

Myanmar-US Relations Since 2011: From Security Partnership to Normal Relations?

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Abstract

The bilateral relations between Myanmar and the United States had declined for more than two decades until 2010. Since the beginning of Myanmar's democratic reform in 2011, Myanmar-US relations constructed to normalize status and also improved to as a security partnership under the leadership of President U Thein Sein government. However, the position of bilateral relations between Myanmar and the United States during the NLD government could not maintain the status of security partnership. Therefore, the paper will explore why the current NLD government could not build more cordial relationship with the United States than the previous President U Thein Sein government. The main objectives of this paper are to examine the diplomatic approach of the USDP government and the current NLD government to the US and to explore the limitations of NLD's government approach to the US in comparison with the USDP government. Thus, the paper will argue that the current NLD government has unlikely realized how to bargain between the domestic needs and the U.S.'s wants in Myanmar.

Keywords: Myanmar-US relations, US' policy to Myanmar, President U Thein Sein Administration's Approach, NLD government Approach

Introduction

After the 1990 election in Myanmar, the United States approach to Myanmar primarily focused on human rights concerns and restoration of democracy. Thus, Washington imposed a severe sanction policy against the military government until 2011.¹ The major aim of the US policy under President Clinton and President Bush was the regime change in Myanmar by denying its strategic interest in Myanmar's core geopolitical spot in Asia-Pacific region.² In 2011, however, Myanmar initiated an extensive reform process in political and socio-economic sectors under the new civilian government led by President U Thein Sein. Coincidentally, Washington shifted its policy to rapprochement with Myanmar under President Obama's administration.³ The US's pragmatic engagement and

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¹ Sun, Yun. "Myanmar in US-China Relations." *Stimson*, Issue no. 3 (2014):1-16. Accessed March 25, 2019. https://www.stimson.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/Myanmar_Issue_Brief_3.pdf, 7.

² Haccke, Jürgen. "The United States and Myanmar: From Antagonist to Security Partners?." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 34, no.2 (2015), 55-83. <http://nbnresolving.org/urn/resolver.pl?urn:nbn:de:gbv:18-4-8730>, 56.

³ Steinberg, David I. "Myanmar-China-US: The Potential for Triangular Cooperation." *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, no. 124 (2014):1-2. Accessed March 25, 2019. <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/publications/myanmar-china-us-the-potential-triangular-cooperation>, 1.

implementing Pivot to Asia strategy toward Myanmar contributed to the warm-up the relationship between Myanmar and the United States. The Obama administrative team rolled back economic sanctions on Myanmar in some extent to support the new civilian government's political and socio-economic reform projects although Congress made raising criticism dealing with human rights and democratic situation in Myanmar. Therefore, bilateral relations between 2011 to 2015 recognized as "security partner" by the ending of antagonists.⁴

Some predicted more cordial relations and more dynamic diplomatic ties between US-Myanmar under the National League for Democracy (NLD) government led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (DASSK) than the quasi-civilian government led by President U Thein Sein. Nonetheless, the practicality of bilateral relations is not smooth under the current NLD government as if they made a positive prediction. The current Myanmar relations with the US is hard to maintain the level of diplomatic relations which initiated by U Thein Sein government instead of pursuing cordial relations. Thus, the paper will explore why the current NLD government could not build a more cordial relationship with the US than the previous President U Thein Sein's administration.

Thus, the paper will argue that the current NLD government has unlikely realized how to bargain between the domestic needs and the U.S.'s wants in Myanmar. The paper will be divided into three main sections. The first section would review how Myanmar and the US constructed bilateral relations from the normalize status to the security partner in the period (2011-2015). Next, it would explore the level of bilateral relations between the two countries since 2015 during the current NLD government period. Lastly, it will conclude with exploring the weakness of NLD government's policy approach to the United States. The major aims of this paper are to re-examine the diplomatic approach of President U Thein Sein and the current NLD government to the US and to explore limitations of NLD's government approach to the US in comparison with U Thein Sein government.

