NE WIN'S TATMADAW DICTATORSHIP

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This thesis examines the nature of Burma's military regime which came to power in March 1962, and which has portrayed itself, somewhat successfully until 1988, as a regime which has constructed a "Burmese" socialist political order in Burma. Though this self-image was more or less accepted by many observers, there nonetheless could be detected in writings on the regime some degree of scholarly unease regarding the nature of the regime stemming from its many glaring failures not only in economic management, but also in arresting political decay which has transformed Burma into a poverty-stricken, debt-ridden, and almost pre-modern authoritarian polity.

This thesis is an attempt to provide a less particularistic explanation of the regime, to show that such a regime is not unique, and that the downward slide of Burma can be understood with reference to existing theories and concepts derived from the study of Third World politics and conditions. Accordingly, the anti-colonial "nationalist" movement in Burma, the Dobama Asiayone of the Thakins, and the various Dobama "armies" which became the national armed forces, the Tatmadaw, and the underlying historical and socio-economic and political conditions are re-examined and analysed within the theoretical framework of comparative Third World politics. The thesis argues that the leaders who led the Tatmadaw to the summit of power in 1962 were not modernizing military leaders, but were foremostly...
politicians in military garb whose agenda was shaped by parochial Burman ethnonationalism, a peculiar kind of anti-foreign "Burmese" socialism, and the myth of their triumph over powerful foreign opponents -- the British and the Japanese.

The thesis examines the military regime -- Ne Win's Tatmadaw dictatorship -- and endeavors to explain the paradoxical configuration, subsequent to the military seizure of power, of a strongly autonomous and highly coercive state in Burma, on the one hand, and the clear evidence of political and economic decay (stemming from the regime's poor performance and/or capacity), on the other hand, from the perspective of Third World politics. The explanation is framed in terms of Ne Win's personal rulership; the transformation of the Tatmadaw, on which the state and the regime is based, into a patrimonialized personal instrument of the patrimonial ruler, Ne Win; the subsequent general and widespread erosion of the integrity of various institutions; the undermining of legal-rational norms; and the increasing reliance of Ne Win and the regime on the use of terror to maintain power as its legitimacy waned over time, and the corresponding greater degree of disengagement of society from the control and perview of the state.
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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Aba -- Father, a patriarch (Burmese)
ABPO -- All Burma Peasant Organization, an affiliate of the AFPFL
ABSU -- All Burma Student Union
ABYL -- All Burma Youth League
AFO -- Anti-Fascist Organization, the forerunner of the AFPFL
AFPFL -- Anti-Fascist Peoples Freedom League
Ahmudan -- A class of serfs owing labor and military service to the kings of ancient Burma, who were organized into "regiments" and segregated from the rest of the population. In current usage, it denotes all servants of the state
Ah-na -- Power, political power (Burmese)
Akaukwun -- Tax or toll collector in ancient Burma
A-myo-tha -- National (adjective)
Atet-lan Saya -- Sorcerer of the Upper Sphere (a practitioner of White Magic)
Atwinwun -- Royal secretary in ancient Burma
Auk-lan Saya -- Sorcerer of the Lower Sphere (a practitioner of the Black Art)
Awza -- Influence and authority (Burmese)
Azu -- A regiment (or a unit) of Ahmudan in ancient Burma
Bama Lu-myo -- The Burman ethnic group
Bama Pyi -- The Burman kingdom
Baung-bee Choot -- Former military men serving in the regime's state-party apparatuses, or involved in politics; literally, "those who have taken off their trousers"
Bayin-gan -- Viceroy
BCP -- Burmese Communist Party, the White Flag communists
BDA -- Burma Defence Army
Bedin Saya -- Astrologer
Beelat-pyan -- One who has studied in England, an England-returnee
BIA -- Burma Independence Army
BNA -- Burma National Army
Bo -- Military leader. Also a term used for male Europeans, especially Britons in colonial Burma
Bogyoke-Wungyi -- Generals/Ministers, i.e., active or former top brass holding cabinet posts in post-1962 Burma
BSPP -- Burmese Socialist Programme Party
Chao-fa, Sawbwa -- Ruling prince, "Lord of the Sky" (Shan/Thai/Lao); Sawbwa is the Burmese pronunciation of the term, Chao-fa
CPB -- Communist Party of Burma, or the Red Flag communists
CSMB -- Civil Supplies Management Board
Daw — Literally, Aunty. A prefix before a name of a female person; a term of respect (Burmese)

DDSI -- Directorate of Defence Services Intelligence

Dee-Mye -- Stable AFPFL led by Ba Swe anf Kyaw Nyein

Dobama, Dbama Asiayone -- The "We Burman" movement of Burman ethnonationalists, the Thakins

DSI -- Defence Services Institute

Duwa -- Kachin ruling chief

"Em-Eye" -- A term by which the Military Intelligence (MIS) is popularly and generally known

FTO -- Federation of Trade Organizations, an affiliate of the AFPFL

Gaung-baung -- A silk headgear worn by Burman men on formal occasions

Gon -- Prestige, an aura of superiority (usually based on wealth or possession, and social status)
Gon-theika -- An aura of moral uprightness and integrity

IDC -- Industrial Development Corporation

JVCs -- Joint-Venture Corporations

Ka-bya -- Eurasian; Anglo-Burman or Anglo-Indians

Kappali Lu-myo -- Africans; the black people of Africa in general

KIA -- Kachin Independence Army

KMT -- Kuomintang, Nationalist Chinese

KNLA -- Karen National Liberation Army

KNU -- Karen National Union

KNUP -- Karen National Union Party (a leftist Karen faction)

Kyant Khaing Ye Athin -- National Solidarity Association

KYO -- Karen Youth Organization, an AFPFL affiliate

Kywanto -- Crown-serfs, or slaves of the king in ancient Burma

LBF -- Local Burmese Force

LNLA -- Lahu National Liberation Army

Lokha Nibban -- Nirvanna on Earth

Loktha-Pyithu -- The "working people", a term coined by the BSPP's military-socialists

Longyi -- A sarong worn by Burman men and women

Lon Htein -- Riot-control police unit

Loy-kroh -- A merit-making rite to forestall or pre-empt misfortune and/or personal disaster (Thai/Shan/Lao)

Lu-myo -- An ethnic group; literally, race

Min-Kyin-Tara Se-bha -- Ten Percepts to be observed by kings

Mintha -- Royal princes; colloquially, a male star in plays or movies

Minthamee -- Royal princesses; also, a female star
Miphaya -- Queen, or one of the four senior royal consorts
MIS -- Military Intelligence Service
Mo-gyo -- Thunder-bolt; the name given to the Japanese Colonel Suzuki, the founder of the BIA
Muang -- A kingdom or principality (Thai/Shan/Lao)
Myanmar, Myranma -- The Burman ethnic group
Myanmar So-she-lit Lanzin -- The Burmese Way to Socialism Programme
Myetna-mpyu -- A generic term in Burmese for Europeans; literally, White-faces or Pale-faces
Myochit -- A patriot; a political party led by U Saw
Myo-thugyi -- Governor, usually hereditary, of a township in ancient Burma
Myowun -- Royally appointed governor of a town in ancient Burma
Myoza -- Fiefholder with jurisdiction over a large town or province; literally, a "Town-eater"

Naing-ngan -- In ancient Burma, the term referred to the peripheries owing tribute to the Burman king. Currently, it means a territorial state
NIB -- National Intelligence Bureau
Nga-bha Thila -- The five basic Moral Percepts to be observed by Buddhists
NSA -- National Solidarity Association
NUF -- National United Front, a coalition of rightist and leftist parties which challenged the AFPFL's parliamentary monopoly in the 1956 elections
NUP -- National Unity Party, or the reconstituted BSPP (after September 1988)

Pa-Hsa-Ba-La -- The AFPFL (in Burmese)
PBF -- Patriotic Burmese Force
PNF -- Palaung National Force
Pon -- An aura of karmic moral greatness and power eliciting love, respect, and awe
Pongyi-gyaung -- A monastery (Burmese)
Pu-haeng -- Head of a village-circle or sub-township (Shan)
PVO -- People's Volunteer Organization
Pyinthit Lu-myo -- The people of France; the French (Burmese)
Pyinnya-tat -- The educated strata; literally, those who have obtained knowledge (Burmese)
Pyithu-Gaungsi -- People's Council
Pyithu-Hluttaw -- The legislative assembly under the 1974 socialist constitution

Rakhine -- The Arakanese
Red Flag communists -- The Communist Party of Burma (CPB)
RUSU -- Rangoon University Student Union

SAC -- Security and Administrative Council
SAMB -- State Agricultural Marketing Board
Sauk-myin-kat Oo-ba-de -- Sarcastic reference to the arbitrary
laws and regulations of the military regime; literally "I Dont Like Your Face Laws"

Sawphaya -- A Karenni territorial ruler; a variation of the Shan/Thai/Lao term, Chao-fa

SEATO -- Southeast Asian Treaty Organization

Se-sayo -- Healer, a medicine-man (Burmese)

Sinye-tha -- The poor; also, a political party led by Dr. Ba Maw

Sit-Bo -- Military officer (Burmese)

SLORC -- State Law and Order Restoration Council

SSA/SSPP -- Shan State Army/Shan State Progress Party

STB -- State Timber Board

Taingyin-tha -- The indigenous people of Burma (Burmese)

Tarok Lu-myo -- The Chinese (Burmese)

Tatmadaw -- The armed forces (Burmese)

Thakin -- Lord or master (Burmese)

Thant-shin -- The Clean faction of the AFPFL of U Nu

TUC-B -- Trade Union Congress-Burma, an AFPFL affiliate

U -- Mister; a form of prefix before a name, and a term of respect. Literally, uncle (Burmese)

White Flag communists -- Burmese Communist Party (BCP)

WNA -- Wa National Army

Wundaik -- A high-level administrative officer in ancient Burma

Wunyi -- A Minister

Yadaya-che -- A magic rite to pre-empt or forestall misfortune and/or personal disaster

Yaw-ga -- An illness, disease (Burmese)

Yebaw -- Comrade

Yebaw Thon-gyek -- The Thirty-Comrades led by Aung San

Yodaya Shan -- A Burmese term, especially in lower Burma, denoting the present Thai of Thailand

Ywa-thugyi -- A village headman

Ywaza -- A fiefholder in ancient Burma with jurisdiction over a village
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

(a) The Problem: Background

This thesis will examine the military regime of Ne Win which has ruled Burma since March 1962. During its twenty-eight years of rule, the regime has constructed what seems to be a strong and highly autonomous state. The state in Burma appears strong and autonomous in the sense that the regime has not only been able to fend off challenge from below successfully, but it has also frequently been able to act upon its preferences without reference to non-statal groups and social forces within society (1).

After the coup in 1962, the military leaders of Burma, under the leadership of Ne Win, installed a new state structure and political system which in many ways resembled the East European socialist model. It was based on socialist democracy and a socialist economy, and organized around the principle of democratic centralism(2). It was characterized by the concentration of all executive, legislative, judicial and administrative power in the hands of the ruling Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) in a one-party state. The self-proclaimed aim of the party and its predominantly military leaders was the establishment of a socialist system based on justice which would end "the exploitation of man by man". Its
goal was the emancipation of "the people, irrespective of race or religion, from all social evils", setting them "free from anxieties over food, clothing and shelter, and from inability to resist evil". The military asserted that only with socialism could "an affluent stage of social development be reached and all people be happy and healthy in mind and body"(3).

When they seized power in 1962, the military elites in Burma regarded themselves as pragmatic and nondoctrinaire socialists and agents of modernization and nation-building(4). The military's confidence in its abilities was, in part, due to its experience in rulership in the caretaker government of 1958-60. The military's relatively competent performance as a caretaker not only reinforced its self-image, but won it the approval of foreign observers. For the 18 months of caretaking, Ne Win was nominated for the Magsaysay Award, which he refused(5). Even an American economic advisor to the AFPFL (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League), Louis J. Walinsky, who greatly admired U Nu, had this to say about the caretaker government's performance: "Crispness in decision making, delegation of authority and responsibility in a clear cut chain of command, efficiency and discipline were the order of the day...[There was] improved law and order, increased efficiency in governmental offices, services and enterprises, and...a new climate of dynamism and social responsibility [which was significant] for social and political, as well as economic development"(6).
The second and sustained intervention of the military in politics which occurred on March 2, 1962, more or less fit the "military as modernizers" thesis then in vogue among scholars pondering the problems of disunity and underdevelopment and the dangers, especially from communist aggression and subversion, confronting Third World states. This school of thought viewed the military in the Third World as a force for national unity and development because of its technical abilities, identification with the lower middle strata of the population, and capacity for political leadership(7). The military was further seen as the focus of modernization, facilitating social mobility within Third World societies, and performing critical communications and socialization functions. It was suggested that the superiority and the modernity of military organizations and leaders in the Third World compelled them to seize power in countries where modernization was retarded(8).

Scholars from the "Socialist" Bloc too have been positive in their views of military involvement in politics, especially where it concerns armies "which did not stand apart from the struggle of the people for national liberation", or were formed in the midst of the revolutionary liberation movement, armies which were composed of peasants, workers, and the urban poor(9). Hence, it is held by these Eastern Bloc academics and analysts that some militaries in Third World societies represented the best organized anti-imperialist and progressive force. It was more or less assumed by these scholars that
leftist-orientated one-party systems dominated by the military were modernizing socialist regimes (10).

Political events outside Burma also contributed to creating a favorable opinion of the 1962 coup d'état in Burma. The cold war was still at its height, more so in Southeast Asia where the United States and the West perceived Mao's China as attempting to subvert or take over these countries via local communist parties, or by exploiting their weaknesses and problems, which were numerous and grave (11). It was held that Third World countries needed strong and efficient governments which would, through modernization measures and economic development, halt the advance of communism.

As well, during this period, Indonesia under Sukarno was seen as drifting into the communist camp, and in South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem was barely in control despite American support and goodwill. Moreover, everywhere in the Third World, civilian leaders were increasingly stereotyped by the Western media and in academic circles as well, as indecisive, weak, soft, corrupt, and inept (which many unfortunately were), and hence vulnerable to communist subversion or aggression. Further, the one-party state, especially in Africa, was viewed positively by many Western academics as an answer to chronic political instability.

More important for Burma, the rise of Marshal Sarit Thanarat in Thailand (1959-63) and his success in bringing about
some economic development and political stability(12), reinforced the perception that Ne Win and his army could similarly modernize Burma. As stated earlier, Ne Win's and the military's performance in 1958-60, firmly legitimated, at least externally, the military's usurpation of power in 1962, and it also raised the hopes of outside observers that Burma would very rapidly be led onto the path of modernization by the disciplined, no-nonsense military leaders. Moreover, some foreign observers also assumed, curiously enough, that the populace shared their positive evaluation of the military(13).

However, events in Burma since 1962 reveal that the country has stagnated. Signs of political and economic decay are everywhere apparent, as will be shown in the course of this thesis. The extent of this systemic decomposition was revealed in the bloody country-wide urban protest against the regime in 1988(14). This mass upheaval brought down the military's civilian and "socialist" facade, the whole BSPP (Burmese Socialist Programme Party) structure, but failed to dislodge the military elites from power.

(b) The Problem: Propositions and Thesis Structure

The phenomenon of an apparently strong and autonomous state which has been able to remain in power for twenty-eight years, but which has not been able to fulfill any of the promises made by the military-socialist leaders for a just and prosperous
socialist society in Burma, or meet the expectations of foreign well-wishers and sympathizers, is an intriguing one which this thesis will attempt to analyze.

This thesis will therefore focus on the nature of military rule in Burma, and the reasons why the military has chosen to rule in the manner it has. It will, as such, analyze how the military has managed to hold on to power despite its dismal performance and unpopularity, and try to ascertain what the future holds regarding its continued rule or eventual withdrawal from politics.

It is widely accepted that the motivation for the military seizing power in 1962 was its perception that it could strengthen what it viewed as a weak state presided over by a crumbling and corrupt civilian elite. It saw itself in the role of "savior". It is on this explanation for the coup that other propositions are based. They are:

(1) Burma's military leaders who are essentially politicians "in military garb"(15), subscribed to a brand of militant ethnonationalism(16) containing strong racial overtones, which was wedded to anti-capitalist or socialist sentiments (more anti-foreign than socialist per se).

(2) The military's commitment to ethnonationalism and to certain socialist concepts (for example, a centralized command economy, one-party dictatorship), served to reinforce its centralizing impulses, and to increase its impatience with
civilian rule (which was based on various kinds of political exchange between the rulers and the ruled).

(3) This ideology impelled the military, when it captured power, to construct a state which would be vested with sufficient power for the regime to govern effectively, restore Burman political and cultural predominance, and ensure an economy free from foreign domination and exploitation.

(4) The military leaders' distaste and contempt for politics and politicians, and their belief in the superiority of the military, rooted in myths of a heroic freedom "struggle" against both the British and Japanese overlords, induced them to choose the instrument of coercion over which they commanded as the main vehicle for the construction of the new order.

(5) Ensuring the military's coherence and unity was the figure of "Aba" (Revered Father) Ne Win, who fulfilled this unifying function by transforming the "Tatmadaw" or the armed forces into a patrimonial and personal instrument of power.

(6) Due to the narrowness of the political base, the result of the exclusion of other societal segments from the political process, the new order could not be effectively institutionalized, nor could modernizing changes be undertaken. And, precisely because the regime and the state rested on a narrow base, that is, on a system backed by the coercive capabilities of the state which severely restricted political participation, the state leaders were better able to maintain their dominance and fend off challenges from below. In other
words, because the regime rested largely on the Tatmadaw, which used coercion and violence on the regime's behalf, it meant that the state leaders had only a narrow constituency to cater to, or to manage, control and reward. For Burma's military-state leaders, this was a less complex task than winning public support, and in terms of holding on to power, it was more effective(17).

(7) The configuration of an excluded, alienated, and helpless populace, counterposed against a highly autonomous state resting on military power organized in support of the regime and the state, has led to a situation of impasse and immobilism, a situation which could extend indefinitely.

It is my contention that the possibility of military withdrawal is non-existent, at least until Ne Win's death, due to the military's fear of Ne Win and the fear of retribution stemming from its atrocities in the non-Burman peripheries and its massacre of unarmed protesters in 1988. As well, withdrawal is foreclosed because the military has become a self-interested privileged class which believes in its own dictum that the "military is the regime is the state", and because certain factors vital to the return of civilian rule are lacking. These factors, among others, are some form of communication and mutual trust between military and civilian leaders, and the availability of civilian leaders with leadership skills after almost three decades of repression.
This thesis is organized into six parts. Chapter II will examine the nature of the military regime, its relation with civilian leaders, and the military's policies and actions following its seizure of power. Some important views expressed by scholars pertaining to the regime and the state in Burma will also be discussed.

Chapter III will explore the nature of military intervention, leadership strategies, dictatorship and despotism, and state-society relationships in seeking to construct a conceptual framework to guide the analysis.

Chapter IV focuses on and examines the origins of the military in Burma, the ideology which shaped or distorted its view of the state, society, and itself, and the corresponding growth of its power, and its capture of the state.

Chapter V deals with the question of how the military in Burma maintained power, and explores the devices and measures employed, and actions taken by the regime to consolidate its grip on power, or to pre-empt and fend off what it perceived as threats to its rule or challenges to the state.

Chapter VI will evaluate the attempts by the military to install a new order to construct a highly autonomous state and offer some conclusions presented.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

1. This view of the concept of state autonomy is derived from a discussion by Eric Nordlinger in ON THE AUTONOMY OF DEMOCRATIC STATES (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp.20-25. Also, see Barrington Moore, Jr., SOCIAL ORIGINS OF DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRACY (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp.252, 441. In the case study of Meiji Japan and a discussion of Germany under Bismarck, Moore refers to the ability of state leaders to construct a sufficiently powerful bureaucratic apparatus (including the military) in order to free the state from societal pressures, separate the government from society, so as to bring about modernization from above, or carry out conservative modernization.


9. The views of Eastern bloc scholars towards any Third World regime evidently depended on their government's policy regarding that particular country.

10. A. Iskenderof, "The Army, Politics, and the People", in Bienen, THE MILITARY AND MODERNIZATION, op. cit, pp.149-56. He cites the regimes in Egypt, Syria, Algeria and Burma as being revolutionary socialist regimes. Eastern Bloc scholars do not differ much from each other in their analyses of military regimes in general, and in particular, about which military regimes are progressive or reactionatory. Also, Georgy I. Mirsky, "The Role of the Army in the Sociopolitical Development of Asian and African Countries", INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW, Vol.2, No.3 (1981), p.333. He has this to say of the military in Burma: "Thus, a group of the Burmese revolutionary military headed by Ne Win...reasoned, as did Nasser in his time, that socialism can be an alternative means of reviving the nation, delivering it from Imperialist exploitation and achieving social justice".


12. As far as can be judged from the personal experience of living in Northern Thailand for almost 10 years, Sarit was widely regarded by Thais of all classes or segments, especially by the peasants, as a beneficent and heroic leader who not only saved the country from external threats, but brought about progress and prosperity. This sentiment about Sarit was still prevalent in the mid-1980s.
13. This is curious because U Nu and his Pyidaungzu party won a landslide victory on an anti-military platform, despite the military's preference for the Stable AFPFL and hostility towards U Nu in the 1960 elections. The elections indicated that the people had not only tasted, but had rejected the military's style and methods of modernization. It is my opinion, which is shared by many in Burma, that the elections, moreover, indicated a measure of political maturity and the electorate's appreciation of the democratic process. Also U Nu's victory indicated his wide acceptance as a legitimate leader, and that the people no longer saw him, and by implication, the government, as one of the Five Enemies of Man. It is curious that some foreign observers should assume that their enthusiasm for the military would be shared by the people so soon after their rejection of the military and after their acceptance of U Nu's legitimacy. Edward Feit, among others, points out to the absence of immediate popular resistance to the coup as indicating the people's disgust with politicians, and by implication, their support for military rule. See Feit, THE ARMED BUREAUCRATS (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973); pp.98-9.

Even if the protests of July 7th, 1962, and in 1963 (during the period of peace talks between the regime and various rebels), and other protests, were to be dismissed as insignificant, there was in the same period, no evidence of popular support for the military either. The absence of popular resistance could be attributed to apathy. On the other hand, however, this begs the question of how an unarmed populace resists tanks, more so since a coup is a surprise move? This discussion leads us to a central contradiction, conceptually and practically, that arises when there is an unsuccessful popular uprising. On one hand, it is welcomed (i.e., the public is expected to resist tyranny, and is belittled as apathetic, backward, and ignorant if it does not). However, when the uprising is bloodily crushed, the international response is "back to business as usual" with whoever controls the capital city. Talk about the popular will, people's power, support for democratic aspirations, and so on, are soon forgotten. There is instead talk about non-interference, and so on. However, this non-interference stance is not exactly what it is touted to be since the subsequent "back to business" response is but a form of tacit and actual support for power incumbents, even where the regime is obviously illegitimate. The point I wish to make here is that the absence of visible popular resistance should not be understood as wide support for a military regime or disgust with politicians. It must also be noted that there are factors which seriously inhibit a mass uprising: firstly, the incumbent regime enjoys a preponderance of power and advantages, and when the situation gets desperate, it will often not hesitate to use indiscriminate violence; and secondly, popular movements are not likely to obtain external assistance since external actors are more comfortable with the status quo, and by implication, with the incumbent, however illegitimate.
14. Participation by the peasants, Burman and otherwise, in the protests against military rule in 1988 has been reported by several eye-witnesses in other towns such as Bassein, Henzada, Prome, Yenangyaung, Magwe, Akyab, Moulmein, Meiktila, Mandalay, Maymyo, Taunggyi, and so on. (Conversations with SS, STA, KT, and others, who either witnessed the protest, had visited their hometowns after the massacres, or had close contacts with family members in Burma). Also see Bertil Lintner, OUTRAGE: BURMA'S STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY (Hongkong: Review Publishing, 1989), p.156-7. General "I Saved Burma" Saw Maung, the Chairman of the SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council), in a speech on July 5, 1989, mentioned that at Ywathitgyi and Taze in rural Upper Burma, the police stations there were successfully stormed by demonstrators. See, NEWS OF MYANMAR (Washington D.C.: The Embassy of the Union of Myanmar), No.2, Special Issue (July 1989), p.4.

There is no doubt that Burman peasants have not fared well under the military regime. According to David I. Steinberg, writing in 1981, 86 percent of rural families live below the poverty line (i.e., U.S.$40 per capita), which he attributes to the low government price for paddy, the elimination of the right of inheritance, and the smallness of the plot owned (63 percent of farms being under five acres). As well, he estimated that 25 percent of peasants were employed as either seasonal or daily farm labor. See David I. Steinberg, BURMA'S ROAD TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT: GROWTH AND IDEOLOGY UNDER MILITARY RULE (Boulder: Westview, 1981), pp.79, 115-6.

15. Most of Burma's top military leaders, such as Aung San, Ne Win, Aung Gyi, Tin Pe, Maung Maung, and so forth began their careers as political agitators, and became "military" men only after they formed or joined the BIA (Burma Independence Army) which was, as described by Dorothy Guyot, "a political movement in military garb". For an admiring, but at times perceptive, portrayal of the BIA, see Dorothy Guyot, "The Burma Independence Army: A Political Movement in Military Garb", in J. Silverstein, ed. SOUTHEAST ASIA IN WORLD WAR II: FOUR ESSAYS (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp.51-65.

16. The "nation" and "the state" in Burma have been identified by the Burman "national" leaders in general, and the military in particular, with Burman ethnicity, Burman culture and values, and Burman history which, by the way, stressed the right of Burman kings to rule over others by virtue of alleged Burman superiority. As noted by David Brown, the anti-colonial movement was "essentially a Burman ethnic nationalist movement" which "portrayed the independent Burmese state as the successor to the Burman dynasties of the past". He also observed that the military has been more closely identified with the Burman majority. See David Brown, "From Peripheral Communities to Ethnic Nations: Separatism in Southeast Asia", PACIFIC AFFAIRS, Vol.61, No.1 (Spring 1988), p.56. David I. Steinberg also observed that Burman
leaders believed that independence was won by the Burman (a perception which, incidentally, is of doubtful validity). The implication is that the non-Burman segments who had not "fought for independence" would therefore have to accept Burman cultural hegemony and political domination. See Steinberg, BURMA: A SOCIALIST NATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (Boulder: Westview, 1982), p.121. Modern Burma is a state composed of ethnic groups that are not only culturally defined, but defined historically and territorially as well. How a common "Burmese nationalism" is to be created and articulated which embraces all, or most, of the existing cultural values and, as well, their respective historical and political experiences, is a major problem which has to be addressed and which has not been successfully done so far.

17. It must here be recognized that the military in Burma, like all ruling Third World militaries, was ambivalent about winning popular support. On one hand, their self-image as "socialist and revolutionaries", or "reformers", "guardian of the nation's cherished values", and so forth, deluded Ne Win and his Brigadiers into thinking that the "masses" supported them and shared their values, a common delusion shared by most Third World coupmakers. Hence there did not appear a need for winning popular support. On the other hand, winning popular support, in practical terms, meant the military's active involvement in politicking, winning over and bargaining with societal segments, and so on, which would have exposed it to all sort of compromises and some form of power-sharing with civilian groups and, worse, with slippery and corrupt politicians. This dilemma is inherent in, and common to, almost all polities under military rule, and difficult to resolve especially in an environment of non-institutionalized politics characterizing Third World states.
CHAPTER TWO: THE NATURE OF MILITARY RULE IN BURMA

(a) The Military as a Political Superstar

The military has always been an active political player in Burma. This is due mainly to its perceived role as the vanguard of the "struggle" for independence in 1942-48 -- a claim made by the army which has not been seriously examined and which has been generally accepted as empirically valid.

The post-independence military in Burma, predominantly Burman, and led mainly by Burman officers (1), had its roots, successively, in the BIA (Burma Independence Army), the BDA (Burma Defence Army), the BNA (Burma National Army), the LBF (Local Burmese Forces), and the PBF (Patriotic Burmese Forces). These armies were essentially what D.Guyot called "political movement[s] in military garb"(2). The first of these, the BIA, was formed around a nucleus of thirty young Burman nationalists, the Thirty-Comrades or Yebaw Thon-gyek(3), who belonged to the Dobama Asi-ayone, which was a political movement led by politicized graduates and students of Rangoon University whose aim was independence from British colonial rule. The Dobama movement, its members, the Thakins, and the ideology or beliefs that it espoused played a significant role not only in the transformation of Burma from a colony to a new independent state in 1948, but also in the creation and the moulding of its armed
forces or the Tatmadaw which, a decade later, asserted itself as a superordinate power.

The Dobama movement had its genesis in the turbulent 1930s. It was founded in 1930 by Ba Thaung, an obscure, part-time "tutor-cum-editor-cum-salesman", together with two friends, Thein Maung and Hla Baw, at a time when anti-Indian and Burman nationalistic feelings were running high. There had been bloody, country-wide anti-Indian riots in May 1930, in which at least 250 Indians were killed and some 2,500 more injured by rampaging Burman mobs who felt that they had been shoved aside in their own homeland by immigrant Indians, especially by Indian laborers(4). While emotions were running high, and the stench of blood and violence hung thick in the air, the three unknown and obscure young men launched their movement with combative and crudely effective slogans such as, "Burma for the Burmans", "We Burman, the master race", "Non-aggression breeds more aggression, Aggression quells aggression", "Run out and meet the onslaught of danger", and "Live dangerously"(5). It was Ba Thaung who proposed that Dobama members call themselves "thakin"(6) in order to remind the Burman that they were a master "race"(7). In addition to the slogans and the self-elevation of the Burman to the status of a master "race", the Dobama song recalled past glories and military conquests of Siam and other neighboring kingdoms and peoples, and claimed (incorrectly) that the Burman were the descendants of the Sakyan "race", i.e., from the linage of Gautama Buddha himself(8). The main component of the Dobama
ideology, if it could be so described, was a strident Burman ethnic sentiment, a "pure form of racialism", which was "basic, emotional, more against something than for anything positively", according to Ba Maw, the Thakin's one-time mentor(9). It was a potent brew in which were mixed feelings of humiliation from being ruled by White-faced (Myetna-hpyu) foreigners, and envy of various "foreigners" who had benefitted, it was felt, from Burman humiliation, such as the Ka-bya or Eurasians (Anglo-Burmese or Anglo-Indian), the Indians, and the Chinese(10); there was, as well, resentment against the Karen who were viewed as favored by both the colonial establishment and missionaries with a disproportionate share of government jobs and other benefits(11).

The time in which the Dobama emerged, the 1930s, was a decade of turmoil in Burma stemming, partly, from the accumulated impact of far-reaching socio-economic changes wrought by colonial rule in which the Burman felt disadvantaged, and, in part, from the introduction by the British of some form of self-rule and the initiation of electoral and participatory politics. Partly, it was also due to the general global tension and turmoil resulting from the world economic crisis, the Great Depression, and political ferment in Europe where German and Italian chauvinist nationalism and "national socialism" had dramatically emerged, threatening to sweep the "decadent democracies" away. In fact, many intellectuals in Western democracies had begun to doubt the viability of democracy, and some even came to believe that totalitarianism, in one form or another, was the wave of the
future. Communism also seemed part of the future and was touted as a shortcut to liberation and industrialization; it was, therefore, particularly attractive to intellectuals and aspiring "national leaders" in poor, backward, exploited, and colonized regions of the world. In Asia, Japan had emerged as a military power, and militarists and radical rightists espousing ultranationalism and military expansionism had grown in strength, gaining ascendancy by 1937(12). Nearer home, the struggle for freedom waged by Mahatama Gandhi and the Congress had resulted in various political reforms and some form of power-sharing which, incidentally, was also extended to Burma by the British.

Within such an unsettled international climate, and with radical changes taking place within Burma itself, political ferment, or Huntington's praetorianism(13), was only to be expected. Under such circumstances, the Dobama movement was able to attract a wide, but essentially amorphous following(14) because its "ideology", or more correctly, its haphazard collection of slogans, responded to almost every aspiration and frustration, and figuratively speaking, also fitted every purse and pocket. The movement espoused an extreme form of Burman nationalism, as mentioned, which was further reinforced by linkages to, for example, Burman royalist sentiments, Mussolini's fascism, Hitler's national socialism, and to Leninism, Stalinism, Trotskyism, and so on. These ideas were advocated, or to be precise, bandied about by Dobama leaders of every political hue(15). It is significant that none of the leading Thakins
advocated democratic ideals and practices(16), and that none gave much thought to conceptualizing a genuine and inclusive "Burmese nationalism" transcending Burman ethnic nationalism. Regarding democratic politics, it is apparent that the Thakins, having experienced a variation of competitive and open politics introduced by the British from the 1920s onward, did not quite take to it, either because it was introduced by a colonial power, or perhaps because they perceived that they could not compete with others whom they felt were better educated, or otherwise better endowed, such as the English merchants, the Eurasian community, the Chinese, and the Indians.

According to Ba Maw, a politician who played an important role in the shaping of modern Burma, the Dobama attracted, in particular, a generation of young men who were "rootless, very much down and out, and subconsciously trying to escape from their problems"(17). It was these young men who, when total war came to Burma in 1942, joined and led the BIA which, in fact, was the "army" of the Dobama, an army given shape and substance by the Thirty Thakin Comrades and the Dobama worldview. Some of these young men who joined the BIA and led or participated in various successive "armies", and whose minds were shaped by their experience as armed "politicians", or conversely, as political "soldiers", became the cadres and officers of the post-independence Burma Army when independence was attained in 1948.
These men believed in general that it was they, more than anything or anyone else, who had fought for and created the new Burma and restored to it the territories which the British had attempted to separate, and that they had, as well, restored to the Burman people the glories of the golden past and Burma's rightful place in the world (18). Among such men was a former postal clerk and aspiring politician, Thakin Shu Maung, who was to become General Ne Win, and who was to be lauded in 1962 and thereafter as a "unifer" who could hold the country together in the manner of past "warrior kings" (19). Aung Gyi, Maung Maung, Tin Pe, San Yu, Sein Lwin, to name a few prominent individuals, who became important top brass in the post-war Burman-dominated army, were all students and agitators connected, in one way or the other, with the Dobama when they enlisted in the BIA, the BDA, the BNA, and the LBF/PBF during the war.

Though historically not very valid, it is generally accepted by the "Burmese" (20), especially the Burman, that the Thirty Comrades and the BIA and other Thakin-led "armies" played a crucial role in the eviction of both the British colonialists and the Japanese invaders from Burma. This myth or military lore has furthermore been accepted by many scholars, even by an otherwise knowledgable authority on the military in Burma, Moshe Lissak, who stated that the Burma Army "had long experience in guerilla warfare against the British and the Japanese" (21).
The wide currency accorded the military's image as the "savior of the nation" and revolutionary vanguard which had "won" independence has naturally reinforced the self-image of the army as a pivotal player in the affairs of the "nation", rather than as a servant of the state. Further, the role played by the Burma Army, the Tatmadaw, in the late-1940s and early-1950s, in propping up the Thakins of the AFPFL (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League), who succeeded to power in 1948, against their rivals and erstwhile comrades, the communist Thakins, leftist Thakins in the PVO (People's Volunteer Organization), and disaffected Burman army units, and against the Karen, further boosted the political capital of military leaders. This dependence of the AFPFL Thakins on the military leaders assured them a lion share of the national budget as well.

The army leaders also never seriously considered themselves subordinated to civilian powerholders. As once stated by Brigadier Maung Maung, "the cream of the resistance movement stayed in the army...[It is] irksome to find those who could not hold their own in the army becoming, in time, our superiors"(22). And more significantly, according to Wiant, army leaders were convinced that only they and the Tatmadaw understood the dreams of Aung San, the father of not only the Tatmadaw, but of the "new and unified" Burma, which had been dashed in 1947 with his assassination, and abandoned by the AFPFL(23). As understood by the military, this dream was the establishment of a political order consisting of "...only one nation, one state, one party,
one leader", in which there were to be "no parliamentary opposition, no nonsense of individualism", and where all "must submit to the State which is supreme over the individual"(24).

(b) The Military on Center-Stage

Burma's military leaders, the "military" Thakins, were, therefore, not ordinary apolitical soldiers, but important political superstars waiting in the wings, watching with disdain the inept performance of the less qualified politicians and civilian leaders on center stage. Their first chance to display their superior skills and leadership qualities came in 1958 when the AFPFL, the party of the civilian Thakins, split into the Stable (Dee-Mye) faction led by U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein, and the Clean (Thant-shin) faction led by U Nu(25). The military stepped in, and assuming the role of a caretaker government in 1958-1960, proceeded to clean up the "mess" created by civilian incompetence. Having accomplished its task, the caretaker government presided over a relatively free and fair election which, to the dismay of the military, was handsomely won by U Nu running on an anti-military platform(26).

