CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Master Thesis

2022 **Myo Win Nyunt**

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Analyzing the Effects of Ethnicity on Internal Armed Conflicts in Burma: Identity Crisis and the Struggle for Recognition

Master thesis

Prague 2022

Author: Myo Win Nyunt

Supervisor: Dr. Janusz Salamon

Adviser: Jacob Maze, Ph.D.

Academic Year: 2021/2022

Bibliographic Note

Myo Win Nyunt. *Analyzing the Effects of Ethnicity on Internal Armed Conflicts in Burma: Identity Crisis and the Struggle for Recognition*. 90 p. Master thesis. Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Studies. Supervisor Dr. Janusz Salamon.

ABSTRACT

While it is a widely accepted argument that ethnicity and armed conflicts are inextricably linked, there is little understating regarding in which conditions and how exactly ethnicity affects armed conflicts, which this thesis aims to explain through a qualitative case study on Burma, a Southeast Asian nation where what is known as ethnic armed organizations and the national armed forces of Burma—the Tatmadaw—have been at war since Burma got independence from Britain in 1948. While ethnicity can turn into a source of conflict in certain situations, ethnic differences *per se* are not the cause of conflict. However, ethnicity and ethnic groups can produce negative effects in certain situations. As the main research question, this study asks: *In which conditions and how 'ethnicity' produce adverse effects that fuel armed conflicts?* In addition to the main research question, this study will test three hypotheses in relation of the main research question to get a clear picture of the adverse effects of ethnicity on armed conflicts. The study concludes by discussing research findings and questions for further research in the area of ethnic armed conflict.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Armed Conflict, Recognition, Identity Crisis, Burma/Myanmar

Range of thesis: 36,192 words; 90 pages with space

ABSTRAKT

While it is a widely accepted argument that ethnicity and armed conflicts are inextricably linked, there is little understating regarding in which conditions and how exactly ethnicity affects armed conflicts, which this thesis aims to explain through a qualitative case study on Burma, a Southeast Asian nation where what is known as ethnic armed organizations and the national armed forces of Burma—the Tatmadaw—have been at war since Burma got independence from Britain in 1948. While ethnicity can turn into a source of conflict in certain situations, ethnic differences *per se* are not the cause of conflict. However, ethnicity and ethnic groups can produce negative effects in certain situations. As the main research question, this study asks: *In which conditions and how 'ethnicity' produce adverse effects that fuel armed conflicts?* In addition to the main research question, this study will test three hypotheses in relation of the main research question to get a clear picture of the adverse effects of ethnicity on armed conflicts. The study concludes by discussing research findings and questions for further research in the area of ethnic armed conflict.

Klíčová slova: Ethnicity, Armed Conflict, Recognition, Identity Crisis, Burma/Myanmar

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

1. The author hereby declares that I compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.

2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.

3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

January 4, 2022. Prague. **Myo Win Nyunt**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly, I thank God for His protecting and giving me strength and wisdom to pursue a post-graduate studies at Charles University in Prague, the place that has taught me how to think. I thank my family who never fail to believe in me. Secondly, I particularly thank Dr. Janusz Salamon (my thesis supverviso), Prof. Vladimir Benacek, Prof. Vilem Semerak, and Jacob Maze (Ph.D.) for their patience and generous academic support. Thirdly, I am also grateful for additional support I received from a few friends who gave me valuable feedback on my thesis. While I do not include their names to protect their privacy, their support helped me overcome many obstacles that I faced in producing this thesis. Lastly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Prospect Burma and Puma Energy for awarding me a generous scholarship to pursue my post-graduate studies in Czech Republic. I would have never made it to Charles without the financial support and kindness from these two institutions.

ACRONYMS

All Burma Student's Democratic Front (ABSDF)
Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL)
Arakan Army (AA)
Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA)
Buddhist Karen National Association (BKNA)
Burma Independent Army (BIA)
Burma National Army (BNA)
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
Communist Party of Burma (CPB)
Communist Party of China (CPC)
Ethnic Armed Organization (EAO)
Ethnic Power Relations (EPR)
General Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA)
International Court of Justice (ICJ)
Kachin Independent Organization (KIO)
Karen Baptist Convention (KBC)
Karen National Association (KNA)
Karen National Union (KNU)
Kuomintang (KMT)
Lahu Democratic Union (LDU)
London School of Economics (LSE)
Ministry of Defense (MOD)
Ministry of Home Affair (MOHA)
Mong Tai Army (MTA)
Myanmar National Democratic Alliance (MNDAA)
National Defense and Security Council (NSDC)
National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA)
National League for Democracy (NLD)
Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA)
New Mon State Party (NMSP)
Patriotic Burmese Force (PBF)
People Republic of China (PRC)
People's Revolutionary Party (PRP)
Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO)
Shan National League for Democracy (SNLD)
State Law and Order Council (SLOC)
Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA)
Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA)
Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)
United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC)
United Wa State Army (UWSA)
University of Los Angeles (UCLA)
Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)
Yong Men Buddhist Association (YMBA)
Young Men Christian Association (YMCA)

Master Thesis Proposal

Institute of Political Studies
Faculty of Social Sciences
Charles University in Prague

Date: 21.05.2018

Author:	**Myo Win Nyunt**	**Supervisor:**	**Janusz Salamon, Ph.D**
E-mail:	64333371@fsv.cuni.cz	E-mail:	Janusz.salamon@univ-oxford.com
Phone:	[redacted]	Phone:	251 080 256 257
Specialisation:	IEPS	Defense Planned:	June 2020

Proposed Topic: Analyzing the Effects of Ethnicity on Internal Armed Conflicts in Burma: Identity Crisis and the Struggle for Recognition

Registered in SIS: Yes. **Date of registration:** (Beginning of June 2018)

Topic Characteristics:

My thesis will focus on the following main research question: **To what extent has ethnicity affected internal armed conflict in Burma?** First, the study will review relevant literature around ethnicity to see how ethnicity is being discussed and understood in the academic sphere. Other terms (race, nationality, indigenous, and so forth) associated with ethnicity are also analyzed to get a clear picture of the unique characteristics of ethnicity. It can be argued that ethnicity is an evolving socio-political concept, meaning that it does not form overnight but normally results from intentional and unintentional social, political, economic and military decisions and actions conducted over the course of several decades and even centuries by different actors. Its definition, form and usage can be changed, manipulated and even weaponized depending upon who is applying it and due to several social, political and economic factors with the passing of time.

In the case of Burma, it is impossible to talk about ethnicity without re-visiting the pre-colonial period (prior to 1885) briefly and the colonial period (1824-1948) extensively. Thus, the first part of this study will approach ethnicity from a historical perspective to understand the development of ethnic identities in detail and to see how it has evolved over time and become central to many issues, especially to armed conflicts that have lasted seven decades and have continued to intensify in recent years.

After analyzing the concept of ethnicity from a historical perspective, the study will analyze how the concept of ethnicity has been translated into the social, political and military actions and demands of contested armed actors. It appears that each ethnic group in Burma is struggling and fighting to get their ethnic rights and identities to be recognized. However, ethnic identities are contested in nature, and the struggle for identity recognition has placed Burma in peril for decades. The political goals of the Myanmar Armed Forces, known as the *Tatmadaw*, and dozens of non-state actors, widely known as ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), will be analyzed to see how ethnicity has been embodied in their political decisions, demands and actions to pursue difficult goals. Finally, the study concludes by arguing that Burma stakeholders need to start thinking about a shared national identity which does not place ethnicity as central to one's basic rights.

Working Hypotheses:

1) The classification of certain ethnic groups as a "martial race" vs. a "non-martial race" under the British divide and rule policy created ethnic division even before Burma got independence from the United Kingdom in 1948.
2) Armed actors in Burma have translated the concept of ethnicity into their political and military decisions, demands and actions, resulting in an identity crisis which places Burma in peril.
3) The concept of ethnicity has become central not only to armed conflicts but also to other important issues such as citizenship, belonging and political recognition, creating a deeply divided society without a shared national identity.

Methodology:

This study applies a case study as a qualitative research method to deal with multiple sources of evidences to defend/verify/falsify the main research question and working hypotheses. Sources will be drawn both from primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources include original census data, peace treaties, political agreements, constitutions and legal documents, among others. Secondary sources include reports published by international organizations and non-government organizations that pay close attention to Burma.

Outline:

1. Introduction
2. Research Methodology Used
3. Theoretical background and the review of academic literature around ethnicity
4. Colonial legacy and inter-ethnic division and conflict in Burma
5. Identity Crisis and the Struggle for Recognition
6. Testing Hypotheses
    a. Hypothesis #1: The classification of certain ethnic groups as a "martial race" vs. a "non-martial race" under the British divide and rule policy created ethnic division even before Burma got independence from the United Kingdom in 1948.
    b. Hypothesis #2: Armed actors in Burma have translated, manipulated and weaponized the concept of ethnicity into their political and military decisions, demands and actions, resulting in an identity crisis which places Burma in peril.
    c. Hypothesis #3: The concept of ethnicity has become central not only to armed conflicts but also to other important issues such as citizenship, belonging and political recognition, creating a deeply divided society without a shared national identity.
7. Conclusion
8. References / Bibliography

References / Bibliography:

1. Fukuyama, Francis. *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018.
2. Taylor, Charles. *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition: An Essay with Commentary.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
3. Pham, Julie. *J. S. Furnivall and Fabianism: Reinterpreting the 'Plural Society' in Burma.* Modern Asian Studies 39, no. 2 (2005): 321-48.
4. Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.
5. Steinberg, David. *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know. Oxford:* Oxford University Press, 2013.
6. Cockett, Richard. *Blood, Dreams and Gold.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.
7. Myint-U, Thant. *The Making of Modern Burma.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
8. Myint-U, Thant. *The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma.* London: Faber & Faber, 2011.
9. Myint-U, Thant. *The Hidden History of Burma: Race, Capitalism, and the Crisis of Democracy in the 21st Century*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019.
10. Lieberman, Victor. *Ethnic Politics in Eighteenth-Century Burma.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
11. Kaushik, Roy. *Race and Recruitment in the Indian Army: 1880– 1918.* Modern Asian Studies 47, no. 4 (2013): 1310-347.
12. International Crisis Group. *Identity Crisis: Ethnicity and Conflict in Myanmar.* https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/312-identity-crisis-ethnicity-and-conflict-myanmar
13. Center for Peace and Conflict Studies. *Re-examining Ethnic Identity in Myanmar.* http://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/Re-Examining-Ethnic-Identity-in-Myanmar.pdf
14. Institute for Policy and Development Policy. *A Return to War: Militarized Conflicts in Northern Shan State.* https://isdp.eu/publication/return-to-war-militarized-conflicts-northern-shan-state/

Date:

Approval of Supervisor (Signature or a faximile):

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT ..... **I**

ABSTRAKT ..... **II**

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP ..... **III**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ..... **IV**

ACRONYMS ..... **V**

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION **4**

Structure of Thesis 8

Note on Terms and Names 8

Historical Background: The Impact of British Colonial Rule 8

Burma's Independence and the Cold War 9

CHAPTER II: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY USED **14**

Research Design 15

Research Question and Hypotheses 17

Data Collection and Limitation 17

CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW **20**

The theories of ethnicity 22

How ethnicity and Ethnic Groups are defined and viewed in Burma? 24

Identity crisis and the struggle for recognition 26

CHAPTER III: ANALYSIS OF MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION AND TESTING HYPOTHESES **28**

Hypothesis 1 28

Introduction 28

The Anglo-Burmese Wars 29

British's view towards Bamar and other minority groups 30

Martial race vs. non-martial race 34

The rise of Bamar nationalism 36

External factors: WWII and the Japanese invasion of Burma 37

The end of Japanese rule and British dilemma 39

Early impendence 41

The role of Karen ethnic group under colonial rule 42
Findings from Hypothesis 1 45
Hypothesis 1A 47
Independent negotiators 47
Analysis of 1947 constitution 49
Post WWII Burma army 52
From ethnic grievances to ethnic armed conflict 53
Hypothesis 2 57
Introduction 57
Land attachment 57
The fall of U Nu Government and the rise of the Tatmadaw 57
U Nu's view on ethnicity and the rise of Ne Win 59
Federalism movement and ethnic groups 61
Analysis of 1974 constitution 62
The concept of Taingyintha and the 1982 Myanmar citizenship law 63
Hypothesis 3 67
Introduction 67
The end of community party of Burma 67
State law and order council 68
Ceasefires with the Northern groups 69
Ceasefires with the Southern Groups 70
Analysis of The National Convention 73
Analysis of 2008 Constitution 77
The Rise of Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD) 78
The role of the Tatmadaw and Commander-in-chief 79
Nationwide ceasefire agreement 81
National League for Democracy Government 82
Bamarnization 84
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION ON RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION 87
APPENDIX A: RACIAL MAP OF BURMA 92
APPENDIX B: ANGOLA BURMESE WARS 93

APPENDIX 3: ETHNIC ARMED ORGANISATION IN BURMA 94
APPENDIX 4: CAPITAL CITIES OF STATES AND DIVISIONS 95
BIBLIOGRAPHY 96

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

While it is widely accepted that ethnicity and armed conflicts are inextricably linked, there is little understanding of the effects of ethnicity and ethnic groups on armed conflicts, which this thesis aims to analyze through a qualitative case study on Burma, a Southeast Asian nation where ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and the national armed forces of Burma—known as the Tatmadaw—have been at war since Burma's independence from Britain in 1948.

While other terms such as tribes, races, indigenous groups, and nationalities are also used in the field of ethnic conflict study, this study will mainly use ethnicity and ethnic groups for the sake of simplicity. This does not suggest that there are no differences among those different terms. However, their similarities outweigh their differences, which should justify using those terms interchangeably without affecting their genesis.

In heterogeneous societies, ethnicity is the basis of people's identity. Belonging to a particular ethnic group is their fundamental identity, something they do not have a choice, but is an ethic marker given at birth. In her latest book titled 'Political Tribes,' Amy Chua—a professor at Yale Law School—perfectly illustrates the relationship between human beings and ethnicity:

> Some groups are voluntary; some are not. Some tribes are sources of joy and salvation; some are the hideous product of hate mongering by opportunistic power seekers. But once people belong to a group, their identities can become oddly bound with it. They will seek to benefit their group mates even when they personally gain nothing. They will penalize outsiders, seemingly gratuitously. They will sacrifice, and even kill and die, for their groups.[1]

The failure to understand the unique characteristics of ethnic groups have resulted in major foreign policy failures and inter-ethnic conflicts in many parts of the world, Chau argues.[2] While ethnic-based violence and conflict are common in many heterogeneous nations, ethnic differences *per se* do not always mean antagonism, for there are many ethnically diverse nations that are profoundly at peace. Some people may also argue that ethnicity in and of itself is just a

[1] Amy Chau, *Political Tribe: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 1.
[2] Ibid., 15-35.

social categorization in our societies and it does not cause anything. Especially in English language, the term 'ethnicity' is often understood only as a descriptor. While this argument is acceptable, it should be noted that the term 'ethnicity' is more than a descriptor and often associates with social groups with common characteristics. Oxford dictionary defines ethnicity as 'the fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition.'[3] Therefore, ethnicity is often used to refer to individuals who belong to specific social groups that share specific common characteristics among the members of the groups—often described as 'ethnic groups' in the ethnic armed conflict literature.

Ethnic groups are not just ordinary groups such as political interest groups, political parties, lobby groups etc. In addition, unlike interstate conflict over sovereignty, territorial control, natural resource, geopolitical dispute, and ideological difference, inter-ethnic conflicts do not always have clear motives for violence and war. Ethnic-based wars are not calculated wars that seek to gain social, political, and economic gains, though these elements can be contributing factors to ethnic conflict. In most cases, ethnic wars are often fought to be recognized for who they are as 'groups' and to protect their 'distinct and unique ethnic characteristics,' which are often complicated to fully understand. Those unique and distinct characteristics—which this study will explore more in the literature review section below—is what make ethnic groups different from other groups.

The concept and definition of ethnicity are often disputed among scholars, and the relationship between ethnicity and armed conflict is often blurred. While most scholars tend to agree that ethnic divides play a significant role in ethnic conflict, there have been discourses over in which conditions and how 'ethnicity' produce adverse effects that fuel armed conflicts, as opposed to a source of "joy and salvation," as Chau put it.[4] This study also argues that ethnicity is often closely linked to recognition and identity crisis—both at the individual and group levels. In his controversial book titled 'The End of History and the Last Man,' Francis Fukuyama—who references Hegel's 'State of Nature,' argues that human beings have a fundamental desire to be recognized by their fellow human beings to feel meaningful in lives and human values depend on

[3] Oxford Dictionary online, s.v. "Ethnicity," accessed August 10, 2021, https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/cite-write/citation-style-guides/chicago/encyclopedias-dictionaries
[4] Chau, *Political Tribe*, 1.

the values they put on each other. This desire for recognition for who they are, Fukuyama argues, is what makes humans different from other animals.

> Hegel's "first man" shares with the animals certain basic natural desires, such as the desire for food, for sleep, for shelter, and above all for the preservation of his own life. He is, to this extent, part of the natural or physical world. But Hegel's "first man" is radically different from animals in that he desires not only real, "positive" objects—a steak, or fur jacket with which to keep warm, or a shelter in which to live—but also objects that are totally non-material. Above all, he desires the desire of other men, that is, to be wanted by others or to be recognized. Indeed, for Hegel, an individual could not become self-conscious, that is, become aware of himself as a separate human being, without being recognized by other human beings. Man, in other words, was from the start a social being: his own sense of self-worth and identity is intimately connected with the value that other people place on him.[5]

As individuals demand recognition from their fellow human beings, ethnic groups—which are made up of those recognition seeking individuals—also demand to be recognized for their ethnic identities or simply who they are. When Fukuyama argues that human beings have a fundamental desire for recognition, he does not mean ethnic groups specifically but human beings in general.[6] However, human beings belong to groups, and among those groups, 'ethnic groups' appear to be more sensitive when it comes to recognition. This means that ethnic groups demand recognition for their distinct and unique characteristic—for who they are as groups—in a way other groups do not demand. Their demands are not only collective but also non-negotiable unlike the ways other groups seek recognition. For example, the demands of political parties can be settled when those demands are met in political settings such as elections. Likewise, the demands of interest groups and lobby groups can be satisfied when policy makers pass laws that protect the interests of those interest groups. However, the demands of ethnic groups cannot be satisfied by simply passing laws or offering political economy interests. Their demands require respecting their distinct and unique ethnic characteristics which vary from group to group.

For many in many parts of the world, their ethnic identities give them a sense of belonging to a community and a sense of purpose to live meaningfully. In most cases, belonging to a particular ethnic group is not a choice, mainly because people are born with it. The only

---

[5] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: The Penguin Group, 2012), 146.
[6] Ibid., 143-152.

question is how people make use of their ethnic identities. Depending on the context, belonging to a particular ethnic group can give a person either benefits or burdens. Benefits include being treated nicely simply because of belonging to an ethnic group, and burdens include being discriminated against and excluded for simply belonging to a particular ethnic group. The fundamental argument is that belonging to a particular ethnic group shapes our ways of life in many different ways, most often in a way that we do not desire but do not have a choice to change it—at least not in the short-term period.

Ethnic-based conflicts are also the fight for recognition—the wars groups wage against each other when one group fails to recognize the ethnic identity of the other. When ethnic groups feel that their ethnic identities and characteristics are excluded, threatened, disrespected, and unrecognized by other groups, they make collective demands—including complex psychological demands without clear motives—to be recognized with certain rights and privileges for who they are as 'groups.'

The intensity of ethnic-based conflict varies depending on the context; it can be from a minor dispute for calling somebody a racist term to civil war, from terrorism to genocide. In some extreme cases, an ethnic identity by birth can make a child stateless, as we have seen in many parts of the world, such as in Palestine and Burma. Ethnic identities and characteristics are powerful political tools used by many forces to exclude individuals and groups from certain rights and privileges.

> Humans are tribal. We need to belong to groups. We crave bounds and attachments, which is why we love clubs, teams, fraternities, family. Almost no one is a hermit. Even monks and friars belong to orders. But the tribal instinct is not just an instinct to belong. It is also an instinct to exclude.[7]

This study does not attempt to seek if ethnic divides cause armed conflict because this is already a widely accepted academic phenomenon among scholars of ethnic conflict. What this study seeks to understand is in which conditions and how 'ethnicity' produce adverse effects that fuel armed conflicts. As mentioned earlier, ethnic differences *per se* do not cause conflict; however, when specific characteristics associated with ethnic groups—often known as the

[7] Chau, *Political Tribe*, 1.

salience of ethnicity in ethnic conflict literature—do not get adequate recognition for their ethnic identities, this often leads to conflict.

Structure of Thesis

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter I includes a brief introduction to ethnicity and conflicts, a note on terms and names, and historical background related to the case study. Chapter II presents the research methodology used, including research design and data limitation. Chapter III discusses the literature review on ethnicity. Chapter IV tests three hypotheses to determine if they can be justified or rejected. Chapter V discusses the research findings and concludes with questions and discussions for future research.

Note on Terms and Names

It is challenging to call proper names consistently as this thesis consists of many non-English terms. In 1989, the military junta of Burma changed the country's name from 'Burma' to 'Myanmar'. Other important names were also changed, including the names of streets, towns, rivers, and ethnic groups. Throughout this thesis, this study will use older names such as Arakan, Arakanese, Akyab, Bamar, Burma, Karen, Rangoon, Rohingya, and Ta'ang—among others. This study uses the Burmese term 'Tatmadaw' to refer to 'the Burmese Armed Forces.' 'Bamar' refers to the members of the majority ethnic group or the dominant group, which made up nearly two-thirds of the country's population. 'Ethnic minority groups,' who are made up of approximately one-third of the population, are meant to address the rest of groups other than the Bamar. The term 'Ethnic Armed Organizations,' or EAOs, refers to the groups who go to war under the names of their ethnic groups, and Non-State Actors (NSAs) refer to groups that do not represent any particular ethnic groups, subject to a few exceptions. This study includes translation in parentheses as relevant for non-English terms and concepts.

Historical Background: The Impact of British Colonial Rule

Burma, as a modern state, is a colonial creation. Prior to 1948, Burma did not have specific criteria to be considered as a state. While there had always been permanent population—ethnic and indigenous population on their ancestral lands—there were no clearly defined territories and boundaries. Even during the British rule—from 1824 to 1948 with a brief interval of the Japanese occupation between 1942 and 1945 during WWII—many territories remained independent and many groups in the frontier and periphery areas were never governed directly

by the British. Prior to the British annexation of Burma, successive Bamar kingdoms had dominated other kingdoms and independent principalities in the region, but their rule never really extended to many areas of what is today Burma.[8] These all changed when Britain got independence from Britain in 1948.

In many ways, Burma's independence—mainly facilitated by the British Government by working with the representatives of the dominant ethnic group (Bamar)—was a forced unifying project in which independent territories of smaller and weaker ethnic groups were put into the Union of Burma to become the organs of post-colonial Burma—the Union of Burma—without a fair process. In addition, the British officials deliberately promoted certain groups over the dominant group through a series of policies what are widely known as 'Divide et Impera' or 'Divide and Rule'.[9]

Burma's Independence and the Cold War

When Burma got independence from British in 1948, things looked like Burma had all the means and resources to rebuild its war-torn economy, to ease ideological clashes between Capitalism and Communism, and to resolve ethnic grievances among the diverse ethnic groups. However, less than three months after gaining independence, Burma's ethnic groups, such as the Karen, the Mon—two major ethnic groups among others in Burma—started taking up arms to fight the central government. In addition, even before the independence, the communists—who had a different vision of Burma's future—went underground to pursue their political goals through armed resistance.[10] Despite these challenges, Burma managed to adapt a parliamentary democracy, which ended in 1962 when the Myanmar Armed Forces—widely known as the Tatmadaw—led by General Ne Win seized power through a coup d'état and turned Burma into a socialist state.[11] This period—the 1960s—was coincided with the peak of the cold war: The Communist Party of China (CPC) under Mao Zedong was driving China into the Cultural Revolution; the Berlin Wall had been constructed; the Cuban Missile Crisis triggered a crisis that

[8] Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 3.
[9] Jan Bečka, "Divide et Impera"? Britische Minderheitenpolitik in Burma 1917- 1948 by Roland Bless," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 22, no. 2 (1991): 414-416
[10] David I. Steinberg, Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs To Know (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, 2013), 44.
[11] Ibid., 63.

brought the United States to the brink of war with the Soviet Union; and ideological clashes turned into armed conflicts in Vietnam and Korea.[12]

Since the end of WWII, the world was dominated by the ideological struggle between communism and capitalism, resulted in millions of lives lost in China's great famines, a genocide under the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, and tens of thousands of lives lost in Vietnam and Korea and many other places.[13] The strength of communism started declining in the 1980s partly caused by the worsening political, social, and economic situations in the Soviet Union. In 1989, an essay titled 'The End of History' written by Francis Fukuyama appeared in the National Interest, predicting that liberal democracy has won the race of human political race—a highly controversial thesis that would be debated among political experts and news commentators in decades to come, in fact until these days with critics writing articles based on this thesis. One of the articles published by The New Yorker in 2018 titled 'Francis Fukuyama Postpones the End of History.'[14]

> What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.[15]

Fukuyama's thesis was further strengthened when the Berlin Wall came down in November of 1989, only three months after Fukuyama's essay had come out.[16] Germany and Burma may have little in common, but the Communist Party of Burma (CPB)—which had been fighting the Tatmadaw on-and-off since 1948—collapsed in 1989, six months prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Coincidentally, the Velvet Revolution between November and December of

---

[12] Encyclopedia Britannica. "Major Cold War Events", Accessed May 4, 2021. https://www.britannica.com/study/major-cold-war-events?fbclid=IwAR0GjFWn0CwWVPJBKmwHR99sbMbnfd0okb4GHBZgfwZdYSEKxmKneZxIR2w

[13] W. A. McDougall, "20th-century International Relations," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, September 3, 2020. https://www.britannica.com/topic/20th-century-international-relations-2085155.

[14] Louis Menand, "Francis Fukuyama Postpones the End of History," *The New Yorker*, Aug. 27, 2018, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/09/03/francis-fukuyama-postpones-the-end-of-history

[15] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, Summer, 1989, 4.