I. Myanmar-US Relations from 2011 to 2015

The relations between Myanmar and the United States in the period from 2011 to 2015 had constructed to normalize status and has also increased to as a security partnership. The domestic political reforms of Myanmar since 2011 was the main backdrop to progress mutual trust between the two countries. On the other hand, the President Obama's pragmatic engagement, dual-track policy, action to action approach toward

⁴ Haccke, Jürgen. "The United States and Myanmar: From Antagonist to Security Partners?," 56.

Myanmar were recognized as the other major driving factors.⁵ Those coincides led to developing bilateral diplomatic ties between Myanmar and the U.S. Therefore, this part will explore how US-Myanmar relations improve from antagonists to security partners. Subsequently, this study will analyse which country carried out more efforts to build mutual trust.

(a) The United States' approach to Myanmar under President Obama Administration

President Obama's initially pursued a "pragmatic engagement policy" in September 2009 toward Myanmar. The main reason is to redress its policy failure of heavy sanction approach and ASEAN's constructive engagement toward Myanmar under SPDC rule. The idea of this pragmatic engagement policy motivated political developments of Myanmar by engaging the political dialogue at senior level. There were three main goals: to adopt real political change; to promote human rights situation; and to support national reconciliation in Myanmar. However, the U.S continuously applied the instrument of sanction.⁶ Thus, the US's pragmatic engagement policy could not immediately lead to Myanmar's political change. Nevertheless, the US's rapprochement to Myanmar brought diplomatic ties to a certain extent due to the shuttle diplomacy of Assistant Secretary State Kurt Campbell and its team.⁷

This raised the important question of why the US initiated to embrace Myanmar after two decades pursuing the isolationist policy. The answer is that the geostrategic location of Myanmar facilitates the US' dream of Pivot to Asia. It is a US's grand strategy in Indo Pacific region to counter any status quo powers' efforts to develop regional hegemony which further step toward global hegemon. Therefore, President Obama convinced that "the success and failure of US grand strategy in the 21st century will be largely determined by development in Indo-Asia-Pacific region"⁸ Nevertheless, President Obama's grand strategy of Pivot to Asia is to contain the expanding of Chinese politico-military activities in the Indo-Pacific region.⁹ Consequently, the geostrategic of Myanmar has been recognized as a strategic arena for the US to confront rising China assertiveness

⁵ Kigpen, Nehginpao. "US-Burma Relations: Change of Politics under the Bush and Obama Administrations." *Strategic Analysis* 37, no.2 (2013), 203-216. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2012.755772>, 203.

⁶ Haccke, Jürgen. "The United States and Myanmar: From Antagonist to Security Partners?," 56.

⁷ Haccke, Jürgen. "The United States and Myanmar: From Antagonist to Security Partners?," 59.

⁸ Sturat, Douglas T. "The Pivot to Asia: Can it serve as the Foundation for American Grand Strategy in the 21st Century." Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) and U.S Army War College Press (UAMP), 2016, 1-4

⁹ Kuo, Mercy A. "The Origin of 'Indo-Pacific' as Geopolitical Construct", *The Diplomat*, January 25, 2018. Accessed April 21, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/the-origin-of-indo-pacific-as-geopolitical-construct/?allpages=yes&print=yes>

in the region. Additionally, strategic thinkers of the US pointed out that the U.S imposing sanctions and adopting the policy isolation on Myanmar provided the country into the larger political and economic dependent relationship with China.¹⁰ This led to the reconsideration of US' policy on Myanmar for over two decades and the rapprochement of President Obama's administration with Myanmar as well.

(b) President U Thein Sein Administration's approach to the US via domestic reform

When President U Thein Sein took office leading the new civilian government in 2011, his administration initiated various reform measure in the political, economic and social sphere to create a peaceful and stable democratic nation. In dealing with the foreign relations, the new government understood its initial need of political legitimacy¹¹ and reducing its over-reliance on China for its primary security challenge.¹² The government further realized the changing international scenario, the formal announcement of the U.S pivot to the Asia Pacific. Consequently, non-alignment policy became its foreign policy practice during President U Thein Sein's administration.¹³ In other words, Naypyidaw reasonably pursued how it should engage in the US at that time.

