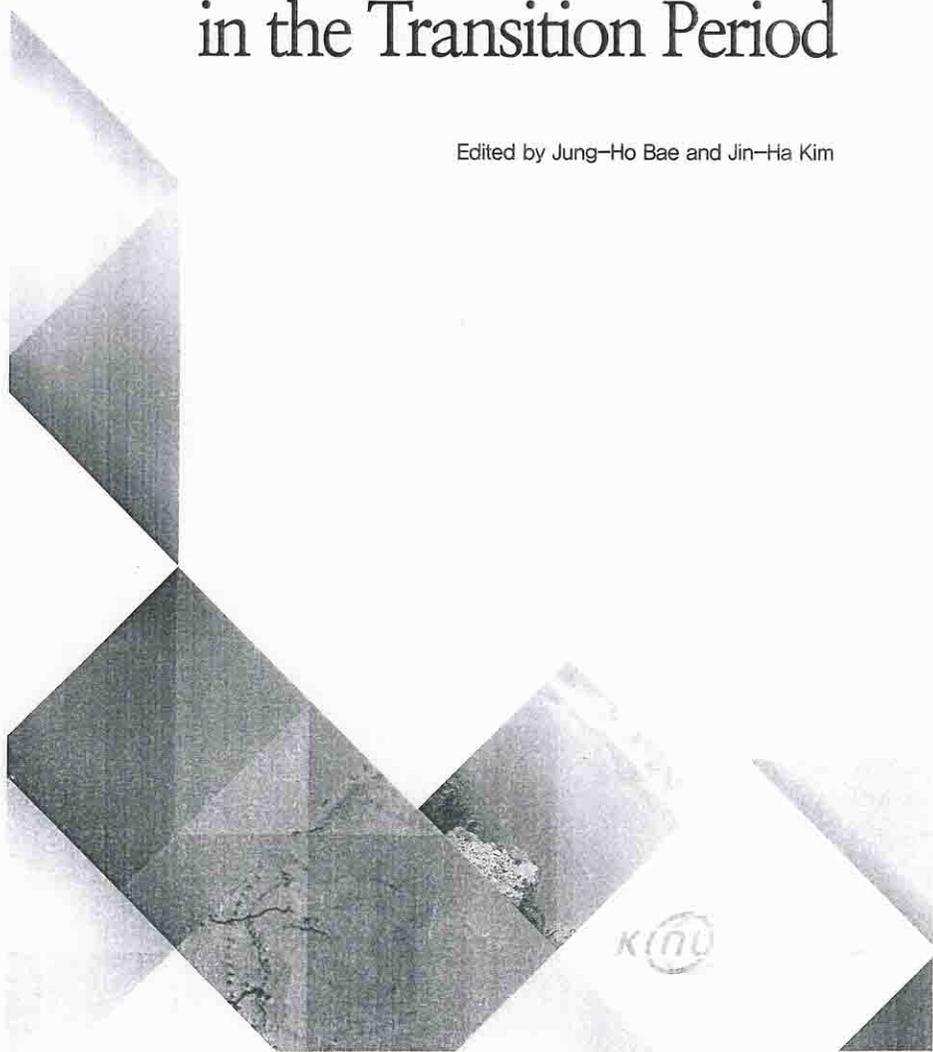


China's Strategic Environment and External Relations in the Transition Period

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VIII. Conflict Management and Peace Making in Myanmar: Effort and Its Effects

Conflict is a form of political argument under the guise of hostility, and violence. It can be characterized in two distinct forms: internal and external conflict. Some domestic conflicts can last for decades and cause unbearable suffering to thousands of innocent people. The range of conflict is, in reality, much wider. So, it is important to start with a discussion about communication, understandings, compromise, and restraint in the peacemaking and reconciliation process.

1. Literature Review

Myanmar Politics(1958~1962), Volume I and Volume II published by the Myanmar Historical Commission in 2006 states facts about Myanmar's history and analyze the implications for successive Myanmar governments and armed insurgent ethnic groups in accordance with their ideological beliefs. These documented references also emphasize the verbatim expressions of prominent political party leaders from the Myanmar independent movement to socialist era.

Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma, authored by Mary P. Callahan, analyses Myanmar's politics with an

additional focus on critical domestic situations before 1962. It emphasizes on the role of the military and its splits with the elected civilian governments. Although it adds additional information after 1988, the author omits discussion of the political and ethnic divisions of the Socialist government before 1988.

The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations edited by John Baylis and others, presents alternative views on security, including the security community, security regimes, and security complex, as well as the common patterns in international security in the post-Cold War era.

China in Burma: The Increasing Investment of Chinese Multinational Corporations in Burma's Hydropower, Oil, Natural Gas in Mining Sector, published by Earth Rights International (ERI) in 2008, provides detailed information on Chinese investment in Myanmar since 1988 and its negative and positive aspects. Data, interpretations and errors in this research are the authors'.

2. Research Question

This chapter attempts to answer what were the previous successive Myanmar governments' attempts to solve its decades-long internal conflict and how these governments tried to establish peace with various insurgent groups by proposing a negotiation formula that included different channels of communication. It

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

also explores what were the major motivations behind conflict management and peacemaking efforts based on an “Arms for Peace” formula adopted by the Myanmar governments. Lastly, it will examine how successive Myanmar governments attempted to maintain political stability by introducing various strategies to negotiate with the ethnic minorities.

3. The origin of the insurgency issue in Myanmar

The outbreak of armed conflict is more likely to occur within a state, rather than between states, rather than between states. In the case of Myanmar, a multi-ethnic insurgency in some ethnic areas following its independence. These insurgencies, which lasted from 1949 to 1997, went on for decades as neither side had the ability to completely defeat the other until 1997.

When examining the basis of these insurgencies, first, the independence movement came about from disagreements, misperceptions, and misunderstandings among the national leaders. Significant divisions arose among nationalist leaders after the assassination of General Aung San on July 19, 1947, which led to the factional spirit in Myanmar politics. Even during the period of the anti-fascist movement, the People’s Revolutionary Party (PRP) headed by Thakin Mya strongly believed in Marxism, while the Communist Party under Thakin Soe was deeply dominated by communist ideology, which had

reverberated in the Burma Independence Army(BIA) under General Aung San and the Burma Defense Army(BDA). However, the Communist Party broke apart in two separate forms; the Communist Party of Burma(CPB) led by Thakin Soe and the Burma Communist Party(BCP) led by Thakin Than Tun.²⁸² Both the CPB and BCP strongly believed that violent confrontation was the only way to win independence. Such a dogma disseminated the seeds of insurrections in Myanmar.

As soon as Myanmar regained independence on January 4, 1948, the seeds of the leftist and separatist insurgencies were sown in mobilizing Myanmar's army. Under the Letyar-Freeman Defense Agreement, the British Advisor of the British Service Mission(BSM) appointed ethnic Kayis as chief of army officers in major operations. However, a large number of former Patriotic Burmese Force(PBF) soldiers served in several infantry battalions.²⁸³ Additionally, the growing political tensions between pro-communist and non-or anti-communist views among former PBF members undermined the unity of the post independence Myanmar army in the later period of Myanmar politics.

²⁸²- *Burma Communist Party Conspiracy to Take Over State Power* (Yangon: News and Periodical Enterprises, 1989), pp. 23~28.

²⁸³- San Nyein and Daw Myint Kyi, *Myanmar Politics 1958~1962 (Volume II)* (Yangon: University Printing Press, 2011), pp. 104~105.