[16] https://www.britannica.com/topic/20th-century-international-relations-2085155/The-New-Imperialism

1989 significantly weakened the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, ending forty-one years of communist rule.[17] A year earlier, in 1988 in Rangoon—the former capital of Burma—a series of student-led protests led to a nationwide demonstration, resulting in the resignation of Ne Win, a dictator who had been in power since 1962.[18] For a brief moment, it looked like democracy was returning to Rangoon, Prague and Berlin and beyond. Fukuyama rose to fame, and his thesis won the political debate, at least for a while, but then the Communist Party of China (CPC) showed that democracy might survive and return to certain places, but not in all places. Students-led demonstrations in the Tiananmen Square in Beijing were brutally suppressed.[19] Looking back to this period, the BBC produced in 2019 a special article titled 'The Fall of Berlin Wall: How 1989 Reshaped the Modern World' in which the author said, "world events often move fast, but it is hard to match the pace and power of change in 1989."[20]

In 1990, the Czech Republic held its first democratic elections since WWII, which saw 97% of voters turn out—a sign that people were eager for change. In the same year, the military generals of Burma tested a taste of democracy by holding a relatively free election which was won by the National League for Democracy (NLD)—the party led by Nobel Peace Prize Winner Aung San Suu Kyi, to whom President Vaclav Havel showed personal support in her struggle for democracy. However, the military generals failed to accept the election result of the 1990 general elections and seized power once again.[21] Unlike in the Czech Republic, Burma did not manage to transition to democracy in the 1990s.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and subsequent events brought peace and stability in many parts of the world. However, foreign policy experts and political scientists overlooked the end of the Cold War. More importantly, what was neglected was the ethnic dimensions of many vulnerable and fragile countries—especially the ones previously under the colonial powers—that

---

[17] Andy Kopsa, "Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution Started 30 Years Ago—But It Was Decades in the Marking," *TIME,* Nov.16, 2019, https://time.com/5730106/velvet-revolution-history/

[18] Steinberg, Burma/Myanmar, 78.

[19] BBC, "Tiananmen Square: What happened in the protests of 1989?" Dec. 23, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48445934

[20] "The Fall of Berlin Wall: How 1989 Reshaped the Modern World," *BBC,* November 5, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50013048 (accessed February 15, 2019)

[21] James F. Guyot, "Myanmar in 1990: The Unconsummated Election," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 2 (1990): 205-211.

were caught in the ideological clashes of the Cold War. Even though ideological clashes of the Cold War overshadowed the grievances of ethnic groups in many parts of the world, they never died out entirely and, in fact, resurfaced again after the Cold War.

> In our foreign policy, for at least half a century, we have been spectacularly blind to the power tribal politics. We tend to view the world in terms of territorial nation-states engaged in great ideological battles—Capitalism versus Communism, Democracy versus Authoritarianism, the "Free World" versus the "Axis of Evil." Blinded by our own ideological prisms, we have repeatedly ignored more primal group identities, which for billions are the most powerful and meaningful, and which derive political upheaval all over the world. This blindness has been the Achilles' hell of U.S. foreign policy.[22]

A series of gruesome human rights violations and international security threats emerged in the post-cold war world. After the Holocaust and the Cambodian genocide, the post-cold war world faced a series of religious and ethnic-based conflicts in Rwanda, the Balkans and later the Middle East.[23] Most people view the recent event in Afghanistan as the victory of the Taliban—a group that has been often portrayed as a terrorist group, which is true. Meanwhile, in a way, the Afghanistan crisis is also an ethnic conflict where the majority—the Pashtuns—have been trying to regain their dominant role.[24] As Chau argues:

> Afghanistan's national anthem mentions fourteen ethnic groups, the largest four being the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras. There is a long history of animosity among these groups. For more than two hundred years, the Pashtuns dominated Afghanistan, but during the Cold War their dominance began to decline, and in 1992, a Tajik and Uzbek-led coalition seized control. The Taliban, supported by Pakistan, emerged again this background. The Taliban is not only an Islamist movement but also an ethnic movement. That vast majority of its members are Pashtuns. It was founded by Pashtuns, it's led by Pashtuns, and it arose out of—and derives its staying power because of—threats of Pashtun dominance.[25]

The reason this study brings in Afghanistan in the discussion is not because Burma and Afghanistan have many things in common, but because there is one similarity among the two nations: that is, there is—like the Pashtun of Afghanistan—the Bamar who had a dominant role for hundreds of year before their dominant role was ended by the British in 1885. In an attempt

---

[22] Chau, *Political Tribe*, 1-13.
[23] Yanhya Sadowski, "Ethnic Conflict," *Foreign Policy,* no. 111 (1991): 12-23.
[24] Chau, *Political Tribe,* 59-74.
[25] Ibid., 60.

to retake their dominant role, the Bamar-dominant central governments and Tatmadaw have attempted several ways to contain other minorities groups, especially the ethnic armed organizations. Since the independence, they have also tested democracy, socialism, and a hybrid system by mixing elements of democracy and military dictatorship.[26] However, all attempts have failed to create a certain level of peace and stability. This is, this study argues, mainly because there has been little understanding—especially among the political elites of the Tatmadaw—about the characteristics of ethnicity and ethnic groups that had made Burma home for centuries. The result of this is that ethnic grievances have been left unsolved since the British left Burma in 1948, and the attempts to contain ethnic groups and ethnic armed organizations by the dominant group have resulted in the longest-running civil war in the world in Burma.

[26] Steinberg, Burma/Myanmar, 41-214.

CHAPTER II: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY USED

This thesis applies the qualitative case study research method. There are certain situations in which applying the case study method as a qualitative research method is more appropriate than other methods. One of those situations is when the research question is broad.[27] In addition, this research approach is especially appropriate when the research question is descriptive, such as 'What is happening or has happened?'[28] The main research question of this study is: *In which conditions and how 'ethnicity' produce adverse effects that fuel armed conflicts?*

Though other research methods (i.e., interviews, surveys, quasi-experiments etc.) are able to provide more tangible evidence, the case study research method has the ability to produce the rich descriptions or the insightful explanations.[29] In addition, another benefit of applying the case study method is that it has the ability to draw from multiple sources, as opposed to a single source of data in other methods such as a survey with a set of questions, to confirm the evidence of the research claims.[30] The primary purpose of the case study research is to study a phenomenon. It is possible that there may be confusions between the case or cases that are being used in the study and the phenomenon.

> Sometimes, there are confusions between the phenomenon and the studied social unit(s). The danger of this is that it may put some report's readers – and sometimes the researcher him/herself – on the wrong foot: to erroneously regard the selected case, instead of the phenomenon to be studied, as paramount.[31]

In this thesis, the selected case—the main studied social unit—is 'Burma', and the phenomenon is 'the effects of ethnicity on internal armed conflicts.' Though the selected case is an important integral part of the research, the main emphasis should be placed on the phenomenon, not on the case itself. For instance, one could replace 'Burma' with another case to study a similar phenomenon: i.e. 'the impacts of racial bias on the internal militant ranking structure of the U.S Army.'

---

[27] Robert Yin, *Applications of Case Study Research* (Newbury Park: SAGE, 2003), 5.
[28] Ibid., 6.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., 10.
[31] Peter Swanborn, *Case Study Research: What, Why and How?* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 5.

It is also important to note that the case study research method has the ability to conduct analysis on multiple actors which may locate at different levels.[32] This is particularly helpful to study about ethnic groups whose access to power is significantly different. Based on the context of the phenomenon being studied, some actors may locate at the national level—i.e. a central government or a national army—whereas other actors may locate at the local level—i.e. a non-state actor who claims to represent a particular ethnic group in a specific territory. As the focus of this study is the effects of ethnicity on internal armed conflicts, it requires assessing many contested actors that are engaging in armed conflicts based on their ethnic characteristics and identities, in addition to analyzing key periods, events, actors, and processes that may have influenced the phenomenon. In addition, maintaining a maximum openness towards unknown aspects is critical in conducting a case study research project to 'let object speak.'[33] There can be confusion between 'research method' and 'research type' when it comes to the case study. Furthermore, some researchers may consider a case study research only a supplement, not as a research method itself. This view is not plausible—and outdated—as case study research method has the ability to conduct a comprehensive analysis independently.

> Case study research appears to serve only as a prelude. As a result, it may not be considered as involving a serious, much less rigorous, inquiry. However, such a traditional and sequential (if not hierarchical) view of social science methods is entirely outdated. Experiments and surveys have their own exploratory modes, and case study research goes well beyond exploratory functions. In other words, all the methods can cover the entire range of situations, from initial exploration to the completion of full and final authoritative studies, without calling on any other methods.[34]

Research Design

Three steps should be involved in designing a case study research. The first step is to define the case itself, which serves as the main unity of analysis. In addition, a case study research can have 'nested units' within the main unit of analysis.[35] The nest unites are often in the form of key periods, events, actors, and processes that have influenced to the phenomenon of

[32] Ibid, 6.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Swanborn, *Case Study Research*, 4-6.
[35] Yin, Case Study Research, 6.

the case study being analyzed. In this study, 'Burma' is the main unit of analysis, but the detailed analysis is conducted on nested units—key periods, events, actors, and processes—that may have contributed to the phenomenon. Critical periods (turning points) and events analyzed include 1) the colonial period (1885-1948); 2) the first decade of post-colonial Burma (1948-1958); 3) the military dictatorship period (1962-2008); and 4) the hybrid-regime period (2010 to 2020). Key actors analyzed include 1) British administrators; 2) U Nu Government; 3) Tatmadaw; 4) Ethnic Armed Organizations with a particular focus on Karen National Union (KNU). Key processes analyzed include 1) independent negotiation process and the 1947 Constitution; 2) 1974 Constitution; 3) National ceasefire processes (1989-2008 and 2013-2020); 4) the National Convention; and 5) 2008 Constitution.

The justification for choosing these key events, actors and processes—not others—is that they represent the whole territory of the case study, not just a specific part of the country. In other words, all the ethnic groups in Burma are subject to—and the victims of in some cases—these key events, actors, and processes, regardless of their consent to those causes. For example, when a constitution is approved, it applies to the whole territory, not only to specific areas, even if the constitutional process is unjust and exclusive. Likewise, British colonialism affected all ethnic groups in various ways, not just majority or minority groups. While including multiple units of analysis in this study may be seen as ambitious, it should be noted that this study only attempts to analyze those key events, actors, and processes from the lens of ethnicity only and see how they have contributed to the phenomenon. The same key periods, events, actors, and processes may have impacted other areas such as economic development and foreign policy, which are beyond the scope of this research. For example, one of the periods this study emphasized is the socialist ear (1962-1988). This study observes this period from the lens of ethnicity. Another researcher may look at the same period and study the economic development of Burma during this same period. Therefore, while scores of critical periods, events, actors, and processes are included in this study, the research parameter is limited by the phenomenon —the effects of ethnicity on internal armed conflicts. Ethnicity itself or ethnic differences *per se* do not produce adverse effects; it is due to specific actors, events, periods, and processes that have pushed ethnicity to become a source of violence and war. By formulating three hypotheses in relation to the main research question, this study aims to show a clear picture of the effects of ethnicity on internal armed conflicts in Burma.

Research Question and Hypotheses

In a case study research project, it is recommended that the researcher decides whether to use a theory.[36] Alternatively, the case study research method can also be used for testing hypotheses.[37] The main research question asks: *In which conditions and how 'ethnicity' produce adverse effects that fuel armed conflicts?* In addition, the following three hypotheses concerning the main research question will be tested:

Hypothesis 1 assumes that there is a negative relationship between ethnic conflict and colonial rule in Burma due to the way ethnicity and ethnic groups were treated by the British colonial administrators. H1A: presupposes that there is a negative relationship between the independence negotiation process and ethnic armed conflicts because of the way the negotiators handled the process. It should be noted that H1 and H1A should be considered as one main hypothesis as the contents of the two are inextricably linked and the analysis is performed on the same key periods, events, actors, and processes. Hypothesis 2 presumes that ethnicity cannot be neutralized by political ideologies due to their distinct and unique characteristics. Hypothesis 3 conjectures that when ceasefires are used by the dominant group to consolidate power, as opposed to solving ethnic grievances, armed conflicts are more likely to intensify between the dominant group and the minority groups.

Data Collection and Limitation

Case study research has the freedom to draw evidence from 'multiple sources of evidence.'[38] When the researcher has a personal relationship with the case study (e.g. the researcher is from the studied country (case study), personal observations should be minimized, if not restricted, in order to reduce the researcher's bias towards the case study and to protect the objectivity of the research. I'm from Burma and this means that I should minimize my subjective views as much as possible and try to approach this project objectively by using reliable and independent sources and findings from other scholars' works. No interviews were conducted as part of this research project. Census records were used significantly for the first part of the study,

[36] Ibid., 9.
[37] Janet Buttoolph Johnson, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff, *Political Science Research Methods* (Washington D.C.: CQS Press, 2019), 135.
[38] Yin, *Case Study Research,* 10.

especially to find out how ethnic groups were viewed by the British, and how they were categorized and used for various purposes throughout the colonial period in Burma. Examined documents include electronic copies of the original census data collected in the British Indian Empire between 1911 and 1931. In addition, the electronic copies of the following original documents were examined: Aung San-Atlee Agreement, the Panglong Agreement, Nu-Atlee Agreement, 1948 Citizenship Law, 1947 Burma Constitution, 1974 Burma Constitution, 1982 Citizenship Law, 2008 Constitution; and Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (2013).

> In case studies six common sources of evidence are used. This includes direct observations, interviews, (e.g., human actions or a physical environment), interviews (e.g., open-ended conversation with key participants); archival records (e.g., student records); documents (e.g., newspaper articles, letters and emails, reports); participant-observation (e.g., being identified as a researcher but also filling a real-life role in the scene being studied); and physical artifacts (e.g., computer downloads of employees' work).[39]

In addition, this study primarily uses datasets from Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) (ETH Zurich/UCLA), and The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)based at Uppsala University. Several sources from foreign media outlets and INGOs are also used to confirm sources to back up research claims in the analysis.

Reliable data on Burma is limited as the country has recently opened up after several decades under military authoritarian. David I. Steinberg—Distinguished Professor of Asia Studies Emeritus of Georgetown University—once said, "Burma is opaque in research terms," meaning that available data on Burma are often inaccurate, misleading, or inadequate, and in some cases have even been manipulated, as often the case in most authoritarian states.[40] The sources for this thesis were primarily drawn from primary and secondary sources in English. Primary sources include decades-old census data, legal documents, peace agreements, and constitutions, which are often unorganized and unclear, for they were written in times of crisis and dramatic changes. Another challenge is a considerable literature gap when it comes to ethnic conflict literature concerning Burma. While plenty of academic sources are available to study Bamar-dominant actors and processes, literature and records that deal with other minority ethnic groups are extremely limited. While several books have been written about the Tatmadaw, data

[39] Ibid.
[40] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar,* 9.

is minimal to conduct an in-depth analysis of other ethnic armed organizations whose presence on the internet is limited by their mountainous terrain and unrelenting jungle valleys.

CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining ethnicity and ethnic groups

As with other academic terms, the term 'ethnicity' has its original root in the Greek word *ethnos*, which simply means 'a community of common descent.' First and foremost, having a collective name is important to constitute as an ethnic community because it shows that a group of people have something in common.[41] According to Anthony Smith, who was a Professor of Emeritus of Ethnicity and Nationalism at London School of Economics (LSE), an ethnic community is "a named human population with a myth of common ancestry, shared memories, cultural elements, a link with a history territory or homeland, and a measure of solidarity."[42] In addition, by referencing Smith's concept on ethnicity, Michael Brown argues in his book titled 'Ethnic Conflict and International Security' that two basic elements are needed to identify ethnic groups: the first one is "the accentuation of cultural traits," and the second one is "the sense that those traits distinguish the group from the members of the society who do not share the differentiating characteristics." In other words, if a group is to be called an ethnic group, it must have specific characteristics (markers) which make them different from other groups in society.[43]

Scholars of ethnic studies such as Smith and Brown argue that at least six criteria must be met to consider a group as an ethnic group. The first one—and the most basis ethnic identity—is a collective name. Brown argues that having a collective name is essential because "a lack of a name reflects an insufficiently developed collective identity."[44] The second criteria is "a common ancestry." People may talk about their ancestors based on myths or realities, and those ancestral links do not necessarily need to be genetic ties. The third one has to do with "shared historical memories," which do not necessarily have to be based on facts. In most cases, they are often "myths or legends passed from generation to generation by word of mouth."[45] For instance, in a book titled 'From the Land of Green Ghosts' written by Pascal Khoo Thwe—who belongs to

---

[41] Anthony D. Smith, "Culture, community and territory: the politics of ethnicity and nationalism." *International Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1996): 445–458.
[42] Anthony D. Smith, "A Europe of Nations. Or the Nation of Europe?" *Journal of Peace Research* 30, no. 2 (1993): 129-135.
[43] Michale E. Brown et al., *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 3.
[44] Brown et al., *Ethnic Conflict and International Security,* 4-5.
[45] Ibid., 5.

Karenni ethnic group of Burma—the author starts the first chapter of the book by telling the world's creation from the view of his Karenni ancestors.[46] This is an example that ethnic groups appear to have their own versions of shared memories about their origin. The fourth criterion is a combination of one or more elements of common culture such as language, customs, or religion. Brown even adds "laws, institutions, dress, music, crafts, architecture, even food."[47] Perhaps, the fifth is of particular importance as it talks about physical attachment. The group must feel "an attachment to a specific piece of territory, which it may or may not inhabit."[48] Scholars of ethnic conflicts—who often use the term 'Territorial Autonomy'—often argue that 'attachment to land' is something, among many characteristics, that mainly fuel ethnic armed conflicts.[49]

In Burma, The Bamar call 'Amimyay'—translated as Mother Land—to refer to the land of their ancestors. The Arakanese ethnic group in the western part of Burma use 'Apamyay'—translated as Father Land—to refer to the land of their lost kingdom. The Karen ethnic group use the term 'Kawthoolei' to refer to a piece of land where they feel a sense of physical belonging. Land attachment, together with other ethnic criteria discussed above, can be observed almost in all ethnic groups in Burma.[50] Perhaps, the last criterion is vague. Smith argues that the group members "have to think of themselves as a group to constitute an ethnic community." This also means that the group members must have a sense of awareness that they belong to the same group.[51] In his landmark piece of work—The Origins of Nations— Smith simply called the groups that meet the six criteria mentioned earlier "Communities," though not all communities share those characteristics. In Smith's view, nations are made up of those groups, and it is impossible to understand how nations work without understanding those groups.[52] This is, however, not to suggest that all human identities are ethnic basis; some identities are non-ethnic but political ones. In his book 'Who Are We? America's Great Debate', Samuel P. Huntington

---

[46] Pascal Khoo Thwe, *From The Land of Green Ghosts: A Burmese Odyssey* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), 1-10.
[47] Brown et al., *Ethnic Conflict and International Security,* 5.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Lars-Erik Cederman, Simon Hug, Andreas Schadel and Julian Wucherpfennig, "Territorial Autonomy in the Shadow of Conflict: Too Little, Too Late?" *American Political Science Review* 109, no. 2 (2015): 354-370
[50] Author's personal observation.
[51] Brown et al., Ethnic Conflict and International Security, 4-5.
[52] Anthony D. Smith, "The origin of nations." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 12, no. 3 (1989).

argued how American national identity does not involve ethnic component, a model which has successfully neutralized the role of ethnicity in America. In addition, Huntington also argued that most Americans do not have a sense of attachment to a piece of land. While they may love their hometowns, Huntington argues that land attachment is not significant to become a part of their identity, which makes them different from other ethnic groups in many parts of the world.[53]

Therefore, the characteristics of an ethnic group include both tangible and intangible factors. They are not merely abstract and include physical attachments elements such as land, dress, dance, and even food. The groups come together to make collective voices and actions under these tangible and intangible characteristics. These characteristics may be politized for other interests, such as territorial gain or access to resources. In some extreme cases, ethnic groups are politized by external actors such as colonial powers, turning them into politicized groups that may engage in war and violence on behalf of those external powers, not for themselves. Not all ethnic groups engage in conflicts and the type of conflict that the groups may engage depend on the context (positions and factors). When ethnic groups are politized, they become political actors who make political demands which are often influenced by their ethnic characteristics.

The theories of ethnicity

The study of ethnicity and ethnic groups in general has theories and different schools of thought. In general, there are at least four different approaches when it comes to ethnicity. Primordialists argue that ethnicity is fixed characteristic, therefore, cannot be easily changed. This include "biological attributes, a long history of practicing cultural differences, or both."[54] Tina Kempin Reuter, the author of Ethnic Conflict on Encyclopedia, argues that ethnicity is treated as "an existential factor for defining individual self-identification or communal distinctness" under primordialists' view on ethnicity.[55] This approach is plausible given the fact that biological attributes are hard to change (people are born in specific ways) and that practicing a particular culture often takes generations. The opponents of this approach, the instrumentalists,

[53] Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? America's Great Debate* (London: the Free Press, 2005), 37-53.
[54] Tina Kempin Reuter, "Ethnic Conflict," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15 Nov. 2021, https://www.britannica.com/topic/ethnic-conflict. (Accessed 31 December 2021).
[55] Ibid.

argue that by putting the characteristics as fixed, primordialists ignore the role of certain variations—the elements that are not fixed—in ethnic identities, Reuter argues.[56] In other words, there are no such thing as 'fixed' as everything changes with the passing of time. In contract to primordialists, scholars such as Benedit Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and Eric Hobsbawn argue that nations—in this sense 'nations' as 'communities of peoples'—and nationalism as a modern invention. In their view, ethnic characteristics—which are often the fuel of nationalist movements—are socially constructed to fulfill political and economic interests of the modern world. Anthony Smith rejects, at least to some extend if not entirely, the notion of these scholars, that ethnic nationalism—a term to describe the political movements fueled by ethnic characteristics—is the product or modernity.[57]

In addition, instrumentalists views ethnicity 'as a device' used by individuals and communities to unify, organize, and mobilize populations to achieve larger goals.[58] This may include using ethnicity as a political device to mobilize a particular group of voters. This approach is often popular among politicians—especially populists—who treat certain elements of ethnicity for political goals. The downside of this approach, Reuter argues, is that ethnicity "has very little or no independent ranking outside the political process and is in its character comparable to other political affiliations such as ideological beliefs or party membership."[59] In addition, social constructivists argue that ethnicity is neither fixed nor open. While they accept that ethnic groups have specific characteristics, they argue that those characteristics are subject to social conditions, and there is a direct correlation between social conditions and characteristics, meaning that ethnic characteristics can be changed based on social conditions. While this group does not deny the existence of ethnic differences, they argue that how to apply ethnic differences depends on personal choices.

In addition to the three different main approaches discussed above, other scholars such as Marc Ross—an expert in ethnicity at Bryn Mawr College in the U.S—approaches ethnicity from the perspective of 'psychocultural interpretations and psychocultural dramas.' According to

---

[56] Ibid.
[57] Finkel, Matt Finkel, "Theories of Nationalism: A Brief Comparison of Realist and Constructivist Ideas of the Nation," *Inquiries Journal* 8, no.10 (2006).
[58] Reuter, *Ethnic Conflict*.
[59] Ibid.

Rose, psycho-cultural interpretations include "shared, deeply held worldviews found in group narratives" and psycho-cultural dramas include "conflicts over competing, and apparently irresolvable, claims engage the central elements of a group's historical experience." In most cases, values attached to ethnicity are non-negotiable, Rose argues, which explains why ethnic conflicts based on ethnicity are challenging to resolve.[60]

> Psychocultural dramas polarizing events whose manifest content involves non-negotiable cultural claims, and/or rights that become important because of their connections to core metaphors group narratives that embody a group's identity. In ethnic conflicts, psychocultural arise over competing claims that evoke deeply rooted dimensions of the conflict which be settled by reference to more general rules or higher authority.[61]

In this regard, Rose and Chau are on the same place, as both seem to argue that the motives behind ethnic conflicts are based on psychocultural ones, as opposed to carefully calculated wars initiated by other political actors. Chau even argues that individuals may even give their lives if their cause benefit the groups—which Chau calls tribes.[62]

How ethnicity and Ethnic Groups are defined and viewed in Burma?

In general, it can be argued that ethnic characteristics in Burma are fixed, thus cannot be easily changed. While inter-marriage is common in Burma, each group is considered separate, and some groups may share more similarities than differences. For instance, in recent years, the conflicts between the Arakan Army (AA)—an Arakanese ethnic armed organization—and the Tatmadaw—a Bamar-dominant armed force—have intensified, though these two groups share the same religion—Theravada Buddhism.[63]

Donald L. Horowitz's—Professor of Law and Political Science—interpretation of ethnicity is perhaps the most appropriate way to describe how ethnicity is widely viewed in Burma. Horowitz argues:

---

[60] Marc Ross, ed., "Psychoultural Interpretations and Drammas: Identity Dynamics in Ethnic Conflict." *Political Psychology* 22, no.1 (2001),157-178.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Chau, *Political Tribe, 1.*
[63] Author's personal observation.

> Ethnic groups can be placed at various points along the birth-choice continuum. But there is always a significant element of descent. Most people are born into the ethnic group in which they will die, and ethnic groups consist mostly of those who have been born into them.[64]

He argues that individuals and groups may alter their ethnic identity, and groups are different in tolerance levels towards outsiders. In other words, the extent to which ethnic groups are willing to give up or share their cultural traits with outsiders varies group by group. He presents Karen—a major ethnic group in Burma—to illustrate his point.

> The Karen along Thai-Burmese frontier, for example, are willing to recognize as Karen men from outside the group who marry Karen women and conform to a few key Karen behavioral rules. Nevertheless, most Karen become group members by being born to Karen parents.[65]

In Horowitz's view, belong to a particular ethnic group (ethnic membership) is an ethnic marker literally given at birth. Therefore, in most cases, if a person wants to belong to a particular ethnic group, that person must be born into that group. In this view, Horowitz argues, "ethnicity and kindship are alike."[66]

Burma's latest census data—conducted in 2014 with support from the U.N—does not provide specific ethnic data. This means that researchers do not have a factual base to determine the exact percentage ratio of each ethnic group in Burma.[67] The ones available are only approximated. However, it is not disputed that the Bamar composes approximately 70% of Burma's population, and the remaining percentages represent other minority groups, with no minority groups having more than 10%.[68] In addition, ethnicity is closely linked to land attachment in Burma, one of the characteristics described by Smith and Brown. Geographically, Burma is divided into seven states and seven regions. The main difference between regions and states is that regions are predominantly Bamar, while ethnic minorities mainly populate the

---

[64] Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Group in Conflict*, (Berkeley: California University Press, 1985), 55.
[65] Ibid., 56.
[66] Ibid., 55-78.
[67] San Yamin Aung, "Still No Date for Release of Census Findings on Ethnic Populations," *The Irrawaddy,* Feb. 21, 2018. https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/still-no-date-release-census-findings-ethnic-populations.html
[68] Steinberg, Burma/Myanmar, XXIV (Preliminary Notes)

states.[69] Furthermore, the states are named after the major ethnic groups that inhabit those states: Kachin State, Karenni State, Karen State, Chin State, Mon State, Arakan State, and Shan State. Appendix (A) shows the geographical locations of these major ethnic groups.