Hence, the new civilian government implemented the step-by-step domestic reform process. First and foremost, President U Thein Sein invited the NLD party to take part in the Myanmar political process by negotiation with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.¹⁴ The government introduced a peace process with the ethnic armed groups to solve the long-standing ethnic civil wars. Then, the government significantly lifted press censorship and released hundreds of political prisoners. Besides, Civil Society Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations allowed to form and contribute to the political process and economic and social development.¹⁵ In particularly, President U Thein Sein approved of the participation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD party in free and fair 2012 by-election.¹⁶ Moreover, President U Thein Sein decided to suspend one of the China Mega Projects, Myitsone Dam, in line with the "people will". However, Yun Sun believed that

¹⁰ Sun, Yun. "Myanmar in US-China Relations." *Stimson*, Issue no. 3 (2014):1-16. Accessed March 25, 2019. https://www.stimson.org/sites/default/files/file-attachments/Myanmar_Issue_Brief_3.pdf

¹¹ Myoe, Maung Aung. "The NLD and Myanmar's Foreign Policy: Not New, But Different." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 36, no.1 (2017), 59.

¹² Haccke, Jürgen. "Myanmar's Foreign Policy under President U Thein Sein: Non-aligned and Diversified." Singapore: ISEAS, 2016, 6.

¹³ Haccke, Jürgen. "Myanmar's Foreign Policy under President U Thein Sein", 4.

¹⁴ Ibid, 60.

¹⁵ Clapp, Priscilla. & DiMaggio, Suzanne. "Sustaining Myanmar's Transition: Ten Critical Challenges." New York: The Asia Society, 2013,3.

¹⁶ Haccke, Jürgen. "The United States and Myanmar: From Antagonist to Security Partners?.", 60

“Myanmar government suspended the project at least partially in order to favour with the US”.¹⁷ These efforts and activities indicated how President U Thein Sein government realized to engage with the US in accordance with the domestic and international scenario at this moment.

(c) The US’s action to action approach

President Obama's administration perceived the new civilian reform process as a meaningful political change. In turn, Washington requires to reward to Naypyidaw's efforts in order to provide the continuous successive reforms. Therefore, Secretary of State Clinton announced to pursue the formula of “action-for-action” in late 2011. Nevertheless, it was not easy for Obama’s administration’s rapprochement to Myanmar due to the resistance of Congress. Congress considerably resisted easing the sanctions on Myanmar. Subsequently, Secretary of State Clinton asked for the former colleague in Congress to reconsider the US’s policy on Myanmar¹⁸.

After winning NLD in the by-election, the U.S promoted the level of bilateral diplomatic relations with accredited an ambassador level. Then, the U.S established USAID mission to provide strengthening democracy, human rights and the rule of law, advancing national reconciliation and peace and supporting humanitarian needs for the country. Additionally, lifting financial and investment sanctions have been adopted. Subsequently, the US administration eliminated by imposing US investment activity in Myanmar with the Military and military leaders. Thus, the US investment in Myanmar reached to 612 million USD in mid-2014.¹⁹

President Obama visited Yangon in November 2012 as recognized a historic visit for the bilateral relations. This visit aimed to secure the various reform measures of Naypyidaw and a further boost to the legitimacy of the new civilian government. In May 2013, President U Thein Sein visited Washington which became first such visit by a head-of-state of Myanmar after the trip of General Ne Win in 1966.²⁰ The US’s government approach to Myanmar focused on security partnership rather than economic cooperation.²¹ Because, the administration actively involved in supporting the peace process, building civil-military relations and resolving inter-communal violence in Myanmar. The US realized the building civil-military relations would bring a peaceful and secure situation in the country. It was a

¹⁷ Sun, Yun. “Myanmar in US-China Relations.”, 4.

¹⁸ Haccke, Jürgen. “The United States and Myanmar: From Antagonist to Security Partners?.”, 61-74.

¹⁹ Haccke, Jürgen. “The United States and Myanmar: From Antagonist to Security Partners?.”, 61-2.