4. Peacemaking during AFPFL

After the demise of General Aung San, the Provisional Government headed by Premier U Nu in 1948 was faced with political problems and internal insurrections of the BCP and CPB, the People's Volunteer Organizations(PVOs), and the Kayin National Defense Organization(KNDO). The provincial government made several attempts to prevent the outbreak of civil war and to solve the multiplying domestic insurrections. But, the delayed decision of arresting communist leaders by Premier U Nu and by the Constituent Assembly(Parliament) fueled a swift communist insurrection.

Furthermore, disagreements proliferated in Myanmar's army and led to leftist and rightist wings from 1948 to 1953. Tensions flared between the leftists, composed of the Patriotic Burmese Force(PBF) and the majority of Myanmar people, and the rightists, comprised mostly of Kayin minorities.

With such rifts in ideology in the country and in the Myanmar's army, the provincial government of Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League(AFPFL) attempted to establish direct peace talks with different insurgent groups, particularly with the communist insurgents under the BCP. However, there were limited confidence building measures with the BCP and PVO. The very first AFPFL attempt to restore national unity among different insurgent groups was the initiative for peacemaking. In March 1948, the provincial

government of AFPFL set up a Committee for Negotiating Peace with the BCP at the request of some Members of Parliament(MP). Although Bo Letyar attempted to contact Thakin Than Tun for negotiation, peace talk with Committee members were rejected by the BCP.²⁸⁴

On May 25, 1948, the provincial government announced the 'Leftist Unity Programme,' which was the conciliation offer made by the AFPFL as part of its formal 'Leftist Unity' proposal. The self-proclaimed Leftist Unity group initially hoped to forge an alliance with communist rebels, so as to bring the government, socialist, communists, military, and AFPFL together on one side. In fact, while the program aimed at negotiating peace in domestic politics, the proposed procedures within the AFPFL government itself brought about another split of PVOs into White PVOs (anti-government faction) and Yellow PVOs(pro-government faction). Army defections to the White PVOs insurrection further deteriorated the country's situation while the KNDO also prepared for armed insurrections.²⁸⁵

For the sake of Union solidarity, Sir U Thwin formed a Peace Committee composed of non-politicians with the aim of liaising between the White PVOs and the government. After the failure

²⁸⁴- San Nyein and Daw Myint Kyi, *Myanmar Politics 1958~1962 (Volume II)*, p. 5; Mary Patricia Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), p. 125.

²⁸⁵- Mary Patricia Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*, p 169.

of Sir U Thwin's negotiation with the White PVOs, the Leftist elements with the continued negotiation with the White PVOs and army defectors towards the formation of a Leftist Unity Front, but were unsuccessful.

Apart from BCP and PVO insurrections, agitation for the formation of a separate Kayin state in mid 1948 by the Kayin National Defense Organization(KNDO) became another cause of conflict for the provincial AFPFL government. Indeed, the issue of a Kayin state was a constitutional complication which was explicitly confirmed at the Constituent Assembly meeting on September 18, 1947, under constitutional Provision 180, No. 1. Karen politicians established the Kayin National Union(KNU) in February 1947 and began aggressive lobbying of the provincial government with the hope of winning a separate Kayin state in accordance with constitutional provisions. In contrast, KNDO decided to establish a separate Kayin state through an armed insurrection.²⁸⁶ In late 1948, the KNU attempt in establishing an independent Kayin state failed to meet three demands which led to an outbreak of an underground Kayin insurgency.

Consequently, a rightist scheme proposed by U Ba Pe and his associates urging the chief of staff to stage a coup d'etat was rejected by General Ne Win on the grounds that it might lead to disunity in the Myanmar army. Later, domestic instability

²⁸⁶- San Nyein and Daw Myint Kyi, *Myanmar Politics 1958~1962 (Volume II)*, p. 175.

adversely affected the country's economic, administrative and financial systems upon which pressure was exerted on the AFPFL to negotiate with the KNU. In May 1950, the government regained control over lost territories and recaptured communist and KNDO strongholds in Pyae and Taungoo. Soon after that, the government offered amnesty to the rebels and total of 6,000 rebels surrendered.²⁸⁷

Apart from individual personal attempts to negotiate with ethnic insurgents based on national reconciliation and government stability, efforts were made in conflict management with the goal of achieving national unity through reconciliation. Both leftist and rightist groups of the AFPFL proposed a unity scheme for those who were explicitly or implicitly against the Union government.²⁸⁸ However, the most important factor at the height of many insurgencies against the provincial government (1948~1951) and AFPFL government(1952~1958) was the strong solidarity of the Myanmar armed forces and General Ne Win, and thus, the chief of staff rejected the proposals by both rightists and leftist groups calling for a coup d'état. About 80% of the PVOs from the underground returned to the legal fold. During these conflicts, thousands of lives of local people were claimed by the clashes

²⁸⁷- *Chronological History of Myanmar Defense Forces 1962~1974 (Volume V)* (Yangon: News & Periodical Enterprises, 1997), p. 188.

²⁸⁸- Mary Patricia Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*, pp. 126~127.

between government military operations against insurgent outposts in remote and rural areas.

5. Civil–Military Tension and Peacemaking

In the context of civil–military relations, two new tensions came to shape the internal struggle for political power in the Union government and armed forces institutions until the 1962 coup. The emerging tension between military and civilian leaders over internal military affairs was laid out at the 1950 Commanding Officers' Conference. The issue was focused on the equitable distribution of ranks among three components of the officer corps: those from the old colonial armies, the officers from the PBF, and the national minority officers. No concrete resolution was documented at the 1951 and 1952 Commanding Officers' Conferences.²⁸⁹

The second major issue was the civilian–army tension. It was intensified in 1951 especially when General Ne Win was replaced by U Win. U Win tried to diminish the army's political influence and General Ne Win's influence within the army of both by introducing legislation that increased civilian control over the army with the intention of limiting the term of the supreme

²⁸⁹ Mya Han and Thein Hlaing, *Myanmar Politics 1948–1958 (Volume IV)* (Yangon: University Printing Press, 1991), pp. 48–52; Mary Patricia Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*, pp. 152–153.

commander. The 1952 Commanding Officers' Conference was the first time the Supreme Commander Conference, which introduced concrete proposals to overhaul the army and to move away from the practice of using ad hoc solutions to address problems of operational efficiency. In short, field commanders, staff officers and civilian government leaders acknowledged the need to transform the Tatmadaw into one capable of defending the sovereignty of the Union. By 1955, however, the tone of the civil-military exchanges had dramatically changed and such divisiveness spread out to the upcountry areas.

Again, the AFPFL in the post-independence period was faced with problems relating to the formation of blocks within political parties based on ideological differences and to party leaders misunderstanding the collective responsibility of the Cabinet. Finally, these problems led to the socialists resigning from AFPFL, which caused the situation to deteriorate further while joint efforts of Prime Minister U Nu, General Ne Win, and loyal nationality leaders tried to reverse the general decline of the country.

The tensions and misunderstandings arose between the Myanmar Tatmadaw and the socialist group of the AFPFL, particularly in the context of the Armed Forces' desire to negotiate with the insurgents in 1951. Red socialists blocked the initiatives of Bo La Yaung who attempted to form a political party comprised of the PVOs that had returned to the legal fold

with the persuasion of General Ne Win as well as those that demanded peace.²⁹⁰

6. Intra-Party conflict and split of the AFPFL

Personal antagonism and sectarian conflicts within the AFPFL led to the decline of its popularity in the mid 1950s. As factionalism increased, there prevailed deterioration of internal peace and public security of life and property. Therefore, at the National Congress of the AFPFL on February 2, 1958, in Yangon, Prime Minister U Nu proclaimed that the AFPFL's ideology was neither Marxism nor capitalism, but socialism. With regard to securing peace, the Prime Minister also urged three main requests to the insurgents: (1) to stop recriminations against each other; (2) to express mutual forgiveness; (3) to come into the legal fold for the collective creation of public welfare. Based on these three messages, the Congress passed three resolutions: (1) on peace; (2) on the principles of building democracy, peace, and foreign relations; and (3) on AFPFL goals in the interim program.²⁹¹

However, despite the peaceful outward appearance of unity, internal antagonisms in domestic politics steadily intensified in

²⁹⁰- Mya Han and Thein Hlaing, *Myanmar Politics 1948~1958 (Volume IV)*, pp. 48~52.