As of this writing, the Government of Myanmar officially recognizes 135 ethnic groups, which is highly controversial among human rights observers as the list excludes groups like Rohingya Muslims of Rakhine State and market-dominant minorities—a term coined by Chau to describe the groups who have significant business power in states where they are the minorities—such as Indians and Chinese from the list.[70] In addition to the eight major ethnic groups mentioned above, smaller minorities are considered as 'sub-groups' of those eight large groups, something not accepted by anthropologists. For instance, in the government list, Akha is considered a sub-group of Shan—who are the majority in Shan State. However, Akha and Shan do not have any significant cultural links, though both are also present in the People Republic of China, Thailand, Laos, and China.[71] In recent years, Burma has also witnessed intra ethnic conflicts, especially in Shan State, where two armed groups are fighting against each other under the same ethnic name.[72] While intra-ethnic conflicts are another research worthy area, it should be noted that the research for this study is limited by inter-ethnic conflicts, not intra ethnic conflicts.

Identity crisis and the struggle for recognition

Each ethnic group in Burma appears to represent a distinct ethnic identity and there is a lack of 'a shared national identity' which give ethnic groups a sense of belonging to the state. When ethnic groups in Burma go to war, they go under the name of their ethnic groups. The initial observations of ethnic grievances in Burma is that there is an identity crisis—a state of not having a shared national identity that give people a sense of belonging to the state. In addition, when ethnic groups feel that their unique characteristics are not fully recognized, they react collectively to get recognition, which often put them in a situation in which they have run out of

---

[69] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, 1-11.
[70] *Transnational Institute*, "Ethnicity without Meaning, Data without Context," Feb. 2014, 1-20. https://www.tni.org/en/briefing/ethnicity-without-meaning-data-without-context
[71] Author belongs to Akha ethnic group.
[72] "Rival Armed Groups Fight Over Territorial Dispute in Myanmar's Shan State," *The Irrawaddy,* July.1, 2012, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/rival-armed-groups-fight-over-territorial-dispute-in-myanmars-shan-state.html

diplomatic options and have to take up arms to fight for their ethnic recognition—for who they are. This has resulted in a situation which I describe by using the term 'Identity Crisis and the Struggle for Recognition'. This study does not provide a separate literature review on identity crisis and recognition as it does with ethnicity and ethnic groups. This is mainly because this study look at identity crisis and struggle for recognition as the presumed effects of the clashes among different ethnic groups—especially between the dominant group and the minorities groups—not as a specific field that requires in-depth literature review like ethnicity. Thus, the main theme of this study is still ethnicity and ethnic groups and their effects on armed conflicts, not the identity crisis and struggle for recognition—though these are the two significant affects that I initially observed before I deep dive into the detailed analysis. This should explain the way the thesis title is established.

CHAPTER III: ANALYSIS OF MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION AND TESTING HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: There is a negative relationship between colonial rule and ethnic conflict in Burma because of the way ethnicity was treated by the British colonial administrators.

Introduction

There is a popular assumption among Indian scholars such as Shashi Tharoor that British were so good at "Divide et Impera." In one of Tharoor's books titled 'An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India,' Tharoor argues that while caste system had existed prior to the arrival of the British to India, it was not something people used to divide each other in India, which changed negatively after the arrival of the British in India.[73]

> "Caste is something we've all been taught to believe has been there for thousands of years and we have always practiced it. But in fact the practice of caste before the British came was much more relaxed, much more fuzzy; there was much more permeability between caste and much more movement of caste up the social chain. So what is striking is that it was the British who made people far more self-conscious of caste identities and separation and distinction among them."[74]

Other scholars such as Pradeep Barua who is an expert on British Empire talks about the way the British classified the races of India based on martial races and non-martial race. Based on their interpretation of the fighting qualities of Indian races, the British officials recruited certain ethnic groups into the British India Army and deliberately excluded certain groups from serving in the army.[75] When the British annexed Burma, they brought these concepts of race and ethnicity. In fact, Burma was governed as a province of the British India and was only separated in 1937—only ten years before the Indian independence and eleven years before the Burma independence. As they did in India, the British used ethic groups to fulfill their political and military goals in Burma. For example, the British never recruited Bamar—the dominant group—in the army while other smaller ethnic groups such as Kachin, Karen and Chin were recruited

---

[73] Shashi Tharoor, "Q&A: Shashi Tharoor on Why the British Owe India an Apology," Interview by Anupriya Kumar, *REUTERS,* Nov. 15, 2016, https://www.reuters.com/article/shashi-tharoor-ear-of-darkness-book-inte-idINKBN13A0X9

[74] Ibid.

[75] Pradeep Barua, "Inventing Race: The British and India's Martial Races," *The Historian* 58, no.1 (1995), 107-116.

and trained to fulfill colonial manpower.[76] Therefore, it is evident that there is a relationship between the colonial rule and the issues around ethnicity and ethnic groups. The initial observation is that this relationship may be negative, but this should be tested as a hypothesis. By analyzing key periods, events, actors, and processes of the colonial rule, this study will see if the hypothesis can be justified or rejected.

The Anglo-Burmese Wars

The British Empire and the Konbaung Dynasty or the Third Burmese Empire fought three wars in the 19th century: the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826); the Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852-1853); and the Third Anglo-Burmese War (1885).[77] The Burmese kingdoms—which had existed at least a thousand years prior to the British annexation of Burma—were known for their aggressive and expansionist behaviors, and they once controlled a territory larger than present-day Burma. In fact, the First Anglo-Burmese War started due to the expansionist behavior of the Burmese dynasty.

> "A Burmese invasion of Assam, north of Bengal, was seen as a threat to British India, and led to the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826). As a result of this war, the British acquired parts of Lower Burma (in southern Myanmar). Further Wars in 1852 and 1885 led to the conquest of the rest of Lower Burma and Upper Burma."[78]

The modern Burmese armed forces—especially the past and present Tatmadaw generals who have ruled Burma directly and indirectly since 1962—take great pride in the heyday of the Burmese kingdoms.[79] At government schools, students are taught about powerful Burmese kings who bravely fought enemies and conquered the territories of regional kingdoms such as the Kingdom of Mrauk U—the lost kingdom of the Arakanese ethnic group—which was defeated by Burmese Konbaung Dynasty in 1785—as well as neighboring ones such as Ayutthaya Kingdom of Thailand or Siam which fell under the Burmese kingdom during the Burmese-Siamese War (1765-1767).[80] Until today, Ayuttaya City in Thailand, which the UNESCO recognizes as an

---

[76] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar,* 16-39.
[77] BBC, "Myanmar Profile-Timeline," Sep.3, 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12992883
[78] Akhilesh Pillalamarri, "When Burma Was Still Part of British India," *The Diplomat*, Sep. 30, 2017. https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/when-burma-was-still-part-of-british-india/
[79] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, 16-24.
[80] Author's own experience.

extensive archaeological site, remains in ruin after being destroyed by the Burmese Kingdom in the 18th century.

> The city was attacked and razed by the Burmese army in 1767 who burned the city to the ground and forced the inhabitants to abandon the city. The city was never rebuilt in the same location and remains known today as an extensive archaeological site.[81]

The statues of Bamar kings can also be widely seen in most public areas in Burma—for example, in front of the Defense Service Academy in May Myo town—where future military officers of Tatmadaw are trained.[82] Significant military operations of the Tatmadaw are often named after Bamar kings. The Bamar—especially those who are the direct descendants of the Bamar kings and queens—still remember the day the British took away their latest King Thipaw and Queen Supayalat from the Royal Palace in Mandalay and exiled them to Ratagir, India, a port city of the Arabian Sea. The relatives of the royal family still gather annually to remember the memories of this painful past. Burma identity—built upon at least a thousand years of successive Bamar kingdoms with Buddhism as the main religion—was pretty much left untouched for centuries prior to the British annexation of Burma in 1885.[83]

> The modern Burmese state was born out of military occupation. Over the course of the 19th century, Britain's Indian empire conquered the coastline from Bengal to Malaya, together with the valley of the Irrawaddy river and the surrounding highlights. From these territories they created British Burma, a province governed from Calcutta. There had been Burmese-speaking kingdoms for at least a thousand years, but Burma's current borders are modern. The last independent kingdom was snuffed out in 1885; tens of thousands died in the 'pacification' campaigns that followed.[84]

British's view towards Bamar and other minority groups

After annexing Burma in 1885, Burma was governed as a province of British India or the Raj, which once controlled the Indian subcontinent from 1858 to 1947; today's Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Burma were all under the control of the Raj. Even before 1885, much of western and southern parts of present-day Burma—the areas lost during the First Anglo-Burmese

---

[81] UNESCO, "Historic City of Ayutthaya." https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/576/
[82] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar,* 16-24.
[83] Kalaung, Zuzakar, "We Were Kings: Burma's Lost Royal Family," *Myanmar Times*, Nov 2, 2017, https://www.mmtimes.com/news/we-were-kings-burmas-lost-royal-family.html
[84] Thant Myint-U, ed., "Not a Single's Year Peace," *London Books Review of Books* 41, no. 22 (2019).

War and the Second Anglo-Burmese War—were under British rule for more than six decades.[85] Appendix (B) shows the areas lost under all three Anglo-Burmese Wars.

The characteristics of Burmese identity—based on the six criteria defined by Anthony Smith in the literature review—were challenged not only by the British but also by other newcomers that came along with the British. The British brought with them ideas about managing different races and ethnic groups, skilled labourers, soldiers, civil servants etc., from other parts of British Indian Empire to their newly conquered territory—Burma. In addition, as noted by Human Rights Watch, there was significant internal migration and borders were not clearly defined within the British Indian Empire. Rangoon—the former capital city of Burma—was considered a place of economic prosperity and attracted traders, skilled workers, and immigrants from British India and beyond, such as China.

> Colonial rule brought economic growth and with it the unregulated emigration of millions of people from across the Indian subcontinent. Burma was then a more prosperous land, the "first America" for many Indian families, a place of opportunity and personal reinvention. In the late 1920s Rangoon, now Yangon, rivaled New York as the world's largest immigrant port, receiving 428,300 people in 1927 alone (when the total population was around 10 million). Rangoon became an Indian city.[86]

As the British came into contact with other groups in addition to Bamar in their newly conquered land, they came to realize that there were in the frontier and periphery areas of the province other groups whose customs were significantly different from that of the Bamar. One of those groups—the Shan—even had their nominally sovereign entities governed by local monarchs called Saophoas. The British also found that—except Arakanese and Shan—the hill peoples of Burma were underdeveloped and isolated from the rest of Bamar society.[87] The British administrators also noticed that the central plains areas—called the heart of the

[85] Akhilesh Pillarlamarri, "When Burma Was Still Part of British India," *The Diplomat*, Sep 30, 2017, https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/when-burma-was-still-part-of-british-india/#:~:text=The%20British%20colony%20of%20Burma,an%20independent%20country%2C%20in%201947.

[86] Thant Myint-U, "Myanmar, an unfinish nation," *NIKKI ASAI*, Jun. 17, 2017, https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Myanmar-an-unfinished-nation

[87] Andrew Selth, "Race and Resistance in Burma (1942-1945)." *Modern Asia Studies* 20, no. 3 (1986), 483-507.

province—represent Bamar identity for various reasons. This can be understood in the words of one colonial administrator who personally participated in the 1911 census report:

> It is [the central plain areas of Burma] the cradle of the Burmese race. It is the venue of the transformation of numerous, petty, diverse and hostile nomadic tribes from the Himalayan region, into a united and powerful nation, sufficiently cohesive to maintain a virile and aggressive existence between its formidable Indian and Chinese neighbors. Neither the vicissitudes of war, nor the domination of alien conquerors, nor the immigration of numerous and diverse racial elements have been able to arrest this silent, steady and apparently inevitable development towards a unified and highly individualized nationality. The national or racial instinct has been sufficiently intense to avert the consequences of unsuccessful war during an ear when such consequences usually approached extermination, and to absorb the intruding element. This central area, the heart of the Province, exhibits the various characteristics of Burmese life to a degree unattainable in any of the remaining division.[88]

In other words, the British administrators saw that the heartland areas of Burma represent the various characteristics of the Bamar ethnic group. As described above, the British colonial administrators described the central areas of Burma as 'the cradle of Burmese [Bamar] race.' The demographic changes within the Burma heartland were not significant and up until the 1930s, Bamar had always been a dominant group in the central area, and the rest groups were absorbed into successive Bamar kingdoms even before the British defeated the last Burmese kingdom in 1885. [89]

However, ethnic groups of Burma were so complicated that the British only used language differences as the only indicator to categorize different races of Burma. Though it was easy to identify major ethnic groups—Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin, Mon, Bamar, Arakan, Shan—it was impossible to identify all the peoples of Burma because there were dozens of other groups who appeared to share relatively the same customs but at the same time different in their own rights. This can be illustrated in the words of one British administrator that participated in the 1931 census data.

> Some of the races or tribes in Burma change their language almost as often as they change their clothes. Languages are changed by conquest, by absorption, by isolation and by a general tendency to adopt the language of a neighbor who is considered to belong to a more

[88] The Government of the United Kingdom, Census of India 1911: Burma-Part I Report, 1912, Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing Office.
[89] The Government of the United Kingdom, Census of India 1931, Pub (8-43), Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing Office.

> powerful, more numerous or more advanced race or tribe. To obtain more accurate knowledge of the inter-relationship and culture of our tribes, a study of ethnology, anthropology, and folk lore is of the greatest importance. Unfortunately, practically nothing, so far, has been done in this respect, and races are becoming more and more mixed, and the threads more and more difficult to disentangle.[90]

This means that who belonged to which group was loosely defined based on only language differences, and most British administrators, if not all, were not anthropologists. It appears to me that they conducted the censuses only for administrative reasons and no specific anthropological investments, which require an extensive time commitment, were made to systematically study all the ethnic groups of Burma. The only marker they used was language differences. Therefore, there were simply no clear benchmarks to understand all the groups' exact similarities and differences.

Geographically, the British also divided Burma into two parts: Ministerial Burma—the Bamar-dominant heartland and the cradle of Bamar ethnic identity—and Frontier Areas—most of which are mountainous terrain and unrelenting jungle valleys—inhabited by Shan, Kachin, Chin, and other ethnic groups other than the Bamar. Administratively speaking, Ministerial Burma or the lower part of today's Burma was governed directly, whereas other ethnic groups in the Frontier Areas were left pretty much untouched. This geographical divide and two separate administrative arrangements have a significant influence on the way ethnic groups feel about their land. For instance, throughout the colonial period, the Shan were left pretty much untouched by the British and were allowed to continue their traditional rule, whereas Bamar monarchy was abolished, and the heartland was subject to direct British administrative system.[91]

Based on the findings from the census reports from 1911, 1921, and 1931, it was clear that the colonial administrators assumed that the ethnic groups in the frontier and periphery areas of Burma typically have certain characteristics or markers that set them apart from the rest of the Bamar of the heartland. In addition, due to rugged geographical features, each group appeared to be independent of one another, though some groups share more similarities than differences. I would also argue that, based on the way colonial officials viewed towards ethnicity and ethnic

[90] Ibid., 245.
[91] Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps,* 220-290.

groups in Burma, the colonial administrators appeared to think that many tribes and ethnic groups of Burma were badly organized.

The findings from the 1941 Census were never published due to the Japanese invasion of Burma in 1942. Though census reports were conducted at then end of the First Anglo-Burmese War, only the census reports conducted after 1901 onwards are more comprehensive. The census reports examined as part of this research—1911, 1921 and 1931—found that the British saw Bamar as a separate race. While there are other groups that seem to have strong characteristics of their own, none of them was able to dominate Bamar prior to the British annexation of Burma in 1885. This Bamar-dominant ethnic power collapsed in 1885 when the British annexed the last Burmese Kingdom.

> The British saw the Burmans [Bamar]—the Burmese-speaking, overwhelmingly Buddhist people of the Irrawaddy valley—as a separate race. As they became more familiar with the dozens of other peoples in their new province, such as the Shan and the Karen, they formulated theories about racial origins, fine-tuned their ideas about racial difference, and categorized each racial grouping as 'indigenous' or 'alien'.[92]

Martial race vs. non-martial race

By taking advantage of the poorly organized nature of ethnic groups, the British started treating them to pursue their political and military goals, including filling the manpower for the British Burma Army and world wars. As discussed previously, their military recruitment strategy appeared to be based on what is known as 'Martial Race Theory', something the British administrators had used in India even before they annexed Burma. The concept of the martial race suggests that certain races are better warriors or soldiers than other races due to their biological or cultural superiority—an outdated non-scientific benchmark to measure the fighting quality.[93]

My analysis shows that this recruitment policy became part of the recruitment policy in Burma. Out of many ethnic groups of Burma, Karen, Kachin, and Chin were considered 'martial races' while Bamar and others were considered a 'non-martial race'. Another scholar of Burmese

[92] Thant Myint-U, *Not a Single's Year Peace.*
[93] Kaushik Roy, "Race and Recruitment in the Indian Army: 1880-1918", *Modern Asian Studies* 47, no. 4 (2013), 1310-1347.

history simply argues that it was rather a trust issue. Steinberg argues that the British had little trust in Bamar who resisted their rule during the Anglo-Burmese wars. Even after the Third Anglo-Burmese War, it took a few years for the British to fully put Bamar under their rule, as there were those who did not accept the defeat and went on to rebel against the colonial rule.[94]

Modern Burmese historians also argue that the Karen—one of the major ethnic groups of Burma—were also used to defeat the last Burmese kingdom. The Karen was the first group with whom the British successfully built a strong relationship. One explanation for this is that the Karen suffered oppression under the Burmese monarchy. Perhaps due to their war efforts against the last Burmese kingdom in 1885, the Karen were later viewed as a martial race by the British. In addition to Karen, the British also used Chin and Kachin to build up colonial military force.

> The Burmese monarchy had reviled the minorities as illiterate pagans and treated them harshly whenever their paths crossed. The Karen suffered most, being at the mercy of the Burman communities in the delta. Of all the ethnic minorities it was the Karens in particular who welcomed the advent of the British, seeing in colonial rule the means of gaining protection from the majority race and of getting opportunities previously denied them.[95]

The first military regiment in the British India Army—the 70th Burma Rifles—were composed of only three ethnic groups: Karen, Kachin, and Chin—the three martial races according to the British officials. However, the British recruited Bamar into the army to fulfil the manpower to fight in WWI.

> Thousands of Burmese volunteered to serve in Mesopotamia as drivers, sappers, and part of the labour corps. Chin volunteers served as part of the labour corps on the Western Front (in France). The 70th Burma Rifles and the 85th Burman Rifles were raised in 1917-1918 and saw action against the Ottoman Empire in both Mesopotamia and Palestine. These regiments included men from various ethnic backgrounds, including Chins, Kachins, Burmans [Bamar] and Karens.[96]

However, there were no Bamar in the army at the start of WWII. This means that the British only used Bamar for WWI efforts and disbanded them after the war, a significant proof that it was the British's plan to keep Bamar ethnic group out of the army. Another argument for this is that with the growing Bamar nationalist movements at home during the 1930s, it was not

---

[94] Steinberg, Burma/Myanmar, 16-39.
[95] Selth, Andrew. "Race and Resistance in Burma (1942-1945)." *Modern Asia Studies* 20, no. 3 (1986), 483-507.
[96] Lost Footsteps. "Burmese Who Fought in WWI." https://lostfootsteps.org/en/history/burmese-who-fought-in-world-war-one

wise to retain Bamar in the army, as Steinberg argues. When Burma was separated in 1937 from British India on the basis of race difference to become British Burma, the army was made up of 50% Karen, 25% Chin and 25% Kachin.[97]

The rise of Bamar nationalism

The British used minority ethnic troops and other non-Bamar troops in the British India Army to suppress Bamar nationalist movements such as the Sayar San Movement in the 1930s—a Burmese nationalist movement led a physician turned nationalist against the British colonial rule.[98] In addition, the introduction of secular education and the inroad of Christian institutions into Burma made early Bamar leaders feel threatened for their Bamar identity, especially for Buddhism which is a significant component of Bamar identity.[99] As the Burmese saying goes, "To Be Bamar is to be Buddhist."[100]

Several Bamar-dominant organizations emerged in the early 20th century to tackle the British influence on the characteristic of Bamar ethnic identity. When the role of Buddhism and Sangha—the basic characteristics of the Bamar ethnic group—was downplayed due to the rising influence of Christianity, the Bamar responded by establishing Buddhist institutions. In 1906, Yong Men Buddhist Association (YMBA) was founded. David I. Steinberg argues that YMBA was aimed to rival Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) and to counter the influence of Christianity during the colonial rule.[101] As discussed in literature review on ethnicity, ethnic groups react collectively when they feel that their ethnic characteristics have been threatened. Political activities were banned under British rule, but YMBA was viewed as apolitical. However, YMBA split into different groups over the disagreement between older members and younger members regarding the future of the association. Steinberg argues that the split

---

[97] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, 16-39.
[98] Renaud, Egreteau. "Burma/Myanmar." *Mas Violence and Resistance*, Oct. 19, 2009, https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/burma-myanmar-1930-2007.html
[99] Ibid.
[100] Juliance Schober, "To be Burmese is to be Buddhist: Formation of Buddhist Modernity in Colonial Burma, In Theravada Buddhism in Colonial." *Taylor and Francis*, Jan.1, 2018., 21-41.
[101] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar,* 16-39.

happened due to the fact that the younger members of YMBA wanted to pursue political goals, while older members believed that the association should remain apolitical.[102]

This was also the starting point when the Bamar ethnic grievances turned into nationalist movements and then eventually to an independence movement. A fraction from YMBA formed the General Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA). Later many members of GCBA left and established separate Burma-dominant political associations. In 1930, the most influential Bamar political association called Dobama Asisayone—meaning 'We Burmans Association'. This association was composed of young and dedicated university students such as Aung San—the father of Aung San Suu Kyi—and U Nu who grew up with fresh political goals, including fighting for independence. The members of this association call themselves 'Thakins'—which can be translated as 'Masters'. By calling themselves Thakins, the Thakins planned to mobilize the Bamar population on the premise that the Bamar were the masters of the land, not the British.[103] Their slogan read:

> "Burma is our country; Burmese literature is our literature; Burmese language is our language. Love our country, raise the standards of our literature, respect our language."[104]

External factors: WWII and the Japanese invasion of Burma

For the Thakins, it was impossible to get military support inside Burma as there were no significant Bamar troops in the British India Army. The British' deliberate plan to keep the Bamar ethnic group out of the army appeared to be effective. This is when the Thakins started seeking outside support. A few external factors influenced Burma around this time. In terms of political ideology, the Thakins were more leaning towards communism. In fact, the first foreign support they sought was from communist China. In 1940, Aung San flew to China with the hope of getting support to establish an independent Bamar Army to fight the British.[105] At the same time, the Japanese interest in Burma was also growing to block the Burma Road, which the

[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Nicholas Tarling, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 286.
[105] Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*, 220-257.

Allied Forces were using to provide military assistance to anti-communists Chinese.[106] The Japanese needed some connections inside Burma. Colonel Keji Suzuki—a staff officer at the Imperial General Headquarters in Japan—was given the task of dealing with Burma. Suzuki travelled to Burma secretly, posing as a journalist for the Yomiuri Shimbun—a daily Japanese newspaper still in operation today in Tokyo—in September 1940. During his trip, he met the Thakins from the Dobama Asisayone. He was later referred to Aung San, who was already in China, seeking Chinese supports to overthrow the British. Suzuki later made contact with Aung San, and both agreed to work together for mutual benefits. An organization named Minami Kikan was established in February 1941. This organization was tasked to support Bamar independent fighters and close the Burma Road to China.[107] The strategic calculation was that the Bamar would liberate from British colonial rule, at least this is what Aung San and his comrades appeared to think, while the Japanese would be able to cut the strategic Burma Road. They, through Minami Kikan, started recruiting potential independent fighters. In April of 1941, Aung San and 19 others secretly left Burma and were trained on Hainan Island. These independent fighters are known as 'Thirty Comrades.'[108]

In December of 1941, the Burma Independent Army (BIA) was formed in Bangkok. Historical records show that initially the BIA consisted of 227 Burmese and 74 Japanese. BIA's Commander-in-Chief was Suzuki himself, and Aung San was appointed as Senior Staff Officer. As they entered Burma, BIA gained civilian support—mainly from the Bamar ethnic group—and grew in numbers. By the time BIA reached Rangoon, the number of troops had grown to approximately 23 000 troops who forced the British to retreat to India. Under Japanese rule, Burma became independent on August 1, 1943. The Japanese invasion of Burma has a profound impact on the BIA. Under Japanese rule, most people, if not all, at the top brass of BIA were Bamar. Dr Ba Maw—a Cambridge University-trained judge who defended Sayar San—was appointed as the head of state. Aung San became the Minister of Defense. Ne Win, one of the members of the Thirty Comrades, became Commander-in-chief of the expanded Burma National

---

[106] Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Burma Road." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 28, 2020. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Burma-Road.
[107] Aung Zaw, "The Man Behind the Burma Independence Army," *The Irrawaddy*, August 25, 2017, https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/commentary/man-behind-burma-independence-army.html
[108] Ibid.

Army, which consisted of seven battalions of infantry and many supporting units dominated by Bamar ethnic group.[109]

As noted above, prior to WWII, there were literally zero Bamar in the army under British rule. Under Japanese rule, the Bamar started, for the first time, serving in the Burma National Army with the support from the Japanese. However, things became clear that the Japanese were merely using the Bamar to pursue their WWII goals.[110] Another reason that the Bamar leaders such as Aung San grew disunification was that the Japanese military officers—who were training the Bamar soldiers in post-British rule—treated the Bamar with cultural disdain.