²⁰ Ibid, 63

²¹ Haccke, Jürgen. “Myanmar’s Foreign Policy under President U Thein Sein”, 24.

follow up to the security assistance for Myanmar with three forms: International Military Education Training (IMET), Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and Section 1206 of the National Defence Authority despite facing the strong resistance from the Congress. Moreover, Myanmar Defence Minister joined US-ASEAN defence ministers' meeting in Hawaii in 2014 and military officers attended as observer status in the 2013 and 2014 multilateral Cobra Gold exercise.²² This showed how the US and Myanmar rebuilt the bilateral relations after the 2011 period.

Therefore, the bilateral relations between the US and Myanmar from 2011 to 2015 had been recognized as a security partnership. The developing bilateral relations in the period greatly relied on the efforts of the new civilian government led by President U Thein Sein rather than President Obama's approach to Myanmar. President Obama's administration could be unable to initiate action to action approach if the new government of Myanmar did not carry out the various reform measures. This evidence shows that the new civilian government successfully pursued to engage the constructive relationship with the US.

II. Myanmar-US Relations since 2016

NLD has officially led the government after the landslide victory of 2015 election. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has taken the position of State Counsellor and Foreign Minister in the NLD-led Government. NLD government continues to subscribe to the independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy for international relations. However, "the NLD's foreign policy, in terms of objectives and principles, is not new but it is different, as adjustment are made in the realm of diplomacy".²³ Some recognized the NLD as "pro-Western bias"²⁴ so they expected to deepen bilateral ties for U.S-Myanmar relations in the time of NLD government led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Thus, the NLD government could have a reasonable prospect to build strong relationships with the US rather than the previous U Thein Sein's government. Unfortunately, the current US-Myanmar relations is unlikely to smooth as they expected due to the US's restriction on relations with Myanmar.

(a) NLD's expectation for a strong relationship with the US

The NLD government seemed to believe enhancing bilateral relations with the US rather than President U Thein Sein government because of the US's support to the NLD's

²² Haccke, Jürgen. "The United States and Myanmar: From Antagonist to Security Partners?," 61-2.

²³ Myoe, Maung Aung. "The NLD and Myanmar's Foreign Policy", 90

²⁴ International Crisis Group. "The Myanmar Elections: Results and Implications." Asia Report N 147, December 9 2015, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/myanmar-elections-results-and-implications>

democratic movements since 1988 by suppressing the military government. Likewise, the democratic efforts of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were always backed up by the Congress and the administration as well. Consequently, it can assume that the US constantly established a strong rapport with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD party since 1998. There were some evidences. The Congress, especially in the efforts of Senator Mitch McConnell, forced restrictions through sanctions to military leaders obtaining visas, trading with Americans and keeping the generals' assets in the US because the Senator has maintained the close connection with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.²⁵ The Congress perceived that this approach provided the isolation to the military government in the international community while supporting the democratic efforts of DASSK.

Besides, the Obama's administration initiated to rapprochement with the new civilian government when it gained the consent of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi that "she trusted U Thein Sein to undertake political reforms and would support these for the benefit of their country"²⁶ after the meeting with him at the presidential residence in mid-2011. Next, the US formulated action-to-action policy to Myanmar after winning the NLD party in by-elections in 2012.²⁷ This allowed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi seating in Parliament to stand the main opposition party. These kinds of support led to high-expectation of NLD government that the US would always back up for the NLD government works and increased bilateral ties in foreign relations.

(b) US's policy on Myanmar after 2016

Scott Marciel, the current US's ambassador to Myanmar, recapitulated the US's policy on Myanmar, "But our goal, the United States' goal, remains the same: We want to see a peaceful, prosperous, democratic Myanmar. One whose people live in harmony and enjoy full rights" in the press interview on May 10, 2018.²⁸ To be sure, since 1988, the US's policy on Myanmar constantly focused on "a (human) rights-based approach".²⁹ Nevertheless, although the US government has continuously maintained its' general policy on Myanmar, the priority of focusing areas have significantly changed. Under the President Trump term, the executive and legislative branch's policy on Myanmar has changed in

²⁵ Mahtani, Shibani. "McConnell pushed sanction against Myanmar. Now he's blocking a new round." The Washington Post, July 1, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/mcconnell-once-pushed-sanctions-against-myanmar-now-hes-blocking-a-new-round/2018/07/01/c48afe7c-795e-11e8-8df3-007495a78738_story.html

²⁶ Haccke, Jürgen. "The United States and Myanmar: From Antagonist to Security Partners?," 60.