²⁹¹- Maung Maung, *Burma in the Family of Nations* (Amsterdam: Djamlatan, 1956), p. 68.

1958. At that point, the Myanmar army under General Ne Win reported the deteriorating internal security situation. In addition, general dissatisfaction within the Myanmar Tatmadaw caused the split of the AFPFL into the Clean AFPFL and the Stable AFPFL. Both cliques accepted the attributes of democracy and the Clean AFPFL was determined to strictly follow the doctrine of internal peace, democracy, and foreign relations, and the interim program adopted by the Union Congress of the AFPFL.

Concerning national solidarity, the Stable AFPFL committed to providing suitable representation of the interests of the Shan, Chin, Kachin, Kayin, Kayah, Mon, Rakhine, and other ethnic minorities. However, mutual recriminations between clique and unethical lobbying in party campaigns still dominated factionalist AFPFL politics. In May 1958, mediation led by Sanghas was issued to appeal to the leaders of the Union government to work in unity for the good of the country. As a result, representatives of both factions signed a Covenant in the presence of Supreme Sayadaws and the 26 leading Sayadaws.

7. Secessionist attempt and its menace

Taking advantage of the political crisis in Myanmar arising from the AFPFL split, some of the states put forward the demand for state rights. On May 22, 1958, 15 demands were presented to the Union government by a committee of five Shan Sawbwa

and MP of Hisbaw. The demands included autonomy of the Shan state within the Union, autonomy on finance and administration for the Shan state government, the right of the Shan state government to establish an armed force, and the distribution of Japanese reparations to the Shan state.

Similarly, in 1958, the MPs of the Rakhine state under the sponsorship of surrendered insurgent leader U Seinda insisted on the formation of a Rakhine state. In response, Prime Minister U Nu promised to concede to the formation of a Rakhine state in exchange for Rakhine MPs' support of the Clean AFPFL. However, on May 15, 1958, the Kachin National Congress(KNC) headed by Duwa Zaw Lun declared its united support for the Stable AFPFL.²⁹² MPs of the Chin State also declared their support for the Stable AFPFL and later announced demands for a Chin Autonomous Region on May 30, 1958, whereas the majority of Union Kayin Nationalist League declared support for the Clean AFPFL.

At the height of the tension concerning the AFPFL split, individuals like Ambassador to China U Hla Maung, Attorney General Dr. Ba Han, and Speaker of the Assembly Bohmu Aung tried to prevent the complete breakup of the AFPFL. However, these personal mediation attempts were in vain when U Nu

²⁹²-Mya Han and Thein Hlaing, *Myanmar Politics 1948~1958 (Volume IV)*, pp. 58~59; *Chronological History of Myanmar Defense Forces 1962~1974 (Volume V)*, p. 66.

requested the Stable AFPFL ministers to resign in June 1958.

The transfer of power from U Nu to General Ne Win and the formation of the caretaker government decreased tensions between field and staff commanders. Counter insurgency operations were of lower priority probably because many senior field officers now held administration posts on the civilian side of the government. However, a new source of civil-military strain occurred when the army often disregarded constitutionally guaranteed rights of citizens and amended the Act concerning information dissemination.

After the 1960 election, U Nu's Pyidaungsu Party won the election but within a few weeks, ethnic minorities called for political reforms that threatened the territorial integrity of the Union. The Shan and Kayinni state representatives wished to exercise their constitutional rights to secede from the Union. Finally, the proposal for establishing a federal state by the minorities posed a danger to the Union. The menace of Union disintegration led to the coup in March 1962 and the formation of the Revolutionary Council(RC).

8. Peacemaking efforts under RC & BSPP

During the time in power of the Revolutionary Council, a plan for negotiating internal peace and national reconciliation was made. On April 1, 1963, an amnesty order was issued inviting all insurgent groups to initiate peace talks with the Revolutionary Council government. At the invitation of the Revolutionary

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Council, eight major insurgent groups, including the CPB, came to negotiate peace talks. The Revolutionary Council accepted the terms regarding a ceasefire agreement in some limited areas of the Kayin, Mon, and Kayinni states.²⁹³ However, after heated debate on the serious issue of secession from the Union proposed by the Rakhine Communist Party, the Shan State Army, the New Mon State Party, and the KNU, no agreement on reconciliation was reached between the government and insurgent groups in late 1963.

One of the reasons for the breakdown of peace talks with KNU was the mutual misunderstanding between the negotiating parties. KNU remained outside the political process. Similarly, when the Revolutionary Council seized power, a ceasefire agreement was drawn up in 1964 with the Kawthoolei Revolutionary Council faction that caused the split in the KNU. The KNU accused the Revolutionary Council of insincerity in the negotiating process.

Once again, the Revolutionary Council attempted to resolve the insurgency problem with political solutions. On December 4, 1968, the government issued Notification No. 72, which formed the Advisory Council for National Reconciliation, composed of 33 political leaders and representatives from ethnic groups.²⁹⁴ During

²⁹³- Kyaw Win, et al, *Myanmar Politics 1948~1958 (Volume III)* (Yangon: University Printing Press, 1991), pp. 157~187.

²⁹⁴- *Chronological History of Myanmar Defense Forces 1962~1974 (Volume V)* (Yangon: News & Periodical Enterprises, 1997), p. 35.

its six-month tenure, the members of the Advisory Council openly debated issues on political, economic and administrative systems in an attempt to make peace with insurgent groups. However, the recommendations proposed by the Advisory Council were found to be difficult to implement in practice, and led to disagreements between the Advisory Council and General Ne Win in 1969. Consequently, from 1962 to 1974, the government launched 738 major military operations under different names to eliminate insurgents in various parts of Myanmar.²⁹⁵

Although General Ne Win initiated peace negotiations with insurgent groups including the BCP and the Kachin Independence Army(KIA) in 1981, the negotiations between General Ne Win and Kachin Independence Organizations(KIO) leader Maran Brang Seng failed to produce an agreement. As a result, the ruling Burma Socialist Programme Party(BSPP), like the Revolutionary Council, had to continue counter-insurgency operations under September 1988.

9. Peacemaking under the SLORC & SPDC

As a consequence of the insurgencies, the nation lagged behind in development. A new process of national reconciliation was initiated after the State Law and Order Restoration Council

²⁹⁵- *Chronological History of Myanmar Defense Forces 1962-1974 (Volume VI)* (Yangon: News & Periodical Enterprises, 1997), p. 188.

(SLORC) came into power in September 1988, to try to scale down the size of the decades-long minority insurrection. Consequently, the SLORC declared a ceasefire policy to begin face-to-face discussions with different political and ethnic leaders regarding the problem of political rights. In November 1993, Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary I of the SLORC launched a new peace campaign addressing insurgent groups as armed groups or national brethren to join to legal fold.²⁹⁶ It also called for peace talks to be held inside Myanmar, and not abroad under a third party chairman. In March 1996, 17 armed insurgent groups except the KNU signed ceasefire agreements. The SLORC reported that lack of progress with the KNU was due to KNU's prioritization of such political issues as regional autonomy and powers of the state governments under the federal constitution.²⁹⁷

In 1991, fighting broke out between the KNU and Tatmadaw, and the KNU outposts, Manerplaw and Kawmoorah, were captured by the Myanmar Army after the mutiny of the Democratic Kayin Buddhist Army(DKBA) against KNU leaders in July 1991. However, peace talks between the KNU and the Restoration Council government were held in Mawlamying in December 1995 and February 1996 respectively. During the first round of

²⁹⁶- *Information Committee of the State Peace and Development Council*, (Press Conference, 15 March 2005).

