saying that Burmese authorities have directed the Police and other government proxy groups to deal harshly with any sign of unrest in Rangoon. "This proves that there is no rule of law (in Burma)," the 88 Generation Students group said in a statement issued on April 23, 2007.



“We seriously urge the authorities to prevent violence in the future and to guarantee the safety of every citizen.”<sup>35</sup>

### (iii) 2007 anti-government protests

“The 2007 Burmese anti-government protests were a series of anti-government protests that started in Burma on August 15, 2007. The immediate cause of the protests was mainly the unannounced decision of the ruling junta, the State Peace and Development Council to remove fuel subsidies which caused the price of diesel and petrol to suddenly rise as much as 100%, and the price of compressed natural gas for buses to increase fivefold in less than a week. The protest demonstrations were at first dealt with quickly and harshly by the junta, with dozens of protesters arrested and detained. Starting September 18, the protests had been led by thousands of Buddhist monks, and those protests had been allowed to proceed until a renewed government crackdown on September 26. During the crack-down, there were rumors of disagreement within the Burmese military, but none were confirmed. Some news reports referred to the protests as the Saffron Revolution

Protesters in Yangon with a banner that *reads non-violence: national movement* in Burmese, in the background is Shwedagon Pagoda

On 7 February 2008, SPDC announced that a referendum for the Constitution would be held, and Elections by 2010. The Burmese constitutional referendum. 2008 was held on May 10 and promised a “*discipline-flourishing democracy*” for the country in the future.”<sup>36</sup>

### (iv) Cyclone Nargis

“On May 3, 2008, Cyclone Nargis devastated the country when winds of up to 215 km/h (135 mph) touched land in the densely populated, rice-farming delta of the Irrawaddy Division. Reports estimated that more than 130,000 people are dead or missing from Cyclone Nargis that hit

the country's Irrawaddy delta. Damage totaled to 10 billion dollars (USD): it was the worst natural disaster in Burmese history. Adds the World Food Programme. "Some villages have been almost totally eradicated and vast rice-growing areas are wiped out." The United Nations projects that as many as 1 million were left homeless; and the World Health Organization "has all opposition in the political field.

Myanmar has tread relations with India, but India is not able to tell it the right way, because Indian government has many problems of their own in the country which it is not able to solve. It in better ways and take some good actions for the development of country. received reports of malaria outbreaks in the worst-affected area. Yet in the critical days following this disaster, Burma's isolationist regime complicated recovery efforts by delaying the entry of United Nations planes delivering medicine, food, and other supplies into the Southeast Asian nation. The government's failure to permit entry for large-scale international relief efforts was described by the United Nations as "unprecedented.

UN and is doing such things which are wintrily to the un code.

There are many parties in Myanmar, such as National league for Democracy and the shan nationalities league of democracy and some other ethnic minorities and military government. At present all these parties are not working mach for development of the country, all these parties are in the outer surface are trying to work hard, but in reality not a single one id making any effort for the betterment of the country. All are trying to have as much money and power as they can . No one has any true concern for the Future of Myanmar. Most of the people of Myanmar think that SanSuu kyi is the future of Myanmar."<sup>37</sup>

## **6. PRESENT SITUATION**

The present situation of the Myanmar in very confused and the government of Myanmar is disturbed internally. At present, the military junta and the government are feeling uncomfortably due to the presence of San Suu Kyi. So they arrest her again and again and trying to keep her as much as possible under house arrest, so she may not be able to

do any oppose to the military government. In the past few years the government almostly tried to put her in depression and tried to restrict her in her movement. Most of the people of Myanmar are with San Suu Kyi, and Western Powers of the world are also in fovour of her, so the government is not able to arrest her directly. It keeps her under house arrest always by some kind of excuse so that the population of Myanmar may not openly oppose the government. But many people protest against the government. In recent few months, the Burmese military junta arrested hundreds of people, which took past in the protest. The government of Myanmar is ignoring the UN and is doing such things which are contrary to the UN code.

There are many parties in Myanmar, such as National League for Democracy and the Shan Nationalities League of Democracy and some other ethnic minorities and military government. At present all these parties are not working much for development of the country, all these parties are in the outer surface are trying to work hard, but in reality not a single one is making any effort for the betterment of the country. All are trying to have as much money and power as they can. No one has any true concern for the future of Myanmar. Most of the people of Myanmar think that San Suu Kyi is the only leader who is making hard effort to work for the future of Myanmar.

## **7. FUTURE PROSPECTS**

In Future the government of Myanmar can be in danger. Because it is not obeying the orders of UN, so UN may give pressure to the Myanmar by forces, and Myanmar is not a member of SAARC, and is not much friendly with any country so no country can help of can advise much. Myanmar takes actions on its own and it doesn't think of listen to others. In Future it can be that if the people see that San Suu Kyi is doing much for country then the present circumstances can change. In next elections San Suu Kyi may be choosen and can be elected for high post and can have much power to make her stand before the government for truth. The country is in a confused state so it is very difficult to say

any thing much about the future of Myanmar. If the people can force the government by protests to do things then things may start improving. One thing is clear that tension between military government of Myanmar and in San Suu Kyi will not last long; the problem will solve one way or the other. San Suu Kyi may become free from all opposition in the political field.

Myanmar has trade relations with India, but India is not able to tell it the right way, because Indian government has many problems of their own in the country which it is not able to solve. It is hoped that Myanmar may recover and practice in better ways and take some good actions for the development of the country.

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