

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM IN MYANMAR
(1948-1962)

Ph.D (DISSERTATION)

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ABSTRACT

On the attainment of Myanmar independence on 4th January 1948, a parliamentary system was put into practice based in the Constitution drafted and adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 24th September 1947. The parliamentary system featured an elected legislature, the Union Parliament, composed of two Chambers, the Chamber of Deputies and the Chamber of Nationalities. An Election Commission was formed in February to conduct parliamentary elections, but widespread insurgency made it impossible to hold elections in the first few years after independence. The first general elections were held only in 1951 and it had to be conducted in three installments depending on conditions of local security. The general elections of 1956 were, however, held in a more regular manner. In both general elections, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) won substantial majorities. A strain came in the parliamentary system in 1958 when the AFPFL split into two factions. Because the Armed Forces showed concern about political stability, parliamentary procedure was followed in installing a Caretaker Government headed by General Ne Win, the Chief of Staff. The Caretaker Government conducted general elections in February 1960. General Ne Win returned power to the Clean AFPFL faction which had won in the general election, but further split developed within the political party, raising further concerns about stability. In the parliamentary system put into practice in January 1948, the executive was a parliamentary executive, with the Cabinet of Ministers responsible to the Union Parliament. The administration was reorganized to make it more effective in undertaking the tasks of social and economic development. The administration was also made democratic by the

inclusion of people's representatives at various levels. On gaining independence in January 1948, a quasi-federal system was established which provided for a division of power between the Union Government and the State Governments. The insurgency and the intrusion of Kuomintang troops created difficulties in the working of some of the State Governments. The split in the AFPFL party also had an effect on the working of the State governments. A movement developed within the States to obtain more rights for the State governments and to create a "truly federal system". This raised the concern of Armed Forces with regard to national unity. A military coup was staged on 2nd March 1962, and this put an end to the parliamentary system.

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