> It was not long before Aung San found that what he meant by independence had little relation to what the Japanese were prepared to give—that he had exchanged an old master for an infinitely more tyrannical new one. As one of his leading followers once said to me, "If the British sucked our blood, the Japanese ground our bones!"[111]

The end of Japanese rule and British dilemma

In 1944, another Burma-dominant organization called Anti-Fascist Organization (AFO) was established—this time to overthrow the Japanese. The goal of this organization is anti-Japanese resistance and the founding members of this group include modern Burma's political parties such as Communist Part of Burma (CPB) led by Thakin Soe, the Burma National Army (BNA)—rebranded from BIA—led by Aung San, and three socialists from the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP)—Kyaw Nyein, Thakin Chit, and Ba Swe; many of these individuals were born out of Dobama Asiasayone. Therefore, in a way, they all were Bamar nationalists who teamed up together, despite significant political ideological differences among them, for a common interest: that is, to overthrow the Japanese and regain control of their ethnic role. It is important to note that the most prominent figures, if not all, that dominated Burmese politics during Japanese rule are all Bamar ethnic. Through AFO, Aung San and others made contact between 1944 and 1955 with the Allied Forces led by the British, who agreed to work with Aung

---

[109] Maung Htin Aung , David I Steinberg, and Michael Arthur Aung-Thwin, "Myanmar". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 6 Aug. 2021, https://www.britannica.com/place/Myanmar.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Field Marshal Sir William Slim, *Defeat into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India (1942-1945)*, 2nd ed. (London: Cassell & Company, 1956).

San's led AFO to overthrow the Japanese from Burma. By May 1945, the Japanese retreated from Burma. A year later, AFO was renamed Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). According to Steinberg, the name change indicates that the aim of the organization was not only to free Burma from the Japanese but also to achieve a full independence from the British.[112]

At the end of the Japanese invasion, Burma was totally transformed into a different place. The economy was in ruin due to WWII and the atrocities committed by the Bamar-dominant BIA and Japanese forces against other minorities such as the Karen during the Japanese invasion of Burma remained unsolved. The British were faced with a dilemma. The British Governor of Burma Reginald Dorman-Smith and General Willian Slim wanted to declare BNA illegal and dissolve it. This decision was dismissed by Supreme Allied Commander Louis Mountbatten. The Supreme Allied Commander's rationale was that if the British arrested Aung San for his alleged crime and his cooperation with the Japanese forces during WWII, the Bamar troops—which significantly grew in numbers and strength since WWII—under BNA would fight the British. Therefore, the only viable option left was to work with Aung San.[113]

The main challenge for the British was how to reform the post-WWII British Burma Army. Previously, as discussed above, the British did not use the Bamar in the British Burma Army. However, after WWII, it was impossible to maintain this style—the deliberate exclusion of the Bamar ethnic group in the army based on martial race and non-martial race—and there was a need to think about how to merge the troops served under the British and the Bamar independent fighters trained by the Japanese officials. The British offered for around 5,000 veterans and 200 officers of the Patriotic Burmese Force (PBF)—renamed from BNA—to form the core of a post-war Burma Army in which the previous Karen, Kachin, and Chin battalions would be integrated, with all troops will be subject to the British command.[114] Aung San was offered the rank of Deputy Inspector General, which he rejected to pursue political goals. In place of him, Bo Let Ya, another member of the Thirty Comrades, got the position while Aung San became a civilian political leader in the AFPFL and the leader of People's Volunteer

[112] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar,* 16-19.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Martin Smith, *Burma—Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1999).

Organization (PVO)—composed of veterans and ex-BNA.[115] It appears to me that the people who were not selected by the British to serve in the post-war army—the numbers mentioned above—went on to serve under this organization under Aung San leadership. This also indicates that Aung San not only had political power—as the head of the AFPFL—but also military power—as the leader of PVO. Meanwhile, ideological clashes and different views regarding independence started emerging among the Bamar leaders within AFPFL. Thakhin Soe—one of the founding members of the AFPFL and the leader of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB)—started rebellion in 1946. The remaining communists led by Thakin Than Tun decaided to remained within the AFPFL, but he, together with his supports, left later due to disagreement over the way Aung San was handling Burma independence with the British officials.[116]

Early impendence

WWII literally transformed Aung San-led AFPFL as the most powerful Bamar-dominant institution which happened to be in the right place in the right time. When the British government invited AFPFL to participate in the Executive Council, Aung San accepted it in September 1946 and became the de facto premier of Burma. In November, the CPB was officially expelled from the AFPFL. This period saw fractions among Bamar prominent political leaders. Aung San emerged as the most prominent leader with whom the British decided to negotiate Burma independence.[117]

Domestic politics were also changing significantly at that time in Britain. The Labour Party defeated the Conservatives in the 1945 United Kingdom general election, and Clement Attlee replaced Sir Winston Churchill as Prime Minister. Churchill believed that granting Burma early independence would lead to instability in Burma, whereas Attlee believed that Burma should be given early independence, as documents from the parliamentary debate on that day show.[118] Historian Thant Myint-U argues that this decision literally changed the course of modern Burma's history.[119] Perhaps, I would also argue that Atlee's decision to give Burma

[115] Ibid.
[116] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar,* 54.
[117] Ibid.
[118] The Government of the United Kingdom, "Burma (Transfer of Power)". 1947, London: The UK Parliament.
[119] Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*, 220-290.

independence earlier than planned had the most profound impact on ethnic conflicts between the majority Bamar and the minority groups.

The role of Karen ethnic group under colonial rule

The British granted Burma independence without addressing several important issues. Out of many important issues, the Karen case appeared to profoundly impact internal ethnic armed conflicts in Burma, mainly because of the way British officials promoted certain minority groups. As discussed earlier, the Karen was the first ethnic group that successfully managed to build a strong relationship with the British. Being oppressed under the Burmese kingdoms, the Karen sided with the British during the Anglo-Burmese wars.[120]

In addition to Bamar ethnic identity, analyzing Karen ethnic identity is one of the main essential components of this research, as the Karen and the Bamar emerged as the strongest ethnic rivals under the colonial period. Karen scholars argue that the British used the existing ancient antagonism between Bamar and Karen. As discussed above, the Karen were poorly treated under the Burmese kingdoms. While the ancient antagonism had already existed between the Bamar and the Karen, it appears that the British formalized this ancient hatred, as they did with many ethnic groups in India during their two-hundred-year colonial rule. At the same time, the arrival of American missionaries in Burma Christianized Karen and helped the Karen climb to higher positions in Burmese society.[121] As noted above, Karen made up of half of the colonial army manpower and were treated as one of the martial races. Through the introduction of Christianity, the Karen were taught how to read and write; many became well educated around that time.[122]

> A considerable number of Karen young men and a few young women are college graduates and are leading useful lives in various communities, as may be seen by looking over the list of officers in government positions in the Education, Forest, Police, Military and subordinate branches.[123]

---

[120] Harry I. Marshall, *The Karen People of Burma: A Study in Anthropology and Ethnology* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1945), 300.
[121] Ibid, 309.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.

As noted above, when the Third Anglo-Burmese War was ended, the British struggled to maintain order in their newly conquered land. The Karen troops—together with Indian troops and others—were used in 'the British pacification of Burma." In addition, minority ethnic troops were involved in cracking down Bamar nationalists in the 1930s, as discussed earlier. I would argue that this made the Bamar feel that the minorities were oppressing them with the British officers' support, resulted in ethnic tensions among the groups.

Though the extent of influence of early American Baptist missionaries on the Karen population is beyond the scope of this study, it was evident that a significant portion of the Karen population were converted to Christian during British rule. Due to their decades-long relationship with the British during the Anglo-Burmese Wars and the conversion to Christianity appeared to have made them closer to the British officials. After Bamar, the Karen became the most literate ethnic group in Burma. It can be argued that the first generation of highly educated Karen were the product of American Baptist missionaries.[124] A dramatic rise in literacy rate among Karen ethnic group meant that they became more capable to exercise their ethnic characteristics in a way they had never did before.

The Rise of Karen Nationalism

The Karen was also the first ethnic group that established political associations. As noted above, the Bamar established YMBA only in 1906. The Karen had already established the Karen Baptist Convention (KBC) in 1840, followed by the establishment of the Karen National Association (KNA) in 1881. While Buddhist Bamar influenced the Burmese political associations analyzed above, the leaders of Karen political associations were dominated by Christian Karen. Later a Buddhist wing of the Buddhist Karen National Association (BKNA) was established in 1939. The Karen National Anthem and the Karen flag were also created. Karen scholars argue that the British recognized the inauguration day of the Karen flag as a public holiday and many viewed this as a sign of the British's recognition for an independent Karen State.[125]

---

[124] Marshall, *The Karen People of Burma,* 300-309.
[125] Shirley Lorraine Worland, *Displaced and misplaced or just displaced: Christian Displaced Karen Identity after Sixty Years of War in Burma.*PhD Thesis. (Brisbane: The University of Queensland, 2010), 19.

WWII changed the fate of Karen. At the end of the Japanese rule in 1945, Prime Minister Clement Atlee negotiated with Aung-San led AFPFL for Burma future. This study reveals that the future of Karen was excluded from the whole process of independent negotiation processes between the Bamar leaders led by Aung San and the Attlee Government. Karen experiences during the Japanese invasion made them worry about their future. As noted above, Karen was one of the oppressed groups under Burmese kingdoms prior to the arrival of the British. Then, they were treated with certain privileges under colonial rule, such as being considered as a martial race and given a special opportunity to serve in the British Burma Army. However, when the British retreated to India during the Japanese invasion of Burma, the Karen suffered atrocities committed by the Bamar-dominant BIA and the Japanese forces. According to one account, hundreds of Karen villages were burned and at least 1, 800 villagers were killed by Bamar and Japanese troops during WWII. This indicated that the Karen future would be suffered without the protection from the British.[126] In 1946, a Karen Goodwill Mission went to London in an attempt to discuss the future of Karen. Though the legitimacy of this trip was disputed even among the Karen leaders, the trip was considered official by many Karen communities.

> The four-man delegation, which included Saw Ba U Gyi, Saw Tha Din, Saw Po Chit, and Sidney Loo Nee, presented the case for Karen independence not only as a just reward for the Karen's role in the war but also as a natural evolution of the special relationship that bound the Karen to Britain.[127]

While British officials formally recognized Karen's war efforts, the Karen leaders saw that the British Government were not interested in deciding the future of Karen. The reality was that, in my opinion, it was not politically and economically strategic to work with the Karen anymore after WWII. There would be nothing to gain by working with the Karen leaders, at least this was how the British Government assessed the political economy situations of Burma at the time after WWII. The best scenario was to work with whoever had the most power and quickly leave war-torn Burma, where no money was to be made anymore. The lack of careful political arrangements for the Karen was the starting point when Karen leaders decided to find their own path. The Karen leaders were put in a position in which they were forced to counter Bamar

[126] Smith, *Burma,* 62-64.
[127]Giulia Garbagni, Mathew J Walton, "Imagining Kawthoolei: Strategies of petitioning for Karen statehood in Burma in the first half of the 20th century," *Nations and Nationalism*, March. 2020, 759– 774.

influence—politically, militarily, and culturally—when their protector—the British administrators—abandoned them after WWII.

Findings from Hypothesis 1

Based on the following key findings from Hypothesis 1, it can be argued that the first hypothesis is plausible. The British annexation of Burma has profound impact on Bamar ethnic group. For the Bamar, one hundred and twenty four years of colonial rule was an era of humiliation for their ethnic characteristics such as their land that they had dominated for hundreds of year, the Buddhism that they had worshiped for centuries, and other customs such as shared memories, language, ways of living that they had practiced for generations. In response, they established institutions and organized ethnic nationalist movements to protect their ethnic characteristics against the colonial rule. While ethnic tensions had existed even before the British annexed Burma, Divide et Impera applied by the British exacerbated the existing tensions and ancient resentment, especially between the Bamar and the Karen Elements of Divide et Impera was especially evident by looking at the way British recruited troops into the British India Army (later British Burma Army). The ethnic troops were used to suppress Bamar nationalist movements in the 1930s and this appeared to significantly affect the way Bamar viewed towards certain ethnic groups such as the Karen, Kachin, and Chin—the three martial races of the British Burma Army. The decision to abandon the Karen after WWII was also another sign that the British only valued the relationship with the Karen to fulfill its strategic political and military interests. When things became clear that it was not strategic to continue working with the Karen, they ignored their demands and started working with Bamar leaders. There were clear signs that the British should not have granted Burma an early independence. When the British retreated to India during the Japanese invasion of India, the Karen lost their protector—the British—and suffered serious human rights violations and atrocities committed by the Japanese and the Bamar forces. The Karen were always viewed as a close ally of the British and this created a sense of resentment among Burma independent fighters towards Karen communities. The way the British restructured the post-WW British Burma Army based on ethnic lines was ignorance. They failed to understand that such arrangement would do more harm than good. Despite all these signs of ethnic grievances—many of which were caused due to their mistreatment of the role of ethnic groups and the concept of ethnicity—they still decided to leave Burma early than planned. In the following hypothesis, this study will conduct a detailed analysis specifically on the independence

negotiation process led by the British and the Bamar leaders. Since the independence negotiation process is a critical part of the colonial rule, I decided to analyze it separately as H1A, but the contents of H1 and H1A are linked as the analysis focus on the same periods, events, actors, and processes.

Hypothesis 1A: There is a negative relationship between the independence negotiation process and ethnic armed conflicts in Burma.

Independent negotiators

On 27 January 1947, the Atlee Government and the Delegation of the Burma Executive Council—led by General Aung San—signed Aung San-Atlee Agreement, which agreed to give Burma independence within one year.[128] One key condition of the agreement was that the Burmese Delegates were required to seek the free consent of the peoples of the Frontier Areas.[129]

> It is agreed objective of both His Majesty's Government and the Burmese Delegates to achieve the early unification of the Frontier Areas and Ministerial Burma with the free consent of the inhabitants of those areas.[130]

In order to fulfil the agreement required by the Aung San-Atlee Agreement, one year before Burma got independence, on 12 February 1947, Aung San signed a peace agreement called the Panglong Agreement with the representatives of three ethnic groups—namely Shan, Kachin, and Chin, from the Frontier Areas.[131] The Aung San-Atlee Agreement was meant to facilitate a smooth transition for the independent negotiation process by unifying the Bamar ethnic group and the peoples of the Frontier Areas. This agreement asked the majority Bamar and the minority groups of the Frontier Areas, governed separately throughout the colonial period, to agree on 'conditions' for the anticipated independence. The result was the Panglong Agreement which agreed, in principle, full autonomy in internal administration for the Frontier Areas. In addition, the agreement also stated that 'the citizens of the Frontier Areas shall enjoy rights and privileges which are regarded as fundamental in democratic countries.'[132] In other words, in exchange for full autonomy and internal administration for the Frontier Areas, the three ethnic groups of Frontier Areas decided to work with Bamar leaders, the dominant group, to seek independence collectively from Britain.

---

[128] Thant Myint-U. "The Shared History of Britain and Burma", *The Telegraph,* May. 11, 2008, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3558192/The-shared-history-of-Britain-and-Burma.html
[129] Aung San-Attlee Agreement, art. 8, sec. a, b, & c.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.

This study argues that this independent negotiation process was exclusive from the start mainly because it excludes the voices of other ethnic groups outside of the Frontier Areas such as Karen, Karenni, Mon, Arakan, and others. The Atlee Government's thinking that Burma independence could be given if the majority of Bamar and the three ethnic groups of the Frontier Areas could find a way to work together collectively was ignorance. The independent negotiation processes were led by only two dominant groups: the British and the Bamar. Other ethnic groups—especially those outside of the Frontier Areas and not Bamar—were not given adequate opportunities, at least not in official settings, to make their demands in the independent negotiation process. In his book titled 'Ethnic Groups in Conflict', Donald L. Horowitz explains this kind of situation by arguing that independent negotiation processes in many former colonies were often exclusive and left out certain groups.

> The movements that sought independence from the colonial powers were not always wholly representative of all the ethnic groups in their territories. Some groups that were not so well represented attempted, with varying degrees of success, to slow down the march independence or to gain special concessions or even a separate state.[133]

In fact, this is exactly what happened to the excluded ethnic groups in Burma. When the Karen leaders failed their diplomatic means to ask the British Government to consider their future, and when things became clear that the negotiation process wouldn't respect their ethnic demands, they decided to create their own path. A few days prior to the Panglong Agreement, the Karen leaders established the Karen National Union by reforming the existing Karen National Organization with more concrete political goals. Through this body, the Karen leaders started demanding separate independence and boycotted the constituent assembly elections of the Aung San-Atlee Agreement, which was held to form a basis of a constitution assembly to draft a constitution. Aung San led AFPFL won the constituent assembly elections. However, three months after the elections, on 19 July 1947, Aung San and six other cabinet members were assassinated by political rivals in the former capital Rangoon. U Nu replaced the position of Aung San in the final months of the Burma independence negotiation process. The elected members of the constituent assembly elections—the majority of whom are Bamar ethnic group—

[133] Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 4.

facilitated the transition process, including the writing of Burma's first constitution—1947 Constitution.[134]

Analysis of 1947 constitution

The political agreements written in the Panglong Agreement were reflected, at least partially, in the 1947 Constitution. The constitution gave the Frontier Areas—and the Karenni States which was neither governed by the British nor the Burma kingdoms—ethnic state status, and the name of the states were named after these ethnic groups. The demands of other groups such as Karen who demanded a separate independence remained unsolved. 1947 Constitution also incorporated the areas where the British did not administer into the Union of Burma. Therefore, in a way the 1947 Constitution can be considered as a forced unifying project to incorporate three areas: 1) the Bamar-dominant areas or the heartland directly governed by the British; 2) the Frontier Areas indirectly governed by the British; and 3) the areas neither governed by the British nor the Burmese kingdoms. In addition, all the remaining territories not specifically mentioned in the constitution were also subject to section 180 and 181 of the constitution as 'the organs of the Union.'[135]

There were two legislative bodies in the constitution—the Chamber of Deputies and the Chamber of Nationalities. Together these two chambers formed the national parliament, which represented all the qualified constituencies of the whole country. The parliament was given to make laws for the whole or any part of the Union except in the areas exclusively given to the states, a proof that a power-sharing structure existed between the state and national levels. Likewise, each state was given the power to make laws for the state.[136]

In addition, the State councils were formed with the members of the national parliament representing each state. When it comes to Shan State, the constitution stated that the members of the Chamber of Nationalities shall be elected by the Saophoas among themselves. This means that the Saophas were given the exclusive right to serve in the Chamber of Nationalities.[137] The British never touched the role of the Saophoas, and the 1947 constitution gave them a special

[134] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar,* 41-61.
[135] The Constitution of the Union of Burma (1947), Chap.1.
[136] Ibid, 15.
[137] Ibid, 28.

consideration to represent the Chamber of Nationalities exclusively. Simply put, the role of Shan traditional rulers—the Saophas—were respected even after independence. A State Minister for each state was appointed by the President based on the recommendation of the Prime Minister in consultation with the State Council. The State Council had the right to elect a cabinet of ministers among its members to aid the State Minister.[138]

In general, the structure of other states councils—Kachin, Karenni, and Chin—were the same, but with different treatment. Unlike Shan State, out of twelves seats from Kachin State to the Chamber of Nationalities, six seats were reserved for the Kachin, whereas the other seats were reserved by non-Kachin. The constitution ensured that 'no predictive laws were passed unless it was agreed by the majority members representing the Kachin and the non-Kachin.' This shows an attempt to minimize potential inter-ethnic disputes within Kachin State. However, the right to appoint the Kachin Minister was based on the recommendation of the Kachin members, not the non-Kachin members. This means that the Kachin were given an exclusive right to appoint a minister from their ethnic group, as were the Shan. However, the constitution made sure the minister needed to consult with non-Kachin members for any matters in the areas where non-Kachin were the majority.[139]

Unlike Shan State and Kachin State, no ethnic representative consideration was given to the Karen State Council. In addition, the formation of Karen State was rejected by the Karen leaders. Therefore, even though Karen was given a state under the 1947 Constitution, this arrangement did not result from an inclusive consultation process with the Karen leaders. The Karenni State was complicated mainly because many areas under Shan State and Karenni State were incorporated into what the British called the Federated Shan State. Like the Sophas, Sawphyas of the Karenni State were given the right to represent in the Chamber of Nationalities. When it comes to Chin Special Division, two areas were included: the Chin Hill District and the Arakan Hill Tracts. Though the Chins had the right to appoint a minister, no executive body was allowed. Perhaps, the most important section of the constitution is Chapter X: Right of

[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid., 15-39.

Secession. This section gave Shan State and Karenni State the right to exercise secession after ten years from the date the constitution came into existence.[140]

Based on these different treatments towards each ethnic group mentioned in the 1947 Constitution, this study argues that each ethnic group had different power levels in relation to the state. Even among Kachin, Karenni, Karen, Shan, and Chin—the four groups given ethnic state status—their access to power in the national parliament, especially the Chamber of Nationalities, was different. In brief, ethnic states were not considered 'equal' in terms of power, and their relations to the Bamar-led political system emerged from the inclusive independence processes facilitated by the British Government. The following table, which I collected from the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) Dataset Family from the University of Zurich and University of Los Angeles (UCLA), shows the power relations among different ethnic groups at the time.[141]

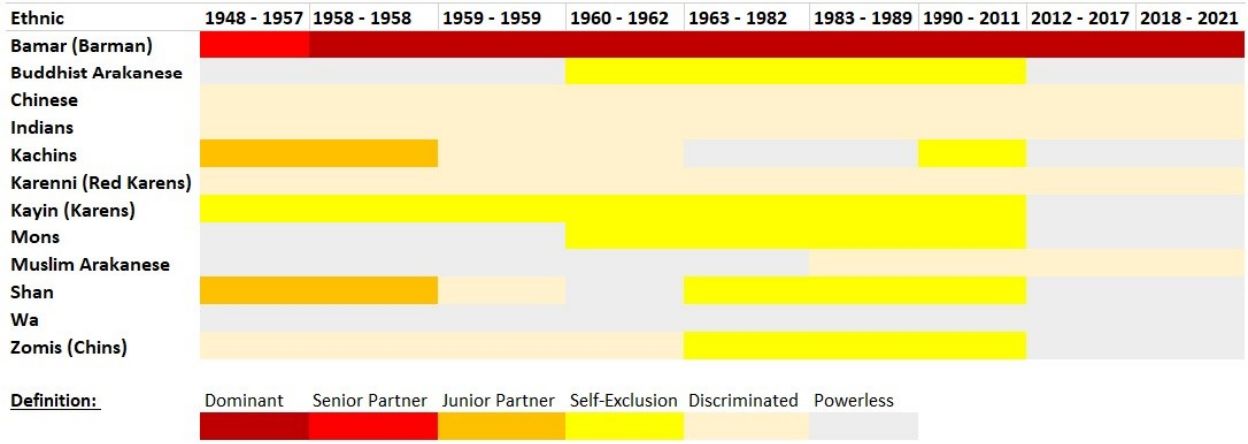


Figure 1: Ethnic power relations in Burma from 1948-2021 (Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) Dataset, 2015)

The table only includes politically relevant ethnic groups. They are categorized based on the degree of access to central state power by those who claimed to represent them. From 1948 to 1957, Bamar enjoyed senior partner status defined in EPR dataset as "Representatives of the group participate as senior partners in a formal or informal power-sharing arrangement. By power sharing, we mean any arrangement that divides executive power among leaders who claim

[140] Ibid., 38.
[141] Vogt, Manuel, Nils-Christian Bormann, Seraina Rüegger, Lars-Erik Cederman, Philipp Hunziker, and Luc Girardin. 2015. "Integrating Data on Ethnicity, Geography, and Conflict: The Ethnic Power Relations Data Set Family." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(7) 2015: 1327–1342.

to represent particular ethnic groups and who have real influence on political decision making."[142]The Kachins and the Shan enjoyed junior partner defined as: 'Representatives participate as junior partners in government.'[143] Arakanese (including the Muslims of Arakan State), Mon and Wa were powerless defined as "Elite representatives hold no political power (or do not have influence on decision making) at the national level of executive power - although without being explicitly discriminated against.[144] Karenni and Chin were considered as discriminated defined as 'Group members are subjected to active, intentional, and targeted discrimination by the state, with the intent of excluding them from political power. Such active discrimination can be either formal or informal, but always refers to the domain of public politics (excluding discrimination in the socio-economic sphere).'[145] The Karen was considered as self-exclusion defined as 'The special category of self-exclusion applies to groups that have excluded themselves from central state power, in the sense that they control a particular territory of the state which they have declared independent from the central government.'[146]

Therefore, each ethnic state was given a different level of power and authority. This is because the historical significance and social status of the ethnic groups vary by group by group. The Sophas of the Shan State had the most power and authority compared to other ethnic groups. In fact, the first President of the Union was Shan ethnic group. Though the constitution was far from perfect, it was evident that it considered ethnic grievances of some groups, at least to a certain degree, by not interfering in their internal ethnic affairs.