²⁹⁷- *Chronological History of Myanmar Defense Forces 1962-1974 (Volume VI)*, p. 23.

negotiations, the KNU expressed the doubt about ceasefire negotiation without any real dialogue about its political future. No effective outcome resulted from the second round of negotiations with the KNU. The reason was that the KNU requested tripartite talks involving the National League for Democracy(NLD), all the ethnic groups, and the SLORC, which was later renamed as the State Peace and Development Council(SPDC) on November 15, 1997.

The confidence-building measures between the government and several different national minorities succeeded between 1989 and 1991 and 16 major ethnic insurgent groups returned to the legal fold. Then, the government ordered a halt to all military offensive operations against insurgent groups on April 28, 1992.²⁹⁸ A new formula for national reconciliation with many insurgent groups, that is, the 'Arms for Peace Negotiation' strategy was introduced with the aim of achieving amity among all ethnic groups. As a result, the strong Mong Thai Army(MTA) led by U Khun Sa agreed to maintain a ceasefire with the government in July 1995.

However, the group that had fought against U Khun Sa formed the Shan State National Army(SSNA) and declared its opposition not only to U Khun Sa's MTA but also to SLORC. On November 22, 1996, U Khun Sa announced his resignation as MTA commander and formally surrendered to the government

²⁹⁸ *Special Press Release on News Conference by News Release by Information Committee of the State Peace and Development Council, March 2005.*

on January 5, 1996. The agreement of ceasefires with such insurgent groups allowed for an official resettlement program at some stages.²⁹⁹

It must be noted that during the SLORC/SPDC period, ceasefire agreements were negotiated in three waves. In the first wave of ceasefire accords, some ethnic insurgent groups such as the Wa and Kokang accepted the negotiated terms of the government. In the second wave, major ethnic insurgents like the Rakhine and Mon accepted the ceasefire agreements. The last or third wave included some separate groups under KNU command and the MTA agreed to follow the ceasefire terms.

Other Shan opposition leaders continued their resistance movement. In 2005, a group calling itself the Shan State Intellectuals Advisory(SSIA) headed by Sao Hkam Hpa, son of the late Nyaung Shwe Sawbwa Sao Shwe Theik made the latest attempt at secession from the Union while the SPDC was holding the National Convention in accordance with the 'Seven-Step Roadmap' to transform the Union to a multiparty democratic system. It was accepted that although internal conflict management and making peace with former insurgent groups had been successful to a certain extent during SLORC/SPDC rule, external pressure on such issues as child soldiers, forced labor, human rights abuses, and tensions with the International Committee

²⁹⁹-Maung Pho Shoke, *Why Did U Khun Sa's MTA Exchange Arms for Peace?* (Yangon: Meik Kaung Press, 1999), p. 66.

on Red Cross(ICRC) were at a deadlock.

With regard to the national reconsolidation among national races, various delegates representing national interests were invited to the National Convention intended to create a new State Constitution. While convening the National Convention, the SPDC announced the State's Seven-Points Road Map on August 30, 2003.³⁰⁰ The SPDC played a leading role in convening the National Convention, the first step of its Seven-Points Road Map, on a grand scale to draft an enduring state constitution. The delegates from eight groups unanimously adopted the detailed the basic principles for the first 13 chapters of the state constitution. At the same time, SPDC established national reconciliation and confidence-building measures with 17 armed national ethnic groups in the form of multilateral discussions on constitutional provisions. Basic principles and more details were laid out for the drafting of the state constitution. Of more than 1,000 delegates to the National Convention, 600 delegates of ethnic groups also attended.³⁰¹

³⁰⁰- *Special Press Release on State of National Address Explaining Current Development in Myanmar.*

³⁰¹- *Special Press Release on News Conference by News Release by Information Committee of the State Peace and Development Council.*

10. Peacemaking after 2010: efforts and effect of new Myanmar government

Peacemaking after 2010 by the newly elected Myanmar government took different approaches since the voices of ethnic minorities, local people, political parties, media, the public, and the Hluttaw became a powerful force in terminating the longest civil conflict in Myanmar history. The first move of Myanmar's new reformist government under the name of political reform³⁰² was peacemaking with the ethnic armed groups and the granting of amnesty for political prisoners. In his inauguration address and ceremony, the new President remarkably expressed a desire to take a peaceful step toward democratization in Myanmar. However, the new government was faced with unexpected challenges in the Rakhine and Kachin states, especially through public opinion. Peacemaking attempts of the President U Thein Sein government with the KIA have been the most heated issue since the new government came into power. It has been clearly observed that for the national reconciliation process to succeed, simultaneous and parallel steps must be attempted by the executive and legislative branches.

It was also found that constitutional implications emerged against the 17 armed insurgent groups which claimed to conclude a ceasefire agreement with SPDC. In accordance with

³⁰²- *The New Light of Myanmar*, March, 2011, p. 1.

Article 20 of the 2008 Constitution, the Myanmar Defense Forces is the only armed forces of Myanmar. This constitutional provision has been widely rejected, especially by the KIA, and has caused ethnic armed insurgent groups to transform themselves into border guard forces.³⁰³

In response, President U Thein Sein's government offered a peacemaking three-step negotiation plan; ceasefire or armistice agreement, region or state-level peacemaking efforts, and Union-level peacemaking with insurgent groups. The government's attempt to make peace with insurgent groups reached a remarkable achievement when the KNU agreed to make peace with the Myanmar government in December 2012.³⁰⁴ However, the military operations against KIO/KIA were critically launched. The international community and domestic civil society organizations strongly requested to the Myanmar government to restore peace in the Kachin state and to resolve the Kachin refugee issue through political discourse.

In the context of peacemaking by the executive branch of the new Myanmar government, Union-level organizations and ministries attempted to resolve the 11 month-long KIO/KIA conflict which claimed hundreds of Kachin lives and damaged economic properties of Kachin State. Under the leadership of

³⁰³- *The New Light of Myanmar*, June 8, 2013, pp. 1~2.

³⁰⁴- Burma News International, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide 2014* (Thailand: AIPP Printing Press, March 2014), p. 28.

President U Thein Sein, with the aim to establish confidence with ethnic minority groups, the Union Peacemaking Central Committee and Union Peacemaking Work Committee were formed on May 3, 2012. Twenty parliamentarians were among the 52 members of the central committee. President U Thein Sein outlined a Three-Stage Roadmap³⁰⁵ for establishing lasting peace with ethnic and armed groups: not seceding from the Union, safeguarding Three Main National Causes, and adhering to the 2008 Constitution. After that, the Myanmar Peace Center was established in October 2012 to assist in all administrative matters required for the acceleration of the peace process. As a result, the government reached a peace agreement with 10 of 11 ethnic armed groups.³⁰⁶ Of those, the KNU, KNPP, SSA, RCSS and MNSP shared common historical background with the KIO/KIA.³⁰⁷ However, the Government clearly announced its full confidence to continue political dialogue without a ceasefire as demanded by the KIA.

At the same time, although the new Myanmar government has been exerting such efforts for the peacemaking and national reconsolidation, it has also faced pressure from the international community which is concerned with the offensive attack by

³⁰⁵- *The New Light of Myanmar*, May 4, 2012, pp. 1~2.

³⁰⁶- *Ibid*.

³⁰⁷- Burma News International, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide 2014*, pp. 20~21.