²⁷ Ibid, 60

²⁸ Congressional Research Service R44570. "US. Restrictions on Relations with Burma", November 13, 2018. <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R44570.html>

²⁹ Myoe, Maung Aung. "The NLD and Myanmar's Foreign Policy", 90

direction to inter-communal violence, peace process, and human rights issue instead of supporting civil-military relations. In the 115th Congress, both House and Senate decided to introduce two bills—Myanmar Unified Through Rigorous Military and Accountability Act of 2018 and the Myanmar Human Rights and Freedom Act of 2018—that would redevelop US policy on Myanmar.³⁰ After the Myanmar military force's clearance operation in November 2017, the U.S. titled this issue as the ethnic cleansing and adopted targeted sanctions on Myanmar. Thus, President Trump's Administration adopted the Global Magnitsky Act which has placed sanctions on three military officers and two military units. Subsequently, both House and Senate also approved the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act of 2018 which outlaws the provision of funding for International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) Program to Myanmar for 2019 to 2023.³¹ Although the sanctions focused on Tatmadaw (Myanmar military), this has allowed the high level of pressure on civil-military relations process under the NLD government.

Dealing with the peacebuilding process, the US has perceived that the NLD government could not bring significant progress in the negotiation, although President Trump's administration continuously backed by financially support and policy matter. Firstly, Washington pointed out the escalation in fighting between Tatmadaw and some ethnic arms groups in Kachin, Shan, Rakhine, and Karen after 2018. Second, there is the lack of significant progress in practices, although the raising expectation Panglong Peace Conference led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would provide the autonomy for ethnic minorities as well as the peaceful resolution for national civil war. Also, in the 3rd Panglong Peace Conference, two major ethnic armed groups: the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Reconstruction Council of Shan States, which signed a ceasefire agreement with President U Thein Sein, temporarily suspended their participation in the peace process. These circumstances have increased the doubt of the US's government to the peace efforts of the NLD government. Consequently, Congress called for to reconsider whether US policy on Myanmar is effective or not dealing with the peace process.³²

Furthermore, Washington has currently concerned the NLD's political reforms dealing with violation of human rights and civil liberties. There are about three hundred people who are sentenced to imprisonment or are pending trial for their political activities.

³⁰ Congressional Research Service R44570. "US. Restrictions on Relations with Burma", 1.

³¹ Martin, Michael F. "U.S. Relations with Burma: Key Issue in 2019." Congressional Research Service IF 11068, January 10, 2019. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF11068.pdf>

³² Martin, Michael F. "Burma's Prospects for Peace in 2019." Congressional Research Service IF 11081, January 23, 2019. <http://www.pennyhill.com/product/if11081-burmas-prospects-for-peace-in-2019-1-23-2019/>

The US seriously criticized the NLD government's restricting freedom of speech and press freedom by making seven years sentenced to two reporters, Kyaw Soe Oo and Wa Lone, in accordance with Myanmar's 1923 Official Secrets Act.³³ Thus, these three main issues are dominant factors to shape a strait of US-Myanmar relations during the NLD-led government and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Another dominant factor in Myanmar-US relations is how President Trump has recognized geostrategic of Myanmar for Indo-Pacific strategic goal. Under Trump's administration, the geostrategic of Myanmar is received a lack of attention to fulfil his strategic goal in the Indo-Pacific region. President Trump's approach for Indo-Pacific goal is very different from the Obama administration. The Trump Administration announced National Security Strategy to promote "a Free and Open Indo-Pacific region (FOIP) which also seeks to integrate U.S. strategy toward East Asia and South Asia" in 2017.³⁴ To develop the FOIP strategy, there will be potential flashpoints: the Korean Peninsula; Taiwan; the South China Sea; the Pakistan-India border; and the China-India border.³⁵ Accordingly, this administration has emphasized on East Asian and South Asian regions rather than South East Asia to accomplish the Indo-Pacific dream. In President Trump's term, Southeast Asia including Myanmar has been received a lack of attention, unlike the Obama Administration.