Post WWII Burma army

As discussed previously, the post-colonial Burma Army was factionalized along ethnic lines. Though the Karen were excluded from the independent negotiation processes, they still had dominant roles in the Burma Army in 1948. This was mainly because of the way the British reformed the post-WWII Bamar Army. In fact, Commander-in-chief, Chief of Army Staff, Chief of Air Staff were all ethnic Karen while only Chief of Navy Staff was ethnic Bamar. In addition, out of fifteen Rifle Battalions, five were dominated by Bamar—5000 Bamar independent

[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.

fighters and 200 officers allowed by the British—and the rest are dominated by Karen, Chin, Kachin and Gurkha. [147] Historian Thant Myint-U notes that Gurkha soldiers were stationed in Burma during the British rule.[148]

This means that the army was structured based on ethnic lines instead of mixing ethnicities to be more diverse. This appeared to fuel the internal power struggle between Karen and Burmese forces based on ethnic lines. When the Karen leaders decided to go against the central government due to disagreement over the way the independent negotiation process was handled by the British and the Bamar leaders, it became challenging for the Karen senior officers in the newly reformed Burma Independent Army (BIA) to gain the trust of Bamar leaders who concerned about the Karen officers supporting the KNU. The result of this Karen-Bamar tension within BIA was that Dun Smith—who was serving as the Commander-in-chief at that time—was removed from its position, and Ne Win—a Bamar and a member of the Thirty Comrades—was appointed. The removal of Dun Smith was mainly because of his ethnic identity as a Karen.[149]

From ethnic grievances to ethnic armed conflict

At first, the common enemy of post-colonial Burma were the communists. Meanwhile, the Karen National (KNU), headed by Karen leader Saw Ba U Gyi, planned a movement for independence following Burma's independence from Britain. By August of 1948, KNDO—the military wing of the KNU—began a rebellion against the AFPFL government. Furthermore, demonstrations were held for Karen independence in Rangoon and other cities.[150]

Mon—another ethnic group that was not administered directly by the British—had been working to be recognized as a distinct group in the final decade of British colonial rule. The Mon leaders attempted to work with Aung San' AFPFL and later with U Nu, who refused to consider Mon ethnic demand to recognize them as a distinct ethnic group. When the Mon leaders were not included in the Panglong Agreement, they decided to take up arms against the central

---

[147] Aung Myoe Moe, *Building the Tatmadaw* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009).
[148] Lost Footsteps. "1917-11 November 1918 Burmese who fought in World War One", Accessed Jan 4, 2021. https://lostfootsteps.org/en/history/burmese-who-fought-in-world-war-one?fbclid=IwAR27pF04HURuxgnPBYVTGqfhYcYMx7I2n8No55cYDQ6vK9WFZUQ44CA-pmE
[149] Smith, *Burma,* 118.
[150] Worland, *Displaced And Misplaced or Just Displaced*, 19.

government, though, unlike the Karen, they did not have significant political and military power.[151]

As discussed previously, the Konbaung Dynasty conquered the Kingdom of Marak-U—the lost kingdom of the Arakan ethnic group—in 1785. The place of what is today Arakan State in Burma fell under the Konbaung Dynasty until it was taken by the British at the end of the First Anglo-Burmese War in 1826. Arakan State was lightly populated when it fell under the British rule and the British officials started encouraging Bangali population from adjacent region to migrate to Arakan.[152]

> When the British annexed Arakan from the hands of the Konbaung Dynasty at the end of the First Anglo-Burmese War in 1826, British policy encouraged Bengali inhabitants from adjacent regions to migrate into lightly populated and fertile valleys of Arakan as farm labourers. There was no international boundary between Bengal and Arakan during British rule and no restrictions on migration within the British Indian Empire.[153]

Arakan historian Aye Chan argues that Muslims had always lived in what is today Arakan State. According to the 1911 census report, there were almost two hundred thousand Muslims in Akyab—the capital of Arakan State—alone.[154] Though the history of Arakan is beyond the scope of this research, it is a widely accepted view that the Muslims in today Arakan State tracked back to centuries. On the other hand, due to uncontrolled mass migration across the British India Empire—most territories of today's Burma, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan—the Muslims in Arakan are seen as the product of British colonial rule, though many of them had made Arakan home way before Bamar's Konbaung Dynasty conquered Arakan.

The voices of this population—the native Muslims of Arakan and those who migrated to Arakan during the colonial rule—were left out during the independent negotiation process. There were no plans on how to consider who belonged where and which group. When this population started demanding their right to form a specific territory and then be officially recognized like other ethnic groups, U Nu Government refused their demands. The British also did nothing to

---

[151] Ashley South, *Mon Nationalism and Civil War in Burma* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 99-125.
[152] Aye Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State of Burma (Myanmar)." *SOAS Bulletin of Burmese Research* 3, no. 2 (2005): 356-420.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.

facilitate a smooth transition process by addressing these issues, and, as a result, armed resistance emerged from the western part of Burma.[155]

The following table from the Ethnic Conflict Dataset from the University of Uppsala—which collects ethnic conflict data since 1948—illustrates the ethnic conflict situation in the first decade of Burma post-colonial period.[156] I filtered out raw data that concerns only Burma, and the result was the following table.

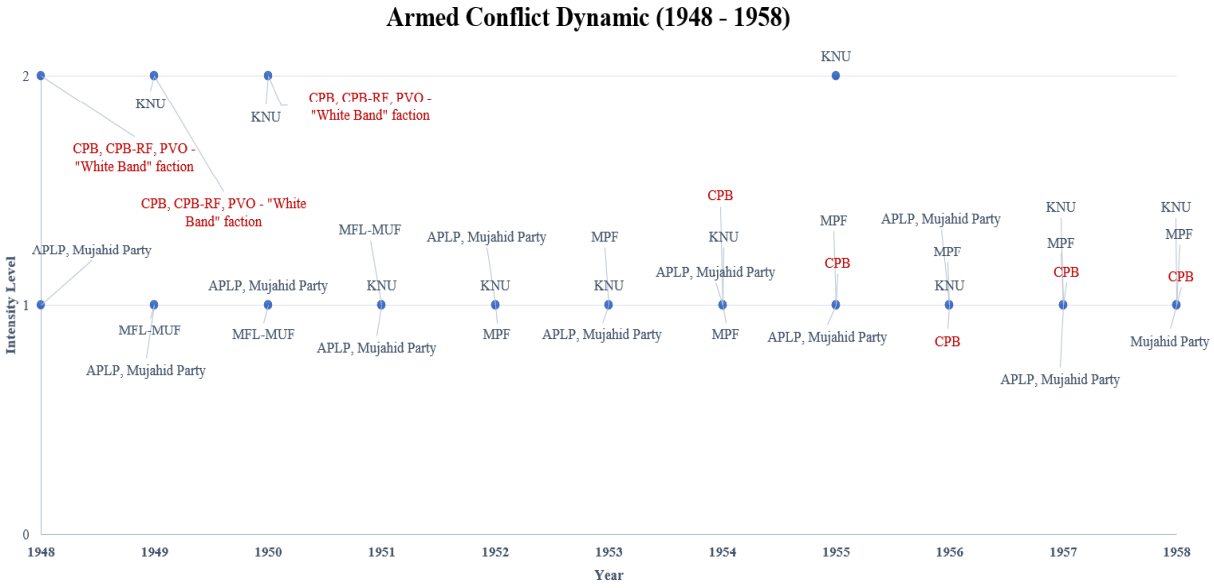


Figure 2: Armed Conflict Dynamic from 1948 to 1958 in Burma (Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 2002)

Note:

*KNU = Karen National Union/Karen ethnic group
*MPL or MFF = Mon ethnic group
*APFL, Mujahid Party = The Muslims of Arakan State
*CPB = Community party of Burma
*Intensity level 1 is considered 'minor' while intensity level 2 is considered 'major'

In total, three groups started fighting the central government right after Burma was granted independence from Britain. It was not a coincidence that these groups decided to fight the central government while others did not. The main reason they decided to turn themselves

[155] Ibid.
[156] Gleditsch, Nils Petter, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Driksson, Margareta Sollenberg, and Havard Strand. "Armed Conflict 1946-2001: A New Dataset. Journal of Peace Research 39, no. 5 (2002).

into ethnic armed groups was, this study argues, that their ethnic demands—the demands concerning protecting their ethnic characteristics. The Panglong Agreement was by far the most exclusive process—and a careless one—facilitated by the British Government in working with the Bamar leaders such as Aung San and U Nu. In addition, as the table suggests, the CPB was also fighting the central government at that time. In fact, the intensity level shows 2 (major) in 1948, 1949, and 1950.

Hypothesis 2: Ethnic Armed Conflicts are more likely to increase when the dominant ethnic group—specifically those in control of central state power—attempts to neutralize the ethnic characteristics of smaller ethnic groups with political ideology.

Introduction

A change of leadership—especially at the national level—can have significant impact the role of ethnic groups. In the second hypothesis, this study will analyze how General Ne Win, a dictator who staged a coup in 1962, treated the role of ethnicity and ethnic groups during his rule. The hypothesis assumes that Ne Wi attempted to neutralize the role of ethnicity and ethnic groups by socialism, which he called "the Burmese Way to Socialism." Turning the state into a social state also meant that he started treating ethnic groups as other groups such as peasants and workers. Due to their distinct and unique characteristics, this study assumes that ethnicity groups will react collectively when they're treated like other groups.

Land attachment

Political demands motivated by the characteristics of ethnicity are complex. Those demands are often inextricably linked to their ethnic characteristics. Though demands vary from group to group, their demands are often linked to internal autonomy, especially territory autonomy—a term coined by ethnic conflict scholars to refer to demands sought by ethnic groups to control a specific territory that they believe represents their ethnic characteristics. As discussed previously, even though the Panglong Agreement and the 1947 Constitution gave a certain level of internal autonomy to Chin, Kachin, Shan, and Karenni, those agreements were not adequate to meet the demands of other ethnic groups. Even among the groups such as the Shan who had a level of internal autonomy provided by the 1947 Constitution, the Shan leaders felt a need to have more control over their territory, which was vital to prevent the increasing Bamar-dominant role in Shan State.

The fall of U Nu Government and the rise of the Tatmadaw

The Bamar did not have a dominant role—as measured by the dataset collected from the University of Zurich—until 1957, as observed in the previous ethnic power relations table. This changed in 1958 when Prime Minister U Nu—who struggled to maintain peace and stability in the 1950s—asked General Ne Win to take over as a caretaker government. The replacement of the central government with the Tatmadaw meant that the ethnic power relations that existed at the national level were eliminated. Since independence, Prime Minister U Nu faced a series of

serious domestic and foreign policy issues. The economy affected by WWII was in ruin; the crime rate was skyrocketing; corruption was widespread among government officials; the communists were constantly fighting the Tatmadaw; and the ethnic armed conflicts were continued.[157]

In addition, the Kuomintang (KMT), officially known as the Yunnan Anti-communist National Salvation Army, started retreating into Shan State starting in 1949 after being defeated by the communists in the Chinese Civil War. By the mid-1950s, the KMT was turning the eastern part of Shan State as their military base to retake mainland China from the hands of communists. They were also engaging in the lucrative opium trade on a large scale to fund their military activities. Several scholars studying this period argue that the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) also played a role by providing financial and military assistance to KMT. U Nu Government concerned that the presence of KMT troops in Shan State would give China a reason to invade Burma. It was a time when China was also involved in the Korea War, which made the Bamar leaders to concern even more about the potential invasion of Burma.[158] When diplomatic attempts at the U.N. to resolve the KMT crisis failed, the Tatmadaw launched offensives against the KMT. While the detailed analysis of this event—the role of KMT in Burma—is beyond the scope of this research, it can be understood that the military expansion increased during this period as the Tatmadaw reinforced troops and weapons into Shan State to fight the KMT troops. In addition, the ongoing clashes with the Community Party of Burma also meant that the Tatmadaw troops were ever more increasing. Shan State was a battleground in the first decade of post-independence Burma. In fact, the first division-level military operation of the Tatmadaw—called the Operation Bayintaung (named after Bamar King Bayintaung)—was launched in Shan State to fight the KMT. The operation was led by Brigadier General Kyaw Zaw, who is, like Ne Win, a member of Bamar-dominant Thirty Comrades.[159]

---

[157] Steinberg, *Burma-Myanmar*, 41-61.
[158] R. Young, Kenneth. *Nationalist Chinese Troops in Burma: Obstacle in Burma's Foreign Relations, 1949–1961."* Ph.D. Thesis (New York: New York University, 1970), 50–53.
[159] Wei Yan Aung, "The Day Chinese Invaders Were Forced Out of Myanmar," *The Irrawaddy*, April 15, 2020, https://www.irrawaddy.com/specials/on-this-day/day-chinese-invaders-forced-myanmar.html

What did all these mean for the Shan ethnic group? For the Shan, the increasing troops of the Bamar-dominant Tatmadaw in their state made them feel that the Bamar dominant role was increasing in their territory. The ordinary Shan ethnic did not have contact with the Tatmadaw soldiers until the 1950s as there was little contact between the two groups during the colonial era. Fighting continuously against the communists, the ethnic armed organizations such as the KNU, and the KMT meant that the Tatmadaw transformed into a stronger army, giving them a more dominant role in areas they never reached previously, such as Shan State. In addition, it appears that that the Tatmadaw gained publicity—especially from ordinary Bamar communities of the heartland—as the fight against the KMT in the 1950s was regarded as defending the state from the first foreign invasion after colonial rule. It was only in 1961 that the Tatmadaw was able to wipe off all the remaining KMT troops from Burma.[160]

When Tatmadaw became the Caretaker Government in 1958, it literally had all the power in its hands. This is evident by looking at how power dynamics changed among ethnic groups. After 1958, the two groups—Kachin and Shan—who previously enjoyed 'junior partner status' were reduced to 'discriminated status' while the Bamar status changed from 'senior partner' to 'dominant', as the ethnic power relations table showed previously. During the Caretaker Government, the country's general situation improved, and the reputation of the Tatmadaw was strengthened when they successfully facilitated 1960 general elections, accepted the result of the elections, and handed power back to the winning political party.[161]

U Nu's view on ethnicity and the rise of Ne Win

Prior to this, in 1958, U Nu had fallen out with his senior government officials, who submitted a motion of no-confidence against him in the national parliament, which U Nu survived. Because of this, the AFPFL was split into two political parties, in which the one led by U Nu—known as the Union Party—won the 1960 general elections facilitated by General Ne Win. One might ask: if U Nu was so incapable of running the state, why did he win the election again? Steinberg argues that U Nu used Buddhism—one of the characteristics associated with the Bamar ethnic group—to attract their votes.

[160] Young, *Nationalist Chinese Troops in Burma,* 50-53.
[161] Steinberg, Burma/Myanmar, 41-61

> The elections of February 6, 1960, following the Caretaker Government, were regarded as free and fair. U Nu, leading his faction of the AFPFL, renamed the Union Party, won against his Stable AFPFL opponents, although the military would have preferred to see the latter victorious. U Nu won in large part because he received the majority of the Buddhist vote. He promised to make Buddhism the state religion. He was known as extremely devout, almost monk-like, even picking saffron (the color of monks' robes) as his party color. His picture was on the ballot box. Some Burmese thought it mesmerized voters into supporting him. The elections brought U Nu back, but the administration was weak and ineffectual. The economy suffered, rebellions increased, and the military, the most effective organization in the state, became concerned.[162]

In this regard, U Nu's style was in line with instrumentalists who argue that ethnic characteristics such as religions are often used as a political device by political actors to unify, organize, and mobilize populations to achieve larger political goals.[163]

In addition, the Shan and Karenni ethnic groups—who had been given the right to secession in the 1947 Constitution—started demanding more autonomy. Due to all these factors—ethnic demands, foreign invasion, a ruined economy, crime rate—General Ne Win decided to take over the civilian government in 1962, as most analysts studying this period argue.[164] A member of the Bamar-dominant Third Comrades and who rose to power after Karen ethnic Commander-in-chief Smith Dun was pushed out due to post-independence Bamar-Karen conflict, Ne Win always had a different vision of Burma, something utterly different from the views of other minority ethnic leaders. While there are many different alternative views among Burmese analysts regarding why Ne Win staged a coup, the most plausible, in my view, is that he started seeing that the union that came to exist because of Bamar independent fighters was under threat when Shan and other ethnic leaders—who started fearing a loss of autonomy due to increasing Tatmadaw role in Shan State in the 1950s—started looking for other political solutions and federalism came out as the most sensible arrangement for their future political ambitions. Ne Win saw this—the federalism movements of minority ethnic groups—as a threat to the Union.[165]

---

[162] Steinberg, Burma-Myanmar, 52-61.
[163] Ibid.
[164] C.P. Cook, "The Era of Ne Win." *Royal Institute of International Affairs* 26, no. 6 (1970), 259-266.
[165] Steinberg, Burma/Myanmar, 41-78.

Federalism movement and ethnic groups

Ne Win saw federalism as a threat to Bamar ethnic dominant role, as federalism emphasizes power and resource sharing among ethnic groups, as opposed to one group having all the power. As discussed earlier, the Panglong Agreement, followed by Burma's first constitution written in 1947, provided some basic principles for state integration.[166] Theoretically speaking, there are two main types of federalism: coming together and holding together. Coming together simply means that independent sovereign states come together to form a nation (e.g. America), whereas holding together means that the more powerful one has control over the decisions of other actors. Myanmar became a country under the concept of 'coming together federalism' in 1947.[167] Based on the foundation derived from the Panglong Agreement, General Aung San and ethnic leaders aimed at drafting Burma's first constitution, which would guarantee equal rights and opportunities. However, due to the unexpected death of General Aung San before the constitution was written, the federal principles written in the Panglong Agreement were never fully fulfilled, though the 1947 Constitution reflected many elements of the agreement. When ethnic groups, especially the Shan, started proposing to have talks about federalism to U Nu Government, Ne Win saw that as attempts by the ethnic groups to leave the union. It appeared that he interpreted federalism as succession. Ne Wi's view was that the Tatmadaw were the backbone to the creation of Union of Burma and it was the Bamar who helped themselves achieve the independence, not the minority ethnic groups. As Dulyapak Preecharush argues:

> The problem with federal design in Myanmar is an embedded legacy from a critical warring period. When the Second World War reached Myanmar, an embryo of the Myanmar patriotic army was gradually formed under Japanese fascism and its centralized military command structure. As such, the Tatmadaw came into existence and started its historic role as the backbone of Myanmar's state-building.[168]

When Ne Win started realizing that U Nu was open doors to discuss federalism with the ethnic groups, he decided to take over by claiming that the Tatmdaw has the duty to preserve the

---

[166] Dulyapak Preecharush, "Federalism and State Formation in Myanmar," *The Irrawaddy*, Feb.14, 2018, https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/federalism-and-state-formation-in-myanmar.html

[167] Chao-Tzang Yawnghwe et al., "Federalism in Burma: A Special Issue." Legal Issues on Burma Journal (2002): 60.

[168] Dulyapak Preecharush, *Federalism and State Formation in Myanmar.*

union.[169] The philosophy of the Tatmadaw was that if it allows one ethnic group to be separated from the union, other ethnic groups will demand the same path and eventually this would lead to a confederation, a term referring to the breaking up of many small independent states from the same union. Instead of working with ethnic groups to discuss their demands and think about a system that would give the majority and the minorities a fair share of the state, he decided to neutralize the role of ethnicity by his "Burmese Way to Socialism." He abolished the 1947 Constitution, arrested oppositions, and imposed direct military rule. Then, after ruling the state for twelve years under direct military rule, he introduced a new constitution in 1974.[170]

Analysis of 1974 constitution

My analysis on 1974 Constitution found that Ne Win not only failed to understand the unique characteristics of ethnicity but also planned to neutralize the role of ethnic groups. In the preamble of the 1974 Constitution, the framers of the constitution accused the 1947 Constitution by saying, 'the power and influence of the feudalists, landlords, and capitalists had increased and consolidated due to the defects in the old Constitution and the ill-effects of capitalistic parliamentary democracy.'[171] Instead of solving ethnic grievances, the constitution stated that the state safeguards the interests of 'the working people whose strength is based on peasants and workers.'[172] Ne Win attempted to impose an idea of common ownership and started treating individuals as peasants and workers instead of individuals belonging to particular ethnic groups. In other words, instead of acknowledging the unique characteristics of ethnic groups, he tried to put all the ethnic differences under the umbrella of 'peasants and workers,' whom he thought the backbone of the socialist state. He clearly failed to understand that ethnic groups cannot be treated like other groups such as peasants, workers and labour groups whose interests, at least to some extent, are motivated by economic incentives, which is not the case in ethnic groups.

The 1974 constitution changed the structures of the ethnic states by increasing the number of ethnic states for Mon.[173] General Ne Win hoped to please minority ethnic groups with this arrangement but failed because all the power was in the hands of the Bamar-dominant

[169] Chao-Tzang Yawnghwe et al., Federalism in Burma.
[170] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar,* 63-78.
[171] The Union of Burma, The Constitution of the Union of Burma, Preamble.
[172] Ibid, chap.2, art. 9.
[173] Ibid., chap.3, art. 30.

Tatmadaw, and the federalism proposals from these ethnic groups were rejected. This revealed another interesting finding that the dominant group cannot satisfy the grievances of smaller ethnic groups by simply allowing a territory without actually giving them actual control over their own territories. In addition, the 1974 Constitution introduced a unicameral system, meaning that the bicameral system under the 1947 Constitution was abolished. By abolishing the Chamber of Nationalities, Ne Win planned to silence the voices of ethnic representatives, another attempt to remove the power of minority ethnic political elites representing various ethnic groups at the national level.

The concept of Taingyintha and the 1982 Myanmar citizenship law

My research also notes that Ne Win started promoting the concept of Taingyinha. By Taingyinthar he meant the eight major ethnic groups of Burma. The 1981 Citizenship Law recognized the eight major ethnic groups and other ethnic groups who had settled within Burma 'Burma citizens.'

> Nationals such as the Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin, Burman, Mon, Rakhine or Shan and ethnic groups as have settled in any of the territories included within the State as their permanent home from a period anterior to 1185 B.E., 1823 A.D. are Burma citizens.[174]

This means that the rest were stripped off from the full citizenship status. This includes those who had migrated to Burma—either part of the mass migration within the British Indian Empire during the colonial rule or as ordinary merchants from China and elsewhere —after the 1823 (prior to the First Anglo-Burmese War). The power to decide which group was Taingyinthar and which group was not was given to the Council of State in which Ne Win has absolute power. In this sense, Ne Win's interpretation on ethnicity was that only certain groups belong to Taingyinthar. By this way he introduced a discriminatory levels of citizenship status, and who belonged to Burma was defined by the year of 1823, a year prior to the First Anglo-Burmese War. In addition, the Council of State was given the power to confer citizenship to anyone if it is for the interest of the state. Meanwhile, the Council also had the power to revoke citizenship of anyone except a citizen by birth. Only the Taingyinthars were considered the legitimate citizens whereas the rest were considered as 'associate citizens' or 'nationalized

[174] The 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law, chap.2, sec. 3.

citizens.'[175] Ne Win Government started talking about 'pure blood' as the basis to define the original races of Burma. Anyone who has at least one non-Taingyinthar parent were considered 'mixed blood'.[176] In this regard, Ne Win attempted to argue that the national identity of Burma must be the blood of the national races and their offspring. For Nay Win, ethnicity is fixed and only certain groups met the criteria to belong to the national ethnic groups of Burma.

> On 8 October 1982, one week before the citizenship law entered into force, Ne Win made a public speech setting out what may be considered the official position on the objectives and rationale of the law. A large part of the speech focuses on the reasons for creating different categories of citizenship. This emerges as primarily a means of distinguishing 'pure blooded nationals' from those who entered Myanmar during the colonial period, their descendants, and 'mixed bloods' (that is, the children of marriages between the two groups). The idea sketched in the speech is that 'pure blooded nationals' should be 'citizens', while the others became 'associate citizens' or 'naturalized citizens'. This explanation and the use of the terms 'pure blooded citizens' and 'mixed bloods' emphasises the racial dimension of the division between 'citizens' and 'associate' or 'naturalised citizens'.[177]

The 1981 Citizenship Law impacted particularly the Rohingya ethnic group from the Arakan State of Burma. Even though non-national races were eligible to apply 'associate' or 'naturalised citizens', people required to submit 'conclusive evidence' that they entered and resided in Myanmar prior to 4 Janaury 1948, the date of the statue succession from the British. An unknown number of Muslim populations in Arakan State became stateless, literally overnight, due to lack of required documentations.[178]

This research also notes that even before the law came into existence, Ne Win government started verifying the immigration status of Muslim population in Arakan State, where the he directed a series of military offensives, which were so violent that one of the campaign, called

---

[175] Ibid., chap.2 to 8.
[176] Sarah L. Clarke, Seng Aung Sein Myint, and Zabra Yu Siwa, *Re-examing Ethnic Identity in Myanmar* (Phnom Phen: Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2019), 23.
[177]Peggy Brett and Kyaw Yin Hlaing, "Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law in Context." *Torkel Opsahl Academic EPublisher (OAEP),* no.22 (2020).
[178] Burma Campaign UK. "A Briefing by Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK, Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law and Rohingya" Burma Campaign UK, December, 2014, https://burmacampaign.org.uk/media/Myanmar%E2%80%99s-1982-Citizenship-Law-and-Rohingya.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2hKCZeUMWs2HbUOhLsmu0blrydmEl9KuE7dsWRNJ7JwsikIIXxehYWTBw (accessed August 4, 2021)

the 1978 Nagamin Operation, which forced approximately 250, 000 refugees to flee across the border into Bangladesh.[179] Though the case of Rohingya requires another in-depth analysis and beyond the scope of this study, it is evident that the first starting point that the Rohingyas started suffering serious human rights violations was around the time when Ne Win started getting rid of non-national races from Burma. In addition, market dominant minorities such as Indian and Chinese suffered tremulously as they were stripped off full citizenship and their businesses were nationalized by Ne Win. The country's economy took a nose dive due to the failed autarky economic policies implemented by Ne Win. In 1988, a student led protest turned into a nationwide democracy movement, which was suppressed by the Tatmadaw brutally. This uprising brought down Ne Win and he was replaced by another group of Tatmadaw general—who rose to power by fighting ethnic rebels during the Cold War.[180]

Findings from Hypothesis 2

While the second hypothesis is plausible, the findings do not seem to be supporting the original assumption. In fact, the findings present two contradicting pictures. In one sense—especially if one only looks at the 1974 Constitution—General Ne Win did not seem to understand the characteristic of ethnic groups. That is why he eliminated the role of ethnic groups entirely from the constitution. In another sense—if one looks beyond the constitution such as the introduction of Thaingyintha and the 1981 Citizenship Law—General Ne Win appeared to believe that ethnic characteristics are fixed, thus cannot be changed or modified. Only those who had settled in Burma before the First Anglo-Burmese War were considered full citizenship, and the rest—those who arrived after British annexed Burma—were excluded from full citizenship rights. Therefore, even though the Muslims of Arakan State—who had been living in Burma for decades, in some cases for centuries, were made 'stateless.' Thus, in the view of General Ne Win, a person cannot become a member of an ethnic group no matter how many years they live in a territory. The benchmark to define who belonged to Burma and who were not was defined by the year of 1824—the year General Ne Win considered Burma lost its independence. Under this assumption, all citizenship rights of all the immigrants—Indian, Chinese, Muslims—were reduced, and hundreds of thousands were deported to India. In other

[179] Clarke et ra., *Re-examining Ethnic Identity*, 25.
[180] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar,* 82-88.

words, the land of Bamar belong only to certain ethnic groups that had existed under the realm of the Bamar kingdom. Though he believed that Burma's minority ethnic groups—Kachin, Karenni, Karen, Chin, Mon, Arakan, Shan—are entitled to call Bamar home, he eliminated their political roles by abolishing the 1947 Constitution, used socialism to neutralize ethnic voices, and imposed a dominant military role all across Burma, especially in Shan State. Due to all these mistreatments of ethnicity and ethnic groups, Burma's ethnic armed conflict dynamic became more complex, with more groups emerging to fight the central government and the Tatmadaw.