Myanmar Defense Forces in Lagargyan, Phakhant Township, and the Kachin state. The U.S. Embassy in Yangon issued a press released on January 24, 2013, criticizing these operations without mentioning the KIA's terrorist actions against the Myanmar Defense Force and Kachin people, which caused a misunderstanding in the international community.³⁰⁸

Apart from executive branch's attempt at conflict management and peacemaking with the KIO/KIA, the legislative branch of Myanmar(Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Pyithu Hluttaw, and Amyotha Hluttaw), formed the National Races Affairs Committee and Peace Making Committee during the Second Regular Session of the Pyidaung Hluttaw. The Constitutional Hluttaws at all levels were established with public elected representatives, specifically national races and elected national races were included in these constituencies as representatives-elect. Through these mechanisms, dialogue at all levels of Hluttaw among political parties, national races representatives, the Defense Service personnel, and representatives-elect on current and popular issues in the respective state or region can be conducted practically.

More complications came about after the alleged announcement of regional instability, especially KIA attempts against civilian soft targets in January 2013. On January 24, 2013, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press release concerning the KIO/KIA

³⁰⁸ *The New Light of Myanmar*, January 25, 2013, p. 16.

in which Myanmar Tatmadaw announced it had ceased all military operations against the KIA, but constant KIA attacks had caused the Myanmar Defense Forces to act in self-defense. However, tensions were reduced when President U Thein Sein issued a statement on an unilateral ceasefire of Myanmar Defense Forces against the KIO/KIA on February 1, 2013. The KIA also pledged to follow the Presidential statement on a ceasefire agreement.

At the same time, at the first regular session of the sixth Amyotha Hluttaw, a representative from the Kachin state constituency U Khet Htein Nam, proposed to set up third party to continue the peace talks between the Myanmar government and the KIO/KIA.³⁰⁹ The proposal also included urging the Union government to adopt firm principles which could help to build mutual understanding between the two parties, to be able to bring about internal peace and humanitarian assistance for the plight of the Kachin state. The proposal was debated by 13 members of parliament on January 24, 2013.

In response to this proposal, President U Thein Sein unilaterally agreed to stop military operations against the KIO/KIA and agreed to resurrect peacemaking efforts with the KIO/KIA. Peacemaking with the KIO/KIA was a delicate and time-consuming process that had been started during the previous administrations. In

³⁰⁹- *Hluttaw Journal*, January 17, 2013, p. 7.

July 2013, Union-level peacemaking between President U Thein Sein's Administration and the KIO/KIA channeled the regional development process and more coherent community since both sides maintained mutual trust and confidence in sustaining the peacemaking effort. In August 2013, it has now followed by the Union-level peacemaking with All Burma Students' Democratic Front(ABSDF), the strongest student group since the 1988 uprising.

In this context, an unprecedented turn toward open discussion could be observed in Myanmar's peacemaking efforts by allowing third party delegates to participate in the peacemaking process. The first participation of a third party delegation was observed in 2009 during a truce negotiation between the KIO/KIA and Myanmar government in Shweli, Yunnan Province. The second time was when delegates from third parties, namely the Centre for Peace and Conflict Study(CPCS), and Nippon Foundation attended peace talks as observers.³¹⁰ Permitting third party representation and third party negotiation in peacemaking had been hardly acknowledged by the previous Myanmar governments.

To tackle major problems regarding the armed conflict, the U Thein Sein administration attempted to settle the dispute through negotiations and to develop the code of conduct especially between government-organized peacemaking groups, military

³¹⁰- Burma News International, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide 2014*, pp. 33~34.



commanders and the United Nationalities Federal Council(UNFC) headed by Naing Han Tha.³¹¹ But, a number of serious challenges emerged on the questions of control of contested areas, economic interests over political dialogue, validity of government-proposed ceasefire terms and development of an ethical code of conduct (trust-building) in dealing with the ethnic armed groups. Apart from these questions, another complication in peacemaking efforts has been the sporadic fighting between government backed Border Guard Forces(BGFs) and the ethnic armed groups. BGFs became a major controversy of ethnic armed groups which persistently denied transforming their forces into government-backed BGFs, especially in SSA/ SSNA and the UWSA armed forces.

In January 2013, before dialogue with the government started, ethnic armed groups held the Liza Summit which resulted in a guideline for ethnic groups. Since then, the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team(NCCT) has been organized as a representing body of ethnic armed groups in dealing with the government peacemaking organizations.³¹² The NCCT has emphasized democratic practices, national equality, the establishment of a federal republic, the formation of a joint committee that will organize the political dialogue after the signing of the nationwide

³¹¹- *Voice of America (VOA)*, October 17, 2014.

³¹²- Burma News International, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide 2014*, pp. 37~39.

ceasefire, and the handling of the plight of internally displaced persons on account of armed conflict.

Drafting a single text document of a nationwide ceasefire agreement is a political means to solve the decades-long armed conflict in Myanmar. Since the new Myanmar government under President U Thein Sein took office on March 31, 2011, attempts have been emphasized to terminate the so called longest civil war and to start political dialogue on peacemaking efforts.³¹³ On government's side, the Union Peacemaking Work Committee(UPWC) chaired by President U Thein Sein has been organized whereas the NCCT represents 16 ethnic armed groups led by U Naing Han Tha and has emerged as the representative body of all ethnic armed groups. The NCCT also invited five ethnic armed to participate in the UPWC-NCCT talks.

Progress of the UPWC-NCCT meeting mainly focused on ethnic issues, a major dissent in the blueprint of the nationwide ceasefire. The first round of talks conducted by the UPWC-NCCT was launched on April 5, 2014 at the Myanmar Peace Center in Yangon.³¹⁴ As part of efforts for achieving the ceasefire agreement with 21 ethnic armed groups, the bill for protecting the rights of ethnic people has been drafted and the constitution is being reviewed at the parliament to present at the fifth round of

³¹³- *The New Light of Myanmar*, March 1, 2011, p. 1.

³¹⁴- Burma News International, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide 2014*, pp. 88~96.

UPWC–NCCT meetings on August 15, 2014.³¹⁵

The UPWC–NCCT meetings highlight the importance of peace for Myanmar, acknowledging that comprises on the proposed points were made due to strenuous efforts by both sides within one year of drafting the single text for the ceasefire deal. By October 5, 2014, fortunately, peacemaking efforts gained momentum, increasing cooperation and holding several rounds of negotiation and dialogue between the UPWC and NCCT to agree on a single text for a nationwide ceasefire deal. As of September 21, 2014, there have been five meetings between the UPWC and NCCT, which have reduced the number of points in contention for the single text from 104 to just a few. The UPWC and NNCT held a sixth round of meetings³¹⁶ during which a third draft of the single text document was approved but there have been five points to be discussed among ethnic armed groups and the UPWC to get consensus for a comprehensive peace deal.

More challenges were encountered while drafting the single text ceasefire agreement by the UPWC–NCCT, as both sides clearly noticed the gaps and difficulties in making the deal. At the five-days of talks between the UPWC and NCCT, they released a joint statement announcing a fourth draft of a ceasefire agreement. In the joint statement, both sides stressed great strides in pursuit of an all inclusive political dialogue

³¹⁵- *The New Light of Myanmar*, April 6, 2014, p. 1.

³¹⁶- *Ibid.*

following the signing of a nationwide ceasefire deal as soon as the single text document is finalized.

Peacemaking efforts have been an uneasy task for Myanmar governments in the various backdrops of the international system. Peacemaking with ethnic armed groups during AFPFL and BSPP were greatly overwhelmed by ideology. The process turned to an interest-centered approach during the SLORC and SPDC governments, while ethnic armed groups concluded truce between 1990 and 2010. The PRC, for the first time, offered good offices for peace talk between the military government of Myanmar and the KIO/KIA in 2008 and 2009 when clashes along the Myanmar-China border became intense and hampered Chinese investment in the Kachin and Shan states. However, it is certain that the international attention became an inevitable drive for peacemaking in Myanmar.