In 1962, two years after U Nu had won a landslide electoral victory against the military-backed Stable faction(27), the military once again stepped in. This time, the army leaders' goal was not merely, as in 1958, to clean up the mess caused by civilian incompetence and weaknesses. It was, rather, to "pick
up the banner of revolution dropped by the fallen Aung San", and to link the Tatmadaw with a "united and militant" working people and peasants in order to uphold the "noble anti-Fascist revolution tradition" and carry on the revolution(28). It was a return to the Dobama ideals which had inspired them to "fight" for independence; they also imagined or believed the whole "nation" was just as inspired as they were by those ideals(29). As noted by Badgley, though the jargon of the army leaders in Burma was socialist and Marxist, they were "ardent nationalists"(30) seeking to maximize the power of their state(31). For the military, imbued by Dobama nationalism, socialism and its statist organizational principles and centralizing tendency represented a means for achieving "national unity", i.e., creating a single community(32).

In place of the parliamentary system which the AFPFL leaders, and incidentally Aung San, as well, accepted(33), and which the military viewed as a failing system full of loopholes and defects, or simply as "fraudulent politics"(34), it set out to construct a one-party socialist state based on a socialist economy in "a Burmese way and in a Burmese form"(35).

In order to achieve a "planned proportional development of all the national productive forces", it proceeded to nationalize "vital" areas of "industrial" and agricultural production, and in the spheres of distribution, transportation, and commodities marketing(36). In effect, this amounted to the
suppression of the market economy and of market forces and mechanisms, and the outlawing of private economic and commercial activities. The tentacles of the state, manned by the Sit-Bo (military officers), subsequently extended not only to the commanding heights of the economy, but to all forms of economic activity. As a prelude to the establishment of a new Burmese socialist order, the military managers expelled Indian and Chinese entrepreneurs, and confiscated all their worldly possessions. Those remaining were impoverished, harassed or discriminated against. The military saw them only as foreign capitalist-exploiters and failed to appreciate their contribution to the process of, to coin a phrase, cultural and national integration through the stomach. For these "foreign" traders and middlemen had served, through their country-wide activities, not only to link regions with regions, towns with villages, and as well, the Burman with the Shan, the Shan with the Kachin, and so on, but they had in the process, also widened the use of Burmese (the Burman language), and had consequently made the various segments and ethnic groups more aware of their interdependence and of the fact that they all lived under one flag(37).

In the political sphere, the military embarked on a process of what could be called the nationalization of politics or political life. All political parties were banned. Even non-political bodies, such as writer associations, cultural societies, student organizations, independent trade unions, and ethnic associations, were banned or had their activities severely
restricted. As well, all doors and windows to the outside world were closed(38). Attempts were even made to bring Buddhism and the sangha under the control of the new Burmese Socialist order(39). All means of communication were taken over, and the press and all means of popular expression severely curtailed(40).

More importantly, the military regime exerted an increasingly tighter control over the peripheries and abolished what it viewed as unnecessary internal divisions, i.e., the ethnically defined constituent states (the Shan, Kachin, Karenni state, and so on), and the right of secession provided the Shan and Karenni (or Kayah) states by the 1948 Constitution(41). Thus, the country which the military saw as close to breaking up in 1962, was once more, the military boasted, held firmly and effectively together(42). The status of the "troublesome and divisive" non-Burman political-territorial entities or the constituent states, was changed. From being semi-autonomous subordinate units within a quasi-federal or semi-unitary arrangement(43), they became mere administrative entities, no different from other Burman Daing or divisions whose borders could be changed at will by the central government(44). The historical fact that these entities became part of the Union of Burma by virtue of the Panglong Agreement in 1947 was brushed aside as irrelevant, even though the day on which it was signed is still celebrated as Union Day.
All power functions and structures hitherto residing separately in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government were restructured so that the newly created Myanmar So-she-lit Lanzin or the Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) stood at the apex of power, or so it seemed. It controlled the government and all administrative organs. And it also selected candidates, not only for the national legislature, the Pyithu-Hluttaw, but also for the various People's Councils (Pyithu-Gaungsli) from the state/divisional levels right down to the sub-township level(45). Structurally, the state in Burma was no different from Eastern European one-party ones(46). To complete the picture of the regime as a revolutionary socialist one, all the top military leaders, including Ne Win, even doffed their military caps and wore gaung-baungs (a silk headgear worn by Burman men on formal occasions).

(c) The Nature of Burma's Military Rule: Approaches

Outwardly, the state in Burma and the new order which the military constructed was a one-party socialist dictatorship of the Burmese working people (the Loktha-Pyithu). Outward forms, however, hide more than they reveal, and, as such, the question of what the nature of military rule in Burma is, has been subjected to examination and debate, especially by political scientists and analysts(47); various interpretations have followed.
Broadly speaking, there are three schools of thought concerning this phenomenon. The first school consists of Eastern Bloc and neo-Marxist analysts, as mentioned earlier, who simply accept the outward forms of the "socialist" regime of the Burmese Loktha-Pyithu or the Working People(48). It seems that these scholars have overlooked certain underlying basic features, such as the fact that there does not exist in Burma distinct and stable class formations; that both the bourgeoisie and the working class are very tiny or yet unformed; and that the economy is still largely a peasant-based subsistence one where the function of cash as a productive or capital generating (or accumulation) factor is still very novel and not yet understood by the peasants, or even by the indigenous urban segments(49).

The second school consists of scholars whose interests lie mainly in the phenomenon of Third World military intervention and economic development. This school focuses principally on the role of the military as economic modernizers and examines and explains the "Burmese" military's successes and/or failures in this respect. This school is represented by such scholars as Moshe Lissak, Edward Feit, David I. Steinberg, Richard Butwell, Dorothy Guyot, J.Wiant(50).

The third group of political scientists and scholars has concentrated on a broader overall view of the nature of military rule in Burma. There are, within this school, those who view military rule in Burma as non-modernizing, in the sense that
the development of democracy and the emergence of a civil society have been retarded as a consequence of military dominance in politics. The analysts in this category include Josef Silverstein, the late Maung Maung Gyi, Mya Maung, and a veteran journalist specializing in Burma, Bertil Lintner(51).

Within this broad approach, there are, on the other hand, scholars such as R.H.Taylor, Michael Aung-Thwin, John Badgley, and Jon Wiant(52), who view the military regime in Burma from the perspective of history. Some view the military as restoring to the Burmese polity certain positive traditional values and symbolisms, i.e., as an experiment, as it were, in a form of Burmese-Buddhist socialism designed to bring about some modernizing changes while minimizing its ill-effects. Others view military rule as part of an inevitable historical-political process which has restored some equilibrium to a society that had suffered serious dysfunction resulting from the imposition of alien values and institutions. As such, it is held that military rule, despite repression and serious malperformance, would benefit Burma and its people in the long run.

The historical process approach taken by R.H.Taylor and Michael Aung-Thwin will be outlined here, not because their works are more insightful or valid, but because they are conceptually relevant to the arguments advanced in this thesis. Taylor's basic argument, as pointed out by Gordon Means, is that "the state cannot be explained or analyzed as a by-product of
socio-cultural factors or of economic and class conditions, because the state, as a central repository of power and decision-making, has the capacity to perpetuate its power and impose its pattern on all other social and economic institutions"(53). The present political order, in Taylor's view, represents a stage in the evolution of a continuous Burmese state and a resolute reassertion of state hegemony(54). Taylor argues that the state in Burma has existed since the Pagan dynasty (849-1287) through the ability of various "state-makers" to expropriate economic surpluses, control foreign trade, and successfully wage wars of expansion which imposed a Burman-Buddhist hegemony over an area roughly covering present-day Burma. Consequently, Taylor asserts that by the nineteenth century, homogenization of the population was well underway. That is, proto-nationalism in the form of attachment to the crown and Buddhism had already developed(55).

Taylor views the military coup as an effort by "those [i.e., the military] who felt a primary obligation to the perpetuation of the state" to restore the predominance of the state vis-à-vis civil society after a period of attempts by others to impose an order based on external values and concepts, which had resulted in a situation where "the state is not dominant [but] must compete with a variety of other groups which are mobilising significant competition to it"(56). Taylor defines "the State" as being "more than just a human institution", and asserts that the state "has a life and spirit of its own, separate, if not superior to the individuals who
compose it"(57). To further clarify his view of what "the State" is, he quotes Benedict Anderson, who writes that "the state has to be understood as an institution, of the same species as the Church...it ingests and excretes personnels in a continuous, steady process...the state not only has its own memory but harbours self-preserving and self-aggrandizing impulses, which at any given moment are 'expressed' through its living members, but which cannot be reduced to their passing personal ambitions"(58). Accordingly, military rule in Burma represents, in Taylor's view, an attempt by the military to structure social relations so that no forces can develop to threaten the perpetuation of the state. Thus the military is applauded as attempting to constitute the state as the ultimate arbiter of societal conflicts, to establish state hegemony, and to set the limits of acceptable political, economic and social behavior(59).

Taylor states that the regime's most significant achievement was the removal of "foreign derived" and "artificial" divisions within Burma's polity(60). An indigenous "Burmese" unity was instead put in place, according to Taylor, by abolishing the autonomous status and the ethnic basis of the constituent states(61), and transforming them into "agents of the central state"(62); changing the legal codes applicable to minority areas, thus providing for their long-term equality and identity within a "non-discriminatory state legal order"; holding yearly Union Day celebration where the non-Burmans perform dances to express their cultural diversity(63); providing all,
regardless of ethnic origins, with equal rights, status, and access to health-care, education and other opportunities; establishing the Academy for the Development of National Groups at Sagaing by the BSPP, and so on(64).

The military regime has few other achievements, something admitted even by Taylor. One of these was its ability to maintain military pressure against the Communist Party, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), various Shan "armies", the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), and other smaller anti-state forces in the peripheries(65). Secondly, there was, he maintains, an increase in the number of teachers at all levels, and the rise in literacy from 53 percent in 1963 to 81 percent in 1985 due to the allocation of more resources for education(66). Thirdly, health-care expenditure was increased, infant mortality rate dropped by one-third, and the numbers of doctors and nurses increased in the mid-1980s. However, Taylor admits that schools and hospitals are overcrowded and poorly equipped(67).

Aung-Thwin is more positive in assessing military rule than Taylor, whose approval of Ne Win's Tatmadaw regime is limited to applauding its success in insuring the dominance and perpetuation of the state in Burma(68). Aung-Thwin, on the other hand, rigorously argues that it is invalid to view the 1962 coup as retrogressive and undesirable. It was instead, he maintains, an effort to restore "meaningful order" and resurrect a uniquely Burmese cultural identity(69). His main contention is that the
period from 1886 to 1962 (i.e., from the British annexation to the Ne Win's seizure of power), was one marked by crime and psychological dysfunction, ethnic conflicts, and rebellion by religious forces(70).

According to Aung-Thwin, a meaningful order should first and foremost reflect precolonial Burmese (actually Burman) notions of pacification, i.e., the notion of a Pax Birmanica. This he defines as an unequivocal relationship which had then existed which was one between a conquering central power and subordinated peripheral units and groups: a relationship where one's exact place, regardless of whether one was a Burman, Shan or Mon, was made clear in the hierarchically-ordered society(71). Aung-Thwin suggests that the post-1962 Burman state has succeeded in achieving this goal. In other words, the military has redefined ethnicity for "its 'relational' rather than its 'ascriptive' attitudes", and has thus made irrelevant notions of ethnicity derived from Western premises and experience(72). Aung-Thwin maintains that there now exists in Burma a more meaningful order and unity since the Shan, Kachin, Karen, and so on are now no longer ethnicity-based political actors, but have become ethnic categories in the anthropological, non-political, sense. That is, there has been a return to a more indigenous situation whereby ethnic groups define themselves in terms of their role-relation with other ethnic groups, in particular, with the Burman in a Burman-dominated political system(73). Aung-Thwin's argument is based on the concept introduced by E.R. Leach,
which was further extended by F. Lehman to cover the troublesome relations between the Burman center and the non-Burman peripheries in post-1948 Burma(74).

Furthermore, Aung-Thwin believes that a meaningful Burmese order should reflect "the relationship of the government to other components in Burmese society" as it existed in the pre-1886 indigenous form(75). He argues that this indigenous relationship has been established by the military in Burma. For example, the relationship between the state as the patron and the sangha as the legitimizer of the state has been symbolically expressed. The relationship of the government to the army is also traditional in the sense that "social and political nobility" is attained through the army from which rulers are recruited. As well, according to Aung-Thwin, the relationship of the government to the agrarian class is very traditional. This class is the state's predominant economic resource and is thus favored, Aung-Thwin argues, over the trading class(76). He also applauds the military-induced cultural renewal as seen from the use of Burmese in all spheres of life, the wearing of the longyi (a sarong for men), and the dropping of Anglicized names, and so forth(77). He further maintains that a meaningful indigenous order in the economic sphere has been established as well. He states that the economic components of the "Burmese Way to Socialism" may in fact be a modern form of traditional redistribution. The economy is largely agrarian, prices of commodities are administered by the state, ties to other market
economies are restricted, market conditions and principles are allowed to operate in certain "pockets" only, namely the blackmarket\(^{(78)}\), and the aim of the state is directed at achieving "the centricity of state resources" rather than their dispersion, "self-sufficiency, not gain"\(^{(79)}\).

Both Taylor and Aung-Thwin more or less dismiss as dysfunctional, if not irrelevant and undesirable, all changes which had occurred and all political innovations and institutions installed in Burma from 1886 to 1962. Though it it doubtful that seventy-two years of history in which tremendous changes have occurred can be dismissed as irrelevant or as a period of "meaningless order", it must, however, be granted that this approach does reflect the world-view and mind-set of important military men of Burma, in many ways.

In order to discover the nature of military rule in Burma, it is necessary to understand why military leaders in Burma held certain views and committed themselves to certain political formulas, and why they chose to construct a state with high autonomy relative to other social and political components in "Burmese" society, and how they did this. The stand taken in this thesis is that the immense change which occurred in Burma in 1886-1962 cannot be ignored, but at the same time, it is argued that many things were unchanged, in particular, the fragmented nature of social organization and relations, and certain values, which distinguish Burma and other Third World polities from the
West. It must be added that Burma is not unique, and Burma's problems and politics are not very different from those facing other Third World polities. Third world countries differ from each other only in the way their rulers or leaders, societal groups, and even individuals, respond to problems which are common to all of them.

As such, the following chapter will discuss concepts dealing with Third World polities and situations in order to construct a theoretical framework to analyze and explain why and how the military in Burma imposed their rule, maintained their dominance, and re-asserted the state's autonomy relative to other groups and forces within society.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

1. When the Burma Army was re-organized in 1945, Aung San, its founder, envisioned it as one based on "class battalions", a British army term for units organized along ethnic lines, i.e., with Burmans posted only to Burman units, and so on. See "Memorandum on the Proposed Reorganization of the Burma Patriotic Forces", August 1945, in J.Silverstein (Compiler), THE POLITICAL LEGACY OF AUNG SAN, Data Paper 86, S.E.Asia Program (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,1972); p.23. As such, there now "exists", in name only, some class battalions such as the Shan Rifles (one battalion), Chin (four), Kachin (six), and Kayah or Karenni (two). Even then, the number of non-Burman units have remained constant. When the civil war was at its height, the Shan State government (headed by the Muangmit Prince, and Foreign Minister concurrently) proposed raising three or four more Shan units to combat rebels in the Shan State. This request was, according to Colonel Saw Ohn (a Shan), rejected by Ne Win, then serving as a Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister.

By the early 1950s, however, non-Burman recruits were posted to Burman battalions and vice versa. As a result, according to Dr. Vumson, a Chin national, Chins serving among Burmans picked up the habit of frittering away their pay instead of remitting money back home. Consequently, Chin elders no longer encouraged Chins to enlist. (Interview, August 1989, Washington D.C.).

Moreover, non-Burman officers with long service experience or distinguished records in the pre-independence regular army, were not favored or trusted. For example, Sai Long, a Shan who received the British Military Cross during World War II, was retired as a Lt. Colonel after over thirty years of service. Such was also the plight of most post-1948 non-Burman officers. The majority of non-Burman officers were retired with the rank of Captain, regardless of merit or qualification. Among Burman officers, upward mobility depends on factors such as, (a) membership in Ne Win's post-1948 first command, the 4th Burma Rifles (Fourth Burif), (b) membership in the BIA and other pre-1948 armed organizations, (c) membership in the MIS (Military Intelligence Service) and related intelligence bodies which Ne Win closely monitors and supervises, (d) cliental links with powerful senior officers (which is a two-edged sword). Factors such as combat record (mostly held by non-Burman officers), professional military experience (again, held mostly by the non-Burman), competence, integrity, and other merit and seniority criteria, do not count as much in the Burma Army or in many, or most, Third World armies.


6. Khin Yi, op. cit, p. 8. Also, M. Maung, op. cit, p. 119. The term thakin is a Burmese mode of addressing a person who one regards as a master or overlord. During the period of colonial rule, all Englishmen were thus addressed by the Burman, especially by rural people and those of humble stations in life.

7. Or, to put it correctly, the Burman ethnic group. However, in Burmese, no precise differentiation is made between racial and ethnonational identity. The term Lu-myo covers both. Thus, a black African is called Kappali Lu-myo; the Chinese, Tarok Lu-myo; the French, Pyinthit Lu-myo; the Burman, Bama Lumyo, and so on. There are, however, terms such as A-Myo-tha and Taingyin-tha, the former meaning roughly "national" as in the national anthem (A-Myo-tha Thechin), and the latter loosely meaning the indigenous people of a country.

8. Khin Yi, op. cit, p. 7. The claim that the Burman race descended from the Buddha's family was, as noted by Khin Yi, a distortion of the claim made that the first Burman king, Abiraja, was a descendant of the Sakyan race.

9. Ba Maw, op. cit, pp. 6, 54. This strong, reactionary nationalistic sentiment, almost an ideology, is similar to what has been described by Barrington Moore as "Catonism", which stresses more on what it is against than what it is for. See Barrington Moore, SOCIAL ORIGINS OF DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRACY (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp. 491-95.


11. Dorothy Guyot, "Communal Conflict in the Burma Delta", in Ruth McVey, SOUTHEAST ASIAN TRANSITIONS (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 197, 199-200. The alleged preponderance of Karen in the colonial service has, somehow, become an accepted "fact", reflecting perhaps the over-sympathy for or confusion over "Burmese" nationalism on the part of Western scholars. Guyot refutes this perception. She says the Karen were over-represented only in the education service which
was due to their mission schooling; in fact, they were under-represented in other services. See Guyot, op cit, p.201. Actually, the Burman were not as severely underprivileged or disadvantaged in British Burma generally and widely believed or alleged. R.H. Taylor presents some figures for the year 1931, showing that the Burman made up 31.2 percent of personnel in the Military and Police (as compared to Karen and other indigenous groups, which was 15.9 percent); 37.4 percent in Public administration (Karen, etcetera, 25.5 percent); and 67.1 percent in Professional and liberal arts (Karen, etc., 24.8 percent); 59.2 percent in Trade (Karen, etc., 14.1 percent). See Taylor, THE STATE IN BURMA (London: C.Hurst, 1987), pp.130 (Table 2.2, adapted from Moshe Lissak, "The Class Structure of Burma: Continuity and Change", JOURNAL OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES, 1 [March 1970], p.130). The given figures above should be viewed in relation to the total population broken down into ethnic categories. Taylor cites the population by ethnicity from BURMA HANDBOOK (Simla: Government of India Press, 1944), as follows: Burman group 9.2 million; Karen 1.3 million; other indigenous groups 2.1 million (the Karen and other non-Burmans constituting over 30 percent of the total). See Taylor, THE STATE IN BURMA, op cit, p.128. However, J.L. Christian, citing from "Statistical Abstract for British India", in PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS, Vol.XXIX, 1937-1938, provides the following figures: Burmese (Burmese speakers) 8.6 million; other indigenous races 4.6 million (comprising more than 50 percent of the total population). See Christian, BURMA AND THE JAPANESE INVADER (Bombay: Thacker and Co., 1945), p.382 It will be seen that the Burman were not overly deprived, none were the other indigenous "races" specially favored. Despite facts to the contrary, Burman nationalists were "highly displeased over the rising fortunes of the once-despised races such as the Karens under the rule of the British", according to a Burman scholar. See Maung Maung Gyi, BURMESE POLITICAL VALUES: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ROOTS OF AUTHORITARIANISM (New York: Praeger, 1983), p.234.

12. Robert A. Scalapino, DEMOCRACY AND THE PARTY MOVEMENT IN PREWAR JAPAN: THE FAILURE OF THE FIRST ATTEMPT (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). According to Scalapino, the election of April 1937, was the last competitive election in prewar Japan. He noted that after 1931, the failure of democracy was clearly revealed, and says that "democratic philosophy and institutions were completely riddled by the sword thrusts of militarism and ultranationalism", pp.386-7,389.


14. The following of the Dobama was amorphous because it was itself not a discrete body with clear organizational structures and boundaries. Membership was informal. It was a coalition of factions led by personalities
who, in turn, split or coalesced as dictated by personal feelings and by issues of the moment. There was constant jockeying for position and leadership. As well, the Dobama was loosely connected with other youth groups, such as the RUSU (Rangoon University Student Union), the ABYL (All-Burma Youth League), the ABSU (All-Burma Student Union), all of which were, again, amorphous bodies. And in accordance with the issue of the moment, the Dobama attacked or cooperated with other more established parties, such as Ba Maw's Sinyetha (the Poor Man or Proletariat) party, U Saw's Myochit (Patriots) party, or Deedok U Ba Choe's Fabian party. See, Khin Yi, op cit, especially pp.133-36, for feuds and jockeying for position among and between Thakin leaders. According to M.Maung, there was a Dobama "inner circle" composed of Thakins Aung San, Nu, Hla Pe (Bo Letya), Ba Hein, Ba Swe, Than Tun, Soe. But as clarified by M.Maung, it was not a formal body and it reflected different views at different times, depending on the issue and on who were present. M.Maung, op cit, pp.119,213-14.


16. Of the AFPFL Thakin leaders, only U Nu can be described as being committed to democracy more or less in the form as derived from and practiced in Western democracies. Aung San was also apparently committed to democracy, but was assassinated in July 1947, at the time when the constituent assembly had just begun drafting the constitution. U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein headed the socialist faction within the AFPFL, and were more committed to socialism than to democracy.


18. These claims made by the "military" Thakins are, in a peculiar and passive way, not totally invalid. Though they, the Thakins, did not hold sufficient power during the war to influence history-changing events, they were nonetheless present on the scene. As it were, they were in the very eye of the storm which wrought these far-reaching and dramatic changes. They survived the storm, while their rivals, the prewar leaders and parties, did not. Thus they were able to exploit the advantages of their position and to reap the fruits of victory afterwards. In this sense, and only in this sense, the Thakins were not entirely wrong in making such claims. It must be noted that the Dobama and the successive armies and/or organizations it created did not loom large in the minds of either the Japanese General Staff planning the invasion, nor did they figure significantly in the Allied Command's plan to recapture Burma.

19. The "unifying" warrior-kings especially honored by the Burman military, are King Anawratha (1044-1077) of Pagan,
Bayinnaung (1551-1581), and Alaungpaya (1752-1760). Aung San is regarded as the fourth unifier. As can be seen from this, unity is equated in the Burman military minds with their conquests, and the submission of others.

Of the "Thirty Comrades", only one, Thakin Shu Maung or General Ne Win, remained in the Burma Army by the late 1950s. Another who remained in the army, Bo Kyaw Zaw, became a Brigadier and gained fame in the operations against the KMT (Nationalist Chinese) stragglers in the Shan State. He was, however, cashiered in 1957 amidst allegations of being a closet communist, being soft on and leaking information to communist rebels. In 1976, ex-Brigadier Kyaw Zaw joined the communist forces on the China-Shan State border, and has not been heard of since then. On Kyaw Zaw, see Bertil Lintner, OUTRAGE: BURMA'S STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY (Hongkong: Review Publishing Co., 1989); pp. 50-1, 79. Also, see dispatches from American Embassy, Rangoon, to State Department, Raw Files, NATIONAL ARCHIVES, Washington D.C., November 28, 1956; December 15, 1956; January 3, 1957; January 23, 1957.

20. It is generally accepted, somehow, by scholars that the term "Burmese" is distinct from the word "Burman"; the former as denoting all ethnolinguistic and ethno-territorial groups of Burma, and the latter referring only to native speakers of Burmese or the Burman language (or to the ethno-Burmese). Though the usage of the terms, mentioned, is a convenient device, it must be remembered that the term "Burmese" refers to the language of the Burman and is an adjective for things Burman, such as the Burmese costume, Burmese food, music, and so on. Strictly speaking, a Shan is a Tai or Thai and a citizen of Burma, but is not a Burmese because he is not a thing belonging to the Burman.

There is a similar difficulty in the use of the term "Myanmar" or "Myrma" and "Bama" as two different and distinct terms. The former does not denote all ethnic groups of Burma, but is a literary and classical name for the "Bama" or the Burman. The change of the country's name by Saw Maung's SLORC from Burma to Myanmar is therefore meaningless and incomprehensible to both the Burman and the non-Burman alike.

In this thesis, the term used are "Burman", for ethnic Burmese, and "non-Burman" for the Karen, Shan, Kachin, and so on. The term "Burmese" will be used within quote marks to indicate both the Burman and the non-Burman, i.e., the citizens of Burma.

It mainly recounts the manoeuvres executed by various Thakin leaders such as Aung San, Thakin Than Tun, Thakin Soe, Thein Pe Myint, and others, to extricate their groups and "armies" from "the consequences of having accepted Japanese fascist assistance" (p.68). The minor role played by the "armies" led by the Thakins was made clear both by Lord Louis Mountbatten and General William Slim in a meeting at Kandy with Aung San, Thakin Than Tun and others, and this point was conceded by Aung San himself (p.56).


24. Maung Maung Gyi, BURMESE POLITICAL VALUES, op cit, p.162. As indicated by the author, Aung San's authoritarian-fascistic "Blueprint For Burma", of which this passage is a part, was written while he was in Tokyo in 1941 when totalitarianism and Mussolini's and Hitler's leadership style were greatly admired by many. There is, however, enough evidence to indicate that Aung San had by 1945 outgrown his youthful and not uncommon, especially among Asian nationalists, admiration for totalitarianism.

As regards the "Blueprint For Burma", according to the editor of THE GUARDIAN, a Rangoon daily, which published the document in a March 1957 issue, the material received was not in Aung San's handwriting. It was a copy of the original allegedly made by a Mr. Sugii, a friend of Colonel Suzuki, the founder of the BIA (Silverstein, THE POLITICAL LEGACY OF AUNG SAN, op cit, p.13.).

25. Some of the leading Thakins, such as Thakins Nu, Kyaw Nyein, and Ba Swe, dropped the prefix to their names in favor of "U" (equivalent to Mister) after independence. Others, such as Thakin Tin, Thakin Tha Khin, Thakin Pan Myaing, and so on, retained the prefix.

26. As to the reason why the military withdrew to the barracks in 1960, there are conflicting views. One view forwarded by Maung Maung is that Ne Win was a "constitutional soldier" who, moreover, was not politically ambitious, and wanted to preserve the army's image as "an organization of young men, trained, disciplined, dedicated to high purpose". See Maung Maung, BURMA AND GENERAL NE WIN (Bombay: Asia Publishing House,1969), pp.232,257,260,269. M.Lissak, on the other hand, argues that the military withdrew because it was not ready, psychologically or ideologically, to establish a prolonged
military regime. See Lissak, MILITARY ROLES IN MODERNIZATION, op cit, p.165. However, many local observers were (and are still) of the opinion that the military at the time thought that it was popular, and that its embryo political party, the National Solidarity Association (NSA), had effectively mobilized the masses. The top brass hence believed that the pro-military Stable AFPFL would win the 1960 elections. It must be remembered that the military was highly praised by both foreign and local newsmedia, and the military itself was not shy about patting itself on the back. There was very little indication at the time that U Nu would win by a landslide and thoroughly humiliate the military.


29. Khin Yi, op cit, p.xv, "Introduction" by R.H.Taylor. He maintains that some of the ideas of the Dobama were implemented and its symbolic legacy was renewed by the military after the 1962 coup.

30. John Badgley, "Burma: The Nexus of Socialism and Two Political Traditions", ASIAN SURVEY, Vol.III, No.2 (February 1963), p.91. The description of the military as "ardent nationalists" given by Badgley here underlines the confusion regarding what constitute "nationalism" in an ethnically segmented Third World state like Burma. The kind of "nationalism" expressed by the Burman military is in content Burman ethnic nationalism based on pride in Burman history, culture, language, etcetera, with the implication that it is superior, and that the culture, history, and so on, of the Karen, Kachin, and others, are inferior and tribal, and that they must therefore accept Burman hegemony, or the ethnocentric Burman version of "Burmese nationalism". A graver implication is that the Burman has therefore the right to rule, and any opposition to Burman political and cultural hegemony by other ethnic groups is illegitimate, and/or instigated by external powers. Within this context, it would be more accurate to describe the military as "ardent ethnonationalists", rather than as "ardent nationalists". The question of what "Burmese nationalism" is, or what it should be, is not just a problem of theoretical definition, but is, rather, a crucial political problem as witnessed by the forty years war between the Karen and Rangoon, for example.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.
33. Up till his early demise, Aung San had shown that he was not a Thakin partisan narrowly bound to any particular Dobama factions or ideas. He sought and appreciated the advice of U Tin Tut, a senior civil servant and a member of the elite ICS (Indian Civil Service), no less, and an important member of the wartime staff of Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, the British Governor-in-exile. Aung San's interim cabinet, all assassinated with him, included many non-Thakins, such as Deedok U Ba Choe, Abdul Razak, and Sao Sam Tun. As regards the rest, only Thakin Mya is recognized as a bona fide Thakin. U Ba Win (Aung San's brother) was most likely only a nominal Thakin. Mahn Ba Khaing was a Karen leader who headed the Karen Youth Organization (KYO), which was affiliated to the AFPFL. Aung San was not particularly close to Ne Win, who was, at that time, and by all accounts, an able subordinate, nothing more. As noted by his daughter, Aungsan Suu-kyi, her father wanted a professional army which did not engage in politics. See NEW YORK TIMES, January 11, 1989 ("A Daughter of Burma, but Can She Be a Symbol?", by Steven Erlanger).


35. Ibid. From a statement attributed to Dr.Ba Maw with reference to the military, which in full reads: "It is also Burmese; it wants socialism, which is good, but it wants it in a Burmese form and in the Burmese way, which is better still". (THE NATION [Rangoon] May 2,1962). This unconditional approval of Dr. Ba Maw for the military and its Burmese Way to Socialism cannot, in my opinion, be taken at face value. He was a frequent visitor to our home in Rangoon and did not subscribe to "Burmese ethnonationalism". He was cosmopolitan and highly intelligent. Moreover, in his book (op cit), which he wrote in 1968, he clearly indicated that he did not at all admire the BIA or the military thinking, especially on politics.


37. Indian and Chinese merchants and middlemen, through self-interest and profit motives, and through commercial transactions, served as links between the urban and rural areas and between various ethnic groups. They were, figuratively, the "market place" of which Furnivall spoke where separate societies met. Moreover, these foreigners, so-called, were becoming assimilated and accepted the idea of a "Burmese" nation-state (again, more because of self-interest and profit-motives, than because of any commitment to an integrated state). They spoke Burmese and used it in their dealings with the Karen, Kachin, Shan, and so forth. Further, not all Indians and Chinese were in commerce. Many of their descents had acquired higher education and professional training. As such, the expulsion of the Indians (en masse, immediately following the coup), and the
impoverishment of, restrictions against, and expulsion (in a trickle, but substantially in the mid- and late-1960s) of the Chinese, exacerbated Burma's "brain-drain" problem. The majority of "Overseas Burmese" in the United States, Australia, England, and Canada are not Burman or ethnic-Burmese, but are "foreigners" who left because they were excluded and made unwelcomed in Burma.

38. Burma's seclusion was a boon for nostalgic travellers seeking a world untainted by Pepsi-cola culture and traffic jams, i.e., the colonial Asia of Somerset Maugham with its tranquil beauty and quaint old-world charms. There was, at one time, profuse praise for Ne Win for keeping Burma and its people untainted and unspoilt by crass commercialism afflicting neighboring Thailand. Most guilty of such insensitivity were writers writing for jet-set tourists in glossy travel magazines memorable only for their color splashed advertisements for expensive perfumes.

39. Wiant, "The Political Symbolism", op cit, pp.61-2. The role of Buddhism and the Sangha in Burmese politics has, I feel, been generally been misunderstood. Too much emphasis has been placed on the legitimating function of Buddhism, and the political role of the Sangha. In Buddhist tradition, a monk is one who has renounced the world completely and he therefore has no worldly obligations, much less any political or social role in society. Monks are, in fact, beggars -- beggars who are, at the same time, morally superior precisely because of their unconditional renunciation. People, including kings and rulers, give alms or support monasteries for selfish reasons, i.e., in order to gain merit which reinforces one's good karma (the sum total of one's behavior spanning many existences), and by implication, to buttress one's Pon (aura of moral-mystic power which elicit automatic respect), Awza (authority, influence), Gon (prestige, social distinction, an aura of superiority), and if one is involved in politics, one's Ah-na (power, political power). Every male person possesses some degree of Pon in relation to the female sex. But both sexes can possess, within limits, certain amount of Awza, Gon and Ah-na.

To digress, Pon, Awza, Gon and Ah-na are distinct categories and are perceived to reside in a person in different combinations. According to this mode of evaluating personal qualities, Ne Win, for example, possesses immense Ah-na, very limited Awza, and very low Pon or Gon. Jack Kennedy will be seen as possessing Gon, Awza, Ah-na, and certain degrees of Pon. The present Thai king, Bhumipol Adulyadej is regarded as having all four categories. Aung San is regarded as having had a high degree of both Awza and Ahna, and Gon-theikka (moral prestige and integrity, a higher form of Gon) which is essential for a leader, and which Ne Win lacks entirely. Donald Trump would possess Gon, extremely limited Awza and Ah-na, and would have Pon only in relation to the female sex. Monks possess Pon and Awza, and must have Theikka (observance of the rules of Sanghahood and moral
percepts), but should shun Ah-na.
The Sangha is, by definition, above politics and beyond the human world. But in times of stress and danger, or even personal misfortune, people, including kings and rulers, may turn to the Sangha for protection because they are the "sons of the Lord Buddha", and thus possess Great Pon. But, it is the moral force and the spirit of compassion embodied in the Sangha which provides protection, not the monk's actions per se on one's behalf, which is incidental. A monk is not obliged to intercede or mediate in human disputes or conflicts, or concern himself with human conditions.

When a monk is involved in politics, it is as an individual and without the sanction of the sect he belongs to, or even of his monastery. In that case, the said monk is, strictly speaking, no longer a monk because he has "re-entered the world of human concerns", but he may nonetheless gain followers and retain respect because of the sanctity of the "yellow robe". This is not to say that the Sangha is not a political force or that monks do not participate in politics. They have done so often, but their role in politics does not have the same weight or the traditional/institutional force or effect as, for example, the actions and pronouncements of the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines.

Even in olden days, the Sangha did not legitimate the rule of any particular king. He who observes the Ten kingly percepts (Min-Kyin Tara Se-bha) and the Five basic moral percepts (Nga-bha Thila) is regarded as a "good king". Their observance is the most important component of the king's "personal legitimacy" (because power and loyalty owed was personal). I doubt that there existed the concept of institutional legitimacy. The state or state apparatus has always been regarded as harmful and predatory, at least in Burma. The king or ruler supports the Sangha and the monastries, builds pagodas (chedi) and performs acts of merits solely in order to buttress his karma, his Ahna, Pon, Awza, etc. Merit-making is, in essence, a selfish and personal act, and has no direct social or political function.

In Buddhism, there is also the concept of Marnya, an evil force which is counterpoised against Lord Buddha's teachings. It is from this concept of a threatening dark and evil force that springs the concept of an alien and heathen-like force (Meitza-Deitti) endangering Buddhism, and this is used by olden kings to rally his subjects against external enemies or intended external victims.

For a interesting discussion on, and valid portrayal of, the relationship between religion and politics in Burma, see F.R. von der Mehden, "The Changing Patterns of Religion and Politics in Burma", R.K. Sakai, ed., STUDIES ON ASIA, op cit, pp.63-72. His view that Buddhism and the Sangha are symbols which are often manipulated by rulers and leaders to gain votes or support, is valid, and is reminiscent of Jimmy Carter portraying himself as a "born-again Christian", or George Bush's image as a "family man".
40. On censorship and restrictions, see DAWN NEWS BULLETIN, Bangkok, March 1989, p.10 ("The Plight of Burmese Writers", by Yan Ko Naing). Writers had to submit their work to censors, who were mostly current or former Sit-Bo (military officers). They were made to pay half a Kyat for every page scrutinized, and further fined for spelling errors. Moreover, each was required to provide the regime with 52 free copies of the published work.