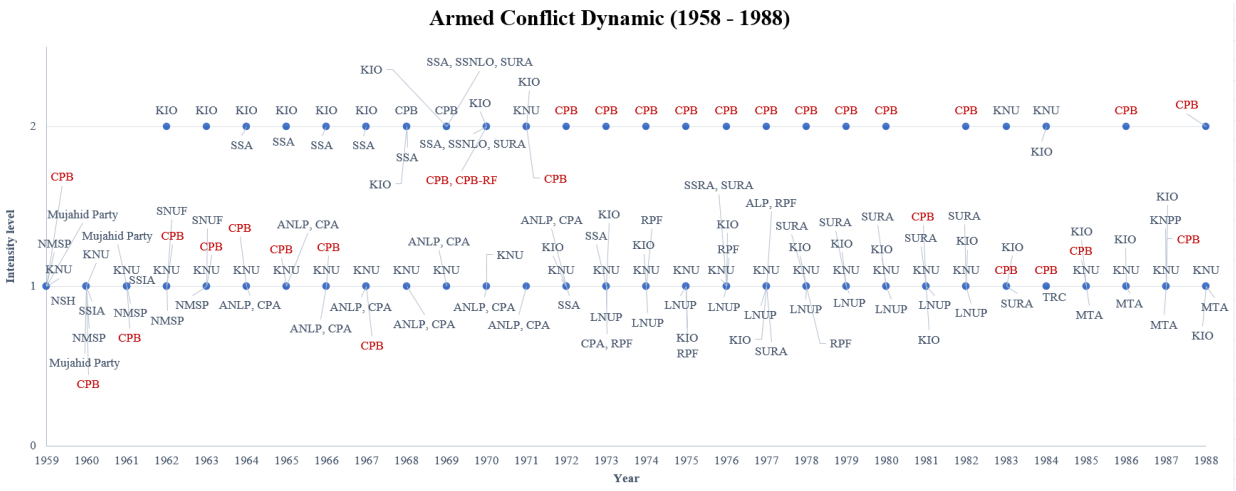


Figure 3: Armed Conflict Dynamic from 1958 to 1988 (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2020)

Note:

KIO = Kachin; SSA, SNUF, SSIA, SSNLO,SURA, MTA= Shan; (please note that these Shan forces fought both collectively and separately from time to time) ANLP, CPA= Communist Party of Arakan; LNUP = Lahu; KNPP = Karenni; KNU = Karen; KIO = Kachin; NMSP = Mon; RPF = Rohingya.

Hypothesis 3: When ceasefires are used by the dominant group to consolidate power, as opposed to solving ethnic grievances, armed conflicts are more likely to intensify between the dominant group and the minority groups.

Introduction

When ethnic groups are weary of wars either due to the painful cost of the armed conflicts or due to external factors such as the end of the Cold War, they tend to enter into some form of formal or informal agreements to ceasefire. This process is often known as the peace process broadly. The general understanding is that when ceasefires happen, regardless of who starts first between the dominant groups and the weaker groups, they are often meant for good—to stop waging against each other either temporarily or permanently. On the other hand, this study argues that ceasefires can be used as a means to consolidate power even more. It is also possible that when a group realizes the end result of the war as a defeat, that group may start engaging in the peace process not because they want to make peace but because to avoid humiliation of the defeat. Since the end of the Cold War, Tatmadaw leaders have engaged in bilateral ceasefire agreements with various ethnic armed organizations in Burma. U Thein Sein Government and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Government have recently attempted—from 2011 to 2020—what is known as the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), which is meant reduce ethnic armed conflicts among different EAOs. Despite all these attempts, the peace process in Burma has been resulted in the reduction of ethnic armed conflicts. The hypothesis assume that this is mainly because the Tatmadaw have used the peace process as a means to consolidate their power and Bamar ethnic dominant role, as opposed to resolving ethnic grievances. This study will test this assumption by analyzing key periods, events, actors and processes between 1989 and 2020 and see if the hypothesis can be supported or rejected.

The end of community party of Burma

As discussed in Historical Background under Chapter I, 1989 was an extraordinary year not just in many parts of the world but also in Burma as the Community Party of Burma (CPB) collapsed and three splinter groups emerged, namely the United Wa State Army (UWSA), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance (MNDAA), and the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA). The first two groups claim to represent two ethnic groups—the Wa and the Kokant—and the last one represents mixed ethnic groups with their leaders are composed of Chinese, Shan, and Akha. Though the main reason behind the split was not clear, Bertil Lintner,

an expert on Wa affairs, argues that the Bamar-dominant CPB never treated the Wa ethnic group with respect:

> CPB treated the Wa as little more than cannon fodder in their struggle to reach central Myanmar, where the party's future, if any, would have lied. It is significant that the CPB chairman Thakin Ba Thein Tin left his headquarters at Panghsang only to go to China, and, on a few occasions, to Mong Ko. He never once visited Wa village inside the CPB controlled base areas to talk to the people there.[181]

Even though the ethnic grievances of these ethnic groups were overshadowed by the ideological based conflicts throughout the Cold War, their desire for recognition for their distinct ethnic characteristics never faded away. Though they were fighting under the umbrella of the CPB during the Cold War, these ethnic groups have always had their own version of future for their ethnic communities—a future in which they will be able to express and exercise their ethnic characteristics freely. When the Cold War faded away starting in 1989, their ethnic grievances, previously overshowed by ideological clashes—resurfaced again.

State law and order council

Unlike in the Czech Republic where the Velvet Revolution ended the community rule and the subsequent events brough back democracy in the 1990s, the 1988 nationwide people uprising in Burma did not produce democracy, though that ended the one-party rule of General Ne Win. A new group of generals—who rose to power by fighting communists and ethnic armed organizations during the Cold War—took over after 1988 and established what was known as the State Law and Order Council (SLOC). Perhaps being influenced by the global democracy wave after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the generals did allow a taste of democracy by allowing political parties (previously banned by Ne Win) to participate in the 1990 general election.[182]

Aung San Suu Kyi—the daughter of Aung San and the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize Winner—entered Burmese politics around this time and co-established the National League for

---

[181] Bertil Lintner, The Much Misunderstood Wa of Myanmar and China, *The Irrawaddy*, Dec. 7, 2021, https://www.irrawaddy.com/culture/books/the-much-misunderstood-wa-of-myanmar-and-china.html

[182] Wei Yan Aung, "Myanmar's 1990 Election: Born of a Democratic Uprising, Ignored by the Military," *The Irrawaddy*, Oct. 7, 2020, https://www.irrawaddy.com/elections-in-history/myanmars-1990-election-born-democratic-uprising-ignored-military.html

Democracy (NLD), which then won the 1990 general election.[183] To the surprise of many—especially international election observers—the Tatmadaw generals facilitated this 1990 election relatively free.[184] Looking back, it looks like the Tatmadaw generals were just testing what would happen without having an actual intention of giving up power if the election result was not turned out to be in their favor. When the NLD won the election with a landslide, the generals refused to relinquish power and detained the NLD leadership and political activists.[185]

The influence of the past is powerful, often in an undesirable way. In the mind of the Tatmadaw generals in the 1990s, the ethnic armed organizations were merely 'rebel groups', a view they shared with Ne Win. While it is not sensitive to use the term 'rebel groups' in English language news articles and academic literature, it is important to note that the term has always been associated with negative views towards ethnic armed groups in Burma. Therefore, in a way rebel groups mean illegitimate groups, a view the Tatmadaw generals have deeply held throughout modern Burma history. As the Tatmadaw generals have always regarded ethnic armed organizations as rebel groups or illegitimate groups, the demands proposed by the ethnic armed organizations have always been viewed as less worthy, if not totally illegitimate.[186]

Ceasefires with the Northern groups

Despite their ignorance over ethnic characteristics, the Tatmadaw leaders understood that they could not follow the same path as Ne Win did. Their calculation, in my opinion, was that they had to do two things to remain their dominant role. By taking advantage of the collapse of the CPB in 1989, the Tatmadaw decided to negotiate ceasefires with the three splinter groups, who were wary of wars and tired of CPB's dominant role in their ancestral territories. As the result of the ideological clashes turned armed conflict between CPB and the Tatmadaw throughout the Cold War period, there were no times to focus on the development of the areas along the China-Myanmar borders—the areas controlled by Wa ethnic group and Kokant ethnic group (and Chinese to some extent). When the Tatmadaw offered ceasefires in exchange for a level of internal autonomy for their ethnic territories and development assistance, all three groups

[183] Ibid.
[184] Bertil Lintner, "The 1990 Election: Sorting Fact from Fiction," *The Irrawaddy,* Oct. 20, 2015, https://www.irrawaddy.com/election/opinion/the-1990-election-sorting-fact-from-fiction
[185] Ibid.
[186] Author's own observation.

accepted. In addition, the ceasefires did not require all three groups to disarm, another reason that made them feel that the Tatmadaw generals were respecting their right to bear arms.[187] In his recent publication titled 'Non-inclusive ceasefires do not bring peace: findings from Myanmar', Min Zaw Oo argues that another incentive that the Tatmadaw generals decided to make peace with these groups was that they wanted to stabilize the border regions so that they could focus on rebuilding the economy.[188]

While this view is plausible, this study, however, argues that the main reason that the Tatmadaw generals decided to make peace with the three splinter groups of the CPB was mainly because they decided to consolidate their power even more. To do this, they needed a break to reconsider their approach—a dominant approach that would keep them in an unchallenged position in the future politics of Burma. In other words, they would not have time to work out their plans if they had to keep fighting dozens of ethnic armed groups in the frontier and periphery areas of the country. Their plan worked as the armed conflicts between the Tatmadaw and the three groups mentioned above stopped during this period, as the conflict data from UPCP indicates, which I include at the end of this section.

Ceasefires with the Southern Groups

After agreeing on ceasefires with these three groups, the Tatmadaw turned to the country's southern parts—the areas along the Thailand-Myanmar border. Unlike the northern areas of the country, the groups in the south are geographically, historically, culturally, ideologically closer to Thailand and the Western forces especially the United States, partly because of the role Thailand and Western forces played in the Cold War period in Burma, especially in the areas along the Thailand-Myanmar border. At one point, all the southern groups and the Kachin Independent Army (KIA), which is not based in the south but in the north, formed a military and political coalition called the National Democratic Front (NDF) to tackle communism and make collective actions against the Tatmadaw.[189] Throughout the Cold War period, the south and the north were ideologically divided, with the northern groups leaning

[187] Tom Kramer, "Neither War Nor Peace: the Future of the Cease-fire Agreements in Burma," *Transnational Institute*, July, 2009, 4-9.
[188] Stein Tonnesson, Min Zaw Oo, and Ne Lynn Aung, "Non-inclusive ceasefires do not bring peace: findings from Myanmar," *Small War & Insurgences* (2021), 1-37.
[189] Kramer, *Neither War Nor Peace,* 8-19.

towards communism under the umbrella of CPB—supported by the People Republic of China (PRC)—and the southern parts and the KIA—supported by Thailand and western democratic forces especially United States—were more leaning towards capitalism.[190]

For the Tatmadaw, the ceasefire negotiations with the southern groups were way more challenging than the northern groups mainly because, in my opinion, the southern areas of Burma represent a very significant historical setting. The ethnic groups based in the south—Karen, Karenni, Shan, Mon—and Kachin in the north—are historically more significant than other groups simply because of the way they had been positioned—and treated—by the British and post-colonial Bamar-dominant central governments and the Tatmadaw since the independence. There were significant differences in worldview between the NDF members and the former CPB members discussed above. For instance, geographically speaking, KIA was based in northern Shan State, which is a day drive to the Chinese border, but they, as an armed group, never became part of the CPB throughout the Cold War. Instead, they had always stuck with the southern groups. This study argues that this is because of the relationship that had built during the colonial rule when both groups (together with Chin) served in the British Burma Army, which was used to put down the Bamar nationalists in the 1930s, as discussed earlier.

The Tatmadaw first attempted to defeat the southern groups, which failed. Realizing that it was impossible to defeat the southern groups due to the mountainous terrain and unrelenting jungle valleys, they turned to a ceasefire approach. In 1993, a charismatic Tatmadaw general named Khin Nyunt started offering ceasefires with the southern groups. In response, two different views emerged among the NDF members. Some of the members of NDF wanted to agree to ceasefires first and then engage in political dialogue, while others wanted to make sure that the Tatmadaw generals give certain political guarantees as a pre-condition to signing ceasefire agreements. In addition, the local population in the southern areas were weary of wars, and pressure was amounting towards the southern groups to stop fighting the Tatmadaw.[191] When KIA signed the agreement with the Tatmadaw, KIA was expelled from the NDF. Min Zaw Oo implies that All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF)—a student-led armed group

[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.

that emerged after the Tatmadaw failed to accept the result of the 1990 elections—was kicked off from Kachin State as part of the Tatmadaw's peace deal with the KIA.[192]

In addition, the end of the cold war meant that the support towards the southern groups by foreign democratic forces was declining. For example, when the Government of Thailand—close ally to the United States throughout the Cold War—realized that communism was no longer a threat, they shifted their policy on southern groups. They started pressuring some southern groups to sign ceasefires with the Tatmadaw. Gradually, all the southern groups, except KNU, signed ceasefire agreements with the Tatmadaw. Even though KNU did not sign ceasefire agreements, the signing of other southern groups meant that the armed conflicts in the south (which the Karen shared with the Mon, the Krenni) significantly reduced conflicts.[193] The KNU was very close to signing the agreement, but General Khin Nyunt was detained in 2004 by other generals during a power shakeup within the top brass of the Tatmadaw. In the case of Shan State, the Tatmadaw offered a comfortable retirement plan for Kun Sa—a CIA wanted drug lord who was leading Mong Tai Army in Shan State at the time. Those who did not follow Kun Sa's plan went on to establish their own Shan ethnic armed organization called the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS)—a strong armed group based between Thailand and Myanmar today.[194]

This study argues that one reason it was easy for the Tatmadaw generals to manipulate ethnic armed organizations was that they were badly organized. One interesting finding this study revealed was that ethnic armed groups have a tendency to break up from time to time, and splinter groups emerge. The leaders of splinter groups often pursue different political and economic goals, which often results in multiple groups that claim to represent the same ethnic group and fight against each other, resulting in a vicious cycle of intra ethnic conflicts. In the case of Mong Tai Army, the leader of this group was led by ethnic Chinese man named Khun Sa, who claimed to fight for ethnic rights but then emerged as a local drug lord. His illicit drug activities were so widespread, especially in the Golden Tringle—the borders areas shared by Burma's Shan State, Thailand, and Lao—that Thomas Constantine, then U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency Administrator, said, "He [Khun Sa] has delivered as much evil to this world as any

[192] Stein Tonnesson et al., *Non-exclusive Ceasefires Don't Bring Peace*, 1-37.
[193] Kramer, *Neither War Nor Peace*, 8-19.
[194] Ibid.

mafia don has done in our history."[195] The Tatmadaw manipulated him by offering a comfortable retirement in the capital to give up the MTA. The Wa forces also joined hands with the Tatmadaw in cracking down Khun San's forces between 1993 and 1996. However, ethnic Shan who were serving under Kun San broke away to establish their own Shan armed group, another reason that economic incentives cannot neutralize ethnic grievances. A fraction from KIA also broke away to sign a separate ceasefire with the Tatmadaw. Another fraction from KNU—who complained about the Christian-dominant role within KNU—broke away to form Buddhism-dominant armed group called Democratic Karen Buddhist Association (DKBA) who turned against the KNU by assisting the Tatmadaw to fight the KNU.[196] It appears that EAOs have a tendency to turn against each other from time to time, one of the reason why they have never became a collective force to defeat the Tatmadaw, which knows how to manipulate EAOs by offering different incentives.

All the ceasefires signed between the Tatmadaw and EAOs were only military truces without any political promises. Moreover, none of the agreements—except the one with the KIA—were written agreements. When asked about Tatmadaw's plan to have political and peace dialogue, General Khin Nyunt referred them to what the Tatmadaw called the National Convention, a national political process initiated by the Tatmadaw to write a new constitution. The EAOs that agreed to ceasefires hoped that they would be able to discuss their political demands—especially the federalism proposals for their ethnic territories—at the National Convention. In fact, according to Kramer, General Khin Nyunt even told the groups that he could not discuss politics as they, the Tatmadaw, was not the government. He advised EAOs to discuss their political demands with a future government that would result from the National Convention.[197]

Analysis of The National Convention

As discussed above, the Tatmadaw asked all the ethnic armed groups to present their political demands to the National Convention. Like all the national political processes since Panglong Agreement in 1947, this process was also led by Bamar-dominant Tatmadaw

[195] Reuters Staff, "Myanmar druglord Khun Sa Dead—Rebel Leader," *REUTERS,* Oct. 30, 2007, https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-30234320071030
[196] Kramer, *Neither War Nor Peace*, 8-19.
[197] Ibid.

generals. Tatmadaw claimed that the national convention process was meant to discuss basic principles of Burma future constitution. In July of 1992, 702 delegates were named by the Tatmadaw for the National Convention. This included only 15% of the political parties that won the seats in the 1990 general elections. The majority of delegates were hand-picked by the Tatmadaw.[198] In October of 1992, the Tatmadaw presented the following six objectives at the National Convention:

1. Non-disintegration of the Union
2. Non-disintegration of national unity
3. Perpetuation of national sovereignty
4. Promotion of a genuine multiparty democracy
5. Promotion of the universal principles of justice, liberty and equality
6. Participation by the Defense Services in a national political leadership role in the future state.[199]

The political sensitivity of these demands proposed by the Tatmadaw varied, with the first three objectives seen as acceptable, at least to some extent, mainly because secession—which the first three points were meant to prevent—was not on the agenda of ethnic groups anymore simply because it was not a realistic political idea. Instead, they collectively sought to work out some sort of federalism (previously denied by General Nay Win) in which they could enjoy a level of internal autonomy. The fourth and fifth points was agreed without any objections as it talked about the promotion of democracy and basic moral principles. The participants representing the minority groups and the Tatmadaw generals were not able to agree on point six, which was meant to give the Bamar-dominant Tatmadaw a special position in the future politics of Burma. In addition, the federalism proposals submitted by the ethnic representatives, such as the elected members of the Shan National League for Democracy (SNLD) which won the second-highest seats in the 1990 constituent assembly after the NLD, were rejected.[200] The ethnic representatives could not accept the Tatmadaw's attempt to give themselves a special position in the future politics of Burma and the Tatmadaw could not accept ethnic groups' demand of establishing a genuine federal system. The process was halted several times due to

[198] Human Rights Watch, "Chronology of Burma's Constitutional Process." July. 18, 2007. https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-chronology-national-convention
[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid.

these disagreements, among others. In 2004, the state announced what they called 'Roadmap to Democracy' in which they included seven points:

1. Reconvening of the National Convention that had been adjourned since 1996
2. After the successful holding of the National Convention, implement step-by step the process necessary for the emergence of a genuine and disciplined democratic system
3. Drafting of a new constitution in accordance with basic principles and detailed basic principles laid down by the National Convention
4. Adoption of the constitution through national referendum
5. Holding of free and fair elections for Pyithu Hluttaws (legislative bodies) according to the new constitution
6. Convening of Hluttaws attended by Hluttaw members in accordance with the new constitution; and,
7. Building a modern, developed, and democratic nation by the state leaders elected by the Hluttaw; and the government and other central organs formed by the Hluttaw.[201]

This time the Tatmadaw leaders deliberately omitted mentioning about the role of Tatmadaw in the future politics of Burma, a proposal previously rejected by ethnic representatives. I would argue that this part was deliberately left out to show that they were willing to negotiate with ethnic representatives. However, the trust had been in ruin between Tatmadaw leaders and ethnic leaders by the time the roadmap came out. For instance, the Tatmadaw generals banned in 2002 the celebration of the 55th anniversary of Union Day—which was meant to celebrate the signing of the Panglong Agreement in 1947.[202] Later when ethnic leaders, especially Shan leaders, started opposing the National Convention for lacking a fair share of legitimate ethnic representatives, they were arrested. Khun Htoo Oo—the leader of SNLD and a major critic of Tatmadaw leaders—were given 93 years' imprisonment.[203] This unreasonably long prison sentence was used to create a climate of fear and sent a message that any attempts to oppose the National Convention process would be severely punished. In 2004, a joint statement was also issued by seven EAOs which have entered ceasefire agreements with the Tatmadaw. The statement demanded the Tatmadaw 'to begin a more inclusive negotiating process for political

[201] Ibid.
[202] Win Htein, Burma's Ethnic Groups Banned from Celebrations, *The Irrawaddy*, Feb. 11, 2002, https://www2.irrawaddy.com/article.php?art_id=2207
[203] Amnesty International. "Myanmar Democracy Advocate Put Behind Bars for 93 Years." Feb. 18, 2011.

development and democracy and national unity.'[204] Therefore, all these demands and dissatisfactions from minority ethnic groups showed that the whole process was inclusive, and it was clear that the Tatmadaw generals were using the national convention process to consolidate their power. They did this by forcing minority ethnic leaders to participate in the process and by punishing those who attempted to discredit the process. Through this inclusive process, the Tatmadaw finalized the convention in 2007, followed by a constitution referendum conducted between 10 and 24 May of 2008. The following table illustrates the conflict situation between 1988 and 2008—the first phrase of the ceasefire process.

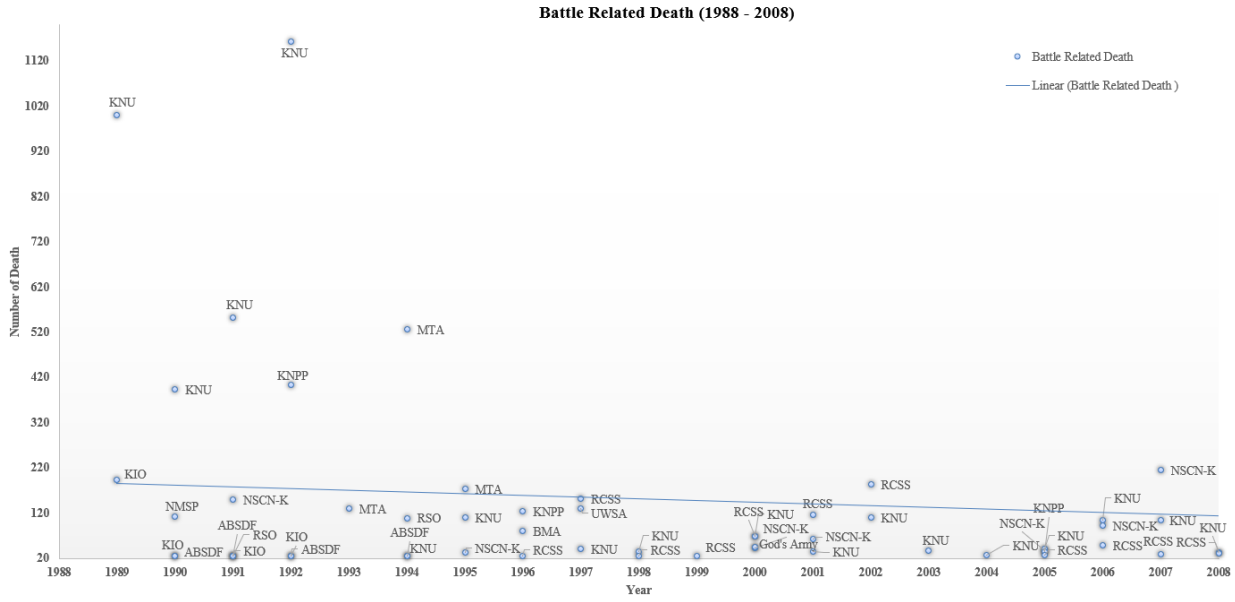


Figure 4: Battle Related Death from 1988 to 2008 (Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 2020)

The table is showed in battle relaed deaths. Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) records only the battle related deaths which exceed 25+ deaths. As the table indicates, except an iccident in 1997, there were no armed conflcits between the three spliters groups of the CPB. That is why ther names are not appeared in the conflict table. Starting in 1993, the armed conflicts with the KIA or KIO (Kachin) were completed stopped, so does with the NMSP (Mon) starting in 1990. Conflict with KNPP (Karenni) were also significantly reduced, except in 1996

[204] Human Rights Watch, "Chronology of Burma's Constitutional Process." July. 18, 2007. https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-chronology-national-convention

and 2005. The conflict with MTA stoped when Khun Sa surrendered in 1996. Another Shan ethnic group, RCSS, emerged to fight the Tatmadaw starting in 1988. A high conflict spike between 1989 and 1992 was an evidece that the Tatamdaw initiatlly attepted to defeat the KNU and other southern groups, which they failed. The conflicts were reduced only when the Tatmadaw started engaing ceasfires with the southern group. Though the conflict with KNU (Karen) reduced signficantly and there were literally no conflicts, at least the conflicts did not exceed 25+ battle deaths, in 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1999, and 2004.

Analysis of 2008 Constitution

According to statistics provided by the Tatmadaw, 98.12% out of 27, 288, 827 eligible voters casted their votes, and of them 92.48% approved the constitution. Based on these facts, in the view of the Tatmadaw, the current constitution—which was the product of sixteen years of the National Convention—was undoubtfully legitimate.[205] In the preamble of the constitution, the Tatmadaw generals went back all the way to 1885 by saying:

> Due to colonial intrusion, the Nation lost her sovereign power in 1885. The National people launched anti-colonialist struggles and National liberation struggles, with unity in strength, sacrificing lives and hence the Nation became an independent sovereign State again on 4th January 1948.[206]

They used the term 'the National people' to refer to all the ethnic groups in Burma and claimed that the national people launched anti-colonist struggles. For those who are well-versed with the colonial history of Burma, it is evident that there were no such collective anti-colonist struggles. In the constitution, the Tatmadaw general also claimed that the 1947 constitution was ended because it was written hastily. They also said that the 1974 constitution written by Ne Win also was abolished due to 'the general situation occurred in 1988'. By general situation they meant the nation-wide democracy movement of the 1988. In addition, they went on to claim that they attempted to adopt multiparty democratic system and market economy. Furthermore, they implied that the constitutional process was participated by all representatives from all townships, a claim that is factually wrong as the process was inclusive.[207]

---

[205] Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, "Announcement of Promulgation of State Constitution of the Republic of Myanmar, May 29, 2008.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid.