Since the United Nations first established September 21 as the International Day of Peace 32 years ago, Myanmar, as a UN member state, has to recognize human rights as a basis for peace. President U Thein Sein highlighted the importance of the role of the Myanmar Defense Forces and all those involved in the peacemaking process with ethnic groups in his message on the 32nd International Day of Peace:

“Since our government has taken office ... emphasizing on peacemaking effort ... we have to join hands with Hluttaws, political parties, Tatmadaw(Myanmar Defense

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Force), ethnic groups and civil societies.”³¹⁷

Vice Chairman of UPWC U Aung Min added:

“... [I]t is usual to encounter more difficulties when both sides are close to reaching the goal of achieving peace ... like a marathon, a series of peace talks presents challenges and obstacles, but the shared goal is peace within reach and it can be realized through broad and sustain efforts.”³¹⁸

U Naing Han Tha, the leader of the NCCT remarked in his concluding speech:

“Situations that had been tackled by both sides on the front line for more than sixty years is more difficult than the present challenges despite having more difficulties than the previous meeting.”³¹⁹

The Myanmar Defense Forces and military legacy stand as major player in the political dialogue of peacemaking. There is also a gap or side effect in making peace with ethnic armed groups, through the UPWC positively stated the possibility and potential for ongoing efforts towards peacemaking and finalizing a ceasefire agreement. In the meantime, President U Thein Sein

³¹⁷- *The New Light of Myanmar*, September 22, 2014, pp. 1~2.

³¹⁸- *Voice of America(VOA)*, September 27, 2014.

³¹⁹- *Voice of America(VOA)*, October 17, 2014.

has ordered a cease of all armed clashes in the Kachin, Shan, Kayin, and Chin states. Despite these efforts, at the end of sixth round of meetings on September 21, 2014, there occurred armed clashes in the Kayin state, and the UWSA, the strongest armed ethnic group in the Shan state warned the Myanmar Defenses Force to follow the suit of UWPC-NCCT joint statement.³²⁰

An informal tripartite meeting of the UPWC, NNCT, and political parties could also be a means for making peace. Establishing an all-inclusive political dialogue under the new Myanmar government would be a great departure from previous military governments, which significantly marginalized the role and voice of political parties in Myanmar's political development.

This dilemma or tug-of-war between the military legacy of Myanmar Defense Forces and reformist Myanmar government under President U Thein Sein can be seen when the ceasefire agreement was broken between the DKBA and Southeast Command of Myanmar Defense Forces in the Kayin state on October 6, 2014. It was a serious consideration for the reformist government while attempting to conclude a final draft of the single text document of the ceasefire agreement with various ethnic groups.

The newly elected civilian-led Myanmar government attempted to maintain international credibility of its political reforms, which

³²⁰- *Voice of America(VOA)*, October 22, 2014.

is important for the success of other reform processes such as economic and administrative reforms. In this context, the reformist Myanmar government recognizes the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in political, economic, and social reforms. It is also a questionable for Myanmar Defense Forces, especially for genuine CSOs. The Myanmar Peace Centre(MPC), the only CSO lobbying at the PMWC-NCCT meetings, is criticized by the National Races Affairs Committee and Myanmar Defense Forces.³²¹ Since the PMWC's main purpose is to lobby all ethnic minorities to sign on to a single peace deal unconditionally the Myanmar Defense Forces have thought the concessions are too high, and mistrust has been developed between the MDF and the MPC. It also pushed the PMWC into the corner on a number of issues in order to continue the PMWC-NCCT meetings.

For the Myanmar Defense Forces, its major concern is for national security; secondary to that, comes the economic interests of various regional and border area trade and commercial interests, which are the strongholds of major ethnic armed groups. Such accusations have traditionally been waged between ethnic armed groups and Myanmar Defense Forces.

Furthermore, trust or confidence-building measures frequently deviate amid certain progress. For instance, on October 13, 2014,

³²¹- *National Defense College (NDC) Political Seminar on Democratic Challenges and Consolidation for Transition Myanmar* (Seminar, October 17, 2014).

the C-in-C announced it would withdraw from the single peace deal despite promising last year to the Myanmar Defense Forces that it would not turn back from democratic reform. Immediately after the withdrawal announcement, the decades-long existed ethnic suspicion of peacemaking with government mushroomed within a few days. In this context, the UWSA, the strongest ethnic armed group with modern military equipment, strongly protested the stand of the Myanmar Defense Force on single peace deal as suspicious political dialogue. Moreover, all Kayin ethnic armed groups that had signed the peace deal in the late September 2014, formed the Kayin Armies Force/Front(KAF) with KNU and DKBA for a coherent focus on peacemaking and to help the post-peace rehabilitation process in Myanmar be focused on relatively fairer views, with more open and accountable dialogues including the unique experiences of marginalized or vulnerable groups as the bedrock of peacemaking efforts. In an interview with VOA, the leader of the KNU, General Mutu Say Phaw replied of the question on the future of ethnic armed forces, "... because of lose confidence on single peace deal and next step, political dialogue, KAF has been formed to counter Myanmar Defense Force offensive warfare, if necessary."³²²

The leader of NCCT, Naing Han Tha is still expecting to proceed with political dialogue even though tension between

³²² *Voice of America(VOA)*, September 14, 2014.

ethnic armed groups and the Myanmar Defense Forces have increased in the Kayin, Kachin and Northern Shan states since early October 2014. Naing Han Tha explains in an interview with Voice of America on October 11, 2014:

“... political dialogue is the only way to maintain peace and to terminate the longest(more than 60 years old) civil war. I can assure that there is no ethnic armed group which wasn't willing to conclude peace deal ...”³²³

Mistrust and fragile confidence can be seen between the Myanmar Defense Forces and ethnic armed forces. From the side of Political Advisors Group to the President, Dr. Saline Ngu Kyone Lyan insisted the ceasefire groups sign a single peace deal first, the last step of which is to proceed to political dialogue. After that it will become an internationally recognized peace deal which can, in turn, prosecute violators of the deal, whether they are Myanmar Defense Force or ethnic armed groups. However, even in the event of a signed peace deal, issues will still exist. For instance, ethnic armed forces are anxious that their forces on the ground will be forcefully transformed into BGFs after signing a peace deal. Another misunderstanding and mistrust that can arise is between the MPC and National Races Affairs Committee of Pyithu Hluttaw which is headed by U

³²³- *Voice of America(VOA)*, October 11, 2014.

Thein Zaw, former Northern Command Commander in fighting against KIA/KIO. This Committee is also suspicious of MPC lobbying in ethnic armed groups which were once considered insurgents against the states.

11. Conclusion

Tables below show a comparative study of peacemaking efforts since 1948 based on different strategies and interests which led to remarkable outcomes in the political and regional stability of Myanmar. Peacemaking efforts and their effects in the early years can be understood as defensive attempts of the provincial and AFPFL governments when Myanmar was on the brink of ideological complex. Generally, however, as demonstrated in the table, it can be observed that AFPFL government focused its peacemaking efforts on national and party unity. As it was an ideological tug of war, conflict management efforts through mediation and negotiation with multiple armed ethnic minorities was shadowed by ideological differences and secessionist movements in early independence period of the country. Peacemaking efforts seemed to be more politicized in dealing with national races, party–army differences, civil–military tension and internal army strife in those days of national reconciliation.