43. For a detailed analysis of the 1948 Constitution with regard to the center-states power distribution, see Alan Gledhill, "The Burmese Constitution", in THE INDIAN YEARBOOK IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (Madras: University of Madras Press,1954).


45. Ibid, p.122.


47. There are distinguished historians who have contributed much to our knowledge and understanding of Burma. Their valuable works are excluded from this category for obvious reasons, although some of their works will be heavily relied on. These distinguished scholars include J.S. Furnivall, J.F. Cady, F.S.V.Donnison, F.K.Lehman, Peter Kunstadter, Dr. Ba Maw, Dr. Htin Aung, Dr. Maung Maung, Hugh Tinker, Frank N.Traeger, M.Sakizyan, Victor Lieberman, Bruce Matthews, and so on.

48. For example, see Georgy I.Mirsky, "The Role of the Army in Sociopolitical Development of Asian and African Countries", in INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW, Vol.2, 3(1981), pp.327-338. This, of course, is understandable given the constraints under which Eastern Bloc scholars have had to work. And, Burma probably does not rank very high in the foreign policy considerations of Moscow or any of the Warsaw Pact countries.

50. Major works in this category are: Moshe Lissak, MILITARY ROLES IN MODERNIZATION (London: Sage, 1976); Edward Feit, THE ARMED BUREAUCRATS (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973); David Steinberg, BURMA: A SOCIALIST NATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (Boulder: Westview, 1982). Butwell, Guyot, and Wiant have analyzed military rule in Burma in numerous articles in journals and periodicals.

51. Important works in this stream are Silverstein's BURMESE POLITICS: THE DILEMMAS OF NATIONALUNITY (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1980), and BURMA; MILITARY RULE AND THE POLITICS OF STAGNATION (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977); Maung Maung Gyi, BURMESE POLITICAL VALUES (New York: Praeger, 1983). Mya Maung has written many articles in this vein in journals. Bertil Lintner has analyzed military rule in Burma in numerous reports for the FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW, Hongkong. Following the 1988 mass upheaval and subsequent massacres and continuing repression by the military, more work in this vein is to be expected.

52. See Robert H. Taylor, THE STATE IN BURMA (London: C. Hurst, 1987). Aung-Thwin, Badgley, and Wiant have written important articles on this aspect of military rule in various academic publications.


54. Ibid, p.329.

55. Taylor, THE STATE IN BURMA, op cit, p.6-7, 10. This view is of dubious accuracy since rulers have been regarded traditionally by the Burman, especially, as the foremost of the Five Enemies of Man. See, E.Sarkisyanz, BUDDHIST BACKGROUND OF THE BURMESE REVOLUTION (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), pp. 76, 78-90.

56. Taylor, op cit, p.4.

57. Ibid, p.3.


61. The fact that the Shan, Kachin and Chin states joined the Union of Burma as equal partners in 1947 as per the Panglong Agreement of February 7th, 1947, is ignored by Taylor, or dismissed as irrelevant.


63. Though the Union Day celebration and dances may be interpreted by outsiders, as by Taylor, as a sign of happy harmony or as official approval of cultural diversity, both the Burman and the ethnic groups know what it really means. It symbolizes the subordination of the Shan, Kachin, Karen, and so on, to the Burman military power. The ethnic groups have nothing to be joyous about in reality. The non-Burman resent the Union Day celebration, and are humiliated by this symbolic show of submission, more so since the day marks the anniversary of the Panglong Agreement, which signified their incorporation as equals and the recognition by Aung San of their rights and autonomous status, which the military has abrogated. Prior to 1962, however, because the non-Burman states enjoyed some form and degree of autonomy, the Union Day dances had positive symbolic meaning. As such, dance troupes were sponsored and organized by various towns and coordinated by the cultural departments of state governments. Participation in the Union Day dances was therefore viewed as a chance to proudly display their cultural heritage and to mark an important and meaningful historical event.

64. Taylor, "Government Response", op cit, pp.112-14. Taylor prefers to accept at face value the regime's pronouncements. Within the Burmese context, however, the term "non-discriminatory" is a code word for the suppression of the rights of the non-Burman to their own laws, language, customs, history, and autonomy (whether cultural or political). The Burman military, in particular, regards such rights as "discriminatory" and undesirable "special privileges", an attitude which is comprehensible only to those who see life (and politics) as a series of zero-sum games.

65. Taylor, THE STATE IN BURMA, op cit, p.334. The ability of the regime to "contain" ethnic rebel forces cannot be considered a significant achievement since the Burma Army enjoys superior firepower, manpower, logistical support, and has at its disposal a major portion of state resources and, as well, the advantage of external assistance. Though it must be recognized that the terrain favors ethnic rebels, and that a small guerilla group is able to tie up a number of regular units, it must also be noted that ethnic rebel forces are, on the other hand, ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-armed, always short of ammunition, lack heavy weapons, are constantly on the move, and except for the BCP or CPB (Communist Party of Burma), do not enjoy foreign support or aid. Their tactical advantages are out-weighed by the numerical, material, logistic superiority of the regular army.
Rather, what is significant is that ethnic guerrillas have been able to fight for so long. Those writing about ethnic rebellion in Burma give the impression that it is the Burma Army which is the less superior force while proclaiming, at the same time, that it is the best infantry force in Asia. Such writings are illustrative of insufficient attention paid to the deeper political ramifications of the internal war in the ethnic areas.

66. Taylor, THE STATE, op cit, p.359-50. However, in 1987 when the regime requested the United Nations to grant Burma the LDC (Least Development Country) status due to debt problems, it argued that the high literacy rate it boasted about was largely "monastic", and unrelated to economic development needs. David I.Steinberg, "Neither Silver Nor Gold", in J.Silverstein, ed. INDEPENDENT BURMA AT FORTY YEARS (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,1989), p.44 (fn.12).


68. Ibid, p.372.


70. Ibid.


74. E.R.Leach, POLITICAL SYSTEMS OF HIGHLAND BURMA: A STUDY OF KACHIN SOCIAL STRUCTURE (London: G.W.Bell,1964); F.K. Lehman, "Ethnic Categories in Burma and the Theory of Social Systems", in Peter Kundstatder, ed. SOUTHEAST ASIAN TRIBES, MINORITIES, AND NATIONS (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp.93-124. This complex anthropological concept, as simplified by Guyot, involves, basically, the conceptualization of ethnicity as a role, rather than as a specific set of cultural and physical traits. It posits that ethnicity becomes salient only in social settings where more than one ethnic group is present, and that it is defined only in relation to other ethnic groups. Guyot extends this concept to cover the Karen-Burman conflict during the Japanese occupation. She maintains that the conflict can be traced to the destruction of the Burman monarchy (which represented an expression of the legitimacy of Burman rule by which Burmans had related to other ethnic groups, or to which
the Karens could be loyal). The destruction of the Burman monarchy resulted, in Guyot's view, in the Karen transferring loyalty to the British monarchy, hence their conflict with the Burman and the BIA. See D.Guyot, "Communal Conflict in the Burma Delta", Ruth McVey, ed. SOUTHEAST ASIAN TRANSITIONS: APPROACHES THROUGH SOCIAL HISTORY (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp.194-5,200-1. Personally, I think Leach's concept of ethnicity as the function of role-relationships among ethnic groups is quite correct where it concerns ethnic groups in a non-political and non-politicized environment. But the extension of Leach's concept by Lehman (and Guyot) to cover or explain the center-peripheral conflict and relations in post-independent, and post-1962, Burma is problematical. This is all the more so when the military regime lacks legitimacy, and when Ne Win is not accepted by even the Burman public as a legitimate ruler (even in a traditional sense), nor is he personally popular.


76. Aung-Thwin's assertion here that peasants are favored by the regime is contradicted by David I.Steinberg who has worked in Burma as an USAID (United States Agency for International Development) officer. Steinberg says that the peasants are once again at the mercy of the landlord, which is the state (p.128). He also asserts that 86 percent of rural farming families live below the poverty level (i.e., U.S.$40 per capita, in 1981), and that 25 percent of the peasant population is landless (p.79). David I. Steinberg, BURMA'S ROAD TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT: GROWTH AND IDEOLOGY UNDER MILITARY RULE (Boulder: Westview, 1981).

77. Ibid, pp.31-2.

78. Aung-Thwin's contention that the blackmarket represents, as he puts it, "pockets" of market conditions, is rather a curious way of describing the legally non-existent, but otherwise very real and all pervasive, illegal economy of Burma.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MILITARY IN POLITICS: THEORETICAL GUIDELINES

(a) The Praetorians versus Praetorianism

As stated by Claude E. Welch, throughout the history of mankind, "control of the armed forces has provided the quickest, surest way to political power" (1). The role played by the Praetorian guards, the military in ancient Rome, in the making and unmaking of emperors may well be the earliest instance of overt influence in politics exerted by an armed body of men organized as armed servants of the state.

However, this does not mean that the military has habitually intervened in politics throughout the world. Direct military intervention has been relatively rare or unknown for a considerable time in Europe, North America, and Australia. Here, even where regimes were established on the back of the military, such as the regime of General Franco in Spain in the 1930s, and the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917, soldiers were quickly made more or less subordinate to civilian leaders, if not purged and made politically powerless.

But in many states of Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia, "juntas and coups, military revolts and military regimes" have been, as noted by S.P. Huntington, quite common (2). As observed by S. Finer in the mid-1970s, of the one-hundred and fifty states in the world, fifty were under military rule of some
kind, and many non-military regimes, such as those in Jordan, Morocco, Iran, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic, existed only by courtesy of their military forces(3). According to C.Clapham, writing in 1988, two-thirds of Latin American countries, one half of Asian states, and more than half of African countries have experienced military coups since 1960(4).

As such, the phenomenon of military intervention and military rule, especially in what is called the Third World, has prompted examination and analysis by scholars, especially by political scientists. This has resulted in the formulation of many explanations and hypotheses explaining its occurrence, nature, and so forth.

Explanations of military intervention can be roughly divided into two categories: those based on factors inherent within the military itself, and those on factors external to the military. With regard to the former, it is explained in terms of, for example, the use of the military by civilian governments as an instrument of repression; the lack of a clear-cut national defence focus; the military's perception of what the "national interest" is; the degree of the military's internal cohesion; the meddling by politicians in the military's internal affairs; the class or social origin of the officer corps; the absence of structural differentiation and functional specialization within the military; the lack of institutional boundaries between
civilian and military elites and/or the politicization of the military by politicians seeking military support; the expansion of the military's role in the affairs of the country, and so forth(5).

Concerning factors external to the military, the forces that push or, as the case may be, pull the military into intervening in politics, to name only the most significant ones, are: the intensification of domestic conflict arising from ethnic or class cleavages; deterioration in economic conditions; the absence or weakness of widely accepted procedures for affecting political change and "rules of the game"; and the real or perceived lack of legitimacy of civilian governments on the part of the general public or of political and social forces, and most importantly, the military(6).

Studies have also been made by scholars assessing the success or otherwise of military leaders and regimes in handling the complex process of social and economic change generated by the process of modernization, i.e., the spread of urbanization (often the result of rural dislocation), mass education and communications, the diversification of economic activity, and the expansion of government activity, from the local to the "national" level, in the political and economic spheres(7). As well, the military's performance in creating political institutions to meet the growing demands made on the political
system that accompanies modernization have been examined and analyzed by scholars (8).

With reference to the military's ability to manage complex change in Third World societies, and its capability in institutionalizing politics or creating political order in praetorian societies (i.e., managing or coping with conflicts that arise from rapid changes and resolving them through the construction of a generally accepted set of institutions and rules), the general consensus is that the military has performed below expectations. That is, military leaders have achieved no more than what civilian leaders would have (had they not been displaced at gunpoint) in the tasks of installing political order and/or economic modernization, thereby refuting the "the military as modernizer" thesis which emerged in the late 1950s and 1960s (9).

The fact that the comparatively better organized and the best funded, in relative terms, organization in the Third World, the military, has been unable to perform as well as expected, despite substantial foreign aid and goodwill usually made available, indicates that praetorian conditions within Third World polities cannot be easily managed. Military regimes have attempted to "tame" what they view as praetorian forces by what, in essence, can be described as reorganizing the political system from above, a measure which involves making the state more autonomous relative to various contending social forces in
society(10). In short, the response is one in which state leaders and/or the military, besieged by politicized and demanding local interests and various social forces, respond with "the withdrawal of all political resources to the top" and by reducing "the strain on the system by shutting out lesser claimants to power" and, finally, resorting to a "bare reliance on command from above"(11).

To understand why it has been difficult even for the military to modernize Third World polities and societies, it is necessary to isolate and examine certain aspects of praetorian politics. Firstly, it is necessary to look into the conditions which give rise to a situation where the society as a whole is, as observed by Huntington, "out-of-joint"(12). Secondly, one must examine what constitutes politics in such societies, who the active players are and what their goals are, and how the game is played in such praetorian arenas. Thirdly, strategies adopted by political actors, and the choices made, must be analyzed in order to explain or understand the outcomes.

The examination of praetorian politics undertaken here will focus chiefly on the states and societies of Southeast Asia, although the main concepts are relevant, and more or less applicable, as well, to the African states. Latin American praetorianism will not be included here because what one would call an historic time dimension constitutes a crucial element which would make the inclusion of Latin America in this analysis
complicated for a thesis of this length(13).

(b) A Theoretical Look at Praetorian Societies

Many states of Africa and Asia, are not only "new", in the literal sense of the word, but they are also composed of many ethnically differentiated societies(14) whose members do not mix but meet only in the market-place, as described by Furnivall(15). It must be emphasized here that colonial rule did not create, per se, Furnivall's dysfunctional plurality. It merely brought them together under one flag(16).

Prior to the arrival of the colonialists, with their insistence on set territorial boundaries, there existed in close proximity various empires, kingdoms, principalities, sultanates, chiefdoms, city-states, trading ports, and a variety of stateless communities. Whatever the degree of "state-ness", or level of political development these premodern polities had achieved, they had several features in common which distinguished them from societies and political trends in the West.

Firstly, money or cash did not figure prominently, if at all, in the everyday life of ordinary people or of their lords and rulers, though there existed some form of coinage system in some of these states. Wealth was not the function of money, and was measured, for example, not even in land, but in the amount of grains one had stored, in heads of cattle, in exhibitions of generosity, in the ability to support one's kins or followers
(clients) and so on. Certain aspects of this kind of economic orientation are still prevalent in Third World rural areas even today(17). In other words, economic life and forms of economic exchange and organization, trade, and decisions on how much to produce and how their value was ascertained were not determined by calculable factors (such as cost, or profit and loss, in terms of labor, time, for example). Nor did there exist a market mechanism, as such, in which factors such as supply and demand played vital roles(18), and upon which rational planning and reasonable expectations could be projected. This, in turn, contributed to the general uncertainty and unpredictability of life.

Secondly, in non-Western societies which had achieved pre-modern "statehood", political power and social control was segmented and uninstitutionalized. That is, though the polity was hierarchally ranked, primary loyalty was to one's immediate overlord and it was personal. The lowest peasant owed loyalty and personal service to his immediate overlord who, in turn, owed it to a greater lord and so on, up the ladder, leading ultimately to the person of the king, or to the "emperor". The one at the apex of power was the super-patron, the absolute, all-powerful "Lord of life"(19). These premodern polities were, in essence, patrimonial political machines, and were marked either by factional and segmental struggles for power and prizes at the center, or by efforts to escape absolutist demands of the center and/or of various overlords(20).
Thirdly, the lesser lords below the king in premodern non-Western polities were not, as in medieval Europe, land-owning "territorial princes and barons who hold position not by favor of the ruler, but by antiquity of blood,...[and] who have states and subjects of their own who recognize them as their lords", to quote Machiavelli(21). There was, instead, a separation between landownership and political-administrative power, and there did not develop, to any politically significant degree, the kind of hereditary land-owning aristocracy which, in many ways, limited royal power because of the king's dependence on them(22). In many cases, even when rulers claimed "ownership" of all land in their domain, such as among the Shan and Lao princes, it was a claim to sovereignty rather than personal ownership(23). And fourthly, there did not exist as in medieval Europe, the "special juridical features and an ideology of 'rights'", or in other words, a form of widely-accepted institutionalization of power and rank manifested in the consecration of ruler-vassal relations through the affirmation of rights and duties under oath and before God(24).

Therefore, because loyalty (the source of power) owing to the overlord (be he a king, a prince, or a village leader) was personal, hence not institutionalized, instability was inherent in the system. A man's primary experience in terms of power relationships was with his immediate overlord, his religious teacher, the head of his clan, or a patron to whom he was in some ways obliged. These relationships "represented
larger worlds of activity and authority", and they determined where a man stood, whom he served, and with whom he went to war\(^\text{(25)}\). And generally, as noted by R. McVey, "the state was not all; often it was not very much". That is, in many cases, the power of the state embodied in the king's person, the power which "dominates all other kind of power, so that religious, economic, and all other meanings come together at the level of the state, whose claims subsume, overshadow, or at least strongly affect them [i.e., all other kinds of power]", held sway only in the areas near the capital\(^\text{(26)}\). Many features characterizing premodern non-Western polities, discussed above, are still to be found in many "modern" Third World states today.

The nineteenth century witnessed the increased venturing of Europeans in search of trade and profit into unknown and fabulously rich -- it was thought -- areas which now encompass the Third World. This search for wealth by a handful of men quickly became a very serious venture which involved not only the annexation of pre-existing socio-political systems, but as well, the installation of a very new order based on Western values and institutions and which rested on rational economic laws and dynamics of capitalism; all of which was, for the natives, an absolutely revolutionary new order\(^\text{(27)}\). In this respect, colonial rulers were, in many ways, like the enlightened absolute European monarchs, Louis XIV of France, for example, who transformed their feudally-segmented domains into national
states(28), though, of course, colonial powers were not consciously creating new or future "nation-states"(29)

But, on the other hand, colonial rule or a revolution, imposed externally and from above, triggered in the subordinated societies a process of complex socio-economic changes. This process, as can be expected, resulted in the mobilization and politicization of colonial societies, giving rise to what is labelled by Huntington as "praetorianism" where, "the wealthy bribe; students riot; workers strike; mobs demonstrate", not unlike the situations in Third World states today(30). The only difference was that the colonial military did not stage coups, and bribery was not as blatant or pervasive, and praetorianism was not visible.

It is evident that, even from cursory readings of history, colonial rule was marked by violence, and that periodically, to borrow a phrase from Huntington, "all sorts of social forces and groups became engaged in direct politics, ...[or] confronted each other nakedly"(31), as can be seen from peasant rebellions, strikes, demonstrations, communal riots, and so on, for example, in India, Vietnam, and Burma after 1930(32). The conventional view implying that praetorianism emerged only after decolonization can perhaps be explained by the fact that colonial rulers were able to cope adequately with conflicts between emergent social forces for a time, thus obscuring the underlying praetorian forces in the colonies. In part, it was
also due to slow communications, the complacent view of colonialism as a civilizing burden of the enlightened West, and the sympathy of scholars and journalists for such a view.

Colonial powers, especially Britain, coped with praetorian conditions, the result of radical changes they effected, through a system approximating David Apter's "Reconciliation Development System". That was a system where rulers more or less accommodated public demands, seeking to overhaul society in general through technological change and reform, promoting economic development by encouraging local entrepreneurs, and seek to reconcile diverse interests through mediation and coordination. This system was one which largely reflected and roughly approximated Western notions of democracy and rulership in that institutions, modelled on those back home, were introduced, giving societal segments some voice or representation, and some degree of participation(33). This resulted in the implanting of constitutional governments, centralized administrative bodies, legal-rational bureaucracies, impartial legal and judicial systems, representative and consultative bodies, and so forth, reflecting Western values and concepts(34), in addition to other economic(35) and social infrastructures catering to the needs of society as a whole.

It was these implanted, basically Western, formal institutions that scholars saw when new states emerged. Furthermore, it seemed that many were additionally blessed,
respectively, with charismatic leaders or a set of modern elites committed to nationalism, progress and equality, a dynamic and modern nationalist movement which enjoyed high legitimacy and mass support, and, more importantly, a revolutionary people's army led by patriotic and forward-looking officers, tested by fire in a successful war of independence(36). In reality, however, the things that glittered and glinted in the sunlight were not gold, to paraphrase an old cliche! In most cases, the emergent "nationalism" was often a particularistic identity consolidated around a dominant ethnic group or tribe(37). Instead of nationalism being a unifying force and symbol, the state instead became an agent of a particular ethnic group(38). And, contrary to nationalist claims that the masses were mobilised around nationalist independence movements, empirical evidence and hindsight suggest, as observed by R. Emerson, that the "actual extent of such mobilization is dubious"(39).

Further, as noted by A. Zolberg, the "charisma" of the "nationalist" leader and his party was, to a substantial degree, derived from the recognition extended by colonial authorities to a particular leader and his party as potential successors or equals, which resulted in their increased popularity and higher profile(40). Furthermore, it must be added that the "qualities" necessary for a "nationalist" leader were not always identical to those required for running a new state.

Regarding the armed forces of new states, most of them were certainly not even proto-national armies, but were colonial
forces subordinated to the respective metropolitan militaries. Further, the majority of senior officers in the new "national" armies had little staff experience and were often jumped-up officers of unknown caliber. There indeed exists a very great difference between Third World armies and those of the West, paralleling that which exists between a Third World political party and a Western one. The praise heaped on these new armies as most modern, best educated, most technically advanced, and the best disciplined body, are unwarranted, more so when one considers that the functioning of most Third World militaries is shrouded in secrecy(41). And, concerning the "anticolonial revolutionary armies" imbued with nationalism, dedicated to the nation, and experienced in guerrilla-style wars of independence, there is, again, a need for healthy skepticism. For example, the BIA in Burma was more ethnonationalistic than nationalistic, and did not figure much in the British retreat from Burma in 1942, or the Japanese defeat in 1945.

Though scholars have been quick enough to penetrate the facade erected around the Third World mass movements and parties, thus contributing immensely to the understanding of the Third World, they have very rarely questioned the military's self-image or looked behind the khaki screen. It is undoubtedly difficult to dissect the secret world of Third World armies, as noted by Bienen(42), but the "leaps of faith" made by some scholars regarding them are extremely misleading. Obviously uniforms, gold braids, marching bands, and tanks do not an army
make, since there have arisen a number of most peculiar armies. There were those that went on strike, as in some new states of East Africa, or mutinied, as in Burma and Belgian Congo; launched regional rebellions, as in Indonesia, or showed little interest in combat, as in Laos and Cambodia; turned to money-making as in South Vietnam and Indonesia; or, believing themselves more capable of ruling, meddled in politics, and overthrew elected governments.

(c) Conceptualising Third World Politics and Rulership

Third World states and the process of politics which has shaped and characterized them are very different from those in the West. As noted earlier, they are literally new in that they were hodge-podge and expedient amalgamations which colonial powers integrated economically, and sometimes, administratively and politically, into one territorial "national" unit.

When these new states attained independence, often a negotiated one, they were, on the surface, "modern nation-states" with constitutions, cabinets, legislatures, judiciaries, armed forces, political parties, and so forth. But, in reality, these were often mere facades. In some, they existed only on paper, and were hastily drawn up chiefly to facilitate the quick exit of colonial powers. The most obvious examples of these are the Belgian Congo, Nigeria, Uganda, and Pakistan. In other cases, existing colonial institutions and processes had been destroyed
by the direct or indirect impact of World War II, as in Burma and most Southeast Asian states. Or, they had been undermined by the rapid mobilization and politicization of social forces manifested in demands for independence which grew louder in the later years of colonial rule(43).

In effect, therefore, it fell upon the shoulders of a handful of new state leaders to rule their domains as best as they could. These were often polities, as noted by Huntington, afflicted by the politicization of all social forces and by the lack or weakness of institutions capable of mediating, refining, and moderating the naked confrontation of these forces(44). Hence, politics, and governing, was not a matter of responding to or mediating demands from highly articulate and organized social interests and groups within institutions operating under accepted "rules of the game". In fact, the new "national" leaders had to deal with, win over, suppress, or neutralize, what W. Howard Wriggins calls, the "components of power" (i.e., societal groups which retain a good deal of autonomy and are capable of showing or withholding their support for rulers). The components of power refer not only to traditional notables or religious and ethnic groups, but also to such "modern" components as armies, bureaucracies, and trade unions(45). And, as noted by Huntington, each of these components was quick to employ means which reflected its peculiar nature and capabilities, as mentioned earlier(46).
As such, for rulers of new states, politics has been primarily a matter of maintaining power and surviving politically in a zero sum game\(^{(47)}\). This survival game is played within compartmentalized and fragmented power relationship structures, which involve political players who are not discrete organizational entities, as noted by G.Heeger\(^{(48)}\). As such, there has emerged in many Third World states, a "distinctive type of political system", termed by R.Jackson and C.Rosberg as "a system of personal rulership"\(^{(49)}\).

It is a system where political order rests, not on institutions and rules, but on "personal-political arrangements", where the players' actions are more important than the underlying social and economic environment\(^{(50)}\). The system is therefore not one based on the rule of law, nor is it one in which the ruler aims at policy goals in order to guide the state towards a specific destination, but aimed at staying afloat rather than going somewhere\(^{(51)}\). It is highlighted by factionalism, clientelism and patronage, coups, purges, plots, corruption, coercion, violence, succession crises and other features and dynamics of non-institutionalized polities and rulership\(^{(52)}\).

Such polities are marked, as Jackson and Rosberg astutely observe, by politics which are highly personal and arbitrary at the top, bearing some similarities to pre-modern despotism and European absolutism. They are increasingly "bureaucratized" at the lower level\(^{(53)}\) because of the efforts of
personal rulers to build up a central bureaucratic apparatus (as an instrument of domination), because of the continuing influences of the colonial bureaucratic legacy, or the rulers' predispositions towards state managerialism and neo-mercantilism(54). In such systems, the one who has succeeded in gaining power is, according to Jackson and Rosberg, the key player. He is a pivot of state power, and manipulates the law and uses coercive instruments of the state to monopolize power and to deny all others the rights and opportunities to compete for that power. Personal rulership is maintained through "the narrowing of the public sphere and its monopolization either by a single ruling party or a military oligarchy [controlled or dominated by one man, the ruler]"(55).

Since these rulers operate in a non-institutionalized political arena, they will probably employ whatever instruments are at hand to maintain their positions. For example, a leader who controls the dominant single party will likely use it as a personal instrument to ensure his dominance, not only within the ruling circle, but within the polity as a whole as well. Similarly, a leader controlling the military would employ the armed forces for similar ends. In other words, the trend is for a political party, the armed forces, the presidency, parliament, and even the state itself, to lose their "institution-ness", or characteristics as institutions, and to ultimately undergo a transformation, i.e., changing from "modern" institutions into
expedient and more or less patrimonial tools, or the tool, of a
ruler or of a new ruling circle.

It needs be recognized that in a system of personal
rulership, the means employed by the ruler to maintain his
survival and position will not be based on impersonal, legal-
rational norms. Rather, it is the personal authority of the
patron-in-chief which holds everything together, and this
authority will be based on patron-client ties and loyalties,
control of patronage (the distribution of positions for personal
profit), and a system of reward based not on merit but on
personal loyalties and other ascriptive criteria (56); even
terror may be used in extreme cases.

Accordingly, elements of premodern relationships
between the ruler and his officials can be discerned in many
"modern" Third World states. These include the arbitrary grants
of power by the ruler and similar alterations made as suits him;
the ruler's personal judgement of a person as constituting a
chief determinant for office; the arbitrary will of the ruler in
determining who shall make what decisions in the conduct of
government; the frequent and abrupt shuffle of officials to
prevent the identification of anyone with the office he occupies,
and so on (57). The transformation of modern institutions and
bureaucracies into patrimonial power pyramids is all too common
and, in many ways, indicates political decay. This decay,
however, is not easy to arrest since those in control are
themselves locked into, and profit from, a pattern of personalized and non-institutionalized politics.

(d) An Overview of Third World State-Society Relations

These Third World rulers, whose survival strategies often give shape to the polities under their rule, have to, however, choose between two major paths regarding how to control, dominate, co-opt and neutralize, or forestall challenges from below. This involves the question of how state-society relations are to be ordered, which, in turn, revolves around whether or not power will be shared, and how it will be shared or otherwise.

The first broad path is one involving the co-optation of the important elite strata by the rulers. It involves the fashioning of a "winning combination" whereby the ruler enters into relations of political exchange with "men of subsidiary influence who will bring with them the acquiescence or the support of their followers"(58).

In this approach, though the political system is dominated by the ruler and his personal instrument of power, often the single ruling party, the polity is, on the other hand, relatively open in the sense that it is inclusive. The whole system is held together by ties of mutual assistance and support between big and lesser men which extend from the ruler to his lieutenants, clients and other followers, and through them to their followers and so on(59). In a sense, the state is not one
which stands above society. It is responsive, very indirectly, to the interests of quite a number of societal segments via pervasive patron-client ties. Thus, the ruler is linked with the ruled by inter-related nodes of patrimonial relationships which often transcend kinship, ethnic, religious, regional, and even class cleavages(60).

The second broad path is one which appears, at least on the surface, to be more efficient, modern, less corrupt, and more conducive to the creation of a modern nation-state based on universal, including socialist, principles, which would create and shape "new social habits, a new national awareness, and new politics in formerly intractable peripheries"(61). This state-society pattern postulates a centralized, bureaucratic state in which societal segments are subordinated, manipulated and controlled through the mobilization of the state's superior power and resources; where resource allocation is governed solely by the interest of the state (or state leaders); and where the state-society linkage is penetrative, extractive and exploitative(62). Such a system, termed by D.Rothchild and M.W.Foley as the "bureaucratic-centralist" state, is further characterized by attempts to undermine the influence of local power, especially ethnic groups; the unwillingness to accommodate or bargain with other societal actors; and a clearly drawn line between those included and those excluded from the political process and rewards(63). In other words, such a state is highly autonomous relative to society. The state is
predominant, is capable of, or so it appears, keeping other societal groups subordinated, and of defining the boundaries of acceptable behavior throughout society (64).

The second path, with its emphasize on a strong and autonomous state, appeals to those leaders who see themselves either as leading a socialist revolution, or as unifying a nation, or both. However, its application within the Third World praetorian environment, dominated by the system of personal rulership, has resulted, in extreme cases, in the creation of a narrowly-based, autocratic or despotic patrimonial bureaucratic-centralist state, held together by a patrimonial ruler. Like premodern autocratic states, the Third World autocratic bureaucratic-centralist state is highly autonomous in that its leaders very frequently act on their own preferences without reference to society, and with scant concern for public welfare. As well, it is dependent for its existence, not so much on society, but rather, in great measure, on a special class of men -- the new ruling class -- in the manner premodern kingdoms were dependent on a governing class of notables, or a distinct military agency, which was, in some cases, segregated from the rest of society (65). The new ruling class usually consists of members of the ruler's entourage and kin, members of the state and the ruling-party apparatuses, and, in some extreme cases, it includes only members of the armed forces and faithful, long-time followers of the ruler.
This has resulted, in extreme cases, in a "separation" of the state from society which has, in turn, increased the sense of insecurity of those ruling and benefiting from such a state. Subsequently, there has occurred more diversion of resources to the coercive machinery (police, military, spy rings, etc.), and a greater reliance on state coercion, intimidation (66), and in extreme cases, state terror.

Rule by terror is, as observed by E.V. Walter, a familiar process in history, but one which has remained on the edges of rational inquiry (67). All kinds of rulers, ranging from despots of antiquity to modern-era totalitarian dictators like Hitler and Stalin, and the Third World ones like Idi Amin, Bokassa, Pol Pot, and Ne Win, have in one way or another employed violence and the "process of terror in the service of power" against the society over which they have respectively ruled (68).

Evidently, no two terror systems are alike; to quote W. Laqueur: "All democracies (like Tolstoy's happy families) are alike, while tyrannies (like unhappy families) are tyrannies in different ways" (69). However, some common features can be discerned. Rulers who have employed some form of violence and terror throughout history, have done so basically because there is perceived, expected, or actual resistance to their rule (70). As stated by Walter, rulers tend to avoid using "destructive methods of power" in conditions of minimal resistance because of political costs (unless cultural or psychic factors create a
disposition to act violently)(71). But, it is very likely, because any power system is, according to Walter, a web of resistance as well as a circuit of controls(72), that rulers who gained power through a revolution or a coup will tend to employ destructive methods of power since their doubtful legitimacy would invite challenge.

The policy of terror can also be viewed as a response to the crisis of integration(73), which, in turn, is closely related to the perception of threats from within and without, and a feeling that the "nation" is about to disintegrate. This feeling of general insecurity approximates what Barrington Moore terms as "Catonism", a pseudo-ideology which justifies a repressive social order and buttresses the position of those in power(74). It is a mind-set where the stress is more on what it is against than what it is for, and is characterized by anti-intellectualism, contempt for foreigners, an aura of moral neatness, the advocacy of sterner virtues and moral regeneration, criticisms of democracy and notions of plurality, militarism and a strong emphasis on obedience and hierarchy, hostility to traders, usurers, the bourgeoisie, capitalism, and so on and so forth(75).

The use of violence and terror by rulers is aimed not only at preventing disintegration, but, as stated by Walter, at control so that the ruled will react in a manner chosen by the ruler, to punish disobedience, to sap the potential for
disobedience or resistance beforehand(76). There are many ways and varying degrees of intensity and scope in which terror and violence are employed. In essence, however, the first element in any process of terror is the specific act or threat of violence which induces a general psychic state of anxieties and fear among the populace which, in fact, constitutes the target of the terror process. It involves three sets of actors: One, the source of violence in the service of terror (i.e., the "king's knives" or the terror staff of the ruler or the state); two, the victims, who may be anyone, and who are chosen arbitrarily and at random(77) or by spies and informers; and three, the general populace, which is the key target of violence(78).

The key element in the process of terror is not so much the intensity, frequency, scope, or duration of violence, but its capacity to induce extreme fear and widespread anxiety in the populace, the target. Violence in the service of terror may take many forms and need not be dramatic or visible, or even continuous. These forms range from mass extermination of certain population segments, mass detention in concentration camps, atrocities or military terrorism against certain ethnic groups, assassination by death squads, "disappearances", to arbitrary arrests and invasion of privacy, imprisonment without trial, widespread torture of prisoners, and periodic brutal and dramatic application of firepower against protesters(79).
The structure set up by the terror regime to keep itself in power is in reality not very complex, and it is as old as history. It consists of the supreme leader who is surrounded and advised by courtiers (ministers, trusted military aides), cronies and favorites, magicians and sorcerers (or theoreticians, advisors, astrologers), and the terror staff consisting of security and intelligence agencies which, in most cases is directly responsible to the dictator himself. Beneath the top structure, there exists the support organization, which may be the "Movement", or the "Party", and in some extreme cases, the entire "Armed Forces". Members of the core support structure are held together above all by fear of the supreme leader, and fear of popular retribution. And like the general populace, they are also the targets of terror and its potential victims. Further, they are, on the one hand, subjected to what Walter terms as "forced choice" (i.e., choosing the lesser evil, and an opportunity for "pay-offs" or rewards which are attractive in an environment of scarcity and competitive struggle for relative advantage), and on the other, the threat of "forced exclusion", or foregoing the advantage of association with the privileged strata(80). Moreover, members and units of the terror staff and the core support organizations, are kept divided by the supreme leader and made to spy on each other, which again, is a device that has been used by despots throughout history.

The employment of terror as a means of ensuring dominance, creating or restoring order, or "taming" praetorian
forces, is more likely to appeal to military rulers since the instruments of violence are closer at hand. As well, the military would be more fearful of disorder and of possible "national" disintegration, all the more so if the military is highly politicized and sees itself, rightly or wrongly (more often the latter), as the creator or saviour of the "nation", or as above politics and the incarnation of all the ideals of the "nation".

Moreover, since military rulers rarely install themselves through elections, and because the military's self-image, as mentioned above, is seldom shared by the populace (a point which has often been overlooked by many non-Third World observers, or dismissed as irrelevant), their legitimacy will be seriously compromised. Such being the case, military regimes are most likely, if faced with widespread resistance or lack of support, to close ranks around the leader and continue ruling through "bare reliance on command from above", in response, and attempt to retain power at all cost. One consequence of this would be the construction of a highly autonomous and powerful state based on, and largely dependent on, the instruments of coercion (i.e., the armed forces and security apparatuses), and patrimonially unified and controlled by the supreme leader.