> Persons who are well experienced in various aspects of politics, security, administration, economics, social and law as well as National races representatives of all townships in the Nation took part in the National Convention.[208]

Under this constitution, the first general election was held in 2010, which was won by the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). USDP was reformed from the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), which was established by Tatmadaw generals in 1993. The Tatmadaw used this institution to mobilize Bamar Buddhist ethnic to become a major political force. When USDA was transformed into a USDP—as a political party—all the human resources mobilized and hard assets such as hundreds of township offices invested since 1993 were transferred to USDP, making it the wealthiest political party in Burma.[209] Prior to the 2010 general elections, certain military generals were retired and joined USDP as election candidates. The NLD boycotted this election by saying that the constitution was not legitimate mainly because of the way it was written. USDP went on to win the 2010 general election comfortably without any strong major political oppositions.[210] General Thein Sein, a rare Tatmadaw general with soft personalities, became the President to head the first quasi-government in which military controlled substantial power and authority protected by the constitution they designed. President Thein Sein was credited for making major reforms, including an open economy that welcomes foreign direct investment, a level of press freedom, and the release of political prisoners.[211]

The Rise of Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD)

At the same time, in 2012, NLD's Aung San Suu Kyi decided that the constitution was the only political alternative to move forward, and she contested in a by-election in 2012, winning a seat in the lower house of the parliament. Furthermore, in 2015, NLD won the 2015 general elections, beating USDP and became the civilian government with Aung San Suu Kyi as the State Counsellor. The reason she became the State Counsellor, not the President, was that the 2008 Constitution bans any candidates with foreign spouses or children from becoming the

---

[208] Ibid.
[209] *BBC.* "Burma junta support group USDA disbands." July. 15, 2010, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-10651760
[210] Thoma Fuller, "Main Opposition to Boycott Myanmar Election," *New York Times*, March 29, 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/30/world/asia/30myanmar.html
[211] Jonah Fisher, "Myanmar: Thein Sein leaves legacy of reform," *BBC*, March. 30, 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35916555

President. This is another proof that shows how the Tamadaw generals view ethnicity. The fact that Aung San Suu Kyi married to a foreign national was seen as an insult to the Bamar Buddhist identity.

These dramatic changes—an open economy that welcomes foreign direct investment, the return of Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD into Burmese politics, a level of media freedom, the release of political prisoners—made Burma observers feel that Burma was on the path to democracy. Once again, the role of ethnicity and ethnic groups were overlooked under the name of democratization. Though this study does not dispute that the process resulting from the 2008 constitution gave Burma a certain level of freedom, the whole process was, from the very start, a power consolidation project of the Tatmadaw generals. This study argues this based on the following additional findings from the 2008 Constitution.

The role of the Tatmadaw and Commander-in-chief

As in other countries, one of the most powerful positions in Burma is the Commander-in-chief of the national armed forces—the Tatmadaw. In most democratic countries, the leader of national armed forces is put under the command of the elected civilian governments. For instance, the President of the United States of America is also the commander-in-chief of the U.S Army.

> The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States.[212]

The framers of the 2008 constitution made sure that the commander-in-chief of the Tatmadaw has direct control over the Ministry of Home Affair (MOHA)—which controls police—the Ministry of Border Affairs (MOBA)—which controls border guard forces—and the Ministry of Defense (MOD)—which controls all the armed forces. The President does not have control over the commander-in-chief.[213] Article 338 of the constitution states, 'All the armed forces in the Union shall be under the commander of the Defense Services [the Tatmadaw].[214] In addition, the three ministries as mentioned earlier are not under the civilian government's direct

[212] U.S Constitution, art. 2, sec. 2.
[213] Nicholas Farrelly, "The Tatmadaw in a democracy", *Myanmar Times*, December 14, 2015. https://www.mmtimes.com/opinion/18123-the-tatmadaw-in-a-democracy.html.
[214] Myanmar 2008 Constitution, art. 338.

control, and the ministers of these institutions are appointed based on the recommendations of the commander-in-chief.

> [The President shall] obtain a list of suitable Defense Service personnel nominated by the Commander-in-Chief of the Defense Services [the Tatmadaw] for Ministries of Defense, Home Affairs and Border Affairs.[215]

In addition, the President is allowed only to make someone approved by the national security council—known as the National Defense and Security Council (NSDC)—Commander-in-chief. [216] NSDC is formed with the following individuals:

1. The President
2. [First] Vice-President
3. [Second] Vice-President
4. Speaker of the Pythu Hluttaw or the lower house of Myanmar's National Parliament
5. Speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw or the upper house of Myanmar's National Parliament
6. Commander-in-Chief of the Defense Services [the Tatmadaw]
7. Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Defense services
8. Minister for Defense
9. Minister for Foreign Affairs
10. Minister for Home Affairs
11. Minister for Border Affairs[217]

Out of these 11 members, only 1 to 5 are elected positions, and the rest are from the Tatmadaw. Therefore, the Tatmadaw have a veto over this council. If this council decides that the state is in crisis, it can call for a state of emergency, cast a vote, and put the Tatmadaw in charge.[218] In addition, the constitution requires at least 75 % +1 votes of all the members of the Myanmar's National Parliament—in which 25% seats are reserved for the Tatmadaw representatives—to amend the most important articles in the constitution.[219] All these findings are strong proofs that the Tatmadaw had been consolidating its dominant role since 1989. Among many flaws, the most ignorant demand made in the constitution was demanding all the ethnic armed organizations to turn into border guard forces.[220] In a way, the 2008 constitution

---

[215] Ibid., art. 232, para. b, sec. 3.
[216] Ibid., art. 342.
[217]Ibid., art. 201, sec. 410.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid., art. 12, sec. 436.
[220] Kim Jolliffe, Security integration in Myanmar: Past experiences and future vision," *Safer World*, May, 2017, 11-14.

was designed to contain ethnic armed organizations. In the view of ethnic armed organizations, this demand meant accepting Bamar's dominant role. Except for a few splinter groups, this unreasonable demand was rejected by all EAOs. Moreover, due to this unrealistic demand, the ceasefire with the KIA collapsed in 2011, and armed conflicts intensified.[221]

Nationwide ceasefire agreement

When the Tatmadaw generals and President Thein Sein Government realized that their plan to contain ethnic armed groups by turning them into border guard forces failed, they turned to another ceasefire process called the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA)—a project President Thein Sein crafted with the support of foreign and domestic peace advisers. A few open-minded retired military generals—including a former Navy Chief of the Tatmadaw and a retired Major General—were tasked to negotiate ceasefires with EAOs.[222] Unlike the previous ceasefire process (1989-2008), these generals decided to work with civilian conflict experts (mostly trained by western universities in Europe and North America) and listened to their inputs—an unusual development within the Tatmadaw which usually likes to stay away from foreign influence, including those trained by western institutions. It was the first time Tatmadaw generals listened to civilian advice on what they should and should not do in the peace process. The result of this development was that NCA includes the terms and concepts that the Tatmadaw previously rejected.

> This agreement [Nation-wide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA)] also aims to secure an enduring peace based on the principles of dignity and justice, through an inclusive political dialogue process involving all relevant stakeholders.[223]

First, the advisers behind this process acknowledge that it needs to be inclusive, at least in theory. The documents also mentioned that it aims to establish a union based on the principles of democracy and federalism in accordance with the outcomes of political dialogue and in the spirt of the Panglong Agreement—an agreement signed between the Bamar representatives and the representatives of the Frontier Areas in 1947. After two years in the making, President Thein Sein held the NCA signing ceremony in October of 2015, one month before another general election was planned to hold. Despite high expectations, only eight EAOs signed NCA out of at

[221] *DVB Multimedia Group.* "Kachin army ambush leaves 30 dead." July. 8, 2011.
[222] Author's own observation.
[223] Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), Preamble.

least twenty active EAOs. [224] According to Dr Min Zaw Oo—who advised the NCA process—many groups decided not to sign due to the timing of the signing ceremony of the NCA.[225] Another election was a month away, and there were expectations that Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD would win, which turned out to be the case. Meanwhile, there were concerns that the Tatmadaw might seize power if the NLD won the election, as they did in the aftermath of the 1990 constituent elections. However, the Tatmadaw accepted the result of the election. The calculation of the Tatmadaw generals was that they had consolidated power through the constitution, and NLD should not pose a threat even it became the government. More important, no civilian governments would have power to amend the constitution they wrote as it was well protected. It was designed in a way constitutional amendments were impossible, unless the Tatmdaw generals agree to make changes.

National League for Democracy Government

When Aung San Suu Kyi became the State Counsellor, there were concerns that she may abandon the NCA process initiated by President Thein Sein to start a new process, as often happen in times of government transition. However, to the surprise of many, Aung San Suu Kyi continued the process by rebranding the NCA. She changed the name of Myanmar Peace Center (MPC)—the body responsible for the NCA process—to National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NPRC).[226] She also rebranded the peace process by calling the 21st Panglong Conference, a sign that she wanted to continue the process her father initiated—the Panglong Agreement.[227]

For ethnic groups and ethnic armed organizations, getting a chance to deal directly with Aung San Suu Kyi—who never got a chance to do politics due to multiple house arrests since 1988—was a historic moment. On the other hand, by then, most ethnic armed groups had learnt

---

[224] Antoni Slodkowski, "Myanmar signs ceasefire with eight armed groups," *REUTERS*, Oct.15, 2015, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-politics-idUSKCN0S82MR20151015
[225] Stein Tonnesson et al., *Non-exclusive Ceasefires Don't Bring Peace*, 1-37.
[226] Nang Lwin Hnin Pwint, "MPB to Be Renamed National Reconciliation and Peace Center," *The Irrawaddy*, Apri 28, 2016, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/mpc-to-be-renamed-national-reconciliation-and-peace-center.html
[227] Alex J. Bellamy, "The 21st Century Panglong: Myanmar's New Hope for Peace," *The Global Observatory*, Aug. 31, 2016, https://theglobalobservatory.org/2016/08/myanmar-21st-century-panglong-aung-san-suu-kyi/

their lessons from the previous ceasefire agreement (1989—2008). In 2016, KIA—whose ceasefire broke down in 2011—teamed up with Arakan Army (AA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA)—the three groups based in northern Burma and all lacked bilateral ceasefire agreements from the previous ceasefire process—and formed an alliance called the Northern Alliance.[228] Then, in 2017, this group shifted their political strategy and followed UWSA-led process called the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC), a political coalition that includes all the non-signatories of the NCA to counter the NCA process. Prior to all these, in 2010, EAOs came together and formed the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC)—a coalition of approximately twenty EAOs to make collective demands when they negotiate with the Tatmadaw and the central government.[229] Though fractions occur from time to time, the emergence of all these coalitions and alliances among EAOs indicate that they become more collective by learning lessons from the previous ceasefire agreements. In the view of EAOs, if they remain separate from each other, it is easy for the Tatmadaw to divide and rule.

Despite high expectations on Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership, NLD Government failed to understand the role of EAOs and the characteristic of ethnicity. While FPNCC members wanted to be treated collectively, the NLD Government decided to exclude three ethnic groups, namely Arakan Army (AA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and the MNDAA, from the peace process on the basis that these three groups lack bilateral ceasefire agreements from the previous ceasefire process (1989—2008). They particularly undermined the role of the Arakan Army which was only established in 2009 by a group of Arakan ethnic nationalists who wanted to reclaim their lost Arakan Kingdom conquered by the Bamar's Konbaung Dynasty. The relationship between FPNCC and the NLD Government soared when the NLD Government designated AA as a terrorist organization in March 2020. [230]

---

[228] ACLED, Analysis of the FPNCC/the Northern Alliance and Myanmar Conflict Dynamics, July. 21, 2018, https://acleddata.com/2018/07/21/analysis-of-the-fpncc-northern-alliance-and-myanmar-conflict-dynamics/

[229] Myanmar Peace Monitor. "United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC)." https://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/1621/unfc/ (no date available)

[230] David Scott Mathieson, "The Arakan Army in Myanmar: Deadly Conflict Rises in Rakhine State," *United States Institute of Peace (USIP)*, no. 486 (2020): 3—17.

Bamarnization

A few events made EAOs feel that the NLD Government was not respecting their ethnic characteristics. Some even started accusing that NLD Government was promoting Bamar-centric policies, as the Tatmadaw has done since the independence. There were reasons to make such observations. As they became the government, some NLD officials started a project to build statues of Aung San in all state and regional capitals in Myanmar. This movement was perceived as Burminization—a term to describe a process of imposing Bamar characteristics over minority groups—by many ethnic communities.[231] Even though Aung San is seen as an independence hero by the Bamar ethnic group, minority ethnic groups do not share this view. When the Karenni students protested this project in Loikaw—the capital of Karenni State—they were arrested, sued, and put in jail. In addition, in Mon State, the NLD Government decided to name a bridge Aung San against the desire of Mon ethnic group who desired a name related to their Mon ethnic identity.[232]

One year after NLD became the government, in October 2016, a group named the Arakan Rohingya Sallvation Army (ARSA) emerged. The legitimacy of ARSA is disputed even among the Rohingya Muslim communities, they claimed to take up arms for the ethnic rights of the Roghinyas, whose ethnic identity has been rejected by the successive governments and the Tatmadaw for decades.

> In October 2016, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) made its first appearance, launching a string of attacks on army patrols. Seventy thousand people fled to Bangladesh in the chaos that followed. ARSA was led by Ataullah abu Ammar Jununi, a Rohingya recently returned from Saudi Arabia who mobilized fighters from an increasingly hopeless and angry population. In August 2017, after ARSA attacked dozens of police outposts and a military base, the Tatmadaw launched a counter-attack that left hundreds if not thousands dead. Scores of villages were razed, and hundreds of thousands fled across the Naaf river into Bangladesh.[233]

This counter-attack—often known as security clearance operations—resulted in the worst humanitarian crisis in the modern history of Burma as at least 800, 000 became refugees, almost

[231] *Radio Free Asia (RFA).* "Myanmar's NLD cautions protestors who oppose Aung San statue in Kayah state." July. 6, 2018.
[232] Lu Min Man, "Thousands protest over bridge name in Mon State," *Myanmar Times*, March. 20, 2017, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/25383-thousands-protest-over-bridge-name-in-mon-state.html
[233]Myint-U, *Not a Single's Year Peace.*

all of them are the Muslims of Arakan State called Rohingyas who were made stateless by 1981 Citizenship Law introduced by Ne Win. Records of human rights violations emerged, and the international rights groups and the United Nations accused the Tatmadaw of genocide.[234] When the Gambia, which is backed by the Organizations of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)—sued Burma at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for violating the Genocide Convention, Aung Shan Suu Kyi decided to defend Myanmar at the ICJ in the Hague.[235] For the minority groups, this decision was an insult to their decades-long sufferings by the dominant group—the Tatmadaw. Even though her defense can be considered the defense for the state rather than the defense for the Tatmadaw, no one can deny that she was defending the actions committed by the Tatmadaw. During her government term, Aung San Suu Kyi was able to convince only two EAOs—the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Lahu Democratic Union (LDU)—to sign the NCA. These two groups are not significant in terms of military might and, in fact, the LDU is believed to have only a few hundred fighters.[236] Despite no significant results from the peace process, NLD went on to win the 2020 general elections, but the Tatmadaw failed to recognize the result of the elections and staged a coup by accusing NLD of vote fraud. It should be noted that the analysis for this thesis does not include this latest event as it is beyond the research parameter and timeframe of this study.

The following table shows the conflict dynamic between 2009 and 2020—the period that saw two governments—the USDP Government and the NLD Government—that came to exist under the political arrangements designed in the 2008 Constitution, which was the result of the sixteen years of power consolidation project in the forms of ceasefires and the national convention process.

[234] https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/05/questions-and-answers-gambias-genocide-case-against-myanmar-international-court
[235] Ibid.
[236] Stein Tonnesson et al., *Non-exclusive Ceasefires Don't Bring Peace*, 1-37.

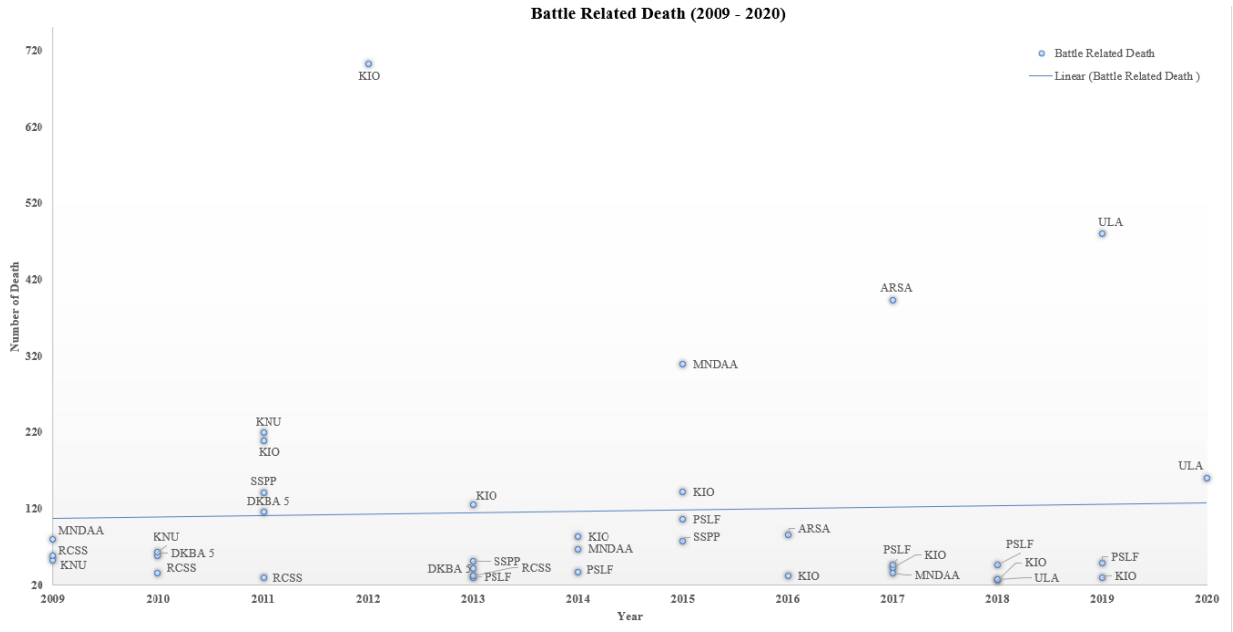


Figure 5: Battle Related Death from 2009 to 2020 in Burma (Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 2020)

As the previous table, these conflicts are the one that exceeded 25+ battle related death given per calendar year. As the table indicates, the armed conflicts with the KNU reduced during this period. This is mainly because the KNU signed the NCA. The ceasefire with the KIA broke down in 2011 and the table showed a high spike in 2011 with battle related deaths reaching between 620 and 720. The conflict with RCSS, another signatory to the NCA, after 2013 was also reduced after 2013, another effect of the NCA. From 2015 to 2020, the table indicates increased conflicts with MNDAA, ARSA, and ULA, together with other groups such as SSPP, PLSF, KIO. Therefore, in general, both governments were not able to cease armed conflicts during the second phrase of the peace process. Unlike the previous table, the linear was slightly rising from 2009 to 2020, an indication that the conflicts were gradually increasing despite of the NCA process.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION ON RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The study asks to what extend the findings from the three hypotheses satisfy the main research questions. The research findings from this study indicate that the concept of ethnic and ethnic groups have significant impact on internal armed conflicts in Burma. As discussed in literature review, ethnic groups are not just groups due to their distinct and unique characteristics, which this study discussed in literature review section. While different scholars view ethnicity and ethnic groups differently, they generally tend to agree that ethnicity and ethnic groups require to be recognized for who they are as 'groups.'

In the case of Burma, as this study has demonstrated, it was evident that there is a negative relationship between ethnic armed conflicts and the British colonial rule. To see if this assumption is justified, this study has analyzed the ways British officials and administrators treated ethnicity and ethnic groups. More importantly, by examining the census reports conducted during the British colonial rule, this study revealed how ethnicity and ethnic groups were interpreted in the context of Burma. In addition, this study also showed how certain ethnic groups were treated as martial races where Bamar ethnic group was regarded as a non-martial race. This kind of recruitment policy—part of the British's Divide and Rule Policy—fueled ethnic tensions among different ethnic groups. This study also discussed how the Bamar—the dominant group—responded when their felt that their ethnic characteristics came under attack and how those responses caused by Bamar ethnic grievances gradually transformed into Bamar national movements and then to independent movements. More importantly, this study showed seeking outside support from the Japanese Government changed the role of Bamar ethnic role. One unexpected finding from the research was the significant impact of WWII on Burma's ethnic groups. In fact, the WWII transformed the Bamar—once a suppressed group under the British—into a dominant group during the WWII and the Japanese rule.

In addition, this study showed that there is a negative relationship between the independence negotiation process and ethnic conflicts in Burma. By analyzing historical records such as peace agreements and constitution, this study showed how the independence negotiation process excluded certain ethnic groups. Moreover, by examining the role of the Karen ethnic group—one of the martial races promoted by the British—this study showed how the failure to address the Karen issue has resulted in Karen-Bamar ethnic conflicts in post-colonial Bamar.

This study also noted that, as evident in data collected from UPDC, Burma was also facing the fighting from the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). This study also observed that while ethnic grievances turned armed conflicts were present between 1948 and 1958—the first decade since the independence—ideological-based armed conflicts were also part of the contributing factor of civil war. A sperate analysis should be encouraged to see how significance of ideological conflicts have been throughout the modern history of Burma.

This study argues that while the first hypothesis was plausible—it should be noted that external factors and players, which don't not have ethnic dimensions, also played significant roles in making ethnic conflicts more complicated. This includes the arrival of communist ideologies among Bamar leaders in the 1930s, the Japanese invasion of Burma during the second WWII, and the influence of the starting period the Cold War. Meanwhile, this factor does not significantly change the fact that ancient ethnic resentment that had existed prior to the British become more apparent due to the way the British treated ethnicity and ethnic groups. This study also noted that the exclusive independent processes—led by only two dominant groups: the British and the Bamar—exacerbated ethnic tensions which then turned into armed conflicts when the British left Burma.

This study also showed that the way leaders view ethnicity and ethnic groups have significant impact on ethnic armed conflict. By analyzing the way General Ne Win treated ethnicity in the second hypothesis, this study initially observed that Ne Win tried to neutralize the concept of ethnicty with his "Burmese Way to Socialism." This study showed how Ne Win eliminated the role of ethnic groups in the 1974 Constitution. On the other hand, the study revealed a contradicting finding that General Ne Win's viewed ethnic characteristics as fixed. This study also analyzed how Ne Win applied the concept of Tainyinthar to exclude certain ethnic groups—particularly market dominant groups such as Chinese and Indian—from citizenship rights. The findings from the second hypothesis indicated that the initial assumption did not satisfy the research findings. While the initial observations indicated that Ne Win's attempts to neutralize the concept of ethnicity, the findings from the 1982 Citizenship Law showed that Ne Win had his own version of definition towards ethnicity and ethnicity groups. This particularly affected the role of the Muslim communities in Arakan State. While he appeared to accept the distinct and unique characteristics of Bamar's ethnic groups such as

Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin, Mon, Arakan, Shan, he abolished their role in national politics. He rejected the idea of federalism and went on to establish a one-party rule. This study also found how U NU Government used ethnicity as a political device to mobilize potential voters. While the fall of U Nu in 1958 was caused by the general situations of the country, he view toward ethnicity and ethnic groups—and his desire to promote Buddhism—fueled ethnic tension.

This study also discussed how major world events' such as the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War coincided with Burma political situations in the 1990s. While many scholars study this period as a return to democracy, this study looked at how the Tatmadaw attempted to consolidate their power during this period. The findings from hypothesis three clearly indicated that the assumption is justified. In particular, the findings from the 2008 Constitution are strong evidence to approve that the Tatmadaw had used the peace process as a means to consolidate their power, as opposed to resolving ethnic grievances.

Based on the research findings from this study, it is clear that there are certain situations in which ethnicity and ethnic groups can produce negative effects. The most important thing is to treat ethnicity and ethnic groups by taking into their distinct and unique characteristics. This is the first step to understand the motives behind ethnic armed conflicts. Out of many characteristics, some characteristics appear to be more sensitive than other. Ethnic groups must have a geographical space in which they are free to exercise their characteristics. For many ethnic groups, protecting the native land on which their characteristics have evolved, which they remember through myths or real history. As this study demonstrated, Burma, as a modern state, came into exist through an inclusive process. While it is hard to say Burma would not have ethnic conflict as it is today if it was never ruled by the colonial force, it was evident that the colonial period had profound impact on the role of many ethnic groups in Burma. In addition, if British would have stayed longer as they did in other places, the situations would have been different. The independence negotiation process itself was inclusive as it was facilitated only by two dominant groups. The mentality of the Tatmadaw leaders is that the sovereignty of Burma was lost when the British annexed Burma during the Anglo-Burmese Wars. Though U Nu was somewhat open to federalism proposals raised by ethnic leaders during the 1950s, as discussed in this study, he himself was somewhat controversial individual whose worldview and personalities were shaped by his religion. While being religious is not necessarily a bad thing, using religion

as a political tool to pursue his political goals was had negative impact on the political situations at the time. General Ne Win's view was clear. For him and the Tatmadaw he led, regaining the Bamar dominant role had always been the first priority. It appears that it was the main reason why he seized power from U Nu. In addition, General Ne Win's view towards ethnicity was troublesome. He believed that only certain ethnic groups belonged to Burma and excluded the rights of other groups. As discussed in hypothesis two, he had two contradicting views when it comes to ethnicity. In a way, he somewhat understood that ethnic groups have certain characteristics. However, he was influenced by the idea that smaller ethnic groups had to accept the dominant role of the Bamar. In fact, in his review, the only reason they lost their dominant role was because of the British. Therefore, in his view, it was justified to impose Bamar role over other minority group when the British left Burma. The Tatamdaw generals that succeeded Ne Win in 1988 also shared this view with General Ne Win. As discussed in this study, the Tatmadaw generals mentioned 1885—the year the British annexed the last Bamar Kingdom—in the preamble of the current constitution of Burma. This shows how think of their role and their view towards other smaller ethnic groups. It also appears that their view is highly influenced by the geographical location of Burma. As discussed, secession from the union is their biggest fear. This view is understandable given the geographical location of Burma, which shared her boundaries with powerful countries, including the People Republic of China and India. For them, there are simply too many factors that can justify their dominant role.