In contrast, peacemaking efforts of the Revolutionary Council and Burma(Myanmar) Socialist Programme Party can be understood

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

as more offensive peace efforts since both governments relied heavily on military strength to establish national unity. Although granting of amnesty to political prisoners and the establishment of a peace council were done for peacemaking purposes, large numbers of military operations were also launched by both the RC and BSPP.

It can also be observed that peacemaking effort of SLORC and SPDC maintained a level of peace with 17 armed ethnic groups with certain significance of sustaining peace. More regional development and economic progress were prominent. The very efficient 'Arms for Peace' negotiation approach with the MTA, the biggest ethnic armed group in the Eastern part of Salween River in the Shan state showed the effectiveness of peacemaking during the SLORC and SPDC governments. The exception being the transformation of ethnic armed groups into border guards in line with 2008 constitutional provision.

No doubt that if peace is achieved through the PMWC–NCCT negotiations, it will be a successful step to political dialogue leading into the 2015 general elections. It will be the internationally recognized political achievement for the reformist Myanmar government under President U Thein Sein. In fact, peacemaking efforts of Myanmar after 2010 can be understood as consolidation efforts, with potential risk factors as Myanmar goes through its own political and economic transition. So far, many international organizations, nonprofit organizations and commercial businesses

have formally recognized the stable pace and right direction of political reform initiated by President U Thein Sein before October 2014.

The following tables also show a clear and brief glimpse of how successive Myanmar governments have attempted to foster national reconciliation and political reform though the effect of their policies brought about questions for how to sustain efforts on the ground. Of key importance to their policies, was the role of the Myanmar Defense Forces and their willingness to abide by the government's choices. While not always in agreement over the best path forward, these efforts highlighted the essential role of the Myanmar Defense Forces in Myanmar's overall political development.

In fact, the political will of successive Myanmar governments clearly outlined the pragmatic engagement with its national brethren since the country's independence. But there is no handy roadmap for national reconciliation and peacemaking. Building the trust and a sense of understanding between conflicting parties has been difficult with risky challenges at every stage. Therefore, a solid basis for constructing, adapting and adopting ideas, and developing the tools to design a reconciliation process appropriate to a particular set of circumstances, is the responsibility of all parties in order to create reliable proposals, simple solutions and range of options drawn from around the internal or external environment.

Table VIII-1 Peacemaking Efforts of the Provincial Government & AFPFL Governments (1948~1958)

Government	Peacemaking Attempt	Basis of Interests	Remarks
Provincial Government	Committee for Negotiating Peace with BCP	Ideological Interests (communist)	- Failure to make peace with BCP & PVO - Intense civil war
Provincial Government	Leftist Unity program	Ideological interests (communist)	- Failure to attract BCP & split in PVO - Intense civil war without rehabilitation efforts
Provincial Government	Peace Committee by Sir U Thwin	Leftist unity	- Failure in peace talks - No regional rehabilitation plans
AFPFL in Provincial Government	Rightists' Scheme by U Ba Pe	Coup d'etat of Myanmar Army	- Failure to talk peace with KNU/KNDO - Intense fighting
AFPFL	Commending Officers' Conferences	Civil-military tensions	- Failure to transform Defense Forces & socialist split from AFPFL
AFPFL	Three Requests made by PM U Nu at the National Congress	Internal peace & public security	- More antagonism in domestic politics
AFPFL	Mediation led by Sangas	National solidarity	- Signing of Covenant on unity for the good of the country
AFPFL	Personal Mediation by U Hla Mg, Dr Ba Han & Bohmu Aung	Preventing party breakups	- Failure in AFPFL unity - Neglect of reconstruction efforts

Table VIII-2 Peacemaking Efforts of Successive Myanmar Governments: RC & BSPP (1974~1988)

Government	Peacemaking Attempt	Basis of Interests	Remarks
RC/BSPP	Amnesty order	Negotiation & internal peace	- Achievement on limited ceasefire agreement
RC/BSPP	Peace Talk with KNU	Kachins in political process & autonomy	- Failure in negotiation with RC due to lack of sincerity between government & insurgent groups
RC/BSPP	Advisor Council for National Reconciliation	Political, economic & social interest of insurgent areas	- Failure to maintain peace agreements - Launched 738 military operations against insurgent groups

Table VIII-3 Peacemaking Efforts of Successive Myanmar Governments: SLORC & SPDC (1988~2010)

Government	Peacemaking Attempt	Basis of Interests	Remarks
SLORC/SPDC	Peace campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ceasefire policy through face-to-face negotiations - Economic interests based on a regional development plan - Economic concession between military government & ethnic armed groups - Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd. (UMEHL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Failure of negotiation - Insisting of problem on regional development plans such as dam, forest, highway projects - No transparency in dealing with ethnic armed groups and foreign based corporations - No accountability between SLORC/SPDC and ethnic armed groups
SPDC	Peace Talk with DKBA & KNU, MTA, Kokang & Wa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ceasefire talk & real dialogue on future politics - Regional economic interests - Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MTA to be observed - Regional development plan & special region zones for local and insurgent groups

Part 1
Part 2
Part 3

Government	Peacemaking Attempt	Based interests	Remarks
SPDC	Regional stability and economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethnic armed insurgents on national development - Regional economic interests of ethnic armed groups & SPDC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cease fire agreements with 15 armed insurgent groups - Establishment of special regions
SPDC	National Reconciliation & confidence-building measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arms for Peace Regional economic interests of ethnic armed groups with SPDC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ceasefire agreements with 17 armed groups - Regional development plans - National Convention & Referendum for 2008 Constitution

● **Table VIII-4** Peacemaking Effort of Successive Myanmar Governments: Elected Civilian Government after 2010

Government	Peacemaking Attempt	Basis of Interests	Remarks
Elected Civilian Government under President U Thein Sein (First 30 Months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) (Selected Ethnic Armed Groups) - Lobbying by regional economic associations and business groups between government and ethnic armed groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political reform - Federal Union - State level ceasefire agreement with respective armed ethnic groups - Economic reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government success in peacemaking deal - Armed clashes with KIO/ KIA and KNU, DKBA in Kachin and Kayin States
Elected Civilian Government under President U Thein Sein (As of October 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Union Peacemaking Work Committee (UMPC) (Government Representative Body) - Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) (All Ethnic Armed Group Representative Body) - UMPC-NCCT Peacemaking Meeting - Myanmar Peace Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single text ceasefire agreement with 17 armed ethnic groups - Federal army concept - Six Point Peace Deal - Economic and business interests of respective ethnic people - Constitutional amendment for more rights for ethnic people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Six Points Peace Deal - Inconsistency amid peace deal and sporadic armed clashes - Tense situation between UMSA and Myanmar Defense Forces on Six Point Peace Deal - Third Party Observers in peacemaking process

In order to sustain peacemaking and national reconciliation, conflicting parties—government and armed ethnic groups normally pursue direct and indirect conflict management strategies which includes various diplomatic tools such as negotiation, compromise, third party conflict resolution, or special missions or envoys. Granting amnesty to political prisoners, inviting peace talks, and implementing the ‘seven steps roadmap’ are the reconciliation strategies of successive Myanmar governments with its ethnic minorities though each strategy was limited in one way or another. The negotiation formulas initiated by some third party organizations or individual and sometimes the governments themselves significantly focused on political stability with the aim of ending civil war through a series of conflicts and military operations against ethnic minorities by the militarily strong Revolutionary Council, SLORC and SPDC.

It is observed that major rifts in ideology, civil-military tension, intra-party conflict of the AFPFL and secessionist attempts by ethnic minorities before regaining independence were the primary sources of armed insurrection in the post independence Myanmar politics under the provincial government. Based on its party’s interests in politics, the splits in the AFPFL, the only influential political party during the independence movement, fueled efforts to solve ethnic insurgent issues.