However, because regimes of terror are essentially patrimonial, they are not likely to outlive their founders for very long, and most likely will become more inclusionary but
still patrimonial. But, on the whole, these Third World states have far to travel before becoming states in the sense that is understood by scholars and defined by Western norms. However reluctant one feels to say that many Third World societies have been "de-developed" by their supposedly modern rulers, it must nonetheless be recognized that their rulers are either incapable of, or are uninterested, or both, in constructing a modern polity. And Unfortunately for the people, their rulers still insist in imagining themselves as indispensable, which only compounds the problem of de-development further.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE


7. On the process of change, see Huntington, POLITICAL ORDER, op cit, pp.32-3.

8. Welch & Smith, op cit, p.250.

9. The "the military as modernizer" thesis is summarised by H. Bienen in "The Background to Contemporary Study of Militaries and Modernization", H. Bienen, ed., THE MILITARY AND MODERNIZATION (New York: Atherton, 1971), pp.1-39. He summarizes the views of those who see the military as a modernizing force, such as Lucian Pye, Guy Pauker, Marion Levy, John Lovell, and Eugene Kim. Huntington, in POLITICAL ORDER IN CHANGING SOCIETIES, op cit, views the military as a well-organized, nationalistic, relatively clean and modernizing force with substantial potential for creating political order. He predicted success in institutionalization if military leaders followed the Kemalist model and/or overcame their distaste for politics and political parties. His high praise for Ayub Khan's Basic Democracy is most unfortunate, because his work is otherwise very valuable, even essential, for understanding Third World politics. The work most often referred to, and which most concisely argue against the "the military as modernizer" thesis, is Eric E. Nordlinger's "Soldiers in Mufti: The Impact of Military Rule Upon Economic and Social Change in the Non-Western States", AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW, 64 (December, 1979). pp.1131-1148. Clapham, op cit, Welch, op cit, and Welch and Smith, op cit, are also of the opinion that military regimes are not particularly modernizing. For similar views, see Talukder Maniruzzerman, MILITARY WITHDRAWAL FROM POLITICS (Boston: Ballinger, 1987), p.2-4, 6, 7; Wilson C. McWilliams, in "Introduction", McWilliam, ed., GARRISONS AND GOVERNMENT:


11. Ruth McVey, "Introduction: Local Voices, Central Power", in R. McVey, ed., SOUTHEAST ASIAN TRANSITION (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 27. Victor Azarya points to the phenomenon of "A small ruling group, gradually retracting (from society, and rallying) around the person of the head of state... closes itself to the participation (of those below) and reduces the services offered to them", resulting, in the final analysis, in a state which is authoritarian, arbitrary and extractive, but whose control is limited. See V. Azarya "Re-Ordering State-Society Relations: Incorporation and Disengagement", in D. Rothchild and Naomi Chazan, eds. THE PRECARIOUS BALANCE: STATE AND SOCIETY IN AFRICA (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), p. 16.


13. That is to say, the regions of Latin America were colonized very much earlier by pre-capitalist, mercantile, colonizing powers, Spain and Portugal. They had already become independent states in the early nineteenth century, which was the time when certain areas in Asia and Africa were being colonized by post-capitalist colonial powers (some of which had, by then, become "modern" democracies). Also, Latin American countries had experienced modernizing changes and corresponding praetorian politics much longer than those in Asia and Africa. Further, most of them, such as, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and so on, had even begun to industrialize by the early twentieth century, and they had also experienced some form of class-based conflicts. Whereas, Asian and African states-to-be had only begun to be slowly transformed into semi-capitalist and semi-modern administrative units, and gradually incorporated into the expanding, essentially capitalist, global economic order. Because of the complex historic time factor, as explained, the examination and analysis of Third World politics here will exclude the Latin American cases though they are Third World countries, and afflicted with problems familiar to Asian and African polities, or vice versa.

14. It can also be said that there also exists racial differentiation in the sense that Indians and Chinese are racially distinct to the indigenous people of Africa. In some
Asian countries like Burma, Thailand, the Philippines, etc., Indians, together with Europeans, are regarded by the natives as racially distinct. The Chinese are, though, seen simply as "foreigners". Most probably because of similar physical appearances and eating habits, they are not regarded, in Burma, as racially distinct as, for example, the Indians or Europeans. The problem faced by these "alien" minorities is one of non-acceptance, or blocked assimilation (like Blacks in the United States), since, in many cases, those belonging to the dominant culture are reluctant to assimilate them because it is felt, rightly or wrongly, that an assimilated Indian, for example, is still an Indian at heart, and that assimilation is superficial and, merely a convenient device adopted by a member of an "alien race" to enable him to better exploit the natives.


16. It has been argued by some scholars that colonialism disrupted the natural evolution of the Third World's pre-existing kingdoms, and that they might have, if left alone, been transformed under absolute, enlightened monarchs into modern nation-states as European states were in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This argument has been the staple rhetoric of many anti-colonial movements and leaders, and implicitly has been adopted by many scholars sympathetic to Third World nationalism. The arguments supporting the possibility of a more natural and balanced indigenous modernity, had colonialism not intruded, also draw upon the experience of the modernizing and absolutist monarchs of Ethiopia and Siam (Thailand), and this has led to the conclusion that modernity would be better and more rapidly achieved in the Third World under a centralized and powerful or "strong" state, than otherwise. These arguments have, however, not passed the test of time, as can be seen from events in countries with "modernizing" monarchs, such as Ethiopia and Iran, for example. Thai monarchs, especially in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, did "modernize" Siam, but it was in the direction dictated by Western concepts and ideas, and with extensive use of Danish, Americans, French, German and British advisors and officials in the various state bureaucracies and agencies, not to mention the opening to Western influences. It certainly was not "indigenous modernization".

17. Even in Thailand, where there has been, since the mid-1960s, a deeper penetration of the system of cash economy, money is still marginal to one's social standing in rural areas, and moreover not necessary for survival.

In rural Burma, among Shan peasants for example, one measure of "wealth" is the heads of cattle one owns, and among the so-called hill tribes, the concept of wealth is unknown. Money functions merely as a medium of exchange. In my opinion, money will come to be regarded as a crucial factor, as capital in
the process of wealth accumulation, and as a determinant of wealth, rather than merely as a medium of exchange, only when a system of credit and commercial banking is well established, widely understood, and used by the majority of the population. For a discussion of rural Burman attitudes in the late 1950s towards wealth and money, see Manning Nash, GOLDEN ROAD TO MODERNITY: VILLAGE LIFE IN CONTEMPORARY BURMA (New York: John Wiley & Sons,1965), especially Chapter.2, pp.9-43 (esp.pp.16, 26,28-30,42-3).

18. Michael Aung-Thwin, PAGAN: THE ORIGINS OF MODERN BURMA (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press,1985); pp.110-15. He gives a brief outline of the some principles underlying economic life and its administration in Burma which was more or less in effect from eleventh century Pagan to the time of British colonialization beginning in 1820.

19. For a detailed study of various types of precolonial political systems in Southeast Asia, see David J. Steinberg, et. al, IN SEARCH OF SOUTHEAST ASIA (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press,1985), ch.4 (pp.30-6), ch.7 (pp.59-67). It is recognized that these premodern political systems differ from each other, but in general, whether they were modelled on the Chinese or Indian systems, or indigenously African, they were more or less patrimonial personal rulerships where power was not checked by institutions but by the countervailing power of other men.

20. Victor B. Lieberman, BURMESE ADMINISTRATIVE CYCLES: ANARCHY AND CONQUEST (New Jersey: Princeton University Press,1984); pp.10-13. Lieberman describes and discusses what he calls the "Burmese administrative cycle", which was a recurring pattern in pre-colonial Burma resulting from the struggle for power among central elite factions and arising from tension between "the throne's absolutist demands" on one hand, and the elite's drive for "elite autonomy and popular evasions" on the other.


22. Ibid. In Vietnam, for example, though provincial officers (governors) were local landowners, they were in essence civil-servants (or mandarins) whose position derived from passing the imperial exams, rather than because they were members of the landed class. Their role was that of "brokers" who, as it were, "owed allegiance both to [their] native village and to the societywide bureaucracy". See D. J.Steinberg, op cit, pp.70-1.

23. Some of the reasons given for the absence of the concept of landownership among princes and lords in particular,
in premodern societies of Southeast Asia, as argued by Steinberg, Onghokham, Lieberman, and so on, is because manpower was the most important source of power and "wealth" (or prestige), since land was relatively plentiful, among other reasons. See, D.J. Steinberg, op cit, p.34; Lieberman, op cit, p.272-3,274,288-9,291. Lieberman, quite accurately in my opinion, relates the ebb and flow of royal power to the ability of monarchs to maintain control over manpower vis-à-vis lesser lords and princes. Also see Onghokham, "The Inscrutable and the Paranoid: An Investigation into the Sources of the Brotodiningrat Affair", in McVey, SOUTHEAST ASIAN TRANSITIONS, op cit, pp.112-57, espec. 114-115,116,118. Anthony Giddens contends that landownership was not an important factor in premodern non-Western societies, because there was no clear economic sphere, or a demarcated set of economic mechanisms separated from the state. Further, there did not exist in these societies a legal system through which legal rights of ownership were defined, and also, ownership of land rarely implied free alienability of the land owned, and hence land could not be translated into means to achieve power, political or otherwise. See, A.Giddens, THE NATION-STATE AND VIOLENCE (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), Vol.II, pp.67-9.

24. Ibid; p.37.


26. Ibid, pp.9-10. It must be commented upon that the present day Third World states are in many ways very similar to those premodern ones in that there is found a dichotomous phenomenon. On one hand, the state is powerful relative to other societal forces (and local interests), and enjoys a good deal of relative autonomy, in the same way the king, his favorites, and officials were able to dominate local-level leaders and prey upon, or make extractive demands on, the populace. But, on the other hand, much of today's Third World society is outside the administrative reach of the state, as was the case in the precolonial polities. This paradox has been noticed by scholars studying Third World states, giving rise to the perception that "state control over society has diminished despite increasing repressive and extractive tendencies", as summarized by V.Azarya. Azarya and N.Chazan, studying the new African states, attribute the decline of the state largely to the withdrawal or disengagement of the rest of society from the perview of the state, for example, by variously keeping the state at a distance by means ranging from popular evasion, dissimulation, and noncompliance, to turning away from the official to the informal economy (the blackmarket and smuggling), and to more active forms of disengagement, such as sabotage, strikes, rebellions, and secession attempts, or exile and migration (as refugees and "boat-people"), or the
flight of capital and brains. Such evasions and various forms of withdrawal of society from the sphere of the state in Third World states today also characterized most precolonial polities, in Asia especially. Even today, government is regarded in Burma as one of the Five Enemies of Man which must be avoided, lied to, and in other ways, evaded. In my opinion, the withdrawal of society from the state perhaps indicates the absence of a common political culture (between rulers and the ruled), rather than plain apathy and/or indifference to politics and government attributed to the ruled by scholars. This has subsequently given rise to "low political culture" explanations for Third World problems and failure at institutionalization, frequently with the implication that those below, the "masses" or whatever, are more to blame than are state leaders. On societal disengagement, see V. Azarya "Reordering State-Society Relations: Incorporation and Disengagement", THE PRECARIOUS BALANCE, op. cit., pp.3-21, esp.pp. 7-9; also, N. Chazan, "Patterns of State-Society Incorporation and Disengagement in Africa", in PRECARIOUS BALANCE, op. cit., pp.121-148, esp. pp.129-31. Regarding the long-standing aversion towards, and evasion of, governments and rulers by the populace in Burma, see Lucian W. Pye, POLITICS, PERSONALITY AND NATION BUILDING (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968 edn.), pp.70-71.

27. The spread of capitalism from Europe to all areas throughout the world, with colonialism serving as a vehicle and a stage in the process, can be viewed as "part of a larger historical process, the scientific and industrial revolution, which has transformed the whole world, including the West itself, in modern times", to quote David J. Steinberg, et.al, in IN SEARCH OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, op. cit, p.166. This, however, is not to say that the precapitalist, pre-cash economies of these societies were at once transformed into modern economies. As a matter of fact, there came into existence the well-known "dual economy" phenomenon where a vast portion of the populace remained as they were previously (i.e., remaining outside the capitalist economy introduced by colonial powers). Even today, vast areas of the Third World are still outside what one would call the modern economy. But colonial powers did put in place infrastructure in the economic and other spheres which were based on premises rooted in capitalist way of doing things, and on market-economy assumptions, and as well, on bourgeoisie values and institutions, political and otherwise. It would not be wrong, perhaps, to view Third World modernization as part of the continuing process of adaptation on the part of largely precapitalist societies to a capitalist economic and bourgeoisie political order initially forced on them by colonialism (which, in turn, was itself a part of the dynamics of capitalism and its expansion).

28. For an interesting analysis of the absolute state in Europe in relation to previous state forms and rulership, see Anthony Giddens, op. cit., pp.83-103. Orlando Petterson provides an account of the development of modern states

29. Precisely because colonial powers were not consciously creating "nation-states" out of the collection of ethnic societies which they annexed outright or ruled indirectly (and moreover, had no intention of doing so), many new states which emerged were, as observed by C. Geertz and R. Emerson, faced with the problem of creating nations from diverse and disparate segments making up the state. See Rupert Emerson, "The Nature of Nations", in John T. McAllister, ed. SOUTHEAST ASIA: THE POLITICS OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION (New York: Random House, 1973), pp. 55-70; and Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution", THE POLITICS OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION, op cit, pp. 42-54.


32. Undoubtedly, colonial powers established "regimes of order", but the "order" imposed was fundamental and transformatory. The colonial "regime of order", in many ways, freed the populace from the capricious and arbitrary exercise of power by the old despotic order, and it was rational, the rule of law did prevail (especially over officials). However, on the other hand, colonial administration and governance was more penetrative and in some spheres (i.e., in taxation, property laws, census, etc.), more difficult to evade. And, as noted by R. McVey, because the transformation of these premodern societies under colonialism was geared to economic and political interests elsewhere (in the mother-countries, for example), it did not take place in an integrated and orderly fashion, and this in turn, quite profoundly disrupted or disturbed existing "native" societies. The impact of the West, the colonial imposition, the process of transformation, and the introduction of a new type of administration, new economic structures and mechanism, and a new kind of politics which allowed for participation, and so on, as can be expected, gave rise to social mobilization and thereby did release praetorian forces. Praetorianism was, it seems to me, not widely recognized as a distinct and significant phenomenon, even by political scientists, until Huntington came along with his pioneering work, POLITICAL ORDER IN CHANGING SOCIETIES, op cit. Also see R. McVey, "Introduction", SOUTHEAST ASIAN TRANSITIONS, op cit, pp. 11-13 (also, fn. 13).


34. Steinberg, et al., IN SEARCH OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, op cit, p. 166.
35. For example, the much maligned Indian money lenders, the Chettiars, in rural Burma contributed enormously to the opening of the Delta land. They assisted, undoubtedly through self-interest, in the capitalization and commercialization of agriculture and the general prosperity of the Burmese peasantry by advancing agricultural credit. In 1929-30, it was estimated that the flow of capital into the agricultural sector amounted to Rs.500 million (or U.S.$180 million at the exchange rate current in 1930). By the outbreak of war, the total capital advanced to agriculture through the Chettiars exceeded all the British capital investments in shipping, mining, banking, oil production, and retail imports. See Lucian W.Pye, POLITICS, PERSONALITY AND NATION-BUILDING, op cit, pp.86-7.

36. For example, writings on Burma prior to the late 1960s reflected such optimism which is, incidentally, most pronounced in Frank N. Traeger's BURMA: FROM KINGDOM TO REPUBLIC (New York: Praeger,1966). Traeger is, it must be admitted, not the only scholar who fell into this optimistic trap. Most scholars in the 1950s and early 1960s, were very favorably disposed towards the new Third World elites and presumed that modernity was just round the corner. Problems afflicting these new states were attributed to acts of God (drought, flood, etc.), the resistance of primordial tribes and traditional notables to modernization, or, more importantly, to communist stooges.


40. Aristide R.Zolberg, CREATING POLITICAL ORDER (Chicago: Rand McNally,1966), pp.17-8. This was precisely the case in Ghana (Kwame Nkruma), Ivory Coast (Houphouet-Boigny), Senegal (Senghor), Guinea (Sekou Toure), Malagasy, etc. This was also the case in Burma, and the British had little choice but to choose the socialist Thakins as the lesser evil. Decolonization involved the making of a deliberate choice by colonial powers as to whom or which party they would bequeath power. It was rarely the case where there already existed a mature and well-organized popular party like the Congress in India. Apparently what observers saw in India influenced them in thinking that such a situation existed elsewhere at the inception of independence.
41. Even a scholar as knowledgable about Third World politics as W. Howard Wriggins, inexplicably, saw the military in the Third World as the best trained and most patriotic element, etcetra, though he is not optimistic about military rule. See Wriggins, THE RULER'S IMPERATIVE (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp.65-7. Also, Hugh Tinker painted an extremely optimistic and favorable portrait of the military in Burma, which probably is the basis for the subsequent (the 1st edition was in 1957) and persistent view that the Burmese military is a modern and modernizing organization. See Tinker, THE UNION OF BURMA: A STUDY OF THE FIRST YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE (London: Oxford University Press, 1967 edn.), pp.323-336.


43. The various "nationalist" anti-colonial movements can be viewed as a representing an acceleration of praetorianism due either to accelerated changes arising from the colonial modernization process, or due to the erosion and/or breakdown of colonial control. It is interesting to speculate here on whether the colonial powers, had they not decolonized, would have been able to contain and handle the praetorian forces which had grown more pronounced in the later years of their rule. And also, to ponder whether colonial powers would have succeeded in the task they had set for themselves: the task of nation-building, state-building and political institutionalization in the colonies, had they been able to stay longer. There might just be a positive correlation between the duration of colonial rule and the endurance of inherited institutions, for example, as in the case of India. On the other hand, politics in the Philippines is still extremely praetorian despite over 400 years of colonial tutelage of Spain and the United States, respectively.

44. Huntington, POLITICAL ORDER, op cit, pp.195-6.


46. Huntington, POLITICAL ORDER, op cit, p.196.

47. Wriggins, THE RULER'S IMPERATIVE, op cit, pp.4-6.


50. Ibid.
51. Ibid, p.18.
52. Ibid, p.6.

53. It must be noted that "bureaucratization" within the Third World context merely means the expansion of personnel and red-tape, and the corresponding expansion of a state-centered patronage system. It is rarely the type of bureaucratization as understood by scholars -- the rationalization of administration and establishing impersonal, legal procedures and norms. Great care is needed when referring to Third World bureaucratization so as to avoid making unwarranted, and optimistic, assumptions about this phenomenon, or its outward appearance.

54. Jackson and Rosberg, op cit, pp.5-6.
55. Ibid; p.23-4.


57. Bendix, NATION-BUILDING AND CITIZENSHIP, op cit, pp.107-108. This is attributed to and synthesized from Max Weber's work.


62. This is Ian Lustick’s well-known "control model" which was formulated to explain how stability is achieved in deeply divided society, but which is also useful in explaining the more repressive regimes, military and civilian, in Africa and within the Third World. See Lustick, "Stability in Deeply Divided Society", in WORLD POLITICS, Vol.31, 3(April, 1979), pp.325-344.


65. Giddens, THE NATION-STATE AND VIOLENCE, op cit, p.52 (from a quoted passage describing the Ottoman Empire attributed to H.A.R. Gibb and H. Bowen, ISLAMIC SOCIETY AND THE WEST [London: Oxford University Press, 1950, Vol. I]). Also see pp.53, 56. In precolonial Burma, the power of the king or the state was based on a special class of crown-serfs of soldiers and laborers, the Ahmudan class, who were organized into regiments, the Asu, and segregated from the rest of society. The Ahmudan (crown-serf) structure was permanent, almost an organic part of the state, in that it constituted a permanent reservoir of manpower and military support for the throne regardless of which dynasty ruled. It was, however, not a caste since a crown serf could become a debt slave of a local notable or even of an ordinary person, and many took advantage of this escape device whenever the king’s service became too burdensome. See Aung-Thwin, PAGAN, op cit, 87-91. Also see Lieberman, BURMESE ADMINISTRATIVE CYCLE, op cit, pp.97-105. Zulu warriors, organized into disciplined regiments were the main prop of Dingiswayo and the despotic Shaka, who ruled through the use of extreme violence and terror. Shaka used the wealth accumulated from plunder or seized from those who displeased him or aroused his suspicion to maintain the standing army and to support the royal kraal and staff. See Eugene V. Walter, TERROR AND RESISTANCE (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.247, 252.


67. Walter, op cit, p.3.

69. Walter Lacqueur, "Is There Now, or Has There Ever Been, Such a Thing as Totalitarianism?", COMMENTARY, Vol.80, 4(October,1983), p.34.


71. Walter, TERROR, op cit, p.15.

72. Ibid, p.17.

73. Ibid; p.282.

74. Moore, SOCIAL ORIGINS OF DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRACY, op cit, p.491-5. Moore attributes "Catonism", a form of reactionary nationalism, to the rise of commercial relationships which undermined the peasant economy which, in turn, adversely affected the overall dominant position of conservative landowners who consequently perceived that society was threatened, or order was collapsing. However, such a mind-set need not be restricted to conservative landowners since reactionary nationalism does not recognize class barriers nor borders.

75. Ibid.

76. Walter, TERROR AND RESISTANCE, op cit, pp.17-8.

77. Victims were chosen arbitrarily, even randomly in the sense that law was subjected to the personal caprice of those who supposedly upheld or implemented "law", a condition common to premodern despotic states and kingdoms of Asia and Africa, and quite applicable to many of today's Third World states. Since "laws" are conditional, ambiguous, and fluid in both their application and scope, those who become victims of the security apparatus appear to the public to have been chosen at random, rather than punished for breaking a specific law or for a particular wrong-doing. For example, in Burma the public attributes the harm done to people by the regime to what is known as the Sauk-myin-kat Oo-badae (Can't Bear the Sight of You Law) because no rhyme or reason can be deduced or is given for punitive actions(since there is usually no warrant, charge or trial). In the case of military atrocities, victims are just people who happen to be present at the wrong place and at a wrong time, or happen to belong to a certain ethnic group in a certain area. There is, therefore, to a large extent, an element of randomness in the choice of victims, at least from the viewpoint of the targeted population, which increases anxiety, which is precisely the intention of the terror staff.
78. Walter, TERROR AND RESISTANCE, _op cit_, pp.7,9.


81. The impending disintegration of the state or "nation" is one of those notions which should be treated with extreme skepticism, since a state cannot easily disintegrate, as witnessed by the existence of Lebanon despite its defacto disintegration. Similarly, a "nation", even if it is not a nation but a collection of warring camps, will not disintegrate so long as the international state-system holds.

82. These sentiments are, unfortunately, an integral part of the military psyche and lore which only the military and some scholars believe in. It is quite strange that even militaries that have not taken part in "independence" struggles, such as the Pakistan Army, and various others, have had their nationalist credentials or roles self-mythologized out of all proportion. These militaries view themselves as something above politics to which the "nation" as well as the whole populace owes a great debt of gratitude in perpetuity.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE TATMADAW TO THE SUMMIT

Burma is a "new" state in the sense that it came into being in its present form as a result of the decolonization process. But it is also an "old" state with political traditions, systems, and history going back to at least the eleventh century, to the reign of Anawratha, 1044-1077 A.D., if not earlier. At the same time, there existed within the area now known as "Burma" other political entities, such as the Mon kingdom to which the Burman owed much by way of civilization and culture, the Arakanese kingdom, and the many Shan princedoms. The main problem of Burman kings was how to deal with these "lesser" rulers and keep them from invading the fertile and rich Irrawaddy basin of the Burman, and how to win their allegiance either as vassals or allies, while at the same time, fending off other Burman power contenders within. Translated into modern terms, the task can be seen as one of keeping the country together and maintaining power, and this has also been the main preoccupation of the post-independence ruling elites of Burma. This thesis examines how the military in Burma under Ne Win's personal leadership has dealt with this age-old problem after having reached the summit of power in 1962. In order to understand the political terrain on which the Tatmadaw marched to the summit of power in Burma, and the context within which the regime has attempted to deal with the task at hand, it will be useful to look briefly into the politics and the political
systems of Burma in the past and trace their development. It will be especially relevant to analyze the political structures on which the successive states or polities in Burma were grounded, to analyze the nature of the state at various historical times, and to investigate the relation of the state to the social segments and forces, or conversely, the roles played by these social and political actors in shaping the nature and role of the state. The origin and role of the most important political actor today, the Tatmadaw, will also be examined in this chapter.

Modern Burma officially came into existence with proper solemnity and ceremony when the Union Jack was lowered and the new flag of the Union of Burma raised at 4.20 a.m. of January 4th, 1948(1). The ceremony symbolizing the transfer of power took place at precisely the time and day deemed propitious by astrologers consulted by U Nu and other AFPFL leaders, the "modernizing" elite of the new country (2).

Today, more than forty years later, those AFPFL leaders such as U Nu, Ba Swe, Kyaw Nyein, Thakin Tin, and many others who succeeded to power in the first decade of independence, have all been displaced. Gone too is the semi-federal constitution designed to cope with ethnic diversity, as are the institutions and a political process modelled on British parliamentary practices, which the ruling AFPFL Thakins had inherited and tried to make function until the coup of 1962.
Burma has since then been ruled by a stern military strongman, Thakin Shu Maung or Ne Win, and his Tatmadaw, the "national" armed forces, to which the "nation" owes, it is claimed, not only its freedom, but its territorial integrity(3). Ne Win has often been compared to past "warrior-kings" who has, with military skills and prowess, not only allegedly "unified" the country, but also has restored stability and order after periods of anarchy and strife.

(a) Premodern Burma: The Kingdom of Warrior-Kings

Precolonial Burma was a typical Southeast Asian kingdom or semi-empire. The nucleus of this semi-empire was the land-locked Burman kingdom, the Bama Pyi or Bama Pran(4), inhabited by the Burman, the Bama or Myanmar (Myranma), who occupied the wide plains on both side of the Irrawaddy. Its lower reaches and the coastal areas, however, were occupied by the Mon with their own kings, with whom the Burman kings often fought and, at times, made into vassals. So it was, similarly, with regard to the Rakhine or Arakanese kingdom on the Bay of Bengal, to the West; the Shan (Tai or Thai) princedoms or Muangs, each ruled by a Chao-fa (Sawbwa, in Burmese) to the North and the East(5); and the Karenni (Red Karen) chiefdoms, also to the East, which were modelled after the Shan political system(6). In addition, interspersed in between the warring "states" were the various state-less Chin, Karen, Kachin, Palaung, PaO, Wa, Lahu communities, which also raided each other, and as well, harassed
the Shan, Burman, and the Mon, or served in their armies(7). The respective status of various ethnic-territorial segments revolved basically around a network of alliances or loyalties between ruling elites at various levels, all of which were based on personal patron-client reciprocities.

As a matter of fact, rebellions and wars of conquest or re-conquest were common. The hold of the Burman kings over the peripheries (Naing-ngan) was, at best, fluid and tenuous(8). Burmese history was, as noted by Furnivall, "largely a tale of conflict between the Burmese [i.e., the Burman], Shans and Mons, punctuated by wars with Siam and Arakan"(9). In fact, as noted by P. Kunstadter, the Burman kingdom was at the time of the final British annexation in 1885-1886, limited "primarily to the Irrawaddy valley, not much further North than Bahmo"(10). Whatever allegiance existed between overlords and underlords was personal and, in many ways, conditional and thus unstable(11). It is, as such, not very meaningful to say that Burma was "unified", especially in the modern sense, under the "warrior-king" Anawratha (1044-1077) or Bayinnaung (1551-1558), for example.

With regard to the Burman kingdom itself, the ideology of the state was centralist, and the power of the monarch absolute and autocratic(12). However, the actual control and personal power of the king was periodically subjected to erosion stemming from increasing evasion of the populace from the state
(often by moving away), and as well, the desertion of members of the Kywanto or Ahmudan class, a special class of bonded crown-serfs who served as laborers and militias, which formed the king's strategic reservoir of organized manpower(13). Correspondingly, such erosion of royal power would be accompanied by the growing strength of factions and coalitions of subordinate elites. Finally, there would appear a new strongman backed by an elite coalition consisting of a number of Bayin-gan (viceroys), Myosa (fief-holders) or "eaters" of provinces or towns(14), Wungyi (Ministers), Atwinwun (Royal Secretaries), ambitious or revengeful Miphaya (queens), Mintha (royal princes), Minthamee (royal princesses), and so on. The new king would then reorganize the all-important Ahmudan class (crown-serf laborers and military men), and re-establish centralized, personalized, royal control, based, as under the previous dynasty, on absolutist principles reinforced by arbitrary power(15).

Precolonial Burma was thus characterized by what Lieberman termed as the "Burmese administrative cycle": the establishment of a centralist, absolutist patrimonial regime, which would be followed by systemic decay due to the exercise of unrestrained personal power at all levels(16), the collapse of the despotic system, and its faithful reconstitution under a new warrior-king(17). There certainly is little evidence to support claims made by some scholars(18) that the Burman kingdom was evolving into "an early modern state", as European states did under various absolutist monarchs. Though the kingdom was
outwardly organized along "bureaucratic" lines, with a centrally appointed set of officers imposed over territorial units and agencies, and with officials seemingly carrying out specific and differentiated functions, it did not function this way in reality. As pointed out by Khin Maung Kyi and Daw Tin Tin, the Burman kingdom was, essentially, a polity which more closely resembled the Asiatic despotic order of the kind expounded by Karl Marx rather than European feudalism(19).

(b) Colonialism and the Transition to Modernity

The final British annexation of the Burman kingdom at the end of 1885 ended, to rephrase Lieberman, the "Burmese despotic cycle". British rule brought about far-reaching and revolutionary changes resulting from the penetration of Western ideas such as, for example, the impartial and fair administration of justice, the rule of law instead of men, concern (at least in principle) for the welfare of the ruled. Further, the British introduced "modern", essentially Western, institutions, such as a reasonably honest and uniform civil administration based on legal-rational principles, a stern but fair judiciary and code of laws, a secular and relatively "modern" educational system, and so forth, which radically transformed society in Burma(20).

Together with the penetration of new notions and institutions, the British also changed the economic landscape of
Burma. Colonialism introduced into the subsistence economy of Burma, based largely on barter and restricted by mercantilist and autarkic regulations, a new economic system resting on private enterprise that was grounded in rational laws of a free market that operated according to calculable variables, such as supply and demand, investment and production, profit and loss, and so on. To facilitate this economic transformation and to exploit its resources better, the British built infrastructures such as dockyards, roads, rail lines, bridges, hospitals, schools, and so on, which in turn brought new lands under cultivation, vitalized commerce and trade, spurred private and foreign investments especially in primary industries and agriculture, all of which served to incorporate Burma into the world economy as a viable and dynamic economic entity.

The penetration of capitalism, the impact of other Western innovations, and the construction of modern physical infrastructure, transformed the country so that, over time, society too became more complex and diverse in structure and composition. There was an influx of Indians who came in as labourers, farmers, moneylenders, shopkeepers, or served the British as clerks, policemen and soldiers. More Chinese also entered the country to keep shops, trade, or became brokers and middlemen. Quite a few English, Welsh, and Scot males, collectively referred to as "Bo" by the Burman, served in the colonial services, or worked in various British commercial and extractive enterprises. Also, some took "native" women as wives.
or mistresses, and thus there appeared a new ethnic community, the Ka-pya (or Eurasians), which did not mix much with the natives, and which was naturally favored by the British. The Burman also changed. Many moved from upper and central Burma to farm in the delta, or settled in urban centers. Some were educated and recruited into the lower reaches of the colonial service. Burmans blessed with wealthy parents went to India or to England (Beelat) for further study, and these prestigious Beelat-pyan (England-returnees) became barristers, university lecturers, senior civil servants, and in the later years, many became politicians. The Karen, hitherto oppressed and scorned by the Burman as "little better than cheap animals"(24), especially appreciated British rule, and were quick to take to the new religion brought by American missionaries(25). They availed themselves of the various opportunities that were offered by a complex and "modernizing" Burma. And soon, the Karen were able to prove themselves equal to the Burman in every way.

From 1919 onwards, in keeping with the growing complexity of the socio-economic structures which had developed in Burma(26), and partly because of British colonial policy in India (to which Burma was politically tied until 1937), the British introduced, by stages, political reforms and other consultative measures directed at giving Burma some form of self-government and its people more voice in their future(27). The measures introduced to facilitate "responsible government", were ones modelled on Western democracy, albeit a paternalistic one,
which allowed all societal and ethnic segments to compete, organize, and interact with each other within a number of institutions and political arenas governed by certain "rules of the game" which were enforced by the colonial authority (28). The ultimate goal of the British was the creation of a fully self-governing Dominion of Burma, an integrated modern polity in which were to be included all the territories claimed by Burman kings (29).

However, the democratic political system and related institutions were rejected by the younger set of educated and semi-educated Burmans, particularly those who participated in or led the Dobama or Thakin movement. This was the generation which entered early manhood during the period of economic recession in Burma resulting from the Great Depression. Moreover, a majority of them had gravitated to Rangoon from rural towns and hence their chance of doing well academically, or finding jobs suitable to their status as the educated or pyinnya-tat strata, was slim (30). They obviously had very little stake in the perpetuation of a system which disadvantaged them.

As well, the effects of the Great Depression on the budding capitalist economy of Burma led to serious social and political disturbances. The gravest was a peasant revolt led by Saya San, which ravaged lower Burma and which took the British, with about a 12,000-strong military force, almost a year to quell. There were also riots, or outbreaks of "frenzied racial
xenophobia"(31), against the Indians and Chinese in 1930, 1931, and 1938. There is no doubt that as the 1930s were ending, new forces which were emerging as a result of radical changes, as mentioned, and from Burma's incorporation into the world economic order (which underwent a severe crisis), were proving difficult to control. This was all the more so when anti-capitalist ideas and ultranationalistic sentiments were gaining strength, particularly in colonial possessions, and especially among the Thakins(32). Society was becoming increasingly "out-of-joint", to borrow Huntington's well known phrase. It was, as observed by Maung Maung Gyi, "a race between nationalism and constitutionalism"(33), a race in which the former won, thanks to World War II.

(c) The Thakins' Tatmadaw and the Creation of A New Burma

The war swept away everything that the British had constructed and envisioned for Burma. Also, the men and leaders who had begun to acquire rudimentary skills in working with new political and economic institutions put in place in the 1920s and 1930s were displaced and dispersed by the destruction and disintegration of the colonial order(34). The war, as well, put weapons of war and means of violence into the hands of societal segments and ethnic groups, and pitted them against one another in the name of independence, loyalty, nationalism, patriotism, anti-colonialism, anti-fascism, and so forth(35). And, in the final analysis, the total disintegration of the British colonial
order delivered power into the hands of the "socialist" and "communist" Thakins, men who generally did not have much respect for Western bourgeois concepts and values, nor the skills to operate institutions based on those values.

The Thakins of the Dobama, because of their youthful energy, were undoubtedly the most visible political force in pre-war Burma. They organized strikes in schools and at the Rangoon University which, in later years, came to be closely associated with the "struggle" for independence, and they also did their best to exploit every form of unrest there was. However, as Rangoon was practically a city of students since all important educational facilities were situated there, the Thakins gained a large following there. This made the Dobama very visible, giving the impression that it was a well-organized "mass" or popular movement, something which the Thakins themselves imagined to be a reality(36). The British, however, in keeping with the spirit and letter of their bestowed laws and constitution, tolerated the Thakins, and did not initially suppress the weird brand of nationalism espoused by the Thakins.

However, with the outbreak of war in Europe, and conflict with Japan looming over the not too far horizon, the British began to crack down on what they viewed as extremist agitators, the Dobama leaders. The Thakins, in turn, according to the slogan, "British Difficulty is Burma's Opportunity", were eager to take up arms against the British, though they had no
idea of how to accomplish this (37). But in August 1940, a leading Thakin, Aung San, who had a five rupees reward out for his capture, managed to smuggle himself out of Burma on a Chinese freighter, "to seek foreign contacts and obtain arms and military aid" (38). He and a companion, Hla Myaing, landed in Amoy, where they were stranded for three months, not knowing what to do next (39). But unknown to Aung San and the Thakins, Japanese secret agents were in contact with the more established political figures in Burma, such as U Saw, Dr. Ba Maw, Dr. Thein Maung, Thakin Kodaw Hmine, Thakin Ba Sein, and so on (40). The Japanese aim was to forment trouble in Burma and somehow disrupt the flow of supplies to Chiang Kai Shek through the famous Burma Road (41). It was through these links that Aung San was contacted by Colonel Suzuki, whom Ba Maw described as a "Lawrence of Arabia" kind of figure (42). Suzuki and Aung San finally managed to smuggle out some more young men belonging to various bickering Thakin factions (43), who were given about six months military training on Hainan Island. These became the famous Thirty-Comrades, whose feats have been mythologized -- out of proportion to the role they really played and what actually transpired.