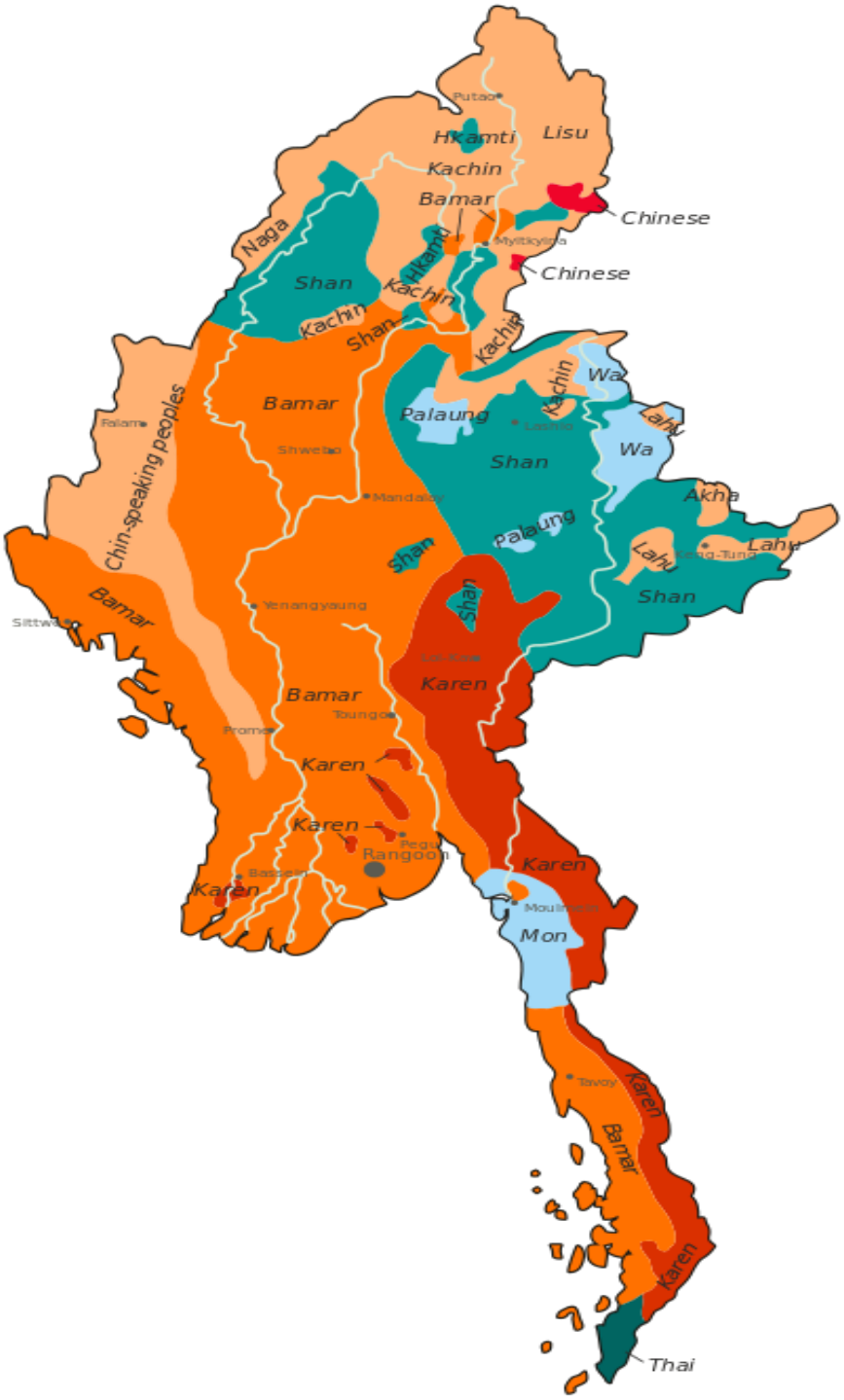
This study also revealed another interesting finding regarding minority ethnic groups in Burma. Though the seven major ethnic groups—Kachin, Karenni, Karen, Chin, Mon, Arakan, Shan—have seven state named after their ethnic names, the ethnic armed organization that claim to represent these groups do not control the capitals of these ethnic states. Only the Tatmdaw control the capitals of these ethnic states. This is evident it one looks at Appendix (C) and (D).

This shows how the Tatmadaw has established their dominant role not only in Bamar-dominant areas but also in the areas where dozens of minority ethic groups had made home for centuries. I would also argue that naming states after ethnic groups is also problematic. The seven ethnic stated mentioned earlier are also the homes of other minorities. Shan State alone has dozens of ethnic groups in addition to Shan. In addition, the demographics of these ethnic states are fluid. For example, a significant Kachin population live in Northern Shan State, in addition to

Kachin State. Many Kachin regard Northern Shan State as their home. In fact, the name of the country—Burma/Myanmar—itself is problematic because it only represents only one ethnic group—Bamar. When the country's name itself represent only one group, it is hard to create a shared national identity. Even after analyzing key periods, events, actors, and processes from the colonial period all the way to the NCA process, this study did not note any significant attempts by any ethnic groups to establish a share national identity—one that does not put 'ethnicity' a central role. For the minority ethnic groups, federalism is the only way to resolve ethnic conflicts in Burma. They often discuss and talk about how our countries such as Switzerland have done it. However, building a federal system and building a shared national identity are two different things. Federalism can be a first step, but this wouldn't fully solve the identity crisis among different ethnic groups.

It appears that most ethnic groups in Burma do not have a sense of belonging to the state mainly because they are the victims of state sponsored human violations for decades. Each ethnic group appears to represent their own distinct and unique ethnic characteristics and there is a lack of a share national identity in Burma. Their struggle for recognition is to be recognized for who they are as distinct groups. Therefore, in the future, the biggest challenge that Burma has is how to unite all ethnic groups under a shared national identity. In other words, a genuine national building process is required in which ethnic groups will come together to sort out how to neutralize their ethnic identities and create a shared national identity that does not represent only one group or certain groups. This may require renaming the name of the country, reconsidering the names of ethnic states, rethinking ethnic identities etc. It is evident that the effects of ethnicity on internal conflicts in Burma are motivated by the characteristics of ethnicity and ethnicity groups and their desire to be recognized for who they are as 'groups.' In the view of the dominant group, it is justifiable to impose their dominant role over other groups as they had always been the dominant group since the beginning. On the other hands, in the view of smaller minority groups, they have their own distinct and unique characteristics that cannot be put under the control of any groups—outsiders. Each ethnic group appears to have their own ethnic boundaries, which are influenced by their distinct and unique characteristics. While it is impossible to fully illustrate the effects of ethnicity, the hope of this study is to show how complex the concept of ethnicity is and its significant on ethnicity.

APPENDIX A: RACIAL MAP OF BURMA

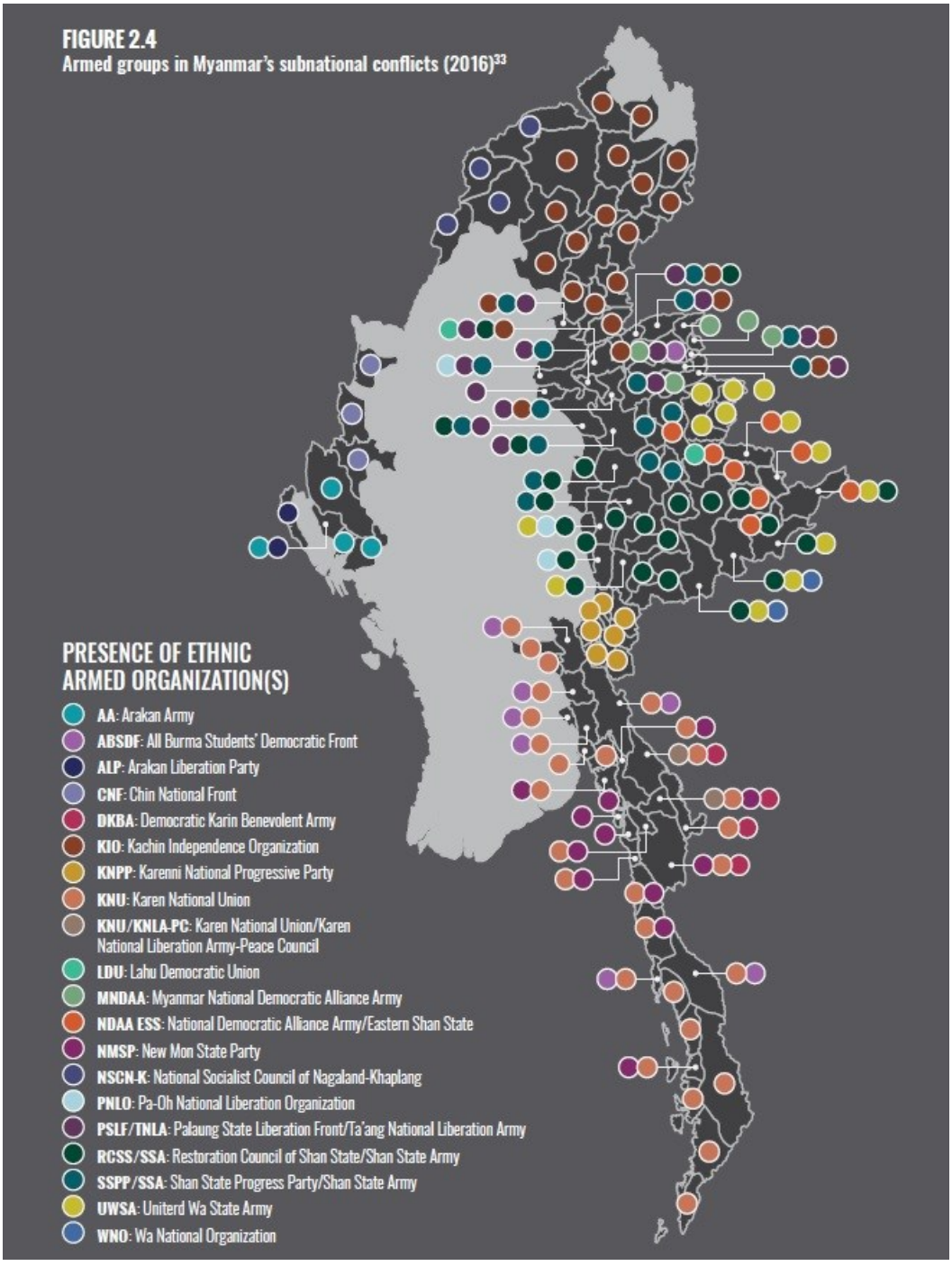


Source 1: The Central Intelligence Agency (2014)

APPENDIX B: ANGOLA BURMESE WARS

Source 2: Encyclopaedia Britannica, (2011)

APPENDIX 3: ETHNIC ARMED ORGANISATION IN BURMA



Source 3: Asia Foundation (2016)

APPENDIX 4: CAPITAL CITIES OF STATES AND DIVISIONS

Source 2: Mappr, (2021)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. ACLED, Analysis of the FPNCC/the Northern Alliance and Myanmar Conflict Dynamics, July. 21, 2018, https://acleddata.com/2018/07/21/analysis-of-the-fpncc-northern-alliance-and-myanmar-conflict-dynamics/
2. Amnesty International. "Myanmar Democracy Advocate Put Behind Bars for 93 Years." Feb. 18, 2011.
3. Amy Chau, Amy. *Political Tribe: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.
4. Aung, Maung Htin, Steinberg, David I. and Aung-Thwin, Michael Arthur. "Myanmar." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 6 Aug. 2021, https://www.britannica.com/place/Myanmar.
5. Aung, San Yamin. "Still No Date for Release of Census Findings on Ethnic Populations." *The Irrawaddy,* Feb. 21, 2018. https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/still-no-date-release-census-findings-ethnic-populations.html
6. Barua, Pradeep. "Inventing Race: The British and India's Martial Races," *The Historian* 58, no.1 (1995), 107-116.
7. *BBC.* "Burma junta support group USDA disbands." July. 15, 2010, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-10651760
8. *BBC.* "Myanmar Profile-Timeline," *BBC*, Sep.3, 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12992883
9. *BBC.* "The Fall of Berlin Wall: How 1989 Reshaped the Modern World." Nov. 5, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50013048 (accessed February 15, 2019)
10. *BBC.* "Tiananmen Square: What happened in the protests of 1989?" Dec. 23, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48445934
11. Brett, Peggy and Hlaing, Kyaw Yin. "Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law in Context." *Torkel Opsahl Academic EPublisher (OAEP),* no.22 (2020).
12. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Burma Road." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 28, 2020. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Burma-Road.
13. Chan, Aye. "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State of Burma (Myanmar)." *SOAS Bulletin of Burmese Research* 3, no. 2 (2005): 356-420.

14. Cook, C.P. “The Era of Ne Win.” *Royal Institute of International Affairs* 26, no. 6 (1970), 259-266.
15. *DVB Multimedia Group.* “Kachin army ambush leaves 30 dead.” July. 8, 2011.
16. Encyclopedia Britannica. “Major Cold War Events.” https://www.britannica.com/study/major-cold-war-events
17. Esman, Milton. *Ethnic Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
18. Farrelly, Nicholas. “The Tatmadaw in a democracy.” *Myanmar Times*, December 14, 2015. https://www.mmtimes.com/opinion/18123-the-tatmadaw-in-a-democracy.html.
19. Ferguson, Jane M. “Who’s Counting? Ethnicity, Belong, and the National Census in Burma/Myanmar.” *Brill* 171, no. 1 (2015), 1-28.
20. Finkel, Matt Finkel. “Theories of Nationalism: A Brief Comparison of Realist and Constructivist Ideas of the Nation.” *Inquiries Journal* 8, no.10 (2006).
21. Fisher, Jonah. “Myanmar: Thein Sein leaves legacy of reform,” *BBC*, March. 30, 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35916555
22. Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man.* London: The Penguin Group, 2012.
23. Fukuyama, Francis. “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, Summer, 1989, 4.
24. Fuller, Thoma. “Main Opposition to Boycott Myanmar Election.” *New York Times*, March 29, 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/30/world/asia/30myanmar.html
25. Garbagni, Giulia and J Walton, Mathew. “Imagining Kawthoolei: Strategies of petitioning for Karen statehood in Burma in the first half of the 20th century.” *Nations and Nationalism*, March. 2020, 759– 774.
26. Gleditsch, Nils Petter, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Driksson, Margareta Sollenberg, and Havard Strand. “Armed Conflict 1946-2001: A New Dadaset. Journal of Peace Research 39, no. 5 (2002).
27. Guyot, James F. “Myanmar in 1990: The Unconsummated Election,” *Asian Survey* 31, no. 2 (1990): 205-211.
28. Hnin Pwint, Nang Lwin. “MPC to Be Renamed National Reconciliation and Peace Center.” *The Irrawaddy*, April 28, 2016, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/mpc-to-be-renamed-national-reconciliation-and-peace-center.html

29. Horowitz, Donald L. *Ethnic Group in Conflict*. Berkeley: California University Press, 1985.
30. Htein, Win. "Burma's Ethnic Groups Banned from Celebrations." *The Irrawaddy*, Feb. 11, 2002, https://www2.irrawaddy.com/article.php?art_id=2207
31. https://cidcm.umd.edu/research/all-minorities-risk-project
32. Human Rights Watch, "Chronology of Burma's Constitutional Process." July. 18, 2007. https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-chronology-national-convention
33. Huntington, Samuel P. *Who Are We? America's Great Debate*. London: the Free Press, 2005).
34. J. Bellamy, Alex. "The 21st Century Panglong: Myanmar's New Hope for Peace." *The Global Observatory*, Aug. 31, 2016, https://theglobalobservatory.org/2016/08/myanmar-21st-century-panglong-aung-san-suu-kyi/
35. Jan Bečka, Jan. "Divide et impera"? Britische Minderheitenpolitik in Burma 1917- 1948 by Roland Bless." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 22, no. 2 (1991): 414-416.
36. Janet Buttoolph Johnson, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff, *Political Science Research Methods* (City: SAGE, 2019), 135.
37. Jolliffe, Kim. "Security integration in Myanmar: Past experiences and future vision." *Safer World*, May 2017, 11-14.
38. Juliance Schober. "To be Burmese is to be Buddhist: Formation of Buddhist Modernity in Colonial Burma, In Theravada Buddhism in Colonial." *Taylor and Francis*, Jan.1, 2018., 21-41.
39. Kalaung, Zuzakar. "We Were Kings: Burma's Lost Royal Family." *Myanmar Times*, Nov 2, 2017, https://www.mmtimes.com/news/we-were-kings-burmas-lost-royal-family.html
40. Khoo The, Pascal. *From The Land of Green Ghosts: A Burmese Odyssey.* New York: Harper Perennial, 2002.
41. Kopsa, Andy. "Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution Started 30 Years Ago—But It Was Decades in the Marking." *TIME,* Nov.16, 2019, https://time.com/5730106/velvet-revolution-history/
42. Kramer, Tom. "Neither War Nor Peace: the Future of the Cease-fire Agreements in Burma." *Transnational Institute*, July 2009, 4-9.

43. Lars-Erik Cederman, Simon Hug, Andreas Schadel and Julian Wucherpfennig. "Territorial Autonomy in the Shadow of Conflict: Too Little, Too Late?" *American Political Science Review* 109, no. 2 (2015): 354-370
44. Linter, Bertil *The Rise and Fall of Communist Party of Burma*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 1990.
45. Lintner, Bertil. "The 1990 Election: Sorting Fact from Fiction," *The Irrawaddy,* Oct. 20, 2015, https://www.irrawaddy.com/election/opinion/the-1990-election-sorting-fact-from-fiction
46. Lintner, Bertil. "The Much Misunderstood Wa of Myanmar and China." *The Irrawaddy,* Dec. 7, 2021, https://www.irrawaddy.com/culture/books/the-much-misunderstood-wa-of-myanmar-and-china.html
47. Lost Footsteps. "Burmese Who Fought in WWI." https://lostfootsteps.org/en/history/burmese-who-fought-in-world-war-one.
48. Man, Lu Min. "Thousands protest over bridge name in Mon State." *Myanmar Times*, March. 20, 2017, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/25383-thousands-protest-over-bridge-name-in-mon-state.html
49. Marshall, Harry I. *The Karen People of Burma: A Study in Anthropology and Ethnology.* Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1945.
50. Mathieson, David Scott. "The Arakan Army in Myanmar: Deadly Conflict Rises in Rakhine State." *United States Institute of Peace (USIP)*, no. 486 (2020): 3—17.
51. McDougall, W. A.. "20th-century International Relations." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, September 3, 2020. https://www.britannica.com/topic/20th-century-international-relations-2085155.
52. Menand, Louis. "Francis Fukuyama Postpones the End of History." *The New Yorker*, Aug. 27, 2018, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/09/03/francis-fukuyama-postpones-the-end-of-history
53. Menand, Louis. "Francis Fukuyama Postpones the End of History." *The New Yorker*, Aug. 27, 2018, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/09/03/francis-fukuyama-postpones-the-end-of-history
54. Michale E. Brown et al., *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*.Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

55. Moe, Aung Kyaw. *Building the Tatmadaw*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009.
56. Myanmar Peace Monitor. “United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC).” https://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/1621/unfc/ (no date available)
57. Myint-U, Thant, *The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma*. London: Faber and Faber, 2007.
58. Myint-U, Thant. “Myanmar, an unfinish nation.” *NIKKI ASAI*, Jun. 17, 2017, https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Myanmar-an-unfinished-nation
59. Myint-U, Thant. “The Shared History of Britain and Burma.” *The Telegraph,* May. 11, 2008, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3558192/The-shared-history-of-Britain-and-Burma.html
60. Oxford Dictionary, Page Number.
61. Pillalamarri, Akhilesh. “When Burma Was Still Part of British India.” *The Diplomat*, Sep. 30, 2017. https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/when-burma-was-still-part-of-british-india/
62. Preecharush, Dulyapak.“Federalism and State Formation in Myanmar.” The Irrawaddy, Feb.14, 2018, https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/federalism-and-state-formation-in-myanmar.html
63. R. Young, Kenneth. *Nationalist Chinese Troops in Burma: Obstacle in Burma's Foreign Relations, 1949–1961.”* Ph.D. Thesis (New York: New York University, 1970), 50–53.
64. *Radio Free Asia (RFA).* “Myanmar’s NLD cautions protestors who oppose Aung San statue in Kayah state.” July. 6, 2018.
65. Renaud, Egreteau. “Burma/Myanmar.” *Mas Violence and Resistance*, Oct. 19, 2009, https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/burma-myanmar-1930-2007.html
66. Reuter, Tina Kempin. "Ethnic Conflict." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15 Nov. 2021, https://www.britannica.com/topic/ethnic-conflict. (Accessed 31 December 2021).
67. *REUTERS*. “Myanmar druglord Khun Sa Dead—Rebel Leader.” Oct. 30, 2007, https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-30234320071030
68. Ross, Marc ed.,.“Psychoultural Interpretations and Drammas: Identity Dynamics in Ethnic Conflict.” *Political Psychology* 22, no.1 (2001),157-178.

69. Roy, Kaushik. “Race and Recruitment in the Indian Army: 1880-1918.” *Modern Asian Studies* 47, no. 4 (2013), 1310-1347.
70. Sadowski, Yanhya. “Ethnic Conflict,” *Foreign Policy,* no. 111 (1991): 12-23.
71. Sarah L. Clarke, Seng Aung Sein Myint, and Zabra Yu Siwa. *Re-examing Ethnic Identity in Myanmar*. Phnom Phen: Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2019.
72. Selth, Andrew. “Myanmar: An Enduring Intelligence State, or a State Enduring Intelligence?” STIMSON Center, April.7, 2021. https://www.stimson.org/2021/myanmar-an-enduring-intelligence-state/
73. Selth, Andrew. “Race and Resistance in Burma (1942-1945).” *Modern Asia Studies* 20, no. 3 (1986), 483-507.
74. Shirley Lorraine Worland, Shirley Lorraine. “Displaced and misplaced or just displaced: Christian Displaced Karen Identity after Sixty Years of War in Burma.” PhD Thesis (Brisbane: The University of Queensland, 2010), 19.
75. Slim, Field Marshal Sir William. *Defeat into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India (1942-1945)*, 2nd ed. London: Cassell & Company, 1956.
76. Smith, Anthony D. “The origin of nations.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 12, no. 3 (1989).
77. Smith, Anthony D.. “A Europe of Nations. Or the Nation of Europe?” *Journal of Peace Research* 30, no. 2 (1993): 129-135.
78. Smith, Anthony D.. “Culture, community and territory: the politics of ethnicity and nationalism.” *International Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1996): 445–458.
79. Smith, Martin. *Burma—Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity.*London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1999.
80. South, Ahley. *Mon Nationalism and Civil War in Burma*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
81. Stein Tonnesson, Min Zaw Oo, and Ne Lynn Aung. “Non-inclusive ceasefires do not bring peace: findings from Myanmar.” *Small War & Insurgences* (2021), 1-37.
82. Steinberg, David. *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs To Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
83. Susanne Prager-Nyein. “The Birth of Burma Army.” The Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, http://www.endofempire.asia/0907-the-birth-of-burmas-modern-army-3/.
84. Swanborn, Peter. *Case Study Research: What, Why and How?* City: SAGE, 2010.

85. Tarling, Nicholas ed. *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
86. Thant Myint-U, ed., "Not a Single's Year Peace," *London Books Review of Books* 41, no. 22 (2019).
87. Tharoor, Shashi. "Q&A: Shashi Tharoor on Why the British Owe India an Apology." Interview by Anupriya Kumar. *REUTERS,* Nov. 15, 2016,
88. *The Irrawaddy.* "Rival Armed Groups Fight Over Territorial Dispute in Myanmar's Shan State." July.1, 2012, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/rival-armed-groups-fight-over-territorial-dispute-in-myanmars-shan-state.html
89. *Transnational Institute*. "Ethnicity without Meaning, Data without Context." Feb. 2014, 1-20. https://www.tni.org/en/briefing/ethnicity-without-meaning-data-without-context
90. UNESCO, "Historic City of Ayuthaya." https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/576/
91. Vogt, Manuel, Nils-Christian Bormann, Seraina Rüegger, Lars-Erik Cederman, Philipp Hunziker, and Luc Girardin. 2015. "Integrating Data on Ethnicity, Geography, and Conflict: The Ethnic Power Relations Data Set Family." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(7): 1327–42.
92. Yan Aung, Wei. "Myanmar's 1990 Election: Born of a Democratic Uprising, Ignored by the Military," *The Irrawaddy*, Oct. 7, 2020, https://www.irrawaddy.com/elections-in-history/myanmars-1990-election-born-democratic-uprising-ignored-military.html
93. Yan Aung, Wei. "The Day Chinese Invaders Were Forced Out of Myanmar," *The Irrawaddy*, April 15, 2020, https://www.irrawaddy.com/specials/on-this-day/day-chinese-invaders-forced-myanmar.html
94. Yawnghwe, Chao-Tzang et al. "Federalism in Burma: A Special Issue." *Legal Issues on Burma Journal* (2002): 60.
95. Yin, Robert. *Applications of Case Study Research*. Newbury Park: SAGE, 2003.
96. Zaw, Aung. "The Man Behind the Burma Independence Army." *The Irrawaddy*, August 25, 2017, https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/commentary/man-behind-burma-independence-army.html

Other Primary Sources

1911 India Census Report

1921 India Census Report

1931 India Census Report

2014 Census Report

Aung San-Atlee Agreement

Aung San-Nu Agreement

Census Reports and Legal Documents

Nationwide Ceasefire agreement

Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), Preamble.

Panglong Agreement

The 1974 Constitution

The 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law

The 2008 Constitution

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. 2008, Yangon: Printing and Publishing Enterprise at Ministry of Information.

The Union of Burma. The Constitution of the Union of Burma, 1947.

The Union of Burma. The Constitution of the Union of Burma, 1974.

U.S Constitution