Personal diplomacy as well as third party negotiation were employed to mediate differences among political party factions,

minorities groups and even the Myanmar army during the AFPFL and BSPP administrations. Unfortunately, it is noted that reconciliation attempts and conferences held by civil society organizations were not very popular and government intervention to reconcile with insurgent groups was rarely seen in the early periods of Myanmar's independence. When the SLORC and SPDC took power, economic concession and "arms for peace" were primarily focused in peacemaking efforts between the military government and ethnic armed groups that concluded the ceasefire agreement. Based on this separately concluded ceasefire agreement with individual ethnic armed groups, ethnic leaders maintained their influence and power in their respective territories since independence. Transparency and accountability between military regimes and the armed ethnic groups were not culturally inherent.

It can be noted that the conflict management and peacemaking efforts with insurgent groups, pursued by the AFPFL, were based on public opinion, voices of different political parties and of minority national races. Direct and indirect conflict management mechanisms were applied to settle differences in civilian-army and political party splits. In contrast, under the Caretaker Government and BSPP, conflict management and peacemaking efforts were carried out with unilateral action, initiated through either the Advisory Board or the Advisory Council organized by the governments. Since the late 1970s, when efforts to persuade insurgent groups to disarm failed, the governments would resort

to counter-insurgency military operations. Only the Caretaker and BSPP governments seriously pursued a direct conflict management mechanism.

Although there remained skepticism about foreign support for Myanmar's peacemaking process, two countries namely Japan and Norway became both the leading donors and observers to several rounds of UPWC-NCCT meetings and the Lizar Summit. Moreover, the Norway-based Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI), which offered \$100 million dollars to support a peace deal of the UPWC-NCCT, and Japan's Nippon Foundation which offered \$10 million for UNFC to hold the Lizar Summit, garnered international credibility for the first time in Myanmar's domestic national reconciliation process, which was the underlying driver of its political reform. In this context, many critics argued that Japan's generous ODA and its INGOs focused mainly on its own geopolitical interests, despite their contributions to Myanmar's domestic affairs.

Until 2011, national reconciliation and making peace with insurgent groups were being implemented based on past experiences, that is, the 'Arms for Peace' strategy for national reconciliation. Some former ethnic warlords in the Shan state acted as negotiators between the SPDC and 'Kokang' or 'Wa' ethnic minorities in the first wave of national reconciliation.

In fact, the SPDC and its predecessor military government pursued dual tactics of give-and-take for national reconciliation.

Part 1
Part 2
Part 3

It can also be noted that conflict management under the SLORC/SPDC was sustained because the insurgents under the ceasefire accord, still had full control over local administration and maintained the right to hold arms in their respective areas. The preceding governments had always insisted on the unconditional surrender of the various insurgent groups, which was one of the reasons why peace negotiations had failed. While over one hundred ethnic groups are still clearly recognizable today, it is important to consider types of political reform, that is, whether to create autonomous regions or a confederation of states.

Moreover, there must be a recognition of ceasefire agreements as political agreements rather than purely military achievements. The substantiality of peace with various insurgent groups will depend on not only achieving internal reconciliation but also on maintaining the good image of the state and the political will of Myanmar in the international arena. It is important to be careful about unforeseeable risks created by Myanmar's political culture, which has factional tendencies and has often experienced the splitting of political parties and organizations throughout its history.

Myanmar in transition is not a rosy picture as each and every country in transition faces the toughest challenges. At this juncture, internal stability and voices from ethnic minorities are supportive of genuine democracy. It is true that ideological differences are not a major concern today, but there are many

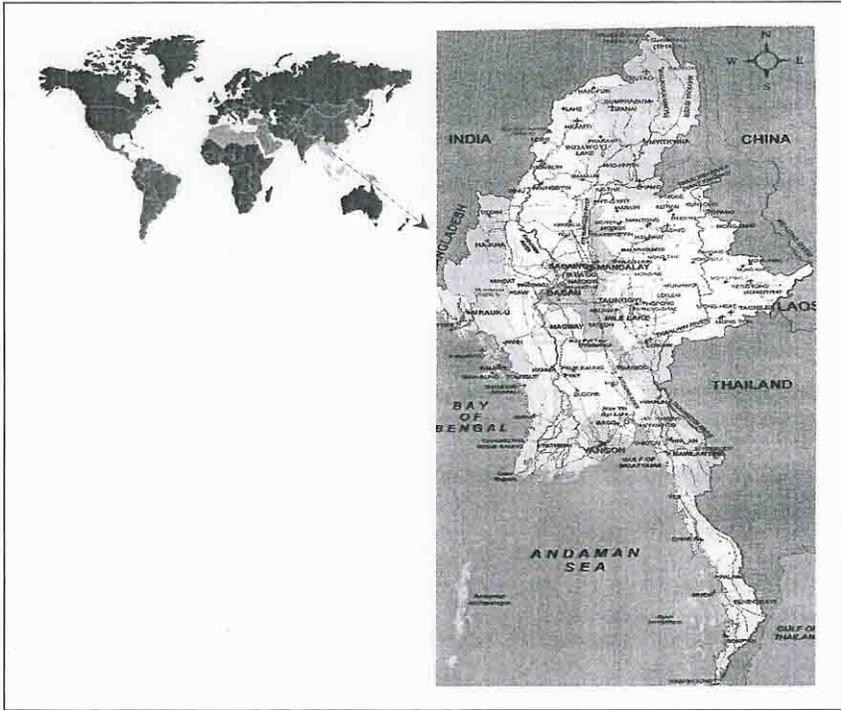
vulnerable and complex soft issues in many ethnic areas such as environmental degradation(Myit Sone Dam which was suspended in early 2011 by presidential decree), foreign investment(crony capitalism), land grabbing(delayed land reallocation to farmers), heavy reliance on natural resource exploitation(natural gas in ethnic areas), limited transparency and accountability, hesitant participation of local communities and Myanmar–China factors in national development. It is naturally very abstract, but it is very important to have dedicated will in maintaining political and economic stability of ethnic minority areas, which in turn, will lead to sustainable peace.

It can be noted that the peacemaking agenda, by striving for a single ceasefire deal and moving to political dialogue, will be sensitive and uneasy tasks full of complication and mistrust. However the government is enthusiastic and willing to proceed with efforts to conclude a single ceasefire deal through the MPC, a major civil society organization for peacemaking between the government and ethnic armed groups. It is necessary to consider the role that CSOs have played and its role in nation-building and state-building in many countries going through a democratic transition. Their work has the potential to positively or negatively impact national security in the long run. The impact of CSOs has been mainly positive in such countries as Indonesia and the Philippines whereas China and Singapore consider CSOs as anti-government cells. The interaction the, between the

Myanmar government and Myanmar's CSOs will factor into the prospects for achieving sustainable peace.

Making sustainable peace is a time-consuming process and it is difficult to anticipate what will happen next, who will set on which positions, or whether it will proceed in a positive way or revert back to fierce fighting. The Myanmar Defense Force, a major actor in Myanmar's political development, has pledged to positively support a democratic reform process. It is also clear that when violence breaks out vulnerable and marginalized groups such as women and children become the major targets. In order to avoid such issues, dynamic interactions by all stakeholders in peacemaking and conflict management efforts must be strengthened to improve governance related to economic, political, cultural, educational, and military matters, among others. Through these interactive dialogues and debates, it can be expected that mutual trust and confidence-building measures between government-sponsored peacemaking committees at various levels, defense forces, ethnic minorities' armed groups and local communities will lead to negotiating behavior and political will to sustain peace and democracy in the near future.

Figure VIII-1 Map of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar



* Source: Country Watch

Part1

Part2

Part3