Contrary to popular lore that the Burma Independence Army (BIA) spearheaded the Japanese invasion of Burma, the Hainan Project, the plan to put Burman nationalists to military use, was almost shelved. The Japanese Army Command, having decided to launch a frontal assault and occupy Burma outright with four crack divisions, no longer needed local guerilla forces to
disrupt the Burma Road(44). However, Suzuki, in a truly Lawrence of Arabia fashion, defied the army and brought these "military" Thakins to the Thai-Burma border, and there he built up the BIA almost single-handedly. As noted by D.Guyot, this "army", under such circumstances, was "small, ill-equipped, and untrained"(45).

Though the small BIA was not really an army, its impact upon a populace disorientated by the war, and upon the thousands of young Burman caught up in an exciting time, was tremendous. Further, the appearance of the BIA and Japanese army at the border with Siam, firstly, coincided with a revived folk prophecy which predicted that the umbrella rod (the British) would be shattered by a thunderbolt (the Japanese), and by rumours spread by Ba Maw and the Thakins(46) that Burma would be liberated by a great army under Bo Mogyo (meaning thunderbolt, in Burmese), a descendant of a Burmese prince(47). Appropriately, Suzuki, the father of the BIA, was given the Burman name, Bo Mogyo. Secondly, Suzuki brilliantly deployed his small, untrained force in such a way so as to gain maximum political and psychological impact, by enabling it "to grow safely behind the Japanese armour, and to move forward and to gather the fruits of the Japanese victories"(48).

Suzuki kept BIA units to the rear or flank of the advancing Japanese divisions, which kept them from being shattered in combat, but which enabled them to march into already liberated villages and towns as "liberators". More importantly,
Suzuki led some BIA units into the capital, Rangoon, ten days after it fell, and there he quickly installed a central BIA administration(49). Thus did Suzuki give the Thakins a very considerable political foothold in Burma during the Japanese occupation, which enabled them to consolidate their position further. This made them an important political factor which could not be ignored either by the British, when they returned in 1945, or challenged by other other political actors and societal segments in Burma.

Aung San and the Thakins learned the lessons taught by Suzuki very well, for they repeated the maneuver of "gathering the fruits of victory won by others" in 1945. That is, when the Thakins changed sides, the anti-Japanese Burma National Army (BNA)(50) rarely confronted the Japanese in frontal combat(51). Instead, according to F.S.V.Donnison, its units usually operated "off the main line of the British military advance", and "arrived in the villages in the guise of victors who had driven out the Japanese"(52). This gave the BNA and the Thakins an aura of accomplishment and heroism, though in reality their contribution to the Japanese defeat was much less that those made by the Chin, Kachin, Karen and other non-Burman resistance forces(53).

In fact, the Thakins launched their "war of resistance against the Japanese Fascists" at a time when the Japanese had suffered grievous military reversals and the British had reoccupied nearly half of Burma(54). Nonetheless, Lord Louis
Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander, chose to recognize the BNA and the Thakins as friendly forces. The reasons were, first, that Mountbatten had overestimated the strength of Japanese resistance; second, he believed erroneous reports of Thakin forces killing hundreds of Japanese, including two major-generals, and therefore overestimated the Thakins(55); and third, he felt that the civilized world and, more crucially, the Americans, were critically assessing how he would handle "the native population in the first British territory to be liberated"(56). Also, unaware that Japan's total capitulation was only a few months away, and viewing Burma as a base for further operations in Malaya and elsewhere(57), Mountbatten decided to use the BNA and the Thakins as auxiliaries which he re-named as the LBF or Local Burmese Forces. Furthermore, he not only met with Aung San, Than Tun, other Thakin leaders, and Bo Ne Win(58), but as well, agreed to incorporate the BNA/LBF/PBF(59) into the Burma Army to be re-formed(60).

The British recognition of Aung San and the Thakins, and their Tatmadaw, laid the groundwork for the future assumption of power of the Thakins, who have been described by Ba Maw as "orphans of the storm, economically insecure or unemployed, socially rootless...a destructive force...[which] created a vast emptiness"(61), who were nurtured in violence and in the belief that their success rested on Burman martial blood and Burman courage. Thus was born a myth, which was to be evoked frequently by the military -- of Burma being liberated from foreigners by
the Tatmadaw, which represented the essence of Burman superiority (62).

The British reconquered Burma in 1945, and by 1947, in accordance with the Aung San-Atlee Agreement signed in January, the British had agreed to transfer the colony of Burma and the indirectly ruled "Frontier Areas" (63), to the "socialist" Thakins. In June 1947, a new constitution was drafted, finalized in September, and the following January independence was declared (64).

In retrospect, it is evident that what was handed over to the Thakins, now organized as the leading element of a broad coalition known as the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL, Pa-Hsa-Ba-La, in Burmese) (65), and what the latter insisted on having immediately, was a country which had suffered very severe war damage, equivalent to at least one-half of man-made wealth in Burma, estimated in monetary terms at U.S.$5 billion (at the exchange rate of Kyat 4:1 U.S.dollars) (66). And worse still, in political terms, the Thakins inherited a disintegrating and as yet unintegrated entity, notwithstanding the outward appearances and words on various agreements and documents. For one thing, the AFPFL was not only a coalition of disparate and adversarial factions revolving around personalities and personal loyalties, or animosities, but it was as well (or consequently), a paper construct which lacked organizational cohesion and a reliable chain of command (67). Aung San, the hero
of the moment, and the Thakin supreme leader, had himself warned a senior British official that "not all AFPFL loyally followed their leader" (68). He commented rather prophetically on his leadership role to a British district commissioner: "Few Burmese leaders have lasted for more than three years. My time is almost up and I have no doubt that soon I shall be following the rest into oblivion" (69).

Burma had begun to unravel politically even before the constitution was finalized: Aung San and his entire interim cabinet were assassinated; the Karen-Burman ethnic conflict continued, becoming more serious daily; Thakin Soe's Red Flag communist Thakins staged uprisings in Arakan, and the White Flag communist Thakins of Thakin Than Tun prepared for a "revolution" and successfully infiltrated the AFPFL's own pocket "army", the PVO (People's Volunteer Organization) (70), labor and peasant organizations, and all Burman units of the new Burma Army except the Fourth Burma Rifles of Colonel Ne Win.

Soon after independence, the Karen-Burman ethnic conflict escalated into a full rebellion which pulled Karen policemen and Karen Rifle units into the fray, an armed conflict which continues to this day (71). The White Flag communist Thakins staged their "revolution", and were joined by Burman mutineers and a large portion of the PVO and other leftist Thakins. To make matters worse, many "socialist" Thakins in power resigned en bloc in order to make way for the rebelling
communist Thakins(72). For the new government of Thakin Nu, this was its darkest hour(73). But fortunately, the Shan Chaofa or princes, the Kachin Duwa, Chin chieftains, and the Karenni Sawphaya, remained staunchly loyal and encouraged U Nu to stand firm(74). It was these supposedly "parochial", "non-modern" so-called tribal leaders who rallied their people behind the AFPFL, and the non-Burman fought resolutely as soldiers in the Burma Army, the armed police, and even as volunteers in various levies raised by their princes and chiefs(75). More importantly, the support of the non-Burman segments for U Nu undoubtedly boosted the legitimacy and respectability of the AFPFL, especially abroad, which, in turn, resulted in generous military and other assistance from Britain, India, Pakistan, and the United States(76). As astutely noted by Maung Maung Gyi, a Burman, "it was not the army per se that saved the country from the impending disintegration in 1948-1949" since the army then was small, divided, and disorganized and as well, mutinous and disloyal as far as Burman units were concerned(77). Rather, it was the so-called "traditional" leaders of the Shan, Kachin, the Chin and even the Karen (before their uprising) which saved Burma.

(d) The March Forward of Bo Ne Win and the Tatmadaw

The armed challenges to the AFPFL state at its inception, however, had a very significant political consequence. It made the ruling AFPFL Thakins dependent on their colleagues and followers in the armed forces, the Tatmadaw. This, in turn,
meant that the Tatmadaw could obtain whatever it needed or wanted, with few questions asked (78); more so since the various rebellions had only been contained, not defused, and particularly since containing the presence in the Shan and Kachin states of defeated Kuomintang (KMT, or Chinese Nationalist) units which had retreated from Yunnan (79), required a strong army. Conversely, it also meant that the Tatmadaw leaders came to enjoy a considerable amount of independence vis-a-vis the ruling AFPFL Thakins.

Further, the military, being an armed agency of the state backed by the resources of the state, could without too much difficulty establish its presence anywhere, especially in areas where civil government officers could not reach. And as such, the Tatmadaw was given and undertook greater responsibility for carrying out various state- and nation-building measures (i.e., the penetration and the establishment of the authority of the state throughout the land) and combating "centrifugal tendencies" (which is a code word for local leaders and organizations), especially among ethnic segments (which is one aspect of nation-building). Thus, for example, large areas of the Shan and Kachin State were put under direct military rule in the early- to mid-1950s (80), and some areas bordering China, like Kokang and the Wa areas in the Shan State, remained special military-administered zones until 1962 when the whole country came under military rule. The aim was two-fold: one, to make the presence and authority of the new state felt in the peripheries;
and two, to undermine the influence of local non-Burman leaders, viewed by the AFPFL Thakins and the military, from their Dobama perspective, as feudal, anti-socialist, and hence, pro-imperialist.

The military further occupied itself with extending the reach of the AFPFL state in the non-Burman states; in particular, in areas where the AFPFL had been unable to compete with already established local parties or leaders. The military carried out this task by just moving in and establishing garrisons and outposts. Since state and local governments had no say in defence matters, and because army officers had the guns and the men, they were able to over-ride local-level authority and laws (and also local sensibilities). The military attempted further to undermine the positions of state-level and local leaders considered undesirable, hostile, or potentially dangerous. One method was to create local opposition groups, or provide existing ones with funds or other kinds of assistance, a task usually undertaken by the political branch of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS). The second was through the open intimidation of local leaders, sometimes with the threat of force, but usually with the actual use of force and terror, especially in rural areas. Thus, the Tatmadaw correspondingly grew more powerful, so that by the mid- and late-1950s, ultimate power in the Shan, Kachin, and other states, rested not in the hands of the state governments, nor with the AFPFL in faraway Rangoon, nor in the Parliament, but in the hands
of army commanders on the spot(86). Even in the Burman areas, it is likely that this situation applied, especially in districts which were put under military administration(87).

The military also engaged in building a political base for itself, ostensibly as part of its anti-insurgency program. It was carried out by the Psychological Warfare Department under the supervision of Brigadier Maung Maung(88). Psycho-warfare warriors went around giving talks, mobilizing veterans, and forming informal groups which, during the caretaker regime of 1958-60, became branches of the National Solidarity Associations or the NSA (Kyant Khaing Ye Athin). It was an embryo political party which was touted by the military as a grassroot organization. In the 1960 elections, it was directed against U Nu's Clean AFPFL in support of the pro-military Stable faction. However, the NSA failed to prevent U Nu's landslide victory and it was shelved. The NSA was, however, not resurrected after the 1962 coup, perhaps, because it failed to accomplish its task or because it had been the support-base of the now dismissed Brigadier Maung Maung(89).

Brigadier Aung Gyi, in the meantime, had built up the Tatmadaw's economic base, and was so successful that at the time of the military caretaker regime, the DSI (the Defence Services Industries) had become a giant economic and commercial empire which owned and operated a department store in Rangoon, an external shipping line, a chain of hotels, automobile dealerships
and service centers, banks, industrial enterprises, and so on(90).

General Ne Win had also been busy. While appearing to be apolitical and more fond of women and horses(91) than exercising power or being an army Chief of Staff, he is said to have keenly studied Chinese and Burmese history. According to Htin Aung, Ne Win "knows Burmese chronicles by rote, [and] looks to the Burmese past to create a Burmese future", and believes in "the maintainence of traditional values"(92). While brooding over the past and, presumably, studying the statecraft of Genghis Khan(93), Ne Win also devoted time to setting up and closely supervising the MIS -- the Military Intelligence Service(94). Very little has been written about the MIS, and it has escaped the attention even of scholars focusing on the military in Burma, though its presence and power is felt and dreaded throughout the country by everyone, regardless of class, creed, age, or place of residence. This was so even at the time when the AFPFL was in power, especially in the non-Burman states.

The MIS is a very powerful, highly secretive secret police organization whose members enjoy the kind of power enjoyed by Stalin's Red Army political commissars or Gestapo personnel in Nazi Germany. Like the American FBI, the MIS keeps intelligence files on ministers, army top brass and officers, politicians, civil servants, academics, journalists, and even BSPP leaders at all levels. It is, however, much more dangerous than the FBI
because the data collected is often based on teashop gossip, rumours, and the like(95). Besides, since those arrested by the MIS are never brought to trial, evidence of guilt or innocence is superfluous(96). Further, even going back to the days before the 1958 coup, the MIS has never bothered with legality when making arrests or searching premises; the MIS has long been above the law and answerable, even then, only to one man, and that man was Ne Win.

Thus, during the first decade of independence, while the Tatmadaw was growing in power and independence, and becoming a parallel state with its own economic and commercial base, country-wide political apparatus and support-base, and independent police organization operating extra-legally and without any lawful restraint throughout the land, the AFPFL Thakins were increasingly becoming more fractious. Each of the top AFPFL leaders, such as Ba Swe, Kyaw Nyein, Thakins Tin, Pan Myaing, Kyaw Dun, presided over his own patron-client network and personal empire(97), and as their clients grew larger, they began to poach on one another's personal empires(98). As Traeger also observes, they had been thrown together for too long and had begun to get on each other nerves (99). More significant, from the point of view of local observers, was the fact that Madames Nu and Kyaw Nyein did not get along at all; the latter was educated, dynamic and cosmopolitan, while the former was from a small town and unassuming(100). These factors contributed to the
The disintegration of a coalition of Thakin notables which had kept them in power.

The falling out of leading political figures, in turn, reinforced the disaffection within the Tatmadaw towards these leaders, who were increasingly viewed by the Tatmadaw "with dismay, with scorn, with a wounded sense of national pride"(101). The Tatmadaw believed the politicians had embraced the good life as big men in the capital, and this was revealed in their lack of direction, absence of ideals, and their fumbling performances in every sphere affecting the "nation". The military, and Ne Win himself, according to Maung Maung (his autobiographer and puppet President of the country for a dramatic and tense month in 1988), was very unhappy with the AFPFL Thakin. He felt that U Nu and top civilian leaders had compromised the revolution and "socialism" through deals with bureaucrats, big traders, foreign capitalists and advisors, "feudal and tribal chiefs", above-ground communists, and so on(102). As well, the AFPFL leaders' adherence to parliamentary democracy had, Ne Win and the military felt, not promoted socialist development, but "just the reverse"(103).

Thus a number of factors slowly converged which motivated the military to seize power. These included the growing strength and autonomy of the military and its development as a parallel power-center due, chiefly, to the dependence of the ruling AFPFL on the military, not only against armed rivals but
also against electoral opposition (104); growing army disillusionment with political leaders who were, it was felt, becoming corrupt and soft, and not very deserving of their fame and fortune; the pervasiveness of a mind-set among Tatmadaw personnel that they won the country's independence, that they represented the "nation" and had "saved" it many times, and that it was their duty therefore to guide and safeguard the nation which was their creation; and finally, there was the disintegration of the ruling civilian coalition, the AFPFL, and the very public rivalry between U Nu, Kyaw Nyein, Ba Swe, Thakin Tin, and so on, which further eroded whatever remaining respect there was for the civilian leadership.

Thus, the Tatmadaw was able to grab power successfully, though not directly, in 1958. It cleaned up the mess created, it claimed, by inept and corrupt politicians. In 1960, the Tatmadaw returned to the barracks and in the process earned high praise from foreign observers. In 1962, the Tatmadaw again came out with tanks and guns, once more to "save the Burma", and since then, it has not relinquished its role as the protector and savior of the "nation", even though the people clearly indicated with their lives in 1988 that they no longer wanted the "protection" of Bo Ne Win and his Tatmadaw.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR


2. It was fortunate for those astrologers that U Nu and the AFPFL Thakins were "modern". They would otherwise have lost their heads given the troubles the leaders encountered soon after. But astrology being what it is, those astrologers could have claimed that they had averted greater misfortune. It is apparent that Ne Win managed to obtain the services of more skilled astrologers. To be fair, however the belief in magic and astrology is a very serious and lucrative business in the Third World. The unpredictable nature of life reinforces the perception that events are the results of mysterious forces beyond human control, or are accidents that occur haphazardly, or according to one's karma. Astrology and other magic, therefore, can be viewed as attempts by men to control, counter, or mitigate various unknown forces that mysteriously shape, determine or change their fate.

3. It has been perceived by those looking in from the outside and claimed by the military as well, that Burma was saved from dissolution by the Tatmadaw at least four times: in 1948-50, when the "Rangoon government" seemed about to be dislodged by the communist Thakins and their "multi-colored insurgent" allies; in 1958, following the disintegration of the AFPFL; in 1962, when Shan princes and other non-Burman leaders were allegedly threatening to secede and "dismember" the Union; and in 1988, when the popular uprising against the military-dominated BSPP regime was interpreted by the military as an attempted takeover by communists.


5. The Shan are a Thai/Lao-speaking people who call themselves the Tai. The word, "Shan", adopted by the British, is derived from the Burman mispronunciation of the word "Siam", although it is spelled "Syam" in the Burmese script. "Shan" is the term used by the Karen, Mon, and the Burman of lower Burma, to denote all Thai/Lao speakers, including the modern Thai of Thailand, who are referred to as "Yodaya Shan" (Ayuthia Shan). British colonial authorities, for political and bureaucratic reasons which cannot be dealt with here, designated the Shan Chaota or princes as "chiefs". But, they were nonetheless recognized as equal to royal princes in both the Burman and the Siamese tradition. In fact, the term "Chaofa", in current Thai usage, denoting a prince or princess of the first order (born of
the Chief Queen), was adopted from Shan, according to Prince Chula Chakrabongse. Moreover, the Shan, like their Lao cousin, and the Malay, had from the twelfth century or earlier, established a "localized system of hierarchical order" ruled over by a "king", see D.J. Steinberg, et al, ed. IN SEARCH OF SOUTHEAST ASIA (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), pp.33-4. Also, P.Kunstadter, "Introduction", in P. Kunstadter, ed. SOUTHEAST ASIAN TRIBES, MINORITIES, AND NATIONS (Princeton: Princeton University Press,1967), pp.41. Further see, H.R.H. Chula Chakrabongse, LORDS OF LIFE: A HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF THAILAND (London: Alvin Redman, Ltd.,1967 edn.), p.52. A well-known writer and former judge in British Burma, Maurice Collis, found it very strange that Shan princes were designated as "chiefs" although "they had been ruling princes for five hundred years", and with some of them entitled to nine gun salutes. See M. Collis, INTO HIDDEN BURMA (London: Faber and Faber, 1953), p.26.


7. Such a situation still exists in Burma today with the Lahu, Wa, Akha, and so on, serving in various armed formations of the Burma Army, the Communist Party's army, the various Shan "armies", the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), and so on, and as well, in their own "armies" such as the Palaung National Force (PNF), the Lahu National Liberation Army (LNLA), the Wa National Army (WNA), and so forth.

8. It must be remembered that there were no "national" boundaries in those days. Hence the tributary system that existed was fluid and often overlapped. For example, Shan princes paid tribute not only to the Burman kings, but to "China" (most probably Yunnan) as well, and at times to the Siamese kings. The Burman kings also paid tribute to China or sent presents (usually regarded as a tribute by the recipient) to the Emperor, as did the Siamese and the Vietnamese.

9. J.S.Furnivall, COLONIAL POLICY AND PRACTICE (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1948), p.12. This is, however, not to say that these historical actors had assumed nationalistic identities or fought each other as national entities. Ethnicity would, it is surmised, play some role, mainly as an awareness-factor which brought people speaking the same language together. Elites (kings, lords, princes, etc.) probably fought each other to protect or further their respective self-interests, and for plunder, rather than for "nation and people", per se. It is inconceivable that there would then have existed a developed form of Burman, Shan, and Mon nationalism which vied with one another for dominance as implied throughout Htin Aung's


11. For example, at the time of the British annexation, the Kachin had, as noted by a Kachin scholar, "risen en masse against the Burmese [Burman] king". See Maran La Raw, "Towards a Basis for Understanding Minorities in Burma: The Kachin", in SOUTHEAST ASIAN TRIBES, op cit, p. 129. More serious still, the Shan Chaofa or princes had, by the early 1880s, not only expelled Burman forces from their homeland, but also had in 1885, formed a coalition, the Limbin Confederacy, aimed at marching on to Mandalay to dethrone King Thibaw, but they were pre-empted by the British. See Sao Saimong Mangrai, THE SHAN STATES AND THE BRITISH ANNEXATION (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 107-111. Though it is not known whether the Shan princes would have succeeded in their venture, they certainly did possess the military vigor to repel repeated Siamese invasions of Kengtung, a Shan princedom, in 1840s to the 1850s. For the Siamese invasions of Kengtung, see Prince Damrong Rajanubhap, THAI WARS AGAINST BURMA (Bangkok: Silpa Bannakharn, 1971, in Thai), pp. 738-807. In 1975, the sawphaya ruling over areas of the present Karenni state were recognized by the British and the Burman king (Mindon) as independent rulers.


13. One of the means by which members of the Kywanto or Ahmudan escaped royal service was to go into debt, and on default become debt-slaves of creditors who, frequently, were powerful or wealthy courtiers, important fief-holders or officials. Other means included outright desertion or taking to banditry. Victor Lieberman, BURMESE ADMINISTRATIVE CYCLES: ANARCHY AND CONQUEST, 1580-1760 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 169-77, espec. 169-71.

14. The literal translation of Myosa is "Town-eater". These were persons granted fiefdoms, which might have been a province, district, or a town, and who had the right to keep an agreed portion of the revenues collected. A Myosa-ship was not hereditary, but a royal prerogative, which could be and often was revoked and shuffled about at will by the king. There was also another type of fiefdom granted, known as Ywasa, or "Village-eater", whose recipient enjoyed the same rights but over a smaller jurisdiction. Khin Mg Kyi and Daw Tin Tin, ADMINISTRATIVE PATTERNS IN HISTORICAL BURMA (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1973), pp. 41-3.
Maung Maung Gyi, _op cit_, pp.27-8.

16. *Ibid*, p.22. Royal power was personalistic, arbitrary, and essentially lawless in that there were no laws above the monarch except Buddhist moral percepts and exhortations which, as pointed out by Maung Maung Gyi, were no more than "pious platitudes" (Maung Maung Gyi, _op cit_, p.22). Lawlessness in the exercise of power was the rule rather than the exception at every level in precolonial Burma, as has been well documented by nineteenth and early twentieth century European observers and historians such as E.C.V. Foucar, G.E. Harvey, Father V. Sangermano, and Sir George Scott. This view was at one time severely resented by "nationalists" and some "Burmese" scholars, but many, such as Ba Maw, Maung Maung Gyi, Daw Tin Tin, and Khin Maung Kyi, have since gradually come to accept the earlier observations of despotic rule in Burma. Daw Mya Sein, however, was one of the earliest Burman scholars to imply that the Burmese kings were despotic. See, Daw Mya Sein, THE ADMINISTRATION OF BURMA (London: Oxford University Press, 1973 edn.), pp.12-15. The works of earlier European historians and observers named above are: E.C.V. Foucar, THEY REIGNED IN MANDALAY (London: Dennis Dobson Limited, 1946); G.E. Harvey, OUTLINE HISTORY OF BURMA (Bombay: Longmans, Green, 1925); Father V. Sangermano, THE BURMESE EMPIRE (London: S. Gupta, 1966 edn.); Sir George Scott, THE BURMAN: HIS LIFE AND NOTIONS (London: The Norton Library, 1963 edn.)

17. This process of the decay of absolutist rule and its reconstitution by a new absolutist ruler in premodern Burma is appropriately named "the Burmese Administrative Cycle" by Lieberman, _op cit_, pp.11-14.

18. For example, R.H. Taylor seems to equate absolutism and strong state-autonomy with the capability and/or willingness of power-holders to bring about socio-political and economic transformation in a legal-rational direction. He, as such, presumes that the Burman kingdom, because of the "increased capacity" of the state-center, was inevitably on its way to becoming a modern state on the eve of the first Anglo-Burmese war in 1820. Taylor further argues that whatever differences there were between precolonial Burma ("the early modern state in Burma", according to him) and the early European states, they were overstated. The implication is that British colonialism disrupted the predetermined natural or historical evolution of the Burman kingdom into a modern Burmese nation-state. Taylor, THE STATE IN BURMA (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1987), pp.5-10.

19. According to the scholars cited, there was almost no distinct division of labor and allocation of duties, rights, and responsibilities, in the modern bureaucratic sense, between the fief-holders (the Bayin-gan, Myosa, Ywaza, etc.), the various types of appointed officers (such as the Wungyi, Myowun, Wundauk, Akaukwun, etc.), and the hereditary local administrators
(the Myothugyi, Ywathugyi, etc). Except for the hereditary officers, all appointments or grants were held at the pleasure of the king and were not transferable to heirs. Officials were frequently appointed, elevated, honored, rewarded, or variously dismissed by the king for trivial or no apparent reasons. Also, there were cases in which a minister or Wungyi was also a Myosa and a Ywasa, and as well, a Wundauk, all rolled into one. As well, his daughter would be, depending upon the king's pleasure, either made a queen or given an appanage of a town or a village (a Myosa or Ywasa), or granted both privileges. As such, one should be wary of claims made that precolonial Burma was close to becoming an "early modern state" because there existed "bureaucratic" structures with seemingly differentiated and specific functions. For a very comprehensive account of precolonial administration in Burma and a sound argument made that the socio-political system in precolonial Burma closely resembled the Asiatic Despotic order rather than a European Feudal type, see Khin Maung Kyi and Daw Tin Tin, op cit, pp.19-21 (Comparing the Asiatic and Feudal Modes with regard to production forces, production relations, division of power and authority, administrative organization, political ideology, and so on), and pp.41-5,48-52,54-6, for a description and analysis of the Burmese Administrative system and responsibilities and privileges of various types of offices.

20. Such a view of colonialism may seem too generous, if not reactionary and slavish. But in comparison to what existed in precolonial Burma, and with what transpired after decolonization, not only in Burma, but in most former colonies, it would be extremely unscholarly to insist that colonialism represented nothing but cold-blooded economic exploitation and cruel political oppression of the "natives". However fashionable it may be to ridicule "the civilizing mission" of the West, it must be recognized that certain ideas that came with the colonial flag, such as the sanctity of law, the principle of political representation, the rights of citizens vis-a-vis their rulers, and the general respect for such rights, the separation of the personal from public realm, civil liberties and freedom, and so forth, are nonetheless civilized, and even universal ideals, even though they may be based on Western/bourgeois values and political culture.


22. This is not to deny that British motives were self-interested. It could not be otherwise since colonies were meant to be, if possible, profitably exploited, or at least, self-supporting. However, it cannot be denied that self-interested British colonialism did transform Burma from a pre-developed, war ravaged, despotically ruled and mismanaged piece of wild real estate into a modern country, or at least, it
became, as put by J. Leroy Christian, "the richest and most brilliant facet [of the brightest gem, i.e., India] in the British imperial crown". At the eve of World War II, Burma exported nearly 3.5 million tons of rice annually, more than the combined total exports of Siam and French Indochina; in Asia, its output of petroleum was exceeded only by Iran and Iraq; Burma was the largest producer of silver and lead, surpassed China in the production of tungsten; and it exported more timber than all the remainder of Asia. See J. Leroy Christian, BURMA AND THE JAPANESE INVADER (Bombay: Thacker and Co., Ltd., 1945), p.4.

23. "Bo", is also the term denoting a military leader or army officer. Even today, male Europeans are still referred to by this term not only among Burmans in Burma, but in "Burmese" communities abroad as well.


25. Dorothy Guyot, "Communal Conflict in the Burma Delta", in Ruth McVey, ed. SOUTHEAST ASIAN TRANSITIONS (New Haven: Yale University, 1978), pp.198-200. Contrary to popular misconception, not all Karens converted to Christianity. Guyot states that there were, prior to the war, about 200,000 Karen Christians (out of 1.4 million who spoke Karen). But those who converted became the elite and they articulated Karen interests and aspirations. The existence of a Karen legend foretelling "the return of a younger brother who kept the Golden Book" probably facilitated the Karen conversion to Christianity. For a detailed account of the Karen, largely ignored by most historians, see J.F. Cady, A HISTORY OF MODERN BURMA (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), pp.137-44, 293-4, 368-73, 412-3, 443-4, 549-52, 589-93. Cady clearly does not approve of Karen nationalism, but avoids stereotyping them as obstacles to "national unity", which unfortunately cannot be said for most Burma scholars, until very recently. For an account of the Karen and missionaries, see Furnivall, COLONIAL POLICY, op cit, pp.55, 180-1, 398-9.

26. For a concise, but surprisingly comprehensive account of developments and changes in Burma under colonial rule, covering rural problems and agriculture, commerce, industry and labor, social changes, and arts, see Leroy Christian, op cit, pp.106-193.

27. These were the Craddock Scheme of 1918-1920, the Whyte Committee Report of 1921, the Burma Reform Bill of 1922, the Simon Commission and Reform Proposals of 1928, the Round Table Conference of 1930 and 1931, the Joint Committee Hearings on Separation in London of 1933, the Burma Reform Bill of 1935, and the Government of Burma Act and Constitution of 1935-1937.
28. However, the political arrangements and institutions wrought by the British have been interpreted by many Burman, even scholars like Htin Aung, as a device to keep Burma divided as per the divide-and-rule colonial strategum. However, it would seem that this argument is too simplistic, and moreover, does not adequately explain fragmentation in "new" Third World states. If the people had been forcefully divided, the removal of that divisive power would have resulted in a trend towards greater unity rather than intensified conflict. Further, at the time of the final annexation, 1885-1886, the control of the Burman king over the peripheries was already non-existent. The British merely accepted the existing fragmentation and diversity. Moreover, the building of a "Burmese" nation was not a top colonial priority. From the 1920s onward, however, British policy was increasingly directed, as adequately documented, at the unification of the separated "Frontier Areas" with "Ministerial Burma" (Burma proper). Htin Aung maintains, however, that the British not only kept the rest of Burma apart from Burma proper, but as well, attempted to fragment Burma proper itself by providing separate representation for the Indians, the Eurasians, the English community, and worse of all, encouraging Karen nationalism. See Htin Aung, THE HISTORY OF MODERN BURMA, op cit, pp.280,285,286. Htin Aung's argument rests, in my view, on the premise that "the nation" of any state must be homogenous, i.e., that there should be no diversity or other forms of ethnic nationalism other than that which is politically dominant (for example, Burman ethnic nationalism). If, and only if, such an argument is accepted as valid, only then can it be said that British policy in Burma was aimed at sowing disunity, and thus, keeping Burma divided. With regard to the alleged colonial "divide-and-rule" strategum, a more plausible view would be that it was a governing technique that played on existing cleavages which made governing by a small white minority more manageable, rather than an intentional device meant to create new cleavages and/or sow disunity.

29. See British White Papers Burma in 1931, 1935, and 1945. The British goal of amalgamating all excluded and separately administered Frontier Areas (the present Chin, Kachin, Shan, Karen, Mon states), and measures taken to grant increasing responsibilities and self-government to the Burman segment are well documented and covered in all histories of modern Burma. The long-term British goal for Burma was, however, preempted by World War II, and the subsequent independence for Burma. The most detailed and the balanced account of pre-war politics and events in Burma is J.F. Cady's book A HISTORY OF MODERN BURMA, op cit.

31. Cady, *op-cit*, p.309. Also see pp.303-318, which covers the dramatic political consequences of the depression. The effects of the Great Depression, and the subsequent Saya San rebellion and racially motivated rampages by the Burman is also well covered in all accounts of modern Burma.


34. Thousands of skilled Indians who had served in the colonial services, the professions, and in trade and commerce, were not only displaced by the war, but the wealth and the network of credit and trade which they created was destroyed. The Chinese, in particular, had to flee when the Japanese invaded, since China was Japan's most hated and despised enemy. As well, a great many Burman who had served in the colonial service suffered greatly at the hands of both the Japanese and the newly empowered Thakins, who hated bureaucrats. The war impoverished everyone, which meant that the emerging Burman middle-class was destroyed. As well, all the pre-war politicians, such as U Pu, Tharawaddy U Maung Maung, Sir Htoo Aung Kyaw, U Ba Pe, and so on were either cowed by the Japanese and the Thakins, and had their followers dispersed, or like Sir Paw Tun escaped to India at the outbreak of war, or like U Saw (the last pre-war Prime Minister), detained by the British. U Saw was, like the Thakins, a rough-and-ready Burman ethnonationalist (who did not get on well with the Thakins), also had long-established contacts with Japanese secret agents in Burma. While on a foreign tour, just prior to the Japanese invasion, he was caught contacting a Japanese agent in Lisbon, and was imprisoned for the duration of the war in Uganda. When he returned to Burma afterwards, he had been eclipsed by Aung San and the Thakins. An attempt was made on his life, and not long after he plotted the assassination of Aung San and his interim cabinet July 1947, for which he was later hanged.

35. The non-Burman certainly did not see the Thakins as liberators or freedom fighters, much less as "national" leaders. To them, the Japanese were the "evil invaders", and the Thakins were lackies who ran errands for the Japanese. Also, the non-Burman leaders were legitimate rulers either by virtue of tradition or experience in the colonial army, police, or administration, while the Thakins were obscure agitators. The experience of the Karen was worse since they, unlike the Shan, Kachin, etc., did not have their own historical homeland, but lived in the Burman plains, and they thus conflicted directly with the Thakins. In a way, the Karen and the non-Burman, during the war, fought against fascism while the Thakins fought to install a Japanese-sponsored fascist state.
36. Like many historians and scholars writing about Burma in the 1960s and earlier, Frank N. Traeger attributed the Thakins' successes against their rivals and against the British to their ability or skills in gaining "mass" support through mass organization techniques and organizational structures, in the manner a mass party or movement is understood in the West. Traeger, op cit, pp.55-56.


40. Maung Maung, BURMA AND GENERAL NE WIN (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1969), pp.70-74. The contact of the Japanese intelligence with well-known political figures in Burma is well documented. It is significant that the younger Thakins were completely overlooked, which testifies to their obscurity and lack of political weight at the time.


42. Ibid, p.111.

43. The Dobama was not a discrete organization with clear organizational boundaries, but was instead a coalition of factions loosely held together around leading personalities who, in turn, coalesced or split as dictated by personalistic considerations, and by issues of the moment. For details of this process, see Khin Yi, THE DOBAMA MOVEMENT IN BURMA, 1930-1938 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), esp. pp.133-36. Also see Brigadier M. Maung, op cit. It seemed that membership was informal, and there was constant jockeying among leaders for position, and leadership feuds were the norm rather than an exception. Also, the Dobama was loosely connected with other youth associations, such as the RUSU (Rangoon University Student Union), the ABYL (All-Burma Youth League), ABSU (All-Burma Student Union), and as well with other more established political parties, such as Ba Maw's Sinyetha (the Poor Man's or Proletariat party), U Saw's Myochit (Patriot), Deedok U Ba Choe's Fabian Socialist party, and, as well, with the various labor unions, especially when there were strikes. According to M. Maung, there was a Dobama "inner circle" composed of Thakin Aung San, Thakin Nu (U Nu), and also presumably included Thakin Hla Pe (Bo Letya), Thakin Ba Swe, Thakin Ba Hein, Thakin Than Tun, and Thakin Soe. But as clarified by Maung Maung, this "inner circle" was not a formal body and it reflected different views, probably at different times, depending on the issue of the moment (M. Maung, op cit, pp.213-14).


46. Just prior to the war, the Thakins had entered into an alliance with Ba Maw's Sinyetha party, forming a new front called the Freedom Bloc.

47. Ba Maw, op cit, pp. 93-94, 139.


49. Ibid, pp. 141, 144-45, 148, 153-54.

50. The BNA was formerly the Burma Defence Army (BDA) which was armed, trained, and equipped by the Japanese as the national defence force of "independent" Burma. Its members were selected from the BIA, which was disbanded by the Japanese in 1942, the year it was formed.

51. At any rate, the BNA's participation in the war against the Japanese was short-lived. The Thakins' resistance began in March 1945, by which time the British had already retaken Mandalay. Rangoon fell in May of the same year.


53. Ibid.


55. Mountbatten is not the only one to have believed the erroneous reports about the military prowess of the Thakin forces. Taylor, writing in 1984, also gives credence to the story of the BNA killing two Japanese generals. However, according to Louis Allen, a military historian and a specialist on the Japanese Army in Burma and elsewhere, "no two Japanese generals were ever killed, by the guerillas [i.e., the BNA] or anyone else". But as he further notes, "this legend is now slotted firmly into the history of the period". See Louis Allen, "Leaving a Sinking Ship: A Comment on the End of Empire", in D.K. Basset and V.T. King, ed. BRITAIN AND SOUTHEAST ASIA (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1986), pp. 65-78, esp. p. 70. Also, Taylor, MARXISM AND THE RESISTANCE IN BURMA (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1984), p. 35.