The position of bilateral relations between Myanmar and the US during the NLD government led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has declined from the status of security partnership. There had a high expectation for bilateral relations under the Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership. But the US administration and the Congress has reinstated targeted sanction to Tatmadaw and put the pressure on the plight of the so-called Rohingya in Rakhine State and human rights conditions in Myanmar. Additionally, President Trump's Indo-Pacific approach has reduced the level of security partnership with Myanmar.

III. The Domestic limitations of the NLD government's relations with the US

The NLD government could not bring the significant progress of the US-Myanmar relations since 2016. The main reason is that the NLD government could not understand how to find a middle ground between the domestic needs and the US's wants. In other words, achieving immediate domestic needs: building civil-military relations and succeeding the peace process will partially facilitate what the US's wants in the country.

³³ Martin, Michael F. "U.S. Relations with Burma: Key Issue in 2019."

³⁴ Vaughn, Bruce. "The Trump Administration's Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Issues for Congress." Congressional Research Service R 45396, October 3, 2018. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45474>, 3.

³⁵ Vaughn, Bruce. "The Trump Administration's Free and Open Indo-Pacific", 4.

Nevertheless, the NLD government is unable to construct mutual understanding and trust with the Tatmadaw dealing with the US restriction on targeted sanction. The main reason is that the NLD government and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi called for continuously US' imposing targeted sanction on Myanmar's Tatmadaw. There were two significant evidence. Firstly, Han Thar Myint, an NLD central executive committee member, reportedly said that "the NLD will not push for a lifting of US restrictions given that the military retains considerable power in the government, as well as in Burma economy"³⁶ in March 2016. Secondly, in September 2016, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi reportedly said in the meeting of member of Congress that "she has hoped that some restrictions on relations with high-level Myanmar military officers and business owned or controlled by the Myanmar military could remain in effect" and "such a selective retention of restriction was not possible".³⁷ These evidences show why the relations between the NLD government and the Tatmadaw could not establish mutual trust and understanding.

Furthermore, there will be a lack of success for the peacemaking process led by NLD government if there are ongoing conflicts between the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed groups. Therefore, building civil-military relations is a significant challenge to NLD government for immediate domestic requirements. This can bring the strength of domestic political unity to engage in foreign relations with the great power and can facilitate the peace-making process to some extent.

Conclusion

To sum up, President U Thein Sein government successfully constructed the security partnership and normalized relations with the US. It can assume that Obama's Pivot to Asia is one of the influencing factors on US-Myanmar relations. However, unless the U Thein Sein has systematic domestic reform, bilateral relations between the US and Myanmar would not develop in those level. In reality, the previous government suitably compromised between the domestic needs which are gaining political legitimacy and international support for its domestic political and economic requirements and balancing on its over-reliance on China, and the US's wants in Myanmar, the containment approach of China influencing on the Indo-Pacific region through its immediate neighbour's democratic reform.

³⁶ Congressional Research Service R44570. "US. Restrictions on Relations with Burma", 11.

³⁷ Ibid, 11.

In Contrary, during the leadership of the NLD government, US-Myanmar relations has not significantly improved. The current NLD government led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi could not prepare the precise policy and diplomatic response toward the United States. Firstly, NLD government are not ready how to response the United States when the US's policy on Myanmar has altered in list of priorities areas toward Myanmar and the changing approach of the US's administration led by President Trump on Indo-Pacific strategy due to its constant belief, US backing to the NLD government for a long time. The confidence of NLD government was that the U.S. always backed up their government due to the party's democratic efforts and the reputation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Secondly, the NLD government has unlikely realized bargaining between domestic needs and the US's wants. The degree of accomplishment to immediate domestic needs: civil-military relations and making peace process would provide the improvement of bilateral relations to some extent. This allows that U.S has led to reinstate the sanctions and has given the pressure on NLD government dealing with Northern Rakhine State, human rights situations and the peace process. To be sure that the current NLD government has faced harassment by the US because of its lack of well-managed in domestic needs and Trump's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Approach. Hence, the paper significantly proves that the future US-Myanmar relations will heavily rely on how the Myanmar government will appropriately find a middle ground between the domestic needs and the US's wants in Myanmar.

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