57. Ibid, p.xxviii.

(58 ) Apparently, Bo Ne Win went along as, at best, a body-guard of Aung San and other Thakin leaders. There is no record of his saying or doing anything during the visit.

59. Though the Allied Command accepted the BNA as a friendly force, it refused to recognize it as a "national" body, and it was re-named the Local Burmese Force (LBF). This was in June 1945. A few weeks later, the name of this armed body was changed again to PBF or Patriotic Burmese Force in preparation for absorption into the regular Burma Army. Tinker, INDEPENDENCE, Vol.1, op cit, pp.331-34, Document 202; pp.335-37, Document 203, "Supreme Allied Commander's Policy Towards the Burmese During the Period of Military Government".

60. Ibid, p.xxix.

61. See Ba Maw, op cit, pp.54-7.

62. The Tatmadaw's marching and battle songs are all very highly jingoistic and chauvinist, often recalling past Burman conquests of Siam and other foreign and "inferior" people. Strident reference is made of the defeat of both the British and the Japanese by Burman steel and blood. Allusions to Burman racial superiority over other "races" is commonly made, and actually believed. Indoctrination in the army is also very parochial and up to now many military men, including officers, believe, for example, that Rangoon's Mingladon Airport is the most modern and the best international airport in Asia. Needless to add, quite a number of military men still believe that the Lord Buddha was a Burman simply because the Burman are said to have descended from his lineage (Source: interrogation of, and conversations with, captured army personnel, defectors and former army officers).

63. The popular misperception, especially among the politically aware Burmans, is that the British did everything possible to prevent the unification of Burma. This misperception can be traced to a popular and academically respectable notion, the divide-and-rule colonial strategem. This notion, however, cannot be applied to Burma since British policy was the eventual incorporation of the Frontier Areas with Burma Proper. At the time of the final annexation, 1885-1886, the peripheries were no longer under Burman control, and to avoid a border war (which could involve China, France, and Siam) and to "pacify" the frontiers as cheaply as possible, the British signed treaties with whichever princes or chiefs were in control. Afterwards, these areas were administered indirectly because they were costly to rule directly. For an account of British "pacification" of the rebellious former Shan tributaries, well after the fall of Mandalay, see Sao Saimong Mangrai, THE BRITISH ANNEXATION, op
Moreover, there is firm evidence that in the crucial years, 1945-1947, the British never encouraged Karen or any sort of nationalism among the "frontier peoples". For example, they even removed a very senior Frontier Areas Administration officer, H.N.C. Stevenson, suspected of opposing reunification and because of complaints made by Aung San and the AFPFL. See, Tinker, THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE, Vol.II, op cit, pp. xxii, 303-4,328-9.

64. The events and the reasons connected with why and how independence was conceded by Britain will not be examined here. It will suffice to say that due to British post-war domestic politics and financial position, its decision to leave India (forced no doubt by Gandhi and the Congress), because the reconstruction of Burma (which had suffered massive war damage) would be exceedingly costly, and because of the Thakin insistence on immediate independence, Britain deemed it expedient and practical (and financially advantageous) to transfer power when it did. For an interesting analysis of British post-war attitudes towards the colonies in which a comparism is made between Burma and Malaya, see R.B.Smith, "Some Contrasts Between Burma and Malaya in British Policy Towards Southeast Asia, 1942-1946", in R.B.Smith, ed. BRITISH POLICY AND THE TRANSFER OF POWER IN ASIA: DOCUMENTARY PERSPECTIVES (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London Press,1988), pp.31-76. The manner in which Britain left was quite hasty and not very honorable, particularly from the viewpoint of the non-Burman segments, especially the Karen who had fought for the British and suffered much subsequently. Further, the fate of the Karenni, which was never annexed by Britain, was not worked out at all, leaving them to make whatever arrangements they could with anyone about their future. Regarding the Shan, Kachin, Chin, and so forth, they did not even know who Aung San and the AFPFL leaders were, or where they came from. All that they were aware of was that the Thakins had not only betrayed the British, but had also back-stabbed the Japanese at the moment the latter was down. This betrayal damaged the Thakins' image and credibility among the non-Burman. Moreover, the agreement to incorporate the "Frontier Areas" was reached with Aung San in London, January 1947, without any prior consultation with the people and leaders concerned. As noted by Silverstein and Donnison, no alternative was offered them. See J.Silverstein, BURMESE POLITICS: THE DILEMMA OF NATIONAL UNITY (New Jersey: Rutgers University,1980), p.103; and Donnison, op cit, pp.135-37. The British blind eye to the obligations owed to the Karen and other non-Burman ethnic segments is sufficiently documented in all studies of the period, but unfortunately played down. For an interesting revelation of the British attitude towards the non-Burman, emulating Pontius Pilate, see REPORT, FRONTIER AREAS COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY (Rangoon: Superintendent Government Printing Office,1947).
65. The AFPFL began its existence as the Anti-Fascist Organization (AFO) and was composed of the military Thakin led by Aung San organized as the Burma National Army (BNA), the Communist Thakin factions of Thakins Soe and Than Tun, the Socialist Thakins under Thakin Mya, and individual Thakins like U Nu, and a Karen organization formed to prevent further Karen-Burman ethnic confrontation. It must however be noted that except for the BNA, which was a military organization, none of the other Thakin socialist and Communist groups were discrete political organizations or parties. The post-1948 AFPFL was likewise a broad front of factions and groups organized around leading personalities despite impressive sounding names adopted by these groups, such as the Socialist Party of Burma, All-Burma Peasant Organization (ABPO), Trade Union Congress-Burma (TUC-B), Federation of Trade Organizations (FTO), All Burma Youth League (ABYL), Women Freedom League, and so forth. The leading elements within the AFPFL were the socialist Thakins, who were, in turn, divided into rival "educated" socialists and phonygyi-gyaung (monastery-educated) socialists. For details of the post-1948 AFPFL, see R. Butwell, U NU OF BURMA (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969 edn.), pp.146-56.

66. Louis J. Walinsky, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BURMA, 1951-1960 (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1965), p.57. According to Walinsky, Burma's Foreign Ministry claimed that war damage amounted to Kyat 50.5 billion, or about 12 billion U.S. dollars at the rate mentioned.

67. For a concise account and analysis of the AFPFL, see Moshe Lissak, MILITARY ROLES IN MODERNIZATION (London: Sage Publications, 1976), pp.146-49.


69. Maurice Maybury, HEAVEN-BORN IN BURMA (Somerset: Castle Cary Press, 1986), Vol.III, p.215. This is the last volume of a trilogy which relates the author's experience as a senior administrative officer, a member of the elite ICS (Indian Civil Service, or the "Heaven-born services", as it was then referred to), who served in Burma before and immediately after World War II. It is a balanced and interesting, though slightly ethnocentric, account of colonial Burma from a perspective of a sympathetic Briton.

70. The PVO was formed in 1947 by Aung San. It was made up of rejects from the various wartime Thakin-led armies when the Burma Army was reconstituted after the war by the British, on the insistence of Aung San. The PVO was therefore a dumping ground for unwanted "freedom fighters", a pocket army of Aung San and the Thakins. Also, while negotiations with the
British were in progress, the PVO constituted a potential future guerilla force in case the British proved inflexible.

71. The initial Karen demand in 1948 (and earlier) was for a sovereign "Karenistan", since not only was the Burman-Karen enmity historically rooted, but the Thakins'armed followers had massacred the Karen during the war. Besides, the Thakins were, in Karen eyes, "traitors" and a "defeated enemy", and it was thus unthinkable for them to put their future in the hands of their main enemy. In the mid-1950s to the late-1960s, however, circumstances made the Karens, led by the Karen National Union Party (KNUP), an ally of Thakin Than Tun's White Flag communists. In the 1970s, the KNU (Karen National Union, the designation "Party", was dropped) responded to the move by the Shan (Shan State Army/Shan State Progress Party, SSA/SSPP) to form a non-Burman, non-communist, and democratic united front, the goal of which was to end armed strife in Burma eventually through a political settlement within a federal framework. In the mid-1980s, the KNU officially renounced separation and secession, and is at present the main supporter and shield of Burman students and other anti-military, pro-democratic groups which fled to the Thai border after the massacres of peaceful demonstrators by the Tatmadaw in 1988. For an account of an ethnic-based resistance movement, the only one written, so far, by an active participant, see Chao-Tzang Yawnghwe, THE SHAN OF BURMA (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987).

72. This episode is covered by all scholars writing about early independent Burma, but the reason why is not made clear. Conflicting explanations have been given, such as that the socialist ministers, aware of their unpopularity, wanted to prove that they were sincere in their desire for peace and harmony, or to make way for communist leaders to enter the cabinet, according to Maung Maung and Maung Maung Gyi. Butwell, however, maintains that it was a bid for power by the socialists which failed since U Nu could maintain himself in power with the support of "Friends of the Frontier states and independence". See, Maung Maung, NE WIN, op cit, p.214; Maung Maung Gyi, op cit, p.117; Richard Butwell, U NU OF BURMA (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), p.102.

73. For an account, quite detailed, of the early insurgency, which was very grave and which almost toppled the new and very inexperienced AFPFL government, see BURMA AND THE INSURRECTIONS (Rangoon: Government Printing Press,1949).

74. Traeger, op cit, p.112. The support of the non-Burman for the AFPFL in its darkest hour is well-documented in all works on modern Burma. Despite this, the stereotyping of the non-Burman leaders as parochial, self-interested, and "traditional" (in the worst sense of the word) has prevailed until quite recently. For example, the surrender of power by the
Shan princes in 1959, to the Shan State Government, has been misrepresented by many scholars, as being a step towards democratization and nation-building taken by the military caretaker government -- a measure resisted by the self-interested and privileged "traditional" Shan notables. The fact of the matter is that with the establishment of the Shan State Government at Taunggyi in 1952, the princes (sawbwa, in Burmese) had begun transferring most of their power to the state government and legislature at Taunggyi. The only step required for "full democratization" was for some seats reserved for the princes in the Upper House of parliament to be made elective. An examination of the democratization process in the Shan State and the role of the princes or chaofa as political actors, instead of as shadowy stereotyped images, would go a long way towards a better understanding of the Shan-Burman relation in particular, and the center-peripheral relationship in Burma in general. For a short account of the role of the Shan princes in Shan State politics within the context of the Burman military presence in the area, see Chao-Tzang Yawnghwe, "The Burman Military: Holding the Country Together?", in J. Silverstein, ed. INDEPENDENT BURMA AT FORTY YEARS: SIX ASSESSMENTS (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989), pp.81-101, esp.pp.94-97.

75. It should not be forgotten that the Karen Rifles, before they were pulled into the Karen uprising, were the ones that broke the military strength of the communists and army mutineers. See, Maung Maung Gyi, op cit, p.185.

76. For account of crucial role played by Britain, India, Pakistan, Australia, and other Commonwealth members, and the United States in saving the AFPFL government during the height of the civil war, see FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1949-1954 (Washington: U.S. State Department, 1975 onwards), Year 1949, Vol.9, pp.573-4; Year 1950, Vol.5, p.149; Year 1950, Vol.6, pp.12, 49, 70, 232-5, 240-4, 247-8, 751. This is also well covered in all accounts of the early years of independence.

77. Maung Maung Gyi, op cit, p.185.


79. For an official account of the Kuomintang (KMT) problem and the Burma government's response, see KUOMINTANG AGGRESSION AGAINST BURMA (Rangoon: Government of Burma, 1953). For the KMT involvement in opium and its influence on politics in the Shan State, see Yawnghwe, THE SHAN, op cit, esp., pp.53-60, 124-26. Also see Bertil Lintner, "The Shans and the Shan State", in CONTEMPORARY SOUTHEAST ASIA, Vol.5, No.4 (March 1984), pp.403-50. For an overview of the KMT problem in which the KMT is

80. J. Silverstein, "Politics in the Shan State: The Question of Secession from the Union of Burma", THE JOURNAL OF ASIAN STUDIES, Vol. XVIII, No. 1 (November, 1958), pp. 51. Unlike his later very perceptive works, this paper is, unfortunately, filled with stereotyped images, typical of American scholars of the period, who reflexively assumed that there already existed a "Burmese" nation, and that the conflict was basically one between a "modernized" center and "feudal and reactionary remnants" in the peripheries. This view is both Burmocentric and Eurocentric.

81. The Burman leaders, particularly the military, were very worried by the secession provision in Chapter 10 of the Union Constitution (1947-1948), which provided for the right of secession of the Shan and Kayah (Karenni) states after ten years of union. The Burman press in Rangoon often published pieces implying that the United States and the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO, an American sponsored anti-communist regional organization, now defunct) had been encouraging Shan princes and dissidents to secede, which prompted the Head of Shan State to refute such rumours. See THE GUARDIAN, Rangoon (in August 1957).

82. According to a late Shan leader, U Kya Bu, an originator and a leading figure in the Federal Movement in 1960-62, one of the reasons why all state governments initiated and supported the movement was because a more federal arrangement would give constituent units some control over the military, and curb its power. (Source: A briefing given by U Kya Bu to a group of Shan student leaders, including myself, at his residence in Taunggyi in 1961. As well, conversations with various leaders, such as Panglong Khun Hti, Ludu U Hla Pe, Thaton Hla Pe, U Toon Nyint Lay, who constituted the moving spirit of the Federal Movement). The most serious problem faced by the non-Burman was the sinister presence of the dreaded MIS (Military Intelligence Service), the heavy-handed exercise of power by Burman officers, and atrocities committed by Burman soldiers everywhere they went, which was fueling a rebellious spirit, especially among the peasants who had borne the brunt of the arbitrary lawlessness of the military. For recent examples, which are only the tip of an enormous iceberg, of atrocities committed by the Burman military, see BURMA: EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION AND TORTURE OF MEMBERS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES (London: Amnesty International, May 1988).
83. The targets of the AFPFL and the military were the incumbent or ruling political parties of the respective non-Burman states which were not subservient to the AFPFL. In the Shan State, the targets also included the Chaofa or princes, village circle heads or the pu-haeng, and village headmen.

84. For example, various "anti-feudalist" politicians such as Namkham U Tun Aye, Tin Ko Ko, and Kyaw Zaw were funded or supported by both the AFPFL and the Burman military, as were some PaO rebel groups. See J. Silverstein, "Politics in the Shan State: The Question of Seccession from the Union of Burma", THE JOURNAL OF ASIAN STUDIES, Vol.XVIII, No.1 (November, 1958), pp.50-1. The MIS also churned out anti-chaofa pulp novels portraying Burman army officers as rescuing beautiful Shan damsels from the clutches of evil "Sawbwa" who, in cohoots with the KMT and imperialist powers, were plotting to destroy the Union. One such writer was Bo Ni, an MIS officer, who later became a minister and was imprisoned along with MIS head Tin U in 1983 for "corruption".

85. The military's rule by terror and intimidation was especially intensified in the Shan areas as 1958 approached. This was the year when the Shan State would be able to exercise the right of secession. Hundreds of village headmen and elders were beaten and put to death in a horrible manner reminiscent of medieval executions. Many simply disappeared. They were accused of being instructed by the princes to collect arms and men in preparation for secession, and were tortured to reveal where arms were hidden, and to implicate the princes and others allegedly involved. Wherever Burman units went, they left behind a trail of destruction, rape, beatings, pillage, and so on. (Source: Related to me by surviving victims, or by their sons who were Shan State Army members, and by villagers everywhere I went during the course of my work and travels throughout the Shan State from 1963-1976). Military atrocities not only continue to this day in the non-Burman areas, but have been extended to the Burman populace, especially the urban segment, since the 1988 uprisings.

86. For example, Colonel Chit Myaing, who was military commander for the Northern Shan State at Lashio (at present designated the Northeast Command), was so powerful that he was called "the king of Lashio" by the Shans. Similarly, Colonel Thein Dok, military commander for the Southern Shan State at Taunggyi, was called "the king of Taunggyi". The military was above the law -- no complaints against the "heroic" Tatmadaw were considered legitimate, and those who dared to complain became, by implication, traitors.

87. Maung Maung, NE WIN, op cit, p.231. Also, M. Lissak, MILITARY ROLES IN MODERNIZATION, op cit, p.163.
88. He is the same Maung Maung who wrote the book, FROM SANGHA TO LAITY, cited in this thesis.

89. Brigadier Maung Maung, Brigadier Aung Shwe, Colonels Kyi Win, Chit Khine, Ba Phyu, and Tin Maung were dismissed after the end of the caretaker regime of 1958-60. This episode has been variously explained. Even Burmese observers and participants do not agree on the reasons. One former civil servant in exile says that they were the hardliners who disagreed with Ne Win about holding the promised 1960 elections, or that they were planning a coup without Ne Win's knowledge. According to a former Tatmadaw officer in exile, it was because they were opposed to a second coup which Ne Win was preparing to stage. Former Brigadier Aung Gyi, an important figure till his dismissal in 1963, stated that no one in the military knew the reasons for the purge. It was, he implied, done purely on the personal whim of Ne Win. See AUNG GYI: THE TRUTH REVEALED, An open letter by Aung to Ne Win in May 1988, translated by Ye Kyaw Thu of the Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma (CRDB), Falls Church, Virginia, June 9, 1988, p.10. It must be here noted that the dismissed officers were afterward appointed as ambassadors. The practice of appointing senior officers, who have been dismissed or have fallen into disfavor, as ambassadors has become a tradition in Ne Win's Burma. This is an inherent part of Ne Win's system of reward and punishment, serving to insure both the silence and the gratitude of those punished or dismissed, thus increasing Ne Win's personal capital within the Tatmadaw. This constitutes a very important element of the personal loyalty accorded to him by the military.


91. Contrary to opinions of outside observers, Ne Win has never enjoyed an aura of personal legitimacy nor viewed as possessing pon or gon-theika by the public. He certainly enjoyed great ah-na and invincibility, but this has been attributed more to magic, astrology and the yadaya-che skills of his astrologers and sorcerers, which detracted much from his personal legitimacy. His womanizing is known throughout the land, and much frowned upon by the rather prudish Burmans (whereas, with the more out-going Thais, Ne Win's many wives would have elicited envious admiration). Yadaya-che is a magic rite performed to ward off approaching misfortunes or forthcoming danger. However, there are socially acceptable and unacceptable kinds of yadaya-che, i.e., those performed by monks or reputable Atet-Ian Saya (Upper-sphere Masters), which usually is a form of doing meritorious deeds, and those performed by Auk-Ian Saya (Lower-sphere Masters) involving all sorts of outlandish deeds performed in secret. Yadaya-che practice is also widespread in Thailand, but it is usually in a mild religious form of lighting
a special candle, fasting, making special offerings, and so on, and is known as Loy-kroh.


93. Ne Win was apparently a great admirer of Genghis Khan, and is allegedly well-read in Chinese "history". According to many former army officers, a film about Genghis Khan featuring John Wayne is his favorite; those privileged to spend an evening with him frequently have to sit through this film.

94. According to a Burma Army officer, a number of whose classmates and friends became MIS officers, and who defected to a rebel group in 1971, Ne Win himself selected candidates for the MIS and closely monitored their training. Their loyalty was constantly tested in many ways until loyalty to Ne Win became a natural reflex. Moreover, MIS candidates and officers were trained to spy on each other, and the attrition rate within the MIS is said to be high. MIS officers thought to be disloyal are shown no mercy and are severely tortured, and many have died, or been maimed for life, as a result. The most lenient punishment was a transfer to a hot combat area in the Shan, Kachin or Karen areas. One high-ranking MIS officer with whom I was well acquainted and who was very well educated and sophisticated, was detained (I heard, in the late 1960s), and when he was finally released, emerged a blind and broken man.

95. One example of erroneous information acted upon is personal. On the morning of the coup, March 2, 1962, our home in Rangoon was surrounded and troops opened fire for more than half an hour, killing my younger brother. The unit's commander was briefed by the MIS to the effect that a Karen rebel unit was stationed at our home and that there was an arsenal of weapons stashed away. He expressed surprise after the event when he discovered that there were no firearms and no Karen rebels. The officer even rebuked the MIS agent, dressed in mufti, who accompanied the troops, for the false information. Judging from the expression on his face when troops combed the house from top to bottom, the MIS agent himself could not believe there were no firearms at all. He had apparently obtained his information from a passing pedicab peddler.

96. Tales of arbitrary and groundless arrests by the MIS are numerous. One such victim was a sixty year old grandmother, in whose house one of U Nu's sons allegedly spent a night when he escaped to Thailand via the Shan State in 1976. She did not even know who U Nu's son was. She was detained by the MIS. Two years passed before the MIS questioned her, whereupon she was released immediately.

98. U Nu apparently was the only one without a personal empire of his own. He was therefore an ideal referee and could have played that role when rivalries between AFPFL leaders intensified beginning from the mid-1950s. However, it was public knowledge in Rangoon that U Kyaw Nyein's wife and U Nu's could not get along, and that the two men also did not like each other very much. As a matter of fact, U Kyaw Nyein was not very popular, and was particularly disliked then by the students since he was in charge of the AFPFL youth organization, which at one time controlled the university and other student unions. He was usually, for some reason, disliked and distrusted by the Rangoon public. For a comprehensive account of the AFPFL split, see Butwell, U Nu, op cit, pp.157-70.


100. Contrary to popular assumptions in the West that Asian wives are dominated and voiceless, in most Burman and Asian families, the wife is the actual manager of the household, and also determines who the husband should socialize with and, as well, scouts around for proper connections. Wives have their own patron-client, kinship, and commercial/financial network which are more efficient and effective than the men's. Further, most Asian men are very careless with money and therefore prefer to have their wives handle the family budget. Important decisions are made by the men, often in consultation with their wives, while the former make almost all the hundred-and-one minor decisions unilaterally. In almost all cases, before the husband is established, it is the wife who keeps the family afloat. This was certainly the case in Burma with regard to most AFPFL leaders. In this respect, Ne Win's abandonment of his first wife for Dr.Khin May Than, a socialite, reflected very negatively on him.


102. Maung Maung, NE WIN, op cit, pp.235-37.


104. Ibid, pp.223-24,228.
Ne Win and his Tatmadaw staged a coup d'état on the morning of March 2, 1962. Since then, the military has held on to power despite various challenges from below. The most serious and visible challenge occurred in 1988, brought about chiefly by the urban segments in Rangoon and other towns, in both the Burman and non-Burman areas.

The country-wide protest spearheaded by students and monks began in March 1988, with an innocuous fight between students and some local drunks in a teashop named "Sanda Win", which coincidentally is also the name of Ne Win's daughter, who is now, together with Colonel Khin Nyunt, said to be influencing the "Old Man" and preparing to succeed him. By July, a series of confrontations between students and the Lon Htein, the so-called riot police, had grown into a mass protest movement, resulting in Aung Gyi's historic letters to Ne Win, which are believed to have prompted the "resignation" of Ne Win and other top party leaders. At an emergency party congress, Ne Win proposed economic reforms and a referendum on whether the one-party system would be retained or replaced by a multi-party system. Surprisingly, the BSPP (Burmese Socialist Programme Party) "rejected" the referendum proposal, and worse, Sein
Lwin, regarded by the public as a killer and thug(8), was "elected" as party chairman and, incredibly, the country's president.

This led to renewed country-wide protests, and the blood-soaked "August Massacre", in which over 2,000 were killed, according to a U.S. State Department report(9). Nonetheless it brought Sein Lwin down in mid-August, and Dr. Maung Maung succeeded him. Maung Maung promised a multi-party election and also withdrew all troops. But, as noted by S.Sesser, no one trusted him or seriously believed that Ne Win had really resigned(10). The people held huge rallies demanding an interim government, and, for a month Burma was effectively without a government as the majority of government employees and civil officers went on strike or participated in pro-democracy rallies which occurred almost daily. Though the government was paralyzed and there was no police and army presence on the streets, the people more or less governed themselves fairly successfully(11) despite the "escapes" of thousands of hardened criminals (i.e., prison gates were opened), and "Em-eye" (MIS, or Military Intelligence Service) agents on the loose. Criminals and the MIS together created disorder and anarchy, laying the groundwork for the return of the army to "restore law and order". On September 18th, 1988, the Tatmadaw came out again, its soldiers shouting their battle cry: "We will kill everybody and rule the earth!", as they charged forward with rifles blazing(12). Thus, Burma was once more saved "from the abyss", according to General Saw
Maung(13), the current "strongman" and chairman of the State Law
and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). The BSPP was scrapped and
reconstituted as the National Unity Party (NUP). The 1974
Socialist Constitution has been treated by SLORC as if it does
not exist at all, which means that the present "state" in Burma
is operating in a "legal limbo"(14).

The Tatmadaw now rules at gunpoint. Although a "free
and fair" election is scheduled in May 1990, popular candidates
have either been placed under house arrest, as in the cases of U
Nu and Aung San Suu-kyi, or like former General Tin U, actually
sentenced to three years hard labor. Thousands of political
organizers have been detained, and have either been sent off to
penal colonies (on Coco Island or in Putao in the far North)(15),
or taken to the frontline as beasts of burden and human
minesweepers. It is apparent that the "hardliners" such as Khin
Nyunt, Myo Nyunt, Sanda Win, and Than Shwe(16), fronting for Ne
Win and the shadowy Sein Lwin, are still very much in command,
and they are apparently determined to make no compromise(17).

(b) Power, Magical Rites, and Sorcerers

The country-wide protest movement failed to topple Ne
Win's Tatmadaw's dictatorship or bring about any change except,
perhaps, to reveal the extent of Ne Win's personal control(18)
over the "national" armed forces, the Tatmadaw, and the latter's
willingness to suppress with cold brutality and mass firepower
any challenge from below, even, or perhaps especially, unarmed peaceful protests by the populace.

Ne Win is the longest ruling military dictator in Asia, and has managed to maintain his rule despite bringing a very rich and well-endowed country to ruin, as attested by its LDC (Least Developed Country) status, which puts Burma on par with Nepal, Ethiopia, and Chad(19). Burma's economic woes are well-documented. For example, its debt service ratio is ninety percent of export value(20); there are shortages in energy, fertilizers, fuel; and there is a decayed official "socialist" economy counterposed to a non-productive (consumer-orientated) but vigorous informal economy based on the blackmarket and smuggling.

The longevity of Ne Win's regime, despite clear evidence of gross mismanagement and unpopularity, is therefore incredible. One explanation for this has a distinctly "Burmese" flavor which the outside world would find ludicrous. It is, however, very widely believed in Burma that Ne Win has in his service a number of very skilled and powerful astrologers (Bedin Saya) and sorcerers (Auk-ian Saya) who have been able to forestall his downfall and reinforce his personal power (Ah-na) by Yadaya- che rites (i.e., the performance of certain acts as prescribed by astrologers or sorcerers to circumvent misfortune or dangers, again, predicted by astrologers)(21).
Irrational measures, such as the demonetizations in 1964, 1985, and 1987; the issuance of Kyat 25, 35, 45, 75, and 90 notes, stemming from Ne Win's obsession with numerology(22); and the change in traffic direction from the left to the right-hand side(23), are considered by the populace as Ne Win's acts of Yadaya-che at the national-level. His private Yadaya-che rites are quite bizarre. They include such acts, widely rumoured in Burma, as shooting his image in the mirror, bathing himself in blood, wearing royal regalia, divorcing wives and bedding new ones, circumambulating the Shwedagon Pagoda in the dead of night while carrying a coffin, and living in a hut at the Kyaik-kasan Stadium for several days. After the 1988 uprising, he is widely reported to have walked backward on the overpass over the Sule Pagoda Road (recently constructed to enable soldiers to shoot down on future protesters), and more recently yet, to have slept in a cradle while feeding from a bottle(24).

To be fair, Ne Win may not have actually performed the above-mentioned acts. But perceptions are important and the majority in Burma, even the educated, are convinced that he has, and that he is therefore protected by a powerful and dangerous black magic which no other sorcerers or mere mortals can overcome. This perception has given Ne Win an aura of sinister invincibility which, in turn, has provided him with a strong psychological advantage. This superstitious belief has inhibited plots from being hatched against Ne Win quite effectively. Firstly, it has given rise to the belief that any plot against
him, because of his superior black magic, would invariably fail. Secondly, the black magic factor has served to complicate matters for those wishing to plot against Ne Win, since it is generally believed that Ne Win already has in his service all the top Auklan Saya there are in the land. Moreover, though belief in the black arts is pervasive in Burma, very few know anything about it, and since it is prohibited by Buddhism, it is regarded as highly risky (25). Hence, the black art factor cannot be dismissed as mere "mumbo-jumbo", but must be recognized as a significant psycho-political instrument of dominance in Burma's system of non-institutionalized patrimonial rulership.

(c) Dobama Socialism: The Neutralization of Dobama Rivals

On the more rational level, however, the longevity of Ne Win's Tatmadaw dictatorship can be attributed to a combination of factors. One of these factors is the legitimacy accorded to socialism as a "national" ideology and goal by all important post-independence Burman elites, which Ne Win has hijacked. The post-independence leaders all had their beginnings in the Dobama movement, or were later coopted by it, and as such, subscribed varyingly to Dobama socialism, which combined Burman ethnonationalism with certain anti-capitalist ideas, as mentioned in earlier chapters. Ne Win's "Burmese Way to Socialism" was nothing new: it was a rearrangement of the various socialist and "nationalist" slogans of the young Thakins (26). It was, however, a formula which Ne Win's most dangerous Burman rivals, the White
Flag communists (the Burma Communist Party, BCP) and Thakin Than Tun, found very difficult to attack ideologically (27). It must also be added that when Ne Win's Tatmadaw socialism resulted in shortages and great hardship, the BCP and other communists were discredited as well, since the populace was not able to distinguish between the two brands of socialism.

On the practical level, Ne Win's expulsion and/or harsh treatment of capitalist elements, the Indians and Chinese, and the implementation of nationalization laws in 1962-1964, under which over 15,000 large and small firms were taken over (28), were measures which confounded the White Flags and sowed internal dissension. This internal dispute revolving around what "line" to adopt concerning Ne Win's "socialism" led to inner-party struggles, resulting in the death of veteran leaders and cadres in bloody purges. The final outcome was the disintegration of the White Flags and their eviction from the Burman Irrawaddy plains (resulting in the loss of their main constituency, the Burman masses), in the early 1970s. It was a setback from which the BCP was never to recover (29).

With regard to the non-communist Dobama socialist-nationalists, such as U Nu, U Ba Swe, U Kyaw Nyein, Thakins Tin, Kyaw Dun, Pan Myaing and others, the AFPFL split, in 1957-58, had already weakened them, and at the time of the 1962 coup, they were already leaders without an organized following (30). Thus, it was difficult for these old-time "socialist" leaders, who
suffered torture, imprisonment (31), and became "non-persons", to challenge Ne Win, especially on ideological grounds, although U Nu did try to raise a resistance movement in the early 1970s which failed miserably, for a number of reasons (32).

Regarding the remaining Thakins of the extreme left, the so-called aboveground communists, Ne Win simply co-opted them (33). This was not a difficult task since they had been shut out from power by the AFPFL for over a decade. Secondly, they, like some of their White Flag friends, did not quite know what to make of Ne Win's "socialism", and thought that they could influence him. Moreover, it made sense for them to climb onto Ne Win's bandwagon, since he was touting socialism. Thirdly, they did not have any real organized followings with which to challenge Ne Win. Besides, the escalating inner-party conflict within the BCP left the aboveground communists without many options but to be co-opted. Consequently, U Ba Nyein, for example, who was close to Brigadier Tin Pe, became the regime's planning wizard and economic czar until the early 1970s (34). Thein Pe Myint, a veteran communist and writer, Thakin Chit Maung, Bo Po Khun, a PVO rebel leader who defected in the late 1950s, and a number of communist defectors such as Yebaw (Comrade) Mya and Ba Khet, were co-opted by Ne Win and helped in formulating the BSPP's "philosophy", The System of Correlation of Man and His Environment (35). This "socialist" concoction was in actuality, as noted by Moshe Lissak, an oversimplified, sweeping, and contradictory synthesis of socialism, Communism and Buddhist
metaphysics which were then formulated into slogans that were difficult to translate into concrete programs(36).

In a country where "socialism" was accepted as the only legitimate goal, Ne Win's move to construct a "Burmese" (i.e., Burman) socialist order was, however, a brilliant master stroke which, in effect, reduced his Dobama rivals to silence and impotence(37). Thus, the Burman masses having being fed socialist propaganda by the ruling-elites, counter-elites and aspiring-elites ever since independence(38), had little opportunity except to accept with varying degrees of enthusiasm and faith (or cynicism and skepticism), a socialist Neikban (nirvanna) promised them by Ne Win and the Tatmadaw.

However, by the time it became evident that Ne Win's "Burmese socialism" was, in reality, Tatmadaw socialism (i.e., an economic system that benefitted the soldiers almost exclusively), Ne Win's Tatmadaw's dictatorship had consolidated itself. Ne Win has put in place, and bequeathed to the Tatmadaw, a highly autonomous and patrimonial state, quite independent of society in the sense that it is a self-contained, self-perpetuating entity over which society has very little influence. It operates according to its own agenda -- the maintainence of power by whatever means necessary, with apparently little concern for the rest of society or the country as a whole (except for a desire to maintain territorial boundaries).
When the coup was staged in 1962, the Tatmadaw had, as outlined earlier, become an independent parallel power center to the government, with its own socialist and unification agenda, and its own political, administrative, economic and enforcement agencies already in place. The capture of power by Ne Win and his brigadiers made them masters of all they surveyed. Before them lay a "political kingdom" in which there were no higher laws or institutions to restrain or guide them. Also, the Tatmadaw was the only cohesive organization in Burma. As well, it was, to quote Maung Maung Gyi, "a sort of built-in paramilitary political organization with guns and tanks ready to carry out the orders of the leaders". Having reached the summit and out-manoeuvred inept civilian incumbents and other rivals for power, the crucial task facing Ne Win was the maintainence of control over the parapolitical Tatmadaw, which, like most Third World "institutions", was segmented by factions, constituting what W. Howard Wriggins describes as components of power within the military, which had to be won over, neutralized, or eliminated.

Ne Win maintained control, like all autocratic rulers through the ages, by keeping his lieutenants divided and suspicious of each other, and by purging those who were independent or became too powerful. The most independent-minded, competent, and well-known of these at the time of the coup was
 Brigadier Aung Gyi, who was an entrepreneur at heart, as his record testifies, and, as he later claimed, a closet democrat as well(42). He was purged in 1963 by Ne Win, with the help of the rival Tin Pe faction. The apolitical, Anglo-Shan Chief of the Air Force, Tommy Clift, was quickly dropped, and the Navy's Commodore Than Pe was killed in an ambush far inland, in the Kachin state(43). Tin Pe and his followers were purged in 1968 by Ne Win with the help of Brigadier San Yu(44). In 1976, Ne Win with the help of San Yu and Tin U, the Intelligence chief, dismissed General Tin U, the popular army Chief of Staff, following a plot by a Captain Ohn Kyaw Myint(45) and friends to assassinate Ne Win and other top leaders, to which the army commander was allegedly but indirectly linked(46). However, in 1983, Brigadier Tin U, the Intelligence chief, who Ne Win had once regarded as an "adopted son", and who was nicknamed "Number One and a Half", the next "strongman", was purged with the help of envious older colleagues, and, according to Bertil Lintner, Ne Win's own daughter, Sanda Win(47).

The purge of top leaders also meant that officers, sometimes numbering over a thousand, connected by ties of kinship or obligation to the purged leader at the top, were also axed. Similarly, those in non-military agencies, the bureaucracies, and the BSPP, were affected as well. Thus a pervasive climate of anxiety, uncertainty, and suspicion, characteristic of polities ruled through a process of terror, was created within the whole state-party-military structure. The result was that it made
government officials (Ahmudan, in Burmese) subservient and submissive, cautious and responsive solely to commands from above. On the other hand, such subservience and the discouragement of initiative and flexibility, undermined professionalism and legal-rational bureaucratic norms, and this contributed greatly to pervasive mismanagement, inefficiency, and stagnancy in Burma, which has been widely observed and documented, and also, importantly, to institutional and systemic decay as well.

The ruling BSPP, formally established in 1971, fared no better than other institutions, and is a good example of the military's inability and unwillingness to construct a modern political order. The BSPP was, in theory, a step forward in the institutionalization of the new "socialist" order, and represented, in principle, the handing over of power by the military to the "working people" (Loktha-pyithu). In practice, it was merely a facade which hid, especially from foreign observers, the continued personal rule by Ne Win and the Tatmadaw(48). Nomination to all positions from the township to the national level, within the party, and through the party to various legislative and administrative People's Councils, was determined by the military(49). The BSPP was at no time allowed to develop into a real ruling party or to represent the "working people"(50). Nonetheless, purges and reshuffles were frequently carried out to keep the BSPP off-balance and to prevent it from developing into a stable and genuine ruling party(51). For
example, in 1976-77, over 50,000 party members were purged following the dismissal of the defence minister, Tin U, and 113 members of the central committee as well as over a thousand members were purged when it was discovered that, in the election to the central committee at the end of 1977, San Yu and Kyaw Soe received more votes than did Ne Win(52). Especially in the non-Burman areas, whenever a leader in a local township council gained any popularity, he would simply be replaced, or if he were an ex-army man, transferred to a non-political post as manager of a people's store or a cooperative, where money-making opportunities were available through the pervasive blackmarket(53).

In addition to Ne Win's system of punishment and control, as mentioned above, his system of rewards has also contributed to the decay of all institutions within the polity. Positions, ranks, and offices in the military, the state apparatuses, party bureaucracies, administrative bodies, and especially those in statal agencies which monopolized all forms of economic and commercial activities, have been patrimonialized. Positions and promotions within the military were no longer tied to merit but became rewards for those loyal to Ne Win. Additionally, even those military officers who had been purged or retired were cared for. They were usually given positions in the BSPP, or in the various administrative people's councils, and those demoted from the party positions and administrative posts were, in turn, given jobs in various state corporations, boards,
ventures and projects, and in cooperatives, people's stores, and so forth\(^{(54)}\). All functional bodies within the government-party-administrative superstructure of the state were transformed into the Tatmadaw's private domain, serving as a source of rewards and privileges, and, as well, as a social security safety net for a special class of men, the military Ahmudan (i.e., soldiers). Consequently, these functional bodies no longer functioned the way such bodies are intended, but became, instead, modern versions of medieval fiefdoms and grants. Furthermore, the monopolization of all plum posts undermined the morale and efficiency of the non-military party members and the whole civil service establishment, and transformed them into do-nothing errand-boys\(^{(55)}\).

Though the effects of institutional and systemic decay were disastrous for the country as a whole, it fitted perfectly into Ne Win's agenda. Institutional decay served to root the system of personal rulership more deeply, which enabled Ne Win, in the capacity of a super-patron and supreme personal ruler, to consolidate and maintain his position as Aba (Revered father) without institutional or legal constraints to restrain him in any way. It also made all subordinate power-holders more dependent on and fearful of him. As well, because the whole state-government structure was transformed into a source of benefits and privileges for the Tatmadaw, it gave this special class of men, the military Ahmudan, a greater personal stake in the maintainence of the personal regime of Ne Win, and the
perpetuation of a system of non-institutionalized politics. Like courtiers of old Burma, they owed their everything to the supreme leader at the apex of a patrimonial pyramid of power. And more importantly, the decay of institutions and the erosion of legal-rational norms also meant that those below were not only deprived of any legal and institutional means of expressing their interests and aspirations to redress wrongs, but were also deprived of the means and resources for checking the exercise of power by Ne Win and his sub-chiefs.

(e) Manipulating and Controlling the Military Ahmudans

The armed forces in Burma, or the Tatmadaw, being the only effectively cohesive organization in the country, and the instrument with which Ne Win obtained power, became the most important base of power. Control over the Tatmadaw thus became the most essential element in the perpetuation and stabilization of power. As mentioned earlier, Ne Win has maintained control over the Tatmadaw through purges, and through transforming it into a privileged special class of military men dependent almost wholly on the favors of its supreme leader and Aba (Revered father). In addition, to ensure loyalty or obedience further, the Tatmadaw is closely monitored by Ne Win's Military Intelligence(56). The MIS operates on the principle that everyone is potentially disloyal and that no one is totally innocent, thus making all within the military establishment undergo its scrutiny. As such, activities of officers, their
contacts with colleagues, friends, kin and so on, are closely watched and recorded (57). MIS officers are attached to every battalion, and undercover agents are inserted within the rank-and-file to spy on officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs). MIS agents are well-trained in the art of sowing personal distrust and discord among officers, especially among their wives, and exploiting personal feuds in order to gain information.

Such close surveillance does not mean that wrongdoings and corruption have, as a consequence, been prevented or eliminated, or that the aim of surveillance is such. As a matter of fact, corruption and a variety of misdeeds are tolerated, and MIS officers and agents themselves participate in all manner of corrupt practices and abuses. As observed by a Burma watcher, the Tatmadaw has been held in thrall by Ne Win "for years by access to special privileges and sanctioned corruption"(58). The aim of surveillance has instead been to gain leverage over those watched. Whenever an officer is felt by Ne Win to be growing too powerful or independent, the intelligence data is then used to expose and dismiss the victim, as in the case of Tin U, the head of the intelligence service himself. Information on his son's lavish wedding in Bangkok, his wife's business deals, and his use of intelligence funds in London was dug up and used to get rid of him in 1983.
The officer corps is further divided into three categories: those who are military academy graduates, those graduating from the Officers Training School (OTS), and those given direct commissions as under-officers (59). Great care is taken to distribute the three categories of officers so as to create a system of checks and balances and prevent officers from cohering. For example, if a battalion commander is an academy graduate, the adjutant would be an OTS officer, while the Intelligence Officer (10) would be a under-officer. And all officers are further monitored by the MIS, as mentioned above.

Ne Win has managed, by the transformation of the whole Tatmadaw into a privileged class or Praetorian Guard (60) dependent on his largesse and on its monopolization of all economic and political rewards within an environment of scarcity, to maneuver Tatmadaw members, especially its officers, into a situation of having to choose, on one hand, between exploiting opportunities for gain and personal safety and security, or, on the other hand, foregoing the advantage of membership in a privileged strata. Lost membership means being cast adrift in a sea of scarcity and thrown into the ranks of the voiceless, unprivileged, and powerless classes constituting the rest of society comprising what is virtually an under-class (61). The choice is, in a way, made easier for Tatmadaw members and officers by the existence of such a system of rewards and punishments -- they have much to gain by compliance and everything to lose by stepping out of line. Under such
conditions, the unthinking loyalty of the Tatmadaw to a skillful and strong-willed manipulator, and its repeated willingness to shoot civilian challengers in cold blood is not at all surprising.

It must also be noted here that the more than forty years of warfare in the peripheries against the Karen, Kachin, Shan, Mon, and other ethnic groups has also contributed to the loyalty of the Tatmadaw to Ne Win and his regime, and has brought the regime some political advantages, externally and internally. Firstly, the war has provided soldiers and officers with an enemy, and as well, provided the regime with some legitimacy as the defender of national integrity and independence, externally, and among the Burman segment (until the 1988 massacres, that is). Secondly, it has kept the Tatmadaw occupied and provided the military Ahmudans with an opportunity to practice their art, and thereby increasing their career chances and/or expanding opportunities for enrichment through plunder, corruption, and the arbitrary exercise of power(62). Thirdly, the problems created by the long war in the peripheries have enhanced the regime's external position. For example, the problem of opium cultivation and narcotics trafficking has provided the regime with yet another "hot" issue with which to gain leverage in the international arena, and to obtain assistance and sympathy(63).
Burma has been transformed, like medieval Burma, in the course of twenty-eight years of military rule, into a country composed basically of two classes, described by a Burman scholar as: "An all-powerful military elite occupying the top social layer and some lesser elite clinging onto the coattails of the military commanders, while simple folks retreat and survive in the base layer as subscribers to the capricious laws and dictates of the military rulers" (64).

Those in the base layer -- most of society -- are divided into the Burman and non-Burman segments, who are separated from each other by historical and political traditions, ascriptive ethnic traits, and by geography. Both of the ethnic segments have been deprived of their rights as citizens, and have been reduced to living, in the manner of their forebearers under Burman kings, as anxiety-ridden and cowed targets and victims of a regime of terror and intimidation.

Ordinarily, the rule by terror imposed in Burma is not dramatic or extraordinarily bloody as was the terror perpetrated by Hitler, Stalin, or Pol Pot, but it nonetheless created the same kind of extreme fear, widespread anxiety, and pervasive sense of personal insecurity. This has been due, in a large measure, to the denial of basic human rights and the protection of the law. For example, the nationalization of all means of production and distribution in 1963-1964 (65), in effect,
outlawed all private economic activities which, in turn, meant the regime depriving the people of its right to secure a livelihood. A majority of the "Burmese" were forced to circumvent socialist decrees and restrictions in order to survive which, as aptly put by various individuals in Burma, "made everyone into an 'economic criminal', and taught everybody to steal, cheat, lie, and betray" (66).

In addition to laws delegitimizing private economic transactions, laws outlawing political activities and curtailing freedom of expression, and regulations restricting internal and external travel were decreed (67). These restrictions not only broadened the power of state and party security agents at all levels, but also widened the scope of what was illegal, and thus, put almost everyone outside the law. In other words, most everyone verged on "criminal activity", as defined by the regime, just in the conduct of daily life. More significantly, most became potential victims, totally at the mercy of spies and informers and those enforcing these regulations.

These restrictions, combined with the arbitrary powers of the MIS and other security agencies (the police and the security branches of the BSPP), which were arbitrarily exercised (68), were what, in essence, constituted the regime's process of terror under ordinary, everyday conditions. It was sufficient to keep the majority of society in a state of
uncertainty and anxiety to drain them of the will to resist or to challenge the regime.

The non-Burman, in addition to being subjected to the "normal" process of terror like the Burman, also suffered exposure to, what could be termed as, military terrorism -- a situation where no distinction is made between combatants and non-combatants, and where soldiers are permitted to pillage, kill, maim, rape, and in other ways brutalize and inflict violence indiscriminately on the local populace without fear of punishment from their superiors(69). In the peripheries, anyone who is not a Burman is a potential target of violence, and there is little a person can do to escape being victimized. Nor can the victim appeal to any higher authorities for redress. Amnesty International has reported cases of villagers found in "insurgent areas"(70) being summarily shot or taken into custody and tortured; of mutilated bodies left by the roadsides and in the fields; of individuals executed simply because of their appearance (for example, being "tidy and well-dressed", or having "a fancy haircut") (71); of tortures which include "shin rolling"(72), the burning of the victim's flesh with cigars, the placing of bullets between fingers and crushing them together, slashing with knives, near-suffocation with plastic bags, near-drowning, near-strangulation, sexual assaults and rape; of countless villagers being seized to work as porters or "coolies"; of porters forced-marched until they drop from sickness or exhaustion, being brutally beaten and/or shot for no reason, and
blown up by mines while forced to lead troops through minefields, and so on (73).

The brutality of military terror upon the non-Burman populace has been an integral component of the regime's counter-insurgency efforts, which, ironically, constitute the only strategy of the military to the problems of national integration. As have been mentioned earlier, Burma has never been a homogenous entity, and there has never been a "Burmese" nation, though some vigorous Burman kings may have occasionally "unified" the country through patron-client ties and tributary relationship with Mon and Arakanese kings, Shan princes, and lesser chiefs. Modern Burma was created in 1947-1948 by virtue of the Panglong Agreement, premised upon the recognition by the Burman successor elites, represented by Aung San, of the rights of the Shan, Kachin, and the Chin, and the political-administrative and territorial integrity of their homelands. This, it must be recognized, was a small but significant step forward in the eventual creation of a "Burmese" nation. However, Ne Win and the Tatmadaw were wedded to a different kind of "Burmese" nationalism, one described by Ba Maw as a "pure form of racialism" (74), and Ne Win's agenda, like those of despotic rulers throughout history, did not include compromise or accommodation with ethnic or any other segments within society. His solution to the problem of national unity was, like his other solutions, the delegitimization of aspirations from below (75). Such "illegitimate demands" were viewed, as despots are wont to,
as challenges to the state which had to met with the "legitimate" use of violence and coercion.

Other protests and demands, for instance those made by students, monks, workers, particularly the urban segments, expressing dissatisfaction with particular conditions or with the regime, were likewise viewed by Ne Win and his Tatmadaw regime as "illegitimate" and treated as challenges against the state itself, which became challenges precisely because no legitimate channels were provided for them. The regime's standard response has been brutal suppression with massive firepower or/and indiscriminate arrests, torture, and detention without trial for indefinite periods, resulting in increased anxiety and fear. Despite the general climate of fear induced by the regime's terror process, however, the student population of Rangoon, especially, has often staged protest rallies which have galvanized the cowed general populace to action on many occasions(76).

The first protest by students of Rangoon University against military rule took place in July 1962, barely four months after the coup(77). Massive firepower was unleashed on the students and the historic Student Union Building on campus was demolished. The regime claimed that only sixteen were killed, a figure which even the most knowledgable outside observers have accepted without question(78). According to a doctor on duty at the Rangoon General Hospital, however, there were at least two
trucks stacked full of corpses (79). Nonetheless, students came out again the following year, to protest the regime's unilateral termination of peace talks with the BCP, resulting in the mass arrest, imprisonment, and torture of students. In 1967, workers of government workshops in Insein rioted over high costs of living and shortages of essential commodities. In 1970, there was another student protest during the Asian regional games in Rangoon; troops were sent out once more to shoot and bayonet students, and schools, colleges, and universities were closed down for several months (80). In 1974, the regime was confronted with strikes and protests by oil workers in Chauk, textile mill hands and railroad workers and mechanics in Insein, dockyard laborers in Simalaik, but these were all suppressed with bayonets and bullets (81). At the end of 1974, there was a massive student-led demonstration in Rangoon over the regime's refusal to give U Thant, former General Secretary of the United Nations, a state funeral. Here again, massive firepower was unleashed, followed by the usual arrest, imprisonment and torture of students and other victims. The following year in 1975, there was a spate of wild-cat strikes, and in 1976, students protested again for the last time till 1987 (82). In September 1987, students once more spearheaded protests against the third demonetization measure, and in 1988, a series of protests by students and the regime's brutal response in March (83) escalated into a country-wide protest movement which resulted in the massacres of August and September in Rangoon and other towns.
(g) Regime Longevity: The External Factor

A brief mention must here be made of the contribution of foreign governments and international donors to the longevity of Ne Win's Tatmadaw dictatorship. The actual assistance, in terms of dollars and cents, provided the regime by foreign governments may not have amounted to very much, but it has been substantial enough to provide the regime with the financial resources to buy arms and maintain a sizable armed force for internal suppression. The fact that, officially and visibly, over 30 percent of the budget is spent on defence reveals how much of the country's resources have been lavished on the military. The figure given does not include the invisible diversion of funds to the military: for example, the budget allocated to the Home Ministry for internal security and narcotics suppression, or the BSPP's expenditures, and indirect subsidies to the military in salaries and benefits to military personnel (active and retired) in administrative posts and in the economic sector (in various state projects, corporation, people's store, cooperatives, and so forth). Therefore, in a situation where independent auditing and institutionalized checks on spending are non-existent, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that only a tiny portion of the budget is actually spent for strictly non-military purposes(84).
Ne Win's foreign policy, which has been neutral and non-aligned in its outward form, is also one which is isolationist, with special emphasis on keeping out outside influence and observation. It is a strategem directed to a large extent to keeping the outside world ignorant about Burma and the regime's dark reality, thus depriving oppositional elements of foreign sympathy. It is strategy which has enabled it to present itself externally as one committed to, as per a plea made by Frank Traeger, "some variant of socialist democracy" which is free of alignment with "either big-power bloc", and therefore deserving of international and American support(85). Likewise, Ne Win's foreign policy is aimed at keeping Burma's populace ignorant of the outside world, thereby forestalling demands for changes and reforms. Ne Win's neutralism, as pointed out by Maung Maung Gyi, is "negative neutralism" aimed at "keeping himself and his 'group' in power" with minimal external "interference"(86). Or, as aptly put by another Burman scholar, Mya Maung, the "opening to the West" or "economic liberalization" policy of Ne Win in the 1970s, and as well, the post-1988 "open economic policies" of Colonel Abel(87) and General Saw Maung, are in reality, "attempts at capturing foreign economic and political support to maintain its [the military regime's] political grip"(88).

As pointed out by Mya Maung, the regime's grip on power was helped considerably by "external pump-priming" amounting to more than U.S.$600 million(89) on the part of the
World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and the governments of West Germany, Japan, and Australia, and so on in the mid-1970s to the early-1980s(90). Likewise, the new "open" economic and investment policy of Colonel Abel is an attempt by the regime to exploit the international recognition accorded the military junta (SLORC), and is directed at obtaining resources for the maintainence of power. The "open" economic policy has been described by a Rangoon-based foreign diplomat as "giving away natural resources to keep themselves alive"(91). It has, so far, manifested itself in the form of selling teak, fishing, mining, and other concessions to Thai, Singaporean, Japanese, Hong Kong, South Korean, and Malaysian "investors" in exchange for ready cash, only benefitting the Bogyoke-Wungyi (Generals/Ministers), their kin and clients, and "carpetbaggers" out for quick profit(92).

The importance of the international assistance to Burma's military regime (or regimes, if the Saw Maung junta is to be viewed as a new regime), highlights a very interesting paradox. There is no doubt that the motives of foreign donors are above reproach, and directed at encouraging economic growth, and are meant to help along the modernization process, particularly in the sphere of politics and governance. But, in reality, foreign assistance has served, instead, to entrench more deeply the patrimonial rule of one man and has aided the process of de-institutionalization in Burma. It has, as well, enabled
the Tatmadaw dictatorship to rule without the consent of those below, and even against their wishes. The example provided in the case of Burma reveals a wide gap existing between the good intentions and the actual impact of foreign inputs in some Third World states.

To sum up, Ne Win's imperative and strategy for survival, described in this chapter, has resulted in both the patrimonialization, and the transformation of the entire Tatmadaw, into Ne Win's Praetorian Guard. However, catering to the needs of the Praetorian Guard (i.e., the entire Tatmadaw) to ensure its loyalty, has meant Ne Win, as Aba, the revered father, has had to provide all "his children" with sufficient rewards, or at least minimum comfort. And, within the context of a moribund "socialist" economy where resources and rewards are limited, power-positions and other offices become rewards (both in the economic and political sense), and a means of livelihood for Tatmadaw members. Moreover, the enormous size of the Praetorian Guard requires the maximum diversion of the country's resources to the Tatmadaw: formally, through budget allocation; invisibly, through expenditure hidden under other headings; and informally through plunder and corruption. The costs of maintaining a large army and providing it with cradle-to-grave welfare, operationing an intensive secret police network (the MIS), tolerating pervasive institution-destroying plunder and corruption, and
waging an almost forty-years war in the peripheries, are no doubt enormous. The result of this has been, as sufficiently documented by scholars and other observers of Ne Win's Burma, the total impoverishment of a resource-rich country and prolonged political decay.

In short, what is now evident in Burma is a situation where the determination of the regime (or the strongman) to survive and maintain power has resulted in the construction of a political order based on the patrimonialization of institutions, the undermining of legal-rational norms and practices, the arbitrary exercise of power, and rule of men instead of law. Ne Win's Tatmadaw dictatorship can in this respect be characterized as a regime which is not only based on, but as well, dependent for its very survival on systemic political and economic decay.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

1. This was the war-cry of soldiers of the 22nd Light Infantry Division (LID) as they went on a killing spree on the bloody and corpse-strewn streets of Rangoon in September 1988. According to an eye witness, a 46-year old lawyer, the soldiers shot and killed young boys and girls, Buddhist monks, Red Cross workers, students, and even bystanders. See, "We Will Kill Everybody and Rule the Earth", THE BURMA REPORT, Issue 2 (January-February 1989), pp.20-21. This was an interview with an eyewitness, "U Min Aung" (a pseudonym), conducted by H.Wood, Chairman of the Tribal Refugee Welfare in Southeast Asia (based in West Australia) on October 26,1988.

2. As commented upon earlier, it would not be entirely correct to portray the 1988 uprisings as solely an urban phenomenon. The wide involvement of Buddhist monks most likely means that peasants also had been more or less drawn into the protests. Though the urban and rural segments in Burma and many Third World countries, in many ways, live in different worlds, there is nonetheless constant social inter-penetration, and close kinship/patron-client links between villages and towns (which are frequently "over-grown villages"). The urban-rural dichotomy is less real than perceived, at least in Burma. Contrary to the stereotyping of peasants as apathetic, dumb, extremely parochial, and etc., they are very aware of politics in general and power-plays in the capital. The inter-flow of information, rumours, and gossip between towns and villages is continuous and tremendous. Further, in dealing with Asians in general, with peasants especially, researchers should note that rural folks will never contradict a "scholar". They will go to great lengths to give him/her the desired information, as perceived by them, instead of what is really relevant or needed.


(4) The Lon Htein are more than "riot police", according to informed opinions in Burma. They are special armed units of the BSPP composed of handpicked party members and ex-army men personally commanded by Sein Lwin. At any rate, there does not exist an autonomous police force in Burma. Many police officers are seconded, or former army officers, and many policemen are ex-servicemen. Lon Htein units are, like other army units, closely supervised by the MIS or the DDSI (Directorate of Defence Services Intelligence), which is controlled by Ne Win and Sein Lwin. The director and executive staff of the DDSI merely
execute orders and handle routine internal administrative matters, but with the two "old men" closely monitoring the operation. In Burma, as in most medieval kingdoms and many contemporary Third World dictatorships, real power and control is not reflected in official positions per the organizational charts. Nor is there a separation between various branches of the government, the government and the party executive, between the army and the police, the various intelligence agencies, or the private and the public domain. As such, it is possible that incorrect conclusions will be drawn about events in Burma (and other Third World states, in general) by outside observers, conditioned as they are to think of the state and "national" leaders as legal-rational entities and players concerned with producing the "political goods" (when, in fact, this is rarely so). Ne Win manages the affairs of state in the manner of an absolute oriental potentate. For example, he rarely holds formal meetings with ministers. They are summoned at random and are made to sit attentively for hours while Ne Win rambles on with cronies (frequently not known to the ministers present). Often, the minister concerned has to second guess what Ne Win wishes him to do. Sometimes, the minister or ministers are ignored altogether. Ne Win's style of decision-making is, according to directors and aides to ministers, in turn, emulated by the ministers themselves when dealing with subordinates. (Source: Conversations and interviews with a number of former army and civil officers in Thailand, Canada, and United States, and as well, kith and kin of important Bogyoke-Wungyis or Generals/Ministers).

5. The two historic letters by Aung Gyi have been published as a booklet by the Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma (CRDB). They are: (a) AUNG GYI'S LETTER: THE TRUTH REVEALED, An Open Letter from Aung Gyi to Ne Win (May 1988), Translated by Ye Kyaw Thu, (Falls Church: Committee For the Restoration of Democracy in Burma [CRDB], June 9, 1988). (b) THE DAY BLOOD FLOWS ON THE INYA EMBANKMENT: THE SECOND LETTER OF AUNG GYI, JUNE 6, 1988, Translated by Ye Kyaw Thu (Falls Church: Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma [CRDB], July 5, 1988).

6. These included the BSPP's vice-chairman San Yu, who was concurrently the president (head of state); general-secretary Aye Ko; Sein Lwin; Kyaw Htin (defence minister); and Tun Tin. A day or so later, Maung Maung Kha, the prime minister, was "removed".

7. This incident is clearly very mysterious and has puzzled the Burmese themselves. That the party would reject any of Ne Win's proposals, no matter how trivial or irrational, is unthinkable, and this is borne out by the fact that he is still very much in control. This has given rise to all sorts of speculations, some of which attribute to Ne Win an omnipotent Machiavillian insight and skills of a diabolical master-puppeteer
orchestrating events to his advantage. Most likely, Ne Win was very badly shaken and perhaps confused when he made the proposals, but Sein Lwin and others may have stiffened his spine by pointing out to him that they were cornered and therefore had better go down fighting, which, from their point of view, and given their mind-set, made a lot of sense.

8. Sein Lwin joined the Tatmadaw during the war and served, according to Maureen Aung-Thwin, as Ne Win's "batman" or orderly. In the Burma Army, this is a "means for rising through the ranks on a coattail of an ambitious officer". See, Maureen Aung-Thwin, "Burmese Days", FOREIGN AFFAIRS, Vol.68, No.2 (Spring 1989), pp.143-61. Sein Lwin did, at least where Ne Win was concerned, however, earn his rank since he was responsible for the death of the Karen supreme leader, Saw Ba U Gyi, and did all Ne Win's "dirty work", such as master-minding the "July 7th" (1962) massacre, and the "March" and "August" massacres in 1988. As well, it is well known in Burma that Sein Lwin is deeply interested in astrology, and is said to be one of Ne Win's "court astrologers". Also, see Maung Maung, BURMA AND GENERAL NE WIN (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1969), p.218, for Sein Lwin's role in the death of Saw Ba U Gyi. For Sein Lwin's involvement in the massacres of 1962 and 1988, see Lintner, OUTRAGE, op cit, pp.117,263.

9. U.S.Department of State, COUNTRY REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES FOR 1988: BURMA (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office,1989), p.741. No one really knows how many were killed in August 1988, because, as stated in the report, "as soon as they finished firing, troops carted off victims for surreptitious mass disposal in order to mask the extent of the carnage". Also, BURMA REPORT, op cit. As is often the case, the dead and some of the wounded were taken away and cremated in secrecy by the military. Estimates of those killed in August 1988 range variously from 2,000 to 3,000 dead. For mention of the wounded being cremated along with the dead, see Melinda Liu, "Inside Bloody Burma", NEWSWEEK (October 3,1988), pp.30-2. Also, Stan Sesser, "A Rich Country Gone Wrong", THE NEW YORKER (October 9, 1989),p.88.

10. Sesser, NEW YORKER, op cit, p.80. This is the most comprehensive but very concise piece on the 1988 Uprising in Burma, so far. This is a must for every student of Burma.

11. Particularly in Mandalay, the monks together with leaders of the democratic movement took over the city and maintained law and order. See Sesser, NEW YORKER, op cit, p.85. In Rangoon and other towns as well, security and other basic services were provided by locally formed ad hoc bodies, according to many eye-witnesses and participants. In Rangoon, however, the newly formed local committees had a harder time keeping law and
order because of the intrusion of "escaped" criminals, and the presence of MIS agents, saboteurs, and agent provocateurs.

12. Over 1,000 were killed in Rangoon alone, but it could be more since the victims were carted away by the troops and cremated secretly. Local sources put the figures killed in the "people's power" uprising from March to October 1988, all over the country, at 6,000 dead, at the very minimum.


14. General Saw Maung, in a rambling (and incoherent) monologue at a press conference to explain the "coup", stated that the Tatmadaw seized power simply because "BCP elements had appeared during the time of the disturbances" (p.8), and by virtue of the fact that the Tatmadaw had in September 1988 become the "people's army", independent of any party or person by order of Dr. Maung Maung in his capacity as chairman of the BSPP (p.3). See, "SLORC Chairman General Saw Maung Meets Local and Foreign Journalists", July 5, 1989, in NEWS OF MYANMAR, Vol.2 (July 1989), Washington: The Embassy of the Union of Myanmar. The situation prior to Saw Maung's "coup", was, as described in a letter from Burma, "we have caged the beast, but it is still fanged and armed". The 1988 September "coup" was, strictly, not a coup, but an attempt by a group of men who had been rejected by the populace to maintain themselves in power without legal grounds, especially since neither the BSPP nor the 1974 socialist constitution were invoked by the junta as a basis for their rule (i.e., the takeover being a "coup" against Dr. Maung Maung's BSPP "government", and the 1974 socialist constitution). The fact that this legal "limbo" has been ignored by many governments and international bodies, highlights a very important political question: that is, how is a "state" and its government to be defined, and, specifically, what are the most important criteria? In other words, do legality and legitimacy matter? Theoretically, the implication of the present situation in Burma is that international recognition (or external legitimacy), which requires no efforts other than to capture physically the capital city and a few buildings, carries more weight than legality or popular support (internal legitimacy). The implication is that "legitimacy" is superfluous in the Third World. It must be noted therefore, that the international community's disregard of a regime's legitimacy vis-a-vis its populace and society, in turn, serves only to encourage coups, military misrule, and "de-development", and, as well, works against civilian leaders ever succeeding in installing a civilized and democratic political order in Third World areas.

16. Brig. General Khin Nyunt (born 1939), Secretary-1 of SLORC; Brig. General Myo Nyunt, Commander of Rangoon Command; and General Than Shwe, Army Commander. Sanda Win is much younger than these men and is a Colonel in the Army Medical Corp. Though these men are the third generation military leaders now coming to the fore, they may not represent their generation, and may just be ambitious individuals who have hitched their stars to Ne Win and, presumably, Sanda Win. However, they may be deposed or may even change direction when Ne Win dies or is incapacitated. To date, no "moderate" faction or figures have emerged, and will probably not until after Ne Win dies. This situation testifies to the effectiveness of purges within the officer corps, and the extent of fear among officers of the arbitrary power of Ne Win and his intelligence agents. Also, the gap between the privileged life of an officer, and even of an ex-officer, and the daily struggle to make a living and the indignities ordinary people have to experience everyday is so great that officers are inhibited from even speaking their minds for fear of being excluded from the charmed circle at the top.

17. Sesser, NEW YORKER, op cit, p.95.


19. D.I. Steinberg, "Neither Silver Nor Gold: The 40th Anniversary of the Burmese Economy", INDEPENDENT BURMA, op cit, pp.35-49, esp., p.35. It was Ne Win himself who requested that the United Nations designate LDC status for Burma. It was a clear admission made before a distinguished international body of his failure as a "national" leader, which makes his attempt to cling to power at all costs rather incomprehensible, if not irrational.


21. Ne Win's obsessive fear is well known throughout Burma, and outside as well, as is his belief in astrology and Yadaya-che rites. The acts attributed to Ne Win are known by all in Burma, and very few doubt that he has performed them.
22. The two earlier demonetization measures were aimed, according to the regime, at punishing blackmarketeers and destroying illegal wealth (which did not make much economic sense since wealth held by these elements was in foreign currencies, gold, land, houses, and the commodities or goods they deal with. The effect of demonetization on such wealth would therefore be marginal). No reason has ever been given for the step in 1987, nor were explanations offered for issuing odd denomination kyat notes. These measures are viewed by the populace as Ne Win's numerology-based yadaya-che rites to forestall some dire threat to himself or his power.

23. This change in the direction of traffic was meant to forestall the turning of the country to the right, i.e., in the direction of liberal democracy, foretold by astrologers.

24. This act was to circumvent the prophesy that "the young would inherit power", and the logic behind this yada-che act is that by becoming "young" or an "infant" again, power would thus be retained.

25. Paradoxically, though the belief in the black arts is prevalent, very few Burmans can explain what this really is, or indicate who the powerful Auk-lan Saya are, or where to find them. Sorcerers, or anyone so reputed, are feared and avoided by good Buddhists. A person perceived as having dealings with magic is not respected, though he may be feared. For comments on the role of superstition in politics in Burma, see Maung Maung Gyi, BURMESE POLITICAL VALUES: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ROOTS OF AUTHORITARIANISM (New York: Praeger, 1983), pp.159-61.


27. As far as the masses, unversed in Marxist polemics, were concerned, Ne Win's and Than Tun's socialism were indistinguishable. This created a tremendous difficulty for Than Tun since most of his cadres were ignorant of the finer points of Marxism. This caused many to waver, impelling Than Tun to purge the party. (Source: Conversations, 1968-1970, with Sai Aung Win, a Shan, and former Rangoon University student union leader, and one of Thakin Than Tun's personal assistants during the purges, 1965-1967).


29. This dispute was resolved violently through a Mao-style "cultural revolution". The internal bloodbath resulted
in the decimation of leaders and veteran cadres, the loss of peasant supporters who were revolted by the brutality of the purges, and finally, the eviction of the White Flag communists (BCP) from the Burman plains and delta. Top leaders like Yebaw (Comrade) Htay, Ba Tin (H.N.Goshal), Comrade General Yan Aung (one of the Thirty-Comrades), and hundreds of veteran cadres were publicly humiliated and barbarously executed. The purges also contributed to the death in action, or otherwise, of many illustrious communist Thakins, such as Thakin Than Tun himself, Thakins Zin and Chit (who succeeded him as Chairman), Bo Zeya (also, one of the Thirty-Comrades). (Source: Sai Aung Win, op cit). For a well-documented and fascinating account, unfortunately in Burmese, of the disintegration of the White Flag BCP, see Yebaw Mya, et.al, ed. THE LAST DAYS OF THAKIN THAN TUN (Rangoon: Mya-ya-bin Press,1970), Vols.I and II. It was actually the work of the MIS, closely supervisied by its director, the then Colonel Tin U. For a short overview of the BCP, see B.Lintner, "The Rise and Fall of the Communists", FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW (June 4,1987), pp.27-34.

30. At the time, Ba Swe, however, had some following within the Tatmadaw, i.e., Brigadier Aung Gyi's faction. The two were said to be related through marriage and Aung Gyi was widely regarded as Ba Swe's protege. (Source: University friends of mine who were related to Aung Gyi). Aung Gyi's dismissal and the purge of his faction, soon after the coup, ended Ba Swe's influence within the Tatmadaw.

31. U Kyaw Nyein was not only tortured in prison, but, according to one former MIS officer, was given coffee laced with minute portions of lead every morning. He died in 1988 of some form of cancer.

32. Mention has been made of U Nu's armed movement in most studies of post-1962 Burma. However, no in-depth study has been made of the movement, nor its failure analysed. It seems to me, that his movement, the Parliamentary Democracy Party (PDP), failed because it lacked serious plans for toppling Ne Win. Everyone in the PDP, from U Nu downwards, expected a mass upheaval and the subsequent defection, en masse, of the army. There was constant talk about being back in Rangoon within two or three weeks. Until the failure of U Nu's attempt (it collapsed in 1974), Ne Win was inexplicably thought of by most Burmans as a brainless, pleasure-seeking political light-weight, or at best, a puppet of some clique or individuals, which he certainly never was. (Source: From conversations and contacts with PDP leaders and many former school and university classmates who joined U Nu in Thailand during that period).

33. Ne Win's co-optation of the "aboveground communists", between 1962-1964 also pleased Chinese leaders, such as Liu Shao-chi and Chen Yi, who had been urging both Ne Win and
BCP leaders to team up in a leftist united front. As well, in order to buy time, Ne Win went through the motions of negotiating with the White Flags in 1963-1964. (Sources: Yebaw Sai Aung Win, personal assistant to Thakin Than Tun; Zau Tu and Phungshwe Zau Seng, deceased 1975, of the Kachin Independence Army [KIA]; Saw Mawrel, presently Chairman of the National Democratic Liberation Front [NDLF], and participant in the 1963 peace talks; and other Burman, Shan, Karen friends in Canada, United States, and Thailand). Also, as a senior officer in the Shan State Army (SSA), it was my job to be informed of these developments.


35. The fact that Ne Win surrounded himself with communist "theoreticians" in the early stage of his rule is well known, and had raised eyebrows among diplomats in Rangoon. Maung Maung, Ne Win's intellectual-in-residence, made it a point in his book to assure readers that Ne Win was not a captive of his communist advisors, stressing that "the man who could sway or influence him [has not been born yet]." Maung Maung, BURMA AND NE WIN, op cit, p. 315. Also, see AUNG GYI'S LETTER, op cit, pp. 14-5 (close relationship between Brig. Tin Pe and U Ba Nyein), 23-4 (the dismantling of Aung Gyi's economic programs by the Tin Pe-Ba Nyein faction), 25 (the Burmese Way to Socialism referred to by Aung Gyi as the "Ba Nyien-Tin Pe plus NUF model"). The National United Front, NUF, was a political front composed of the conservative Justice Party and a number of aboveground communist groups, dominated by leftists, to contest the 1956 election against the as yet unsplit AFPFL.


37. It was only the non-Burman segments which were unaffected by socialism, chiefly because they and their leaders had nothing to do with the Dobama movement or "ideology". And hence, they were able to represent Ne Win's regime as an evil socialist and chauvinistic dictatorship, while Burman leaders could not, or did not know how to counter Ne Win's Socialism (a combination of Burman ethnonationalism and Dobama socialism). This partly explains the endurance of various ethnic resistance, and the ineffectiveness and collapse of the main Burman challenge (i.e., the White Flag Communists) to Ne Win.

38. In this respect, U Nu and the AFPFL cannot escape a large share of responsibility. In pre-1962 Burma, in addition to socialist rhetoric emanating daily from the lips of politicians and the pens of editors, columnists, and party hacks,
U Nu's collected speeches condemning capitalism and extolling socialism were required texts for the important government examination in the 7th and 10th grades. As well, the novels of Charles Dickens were popular, and translated into Burmese, or copied and adapted by Burmese novelists. Marxist and socialist jargon was in vogue, especially among university students, and used even in the non-political context. For example, woman students would, in fun, be classified, depending on their physical assets, as "bourgeois", "petty-bourgeois" or "proletariat".

39. The agencies of the autonomous military were the National Solidarity Associations (NSA), the Security and Administrative Committees (SAC), the Defence Service Industries (DSI) or, as it was known later, the Burma Economic Development Corporation (BEDC), and the Military Intelligence Service (MIS), all of which operated on a country-wide basis.

40. Maung Maung Gyi, op cit, p.122.

41. Several military factions could be discerned at the time of the coup. There was one headed by Ne Win composed of the 4th Burma Rifles courtiers; the MIS faction led by Colonel Maung Lwin, which was also Ne Win's faction but was distinct from the Fourth Burma Rifles; and the Aung Gyi's, Tin Pe's, San Yu's, Saw Myint's, Maung Shwe's, Sein Mya's factions, and so forth.

42. AUNG GYI'S LETTER, op cit, pp.11-12. Aung Gyi claims that Ne Win himself "planned, manoeuvered troops, gave commands, and everything else in the matter of the coup de-etat...but did not lawfully keep me informed", and states that after the coup, he, Aung Gyi, "went into the bathroom" and cried his heart out to mourn the cremation of democracy. He also states that no plans concerning the "doctrines, the political system, procedures, or in guidance in the way of thoughts and knowledge" were made in advance. Since none of the 1962 coup participants except Aung Gyi has come out with information about the period, his account will have to be accepted at face value.

43. There were rumours at the time that the ambush in which he was killed was stage-managed. It was well known that Commodore Than Pe did not get along well with his colleagues in the Revolutionary Council, and moreover he was blunt and forthright in speech. (I was in Rangoon at the time, and one of his nephews was a good friend).


45. Regarding Captain Ohn Kyaw Myint's alleged plot, many ex-army officers have argued that there was no plot. It was,
they maintained, a trumped-up conspiracy charge aimed at getting rid of General Tin U, or to terrorize DSA (Defence Services Academy) graduates and to de-professionalize the officer corps.

46. However, the official reason given for General Tin U's dismissal was his wife's blackmarket activities. He was imprisoned for keeping silent about the assassination plot. See Mya Maung, "The Burma Road to Poverty: A Socio-political Analysis", in FLETCHER FORUM OF WORLD AFFAIRS, Summer 1989, pp.279.

47. Lintner, OUTRAGE, op cit, pp.92-3.


49. For an analysis of the BSPP with regard to the dominance of the military at all levels, see Jon Wiant and John Badgley, in "The Ne Win-BSPP Style of Bama-lo", in J. Silverstein, ed. THE FUTURE OF BURMA, op cit, pp.43-62. Because of the dominance of the military within the BSPP, the oft-repeated claim of the military that "the Tatmadaw and the Party are indivisible" (p.52), is not just rhetoric, but is a fact. According to Wiant and Badgley, 60 percent of BSPP members were military men, and two out of every three soldiers were either candidates or full party members (p.57). Also, J. Silverstein, "From Soldiers to Civilians", in Silverstein, THE FUTURE OF BURMA, op cit, pp.80-92.

50. In 1974, when the population of Taze Township in Upper Burma put up their own slate of candidates for both the Pyithu Hluttaw (Parliament) and the township council, all the candidates were arrested and held for eighteen months. See, Steinberg, BURMA'S ROAD, op cit, p.70.


52 Steinberg, BURMA'S ROAD, op cit, p.74. Also, Maung Maung Gyi, op cit, p.222 (fn.54); and Lintner, OUTRAGE, op cit, p.79. According to many people interviewed by me in the 1970s (while serving in the Shan State Army), and later (in Thailand, Canada, and United States), purges within the BSPP were constant affairs primarily in the form of arbitrary dismissals of party officials whenever there were signs that the person in question had begun to consolidate his/her position within the hierarchy, or had begun to gain prominence. Thus, the BSPP was certainly not a vehicle for getting ahead or getting things done. The BSPP has been ridiculed by local political wits as an
employment agency for the baung-bee-choot (those who discard their trousers, i.e., former military officers).

53. For example, a Shan who was an ex-captain and a BSPP member was "elected" chairman of a township people's council in the Hsipaw area of Shan State in 1971-1972. He proved capable and popular, and was consequently posted to head a cooperative elsewhere. (I was operating in the Hsipaw area at the time). Almost all non-Burman former officers are to be found "managing" cooperatives and people's stores, but unlike Burman ones, have not dared to enrich themselves, most likely because they are more vulnerable to dismissal since they do not enjoy the protection of powerful patrons, who are invariably Burmans.

54. For a good journalistic analysis of the decay of institutions and the government bureaucracies due to the infusion of army officers, ex-army men, and disabled servicemen within these bodies, see "Masses in Revolt Against Stifling Authoritarian Grip", FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW (August 25, 1988), pp.12-13.

55. As observed by Maung Maung Gyi, the situation of civilian bureaucrats has been succinctly summed up in the "Three Don'ts" and "Three Recommendations". They are: "Don't do anything, Don't get involved, Don't get fired" (Ma Loke, Ma Shok, Ma Pyoke), and "Go if you are summoned, Do what you are ordered to, Do not dispute the commands given" (Khaw yin thwa, Khaing yin loke, Khan ma-pyaw nhe). Maung Maung Gyi, op cit, pp.194. It was certainly not in one's interest to excel or be reputed as having initiative since it aroused suspicions of the higher-ups and the envy of colleagues and underlings, as well.

56. The Military Intelligence Service (MIS) is the most important secret service agency. Its directors invariably head any national intelligence agency, such as the National Intelligence Bureau (NIB), which is now known as the Directorate of Defence Service Intelligence (DDSI). The MIS is Ne Win's personally controlled intelligence service. It operates on a country-wide basis and looks into every sphere of human activity, unrestrained by law and accountable only to Ne Win. It is dreaded throughout Burma, and known even to the most illiterate of peasants by its English initial, the "Em-Eye".


58. Burma Watcher, in "Burma in 1988: There Came a Whirlwind", ASIAN SURVEY, Vol.XXIX, No.2 (February 1989), pp.174-80. According to a former army officer, officers wanting fast promotion or plumb posts have to provide battalion executives and the commander with regular "pay-offs" (or tribute), which were
obtained either through misappropriating military operational funds, plunder, extortion, bribery, or blackmarket and narcotics deals. Those posted to the gem-rich areas are expected to provide jade stones, rubies, and sapphires, and a percentage of the "protection" money obtained. Battalion commanders and executives are, in turn, required to pay regular tribute to higher commanders, and up the ladder, right up to San Yu and Ne Win. This tribute system also existed within the now "defunct" BSPP chain of command. An officer who refuses to play this game ends up being posted from one combat zone to another, is passed over for promotion, and is generally distrusted by his superiors and fellow officers, and regarded as stupid cannon-fodder. However, it must be noted that the patrimonialization of the military or of other institutions is not "uniquely Burmese". In societies where personal relations and patron-client claims and responses are deeply rooted, as in most Third World states, the de-institutionalization of institutions does pose a very serious problem, and raises doubts about whether they can be modernized in the sense that is understood in academic circles.

59. According to a former army officer, "under-officers" are those promoted directly from within the ranks (i.e., individuals regarded as politically reliable), and are often those without much schooling, or are sons of veterans or of those killed in action. These under-officers are feared by regular officers. For mention of under-officers, see Tin Maung Maung Than, Comments on R.H.Taylor's "Government Responses to Armed Communist and Separatist Movements: Burma", in G.Jeshurun, ed. GOVERNMENTS AND REBELLIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies,1985), pp.129-30. Also, there is an institution in the Burma Army, the "Boys'Corps", which is a special preparatory military school for orphans. Those who do not matriculate (the majority) are put into elite combat and security units, and its graduates appointed as non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and, after a time, made under-officers. The alumni of the "Boys'Corps" are, because of their circumstance and training, hard-core supporters of the regime. (Source: Interrogation of former Burma Army men who defected to and served in the Shan State Army under my command). With respect to the use of orphans to nurture a body of hardcore supporters, Ne Win's Burma is very much like Nicolae Ceausescu's Romania.

60. It must be noted that Ne Win has been very shrewd in making the entire Tatmadaw his Praetorian Guard. In many dictatorships, the Praetorian Guard comprised only a segment of the coercive arm of the state, usually the security apparatus or agencies, such as the Gestapo and the SS (in the case of Hitler), the KGB and related agencies (Stalin), the Securitate (Ceausescu), or segregated special elite units within the armed forces or the army. Rarely has a despot employed the entire military as his Praetorian Guard, and "looked after" military men
in the manner of a father looking after his children, as in the case of Ne Win.

61. For an analysis of the highly privileged and patrimonialized Burma Army and its political role, see Bruce Matthews, "Fortunes of Politics and Culture in Burma", paper delivered at the annual meeting of the CANADIAN COUNCIL OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES (CCSEAS) in Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 1988, and "Under the Light Yoke: Burma and Its Destiny", paper delivered at Joint Conference of CCSEAS and NORTHWEST CONSORTIUM FOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES in Vancouver, B.C., November 1989. The rest of society in Burma can be termed as an under-class because there do not exist any forms of social security safety-nets for those outside the military. The general populace has also been excluded from the political system and process (which has become the military's private domain).

62. F.S.V.Donnison, BURMA (New York: Praeger,1970), p.169. He raises the idea of the military's need for an internal war with the Kachin, Shan, Karen and others in the peripheries in order to further its corporate interest, opportunities to "swashbuckle through villages and live off the land", and enhance chances for enrichment and career advancement. Foreign experts who are wont to swallow claims made by Third World militaries that they are the only ones capable of restoring peace or building a nation should keep this thought in mind. The Burma Army does, however, fight very seriously with genuine resistance armies, such as the BCP, the KNU (Karen National Union), KIA (Kachin Independence Army), and the pre-1977 Shan State Army (SSA), but have reached accommodation with various non-political armies, such as the Chinese KMT armies in the Shan State, and various drug armies.

63. The regime has successfully managed to put all blame for narcotics out-flow from Burma on ethnic rebel armies and the BCP, and in particular, on the notorious Shan warlord, Khun Sa. As a result, the regime has gained international sympathy and has obtained narcotics supression aid from the United States. For an example of a positive view of the regime's "drug suppression efforts", and implied regret at the suspension of anti-narcotics assistance following the 1988 massacres, see "Burma", in U.S.State Department, REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY, 1989 (Washington, D.C.: The U.S. Department of State,1989), pp.181-87.

64. Mya Maung, "The Burma Road to Poverty", op cit, p.293.

65. Steinberg, BURMA'S ROAD, op cit, pp.27-31.

66. This is a common and sad complaint heard throughout Burma by people of all ages and stations in life. It
is, however, not argued here that the nationalization is in itself a violation of human rights. Theoretically, it enables the government to provide society with services, employment, and goods and products on a less exploitative basis. In Burma, however, the regime has not only failed to provide society with the expected (as theoretically required or possible) goods, services, and employment, and by making all forms of private economic transactions illegal, has also criminalized a large arena of job possibilities. In this sense, it can be argued that the regime, through its economic decrees, has deprived a large sector of the people, especially in urban areas, of their right to a livelihood.

67. These laws included the requirement of having to carry and show one's identity card everywhere one went, usually on exit and entry points of towns and some villages; obtaining travel permits from authorities concerned; reporting to authorities upon one's arrival at a destination; and having to register overnight visitors, and so forth. For details of such restrictions, see U.S. State Department, COUNTRY REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, op cit, pp.744 (Section 1.F, Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence), 746 (Section 2.D, Freedom of Movement within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation).

68. Because various regulations were non-rational, extensive and petty, their uniform enforcement was impossible. Violations were therefore generally tolerated but not forgotten. Records of violations became the means by which administrative-security officials could extract money and other favors from, or blackmail and terrorize, individuals.

69. According to the Amnesty International, it is unaware of any investigation by the Burmese Government into any of the allegations of political killings and tortures in minority areas. Amnesty International states that it is also not aware of any cases in which any security personnel have been legally punished for human rights violations or political killings (within the period covered by the report, 1984-1987, and earlier). See AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT ON BURMA: EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION AND TORTURE OF MEMBERS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES (London: Amnesty International, May 1988), p.64.

70. The term "insurgent areas" is meaningless because in the non-Burman territories, except towns and some villages garrisoned by the Burman military, all areas are "insurgent areas".

71. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT, op cit, p.2.

72. Ibid. "Shin rolling" is a most painful form of torture. A piece of bamboo pole is rolled up and down over the
victim's shin until the skin is slowly stripped off, and the torture is continued until the bones are exposed.

73. Ibid. The above report covers the period 1984-1987, and was compiled from interviews with 70 Karen, Mon and Kachin civilians in seven different places in Thailand (p.1). The Amnesty's report states that because "minority areas" are inaccessible to independent human rights investigators and all foreigners, its data on Burma Army atrocities "cannot be regarded as comprehensive" (p.5). It is very likely that the report represents only the tip of an enormous iceberg since the Tatmadaw's atrocities have been going on since the mid-1950s. Also see, Edith Mirante, "Beasts of Burden", THE BURMA REPORT, op cit, pp.8-9.


75. For an analysis of the claim made by the military that it "held the country together", see Chao-Tzang Yawnghwe, "The Burman Military: Holding the Country Together?", in J.Silverstein, ed. INDEPENDENT BURMA, op cit, pp.81-101.

76. The phenomenon of frequent protests initiated by students, particularly in Rangoon, certainly needs further research. In the early 1960s, students were ideologically motivated in two ways: one, they were opposed to "fascism", which was equated with the military; and two, many top student leaders were secret members of the White Flag BCP, and the general anti-military sentiment was exploited by them. However, the fact that student protests have been frequent, even after the BCP's political collapse (in 1968-1969), is perhaps, an indication of an aversion to despotic rule in general, and the military regime in particular. In Burma, the military has generally never been highly regarded despite the self-serving and self-generated super-heroic myths. The bullying indiscipline of Burman soldiers is known and resented throughout Burma, even by the Burman segment, contrary to assumptions made by foreign observers who tend to believe the myths. The mismanagement of the economy by the military may have further fuelled anti-regime sentiments among both the students and the general populace. For accounts of frequent protests by the populace and students, see Steinberg, BURMA'S ROAD, op cit, pp.25,36,73-4; Silverstein, BURMA: MILITARY RULE, op cit, pp.49-51; Lintner, OUTRAGE, op cit, pp.9-23 (Chapter 1),57-58,74-77,98-195 (Chapter 3-6).

78. These include even knowledgable scholars like F.S.V.Donnison and J.Silverstein. See, Donnison, BURMA, op.cit., p.166 ("Seventeen killed and thirty-nine wounded"); Silverstein, "Burmese Student Politics in a Changing Society", DAEDALUS, Vol.97, No.1 (Winter 1968), p.290 ("More than fifteen students were killed"). Silverstein's article is, unfortunately, very optimistic, predicting a period of harmonious relations between students and the regime due to the "improving quality of education" and steps taken by the regime to isolate the students "from outside distractions"(p.291).

79. Interview with Dr.H.Chen, Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A., August 1989.

80. This has been the standard response after outbreaks of student demonstrations. Ever since the "people's power" uprising in 1988, educational institutions have been closed down now, for almost two years. Elementary schools were re-opened in early-1989, but parents were required to sign papers guaranteeing that their 6-14 years old offspring would not "engage in protests". Teaching staffs have been threatened with dismissal and imprisonment if there occurred any "disturbances".

81. Ironically, these workers were government employees, since there were no private industries, and politically, they were the supposed "vanguard" of the regime's Burmese "socialist" revolution.

82. The calm from 1976 to 1987 was due in large part to a step taken by the regime to allow Burmese males to go abroad and work as menial deckhands for several years on merchant ships in Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, and elsewhere. They were allowed to import automobiles, refrigerators, television sets, etc., which were resold for huge profits. For a time, these menial deckhands, earning only minimum wages (around U.S.$200-400 a month), were sought after as sons-in-law, ranking well above local doctors, engineers, and so on. However, by the mid-1980s, even work as menial deckhands became scarce, which eliminated this employment and advancement opportunity. Further, Ne Win's 1981 Amnesty Order, which allowed U Nu to return, followed by a short honeymoon between Ne Win and the leaders he had deposed, imprisoned, or exiled, boosted Ne Win's image, and encouraged hopes that he was mellowing and that he could be induced by former leaders to institute reforms. This did not, however, occur. The Amnesty Order and the political honeymoon therefore came to be viewed by the populace as just another of Ne Win's numerous Yadaya-che exercises. For an interesting but rather ethnocentric account of Burma in the late-1970s and early-1980s, see Barbara Crossette, "Burma's Eroding Isolation", NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE, New York (November 24,1985), pp.138-39,150-51,159-61 (7 pages).
83. For the brutality of the Lon-Htein in March 1988 against protesting students, and the massacre, torture and rape of detained students in their cells, see THE DAY BLOOD FLOWED (Aung Gyi's letter), *op cit*, pp.3-6.

84. See Lintner, *OUTRAGE*, *op cit*, p.81; Steinberg, *BURMA'S ROAD*, *op cit*, p.165. Lissak's figures for military expenditure are as follows: 1964/65, 31.4 percent, 1965/66, 51.3 percent, 1966/7, 45.5 percent. See Lissak, *MILITARY ROLE IN MODERNIZATION*, *op cit*, p.180 (fn.83).


87. Colonel Abel is the SLORC's Trade Minister who is in charge of "opening" Burma's economy to foreign investors. He is member of Ne Win's 4th Burma Rifles faction.

88. Mya Maung,"The Burma Road to Poverty", *op cit*, pp.278,279-80,291,292. Also, Steinberg, "Neither Silver or Gold", *INDEPENDENT BURMA*, *op cit*, p.38.

89. This figure does not include the aid and grants the regime received from China, and the Eastern Bloc, including the Soviet Union, during its earlier anti-West phase. The credit and grants provided, by country, are as follows: the Soviet Union, U.S.$15 million (1958-1967,1965,1969,1970,1971); China, $84 million (1961-1967); Yugoslavia, $16 million (1964,1966); East Germany, $28 million (1964,1966); Poland, $10 million (1966, but as of 1970, none has been utilized). See, John W.Henderson, *et al*., ed. *AREA HANDBOOK FOR BURMA*, *op cit*, pp.204-205.

90. Mya Maung, "The Burma Road to Poverty", *op cit*, p.280. Foreign assisted projects in Burma have become fiefdoms of the Bogyoke-Wungyi (Generals/Ministers), and are keenly competed for, and won by those skilled at court intrigues. Expertise and feasibility are often ignored. In one case, a modern tapioca processing plant was built in a rubber producing area, and it has, to date, not been utilized as such, but as a temporary barrack. In another, a project for the manufacture of industrial rubber goods was submitted to a United Nations agency, and despite negative reaction by experts, funding was granted anyway, and the project has now become a white elephant. In another, an Australian-funded salt producing project was located at an unsuitable location, and when Ne Win came to inspect, truckloads of salt were transported to cover up the project's
failure. Further, projects for non-military production are diverted to military use. For example, a condensed milk factory intended for civilians ended up producing solely for the military. And canneries meant for the civil sector have been producing various tinned provisions solely for the military top brass. (Source: Conversations and interviews with informed people from Burma, and officials, past and present, of aid agencies with experience in Burma). It is also commonplace to find relief and humanitarian supplies on the blackmarket via military personnel or their wives and kin. For an account of open theft of supplies within the military, and abuse of humanitarian aid, see Sesser, NEW YORKER, pp.72-73.


92. Ibid. Colonel Abel's new "open" economic policy has been variously dubbed as "The Burmese Way to Capitalism" or "Colonel Abel's Road to Capitalism" by wags in Burma.
CHAPTER SIX: THE TATMADAW DICTATORSHIP: EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

(a) A Conceptual View of Burma

This thesis examines the long-lived Ne Win regime in Burma as a Third World phenomenon which can best be explained and understood if analyzed within a conceptual framework of comparative Third World politics. With this in mind, concepts derived from comparative Third World studies dealing with societal fragmentation, non-institutionalized politics, personal rulership, patrimonialism, military intervention, state-society relations, "state autonomy", and so forth, have been examined, and a conceptual framework constructed in Chapter III. Such an approach is necessary because the conventional one which views Ne Win's Tatmadaw regime within the context of institutionalized politics and legal-rational decision-making, an approach taken in varying degrees by scholars, especially historians, such as R.H. Taylor, Frank Traeger, M.Aung-Thwin, presented in Chapters I and II of this thesis, does not satisfactorily explain the nature of the Tatmadaw regime, or its actions and their outcomes.

It is felt here that the conventional approach can be misleading, as evident from the images of Ne Win's Tatmadaw regime as one embarking upon a uniquely Burmese- and/or Buddhist-orientated socialist path, or as a regime attempting to build a
modern and very "Burmese" political order in the face of praetorian and centrifugal tendencies. The regime has also been viewed as "shielding" Burma from superpower and regional conflicts, and from the undesirable by-products of modernization, such as the depletion of its natural resources, cultural pollution, and crass commercialization, which have afflicted Thailand and other "more successful" Third World states.

There are, however, several features which contradict the image one obtains from the conventional analyses of Burma. They are, the pervasive climate of fear among the populace of the regime and the "Em-Eye" (the Military Intelligence Service); the concentration of power in the hands of one man, Ne Win; the monopolization by the military(1) of all public spheres of life; the curtailment of all civil liberties and freedoms; the regime's inability or unwillingness to respond to dissent except by use of coercion and violence, resulting in, for example, an unending war with the Karen and other ethnic groups(2); the frequent protests by the urban Burman segment (i.e., students, monks and workers), and their often bloody, and always brutal, suppression.

The position taken in this thesis is that though Burma is very different from Western polities, it is, in relation to other Third World entities, not very unique. It faces many basic Third World problems, such as social and political fragmentation exacerbated by the process of rapid change; the mobilization of
diverse (ethnic or otherwise) groups and segments, which are politicized, parochially-orientated and patrimonially organized, confronting each other over real or perceived threats, expected rewards, and disappointments; the scarcity of resources and the lack of the wherewithal to increase the economic pie and/or resources available to the society and the powerholders; the absence of national consensus with regard to what constitutes "the nation", its purpose and goals, and what political legitimacy is, and how (or who) defines it; the weakness of institutions, and disagreement over the "rules of the game", and so on, which further serve to create political turmoil and generate more conflicts. Other problems include rapid population growth, low or declining production, outdated and low production technology in productive activities, unemployment or under-employment, and illiteracy accompanied by lack of jobs for the "educated".

The problems are immense, seemingly insurmountable, almost always overwhelming. As suggested in Chapter III, many Third World regimes and rulers have nonetheless had somehow to function within a praetorian situation in a non-institutionalized political environment. In other words, these leaders and rulers have had to exercise power with meagre resources and insufficient information, within a political system where power-relationships are based more on personal considerations and personalities than on interaction between institutions and discrete associations, and where the personality of the ruler and his skills in
manipulating other men, therefore, are critical to the ruler's and the regime's survival, and play a larger role in shaping the polity than any other factors -- a system aptly termed by R. Jackson and C. Rosberg as a system of personal rulership.

(b) An Evaluation

The evolution of politics in Burma is basically a set of outcomes resulting from interactions between Dobama leaders and factions, the first generation of nationalists, who have dominated the political stage since World War II. It is essentially the story of their struggles for political power and survival within a non-institutionalized political environment that has been observed in the study of "new" states in Africa and other Third World areas by a number of perceptive scholars(3). The rulers and leaders of Burma are viewed in this thesis as men having to stay afloat and hold on to the levers of power without the help of firmly institutionalized rules, established procedures, and sound structures.

At the time of independence, Burma's new rulers, the AFPFL (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League), constituted only one segment of the Dobama Asiayone (or the Thakin movement), which, due to circumstances, as explained in Chapters II and IV, was the dominant anti-colonial "nationalist" movement. In the manner of such Third World movements, it consisted of factions which had, even before independence, split into competing rival
Broadly speaking, there were the "in" Thakin factions (those within the AFPFL led by Thakin Aung San, and after his death, by U Nu), and the "out" factions composed of various Thakin-led "parties" and "organizations"(4). In addition to the visible Thakin groups and factions, there was the Tatmadaw, led by "political soldiers" or "armed politicians" -- the "military" Thakin, such as Thakin Shu Maung (later, General Ne Win) and other former Dobama agitators, such as Maung Maung, Aung Gyi, Tin Pe and so forth.

The Tatmadaw was nurtured and shaped, as was shown in Chapters II and IV, by the "military" Thakins, and was, in essence, a political organization in military garb (or a para-political military body), "indoctrinated" by its leader in the Dobama "ideology", a creed born in the tumultuous 1930s when the whole world was gripped by extremist right-wing nationalism and leftist "solutions" to the "crisis of capitalism", and when militaristic and totalitarian trends were in vogue. As such, the Dobama creed, embraced by the military, was a form of ethnonationalism which dwelled stridently upon Burman superiority and their past glories and conquests. It was, in turn, combined with "socialism", which consisted essentially of anti-foreign and anti-capitalist sentiments (the two being synonymous within the Dobama context), anti-imperialism (with a strong anti-West orientation), and which was, at the same time, welded to the concept of a centralist, unitary state as espoused by totalitarian leaders such as Mussolini, Hitler, Tojo, Lenin, and
so on, as stated in proposition one of this thesis. Although all the Thakin factions embraced the Dobama creed, they were rival elite factions which were pitted against each other in a classically praetorian society which Burma was in 1948.

U Nu and the AFPFL leaders, who gained power at independence, were at once challenged by the communist Thakins and their leftist allies (the PVO and Burman mutineers of the three Burma Rifle units), and by the Karens and their allies (the Mon, PaO, and Naw Seng's Kachin mutineers). However, they managed to survive and exercise power by fashioning a "winning combination" with the Shan, Kachin, Chin, and the Karenni ruling elites, and with their invaluable help and support, fended off challenges and maintained power and dominance. The role played by the Tatmadaw in this Dobama intra-elite conflict was, ostensibly and outwardly, as a professional national army engaged in defending the government and "nation" from communist rebels and other insurgents and, simultaneously, carrying out "state- and nation-building" activities, especially in the insurgent-infested areas and non-Burman peripheries.

However, the Tatmadaw, under the guidance Ne Win, Aung Gyi, Maung Maung, etc., developed into something more than a professional armed agency of the AFPFL state. Further, the dependence of the ruling AFPFL Thakins on their colleagues in uniform to fend off armed challengers, to win national and local elections, and also to carry out "state- and nation-building
tasks" (5), greatly strengthened the position of the Tatmadaw and its leaders. This enabled the "military" Thakins to obtain the leverage and resources necessary to build up the Tatmadaw, which in time grew into a parallel power center. By the end of the 1950s, as detailed in Chapter IV, the Tatmadaw had become a powerful and independent political-military-economic organism with its own country-wide economic empire (the Defence Services Industry), an embryonic mass movement (the National Solidarity Association), an extra-legal and very powerful, and uniformly dreaded, secret police (the Military Intelligence Service), and in many rural areas, especially in the non-Burman states, the Tatmadaw was the de facto supreme power.

The visible and overt (6) intervention by the Tatmadaw in politics, first in 1958, and later in 1962, can be seen as an outcome of the AFPFL split in 1957-1958 which, in a sense, represents the breakdown of the coalition between first-line Thakin leaders, such as U Nu, Ba Swe, Kyaw Nyein, and Thakin Tin, who had held power since 1948 by means of a series of alliances with each other and with the lesser Burman and other elites within the polity. The coup of 1962 can thus be viewed, in this respect, as the changing of the guard, albeit at gunpoint, within the ranks of the first-generation Burman ethnonationalist elites, whereby power slipped away from the civilian Thakins into the hands of the "military" Thakins, rather than simply as a coup d'état by a professional and apolitical military to "save" Burma from some abyss or dismemberment, as was claimed.
It must be recognized that Ne Win and the Tatmadaw leaders reached the summit of power at the head of what was a built-in para-military political party. It should be noted that despotic trends, or the propensity for the arbitrary exercise of power, is, conceptually, an inherent tendency of any military body that enters the political realm, at least in the Third World(7). Only a military leader who attains power at the head of the armed forces would be able, and most likely, to install an autocratic regime and create a highly autonomous state. That is to say, only a military leader, already in possession of a power base vested with a monopoly over the means of violence, and over an organization which is more or less conditioned to obey orders from above, would enjoy the luxury of dispensing with the need to communicate with and accommodate other societal segments and actors(8). It is not argued here that all military rulers favor an extremely repressive/unresponsive regime. Some soldiers have been relatively accommodative as can be seen from Suharto's dealings with the Chinese business community and other lesser elites in Indonesia, while some civilian-dominated regimes, the communist regime in Vietnam, for example, have been harsh and highly autonomous(9). However, it must be recognized that military rulers tend to be impatient in their dealings with civilian elites and aspirations that conflict with their agenda.

Ne Win attained political power as commander-in-chief of the Tatmadaw, which was and remains his power-base. The Tatmadaw is a para-political army which views itself not merely
as an armed agent of the state, but as having "created" the "Burmese nation" by "defeating" intruding foreign powers. As narrated in Chapters II and IV, it has been strongly influenced by the Dobama's ethnonationalistic and totalitarian creed. As such, the compromises made by the AFPFL with various non-Burman ethnic segments (such as with the Shan princes, the Kachin duwa, and Karenni sawphaya), and its attitude towards the political process (based on Western or bourgeoisie representative democracy) itself, which necessitated tolerance, rights and liberties, and some forms of political exchange between the rulers and the ruled, served, as stated in propositions two and four, to increase the military's impatience with civilian rule, and heightened its "distaste and contempt for politics and politicians". Ne Win and the Tatmadaw came to believe that the Dobama "revolutionary ideals" had been betrayed by weak, corrupt, and inept politicians, undermined by Western and capitalist values and institutions, and compromised by accommodation with a host of undesirable elements, such as "feudal" Shan princes, tribal chiefs, foreign capitalists, exploitative Indian and Chinese middlemen and money-lenders.

Upon reaching the summit of power, Ne Win and the Tatmadaw rulers, therefore, proceeded to carry out a "socialist revolution" from above, in keeping with its Dobama creed (a mixture of militant Burman ethnonationalism and "socialism"). Simultaneously, it "tamed" praetorian forces, especially in the peripheries, which the military claimed were threatening the
territorial integrity and very existence of Burma(10). The construction, therefore, of a powerful state which would, as stated in proposition three, "be vested with sufficient power" to facilitate effective governance, and "restore the Burman political and cultural dominance, and which would, at the same time, ensure an economy free from foreign domination and exploitation", became an overriding goal of Ne Win's post-1962 military rule.

The military's belief in the self-created myths of its heroic role and superiority, combined with its experience in post-1948 Burma as an important power player, especially in the "state- and nation-building" sphere, convinced the "military" Thakins that they could lead a "socialist revolution" -- employing the Tatmadaw (which, in their eyes, was a "revolutionary movement") as a "revolutionary vanguard" in achieving the Dobama goals. However, the "political kingdom" which Ne Win won and aspired to transform (or so it seemed) into a socialist lokha nibban (an earthly nirvana) was a non-institutionalized and praetorian society. As well, the Tatmadaw, the very vehicle which was to carry the "revolution" forward, was itself an "institution" fragmented into factions led, respectively, by Aung Gyi, Tin Pe, Maung Lwin (the MIS head in 1962), Sein Lwin (the Fourth Burma Rifles clique), Chit Myaing, Sein Mya and so on. These lieutenants constituted potential threats to Ne Win's survival since they too possessed the means to attain power and depose the leader.
Furthermore, since the Tatmadaw and Ne Win gained power through an act of usurpation, the regime's doubtful legitimacy invited challenges from below. As is well known, challenges to powerholders have been the rule rather than the exception in Burma, as evident from the continuous insurrection since 1948, involving the non-Burman segments and many "out" Thakin factions. Analytically speaking, the Tatmadaw had been a part of this armed conflict as a political player since it was, in fact, a Thakin faction in military garb. The ascension to power of Ne Win and the Tatmadaw therefore represented the usurpation of power by a partisan political player, rather than a temporary intervention in politics by patriotic officers and idealistic military "reformers" intent on cleaning up the "mess". The aim of the "military" Thakins was, instead, to complete the Dobama "revolution" abandoned by the AFPFL Thakins.

It must here be stressed that Ne Win's Tatmadaw "socialism", as expounded in "The System of Correlation of Man and his Environment" and the "Burmese Way to Socialism", was nothing new, as noted by R.H.Taylor(11), nor very inspiring insofar as other socialist-ethnonationalist Thakins and the Burman public were concerned(12). Moreover, the AFPFL state was, to a large extent, already a socialist one, with the state owning and operating all public utilities, and in control of, and dominating, important sectors of the economy -- a reality which Ne Win and many scholars overlooked. In fact, the AFPFL had nationalized those economic sectors that were worthwhile, and
numerous state enterprises and boards had been in operation for
some time, such as the State Agricultural Marketing Board (SAMB),
State Timber Board (STB), the Rubber Exporter Corporation, the
Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), Civil Supplies
Management Board (CSMB), the Joint Venture Trading Corporations
(JVCs), the State Pawnshop Management Board, and so on(13).

The "Burmese Way to Socialism" formula did not,
therefore, represent anything very new, nor did it help boost the
legitimacy of the Tatmadaw regime(14), or win for it popular
support, although it did render impotent significant actors from
within the Burman segment, in particular the deposed AFPFL elites
and the communist Thakins. Conversely, this also meant that Ne
Win and the Tatmadaw deprived themselves of their support.
Instead, "Tatmadaw socialism" stiffened resistance in the non-
Burman ethnic homelands where socialism was unappealing,
especially since the non-Burman had not been, from the beginning,
very much influenced by the Dobama creed.

Ne Win's Tatmadaw socialism and the military's Dobama
Burman ethnonationalism not only alienated and excluded the non-
Burman segments, but its nationalization measures and prejudice
against "foreigners" similarly affected the Indian, Chinese, and
Eurasian segments, which more or less comprised the commercial
and professional strata in Burma. These segments were expelled,
compelled to emigrate, and discriminated against. The Kachin,
Karen, Mon, Shan, Arakanese, etc., for their part, increasingly came to form various ethnic resistance armies.

Ne Win and the Tatmadaw leaders, therefore, found themselves, virtually from the onset of their rule, politically isolated(15). The only group they were able to co-opt was the handful of "aboveground" communists, such as U Ba Nyein, Thakin Chit Maung, and Thakin Thein Pe Myint who had no substantial following. And the regime's drastic nationalization measures of 1962-1964, encouraged by these communist "theoreticians", no doubt, resulted in immediate widespread shortages and, subsequently, in economic stagnation. These measures not only disrupted the normal functioning of the existing economy, but caused the flight of capital and loss of human skills. As well, there were in Burma, as in most Third World economies, very few "capitalist" assets in the first place(16). The existing economic pie was too small for it to be redistributed drastically, nor was it large enough, when expropriated, to serve as a base for "socialist construction"(17).

Having seized power at gunpoint, Ne Win needed to maintain his hold over the very instrument which handed him the reins -- the Tatmadaw. This was all the more imperative since he had alienated and/or excluded all non-military actors from the political process, and had, as well, delegitimized all economic activities and political aspirations, which further dissipated whatever support the regime might have had. The Tatmadaw itself
was therefore purged by Ne Win of independent-minded subordinates and potential rivals so that no one remained who could challenge him from within. The Tatmadaw was thus, through a series of purges, transformed subsequently into a personal instrument of Ne Win.

Once the Tatmadaw was patrimonialized, it was inevitable that all the executive organs, power apparatuses, state corporations and agencies, and various "representative" bodies within the state which the Tatmadaw monopolized, including the "ruling-party", the Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) and its organs and appendages, would follow suit. It must be emphasized that the patrimonialization of the whole power system within the polity is not unique to Burma, nor should this phenomenon be associated solely with despotic rule and military regimes. As observed by A.Zolberg, S.P. Huntington, C.E. Welch, C. Clapham, R.Jackson and C.Rosberg, it is a phenomenon, varying only in degree, quite common to most Third World polities, regardless of whether they are ruled by legitimate leaders, or by rulers like Idi Amin and Ne Win, for example, who possessed little legitimacy.

Thus, in Burma, the whole BSPP state became the private domain of Ne Win, and served as a resource base of his power. All positions and posts within the state edifice and power apparatuses were transformed into rewards for favored Tatmadaw members, and as means of livelihood for those in the
lower echelon, the less favored, and even those purged. The latter were given posts in the less important state-party apparatuses and agencies, while those favored received plum posts in the upper reaches of the patrimonial hierarchy. The result was that the whole Tatmadaw became, as it were, Ne Win's Praetorian Guard, and he, in turn, came increasingly to be revered as Aba, the revered father, who "looked after his own" -- the man to whom all "soldiers" owed their everything(20). Hence, as stated in proposition five, the Tatmadaw's coherence and unity was ensured by Aba Ne Win who, as the "revered father", rewarded and punished his "children", and most importantly, ensured the livelihood and comfort of even those purged or who had otherwise outlived their usefulness.

Thus there has been created in Burma under Ne Win's Tatmadaw dictatorship, as stated in proposition seven of this thesis, a configuration of "an excluded, alienated, and helpless populace, counterpoised against a highly autonomous state resting on military power organized in position of support for the regime and the state". Ne Win's "modern" and "socialist" Burma has come to resemble, in many ways, the pre-colonial Burman kingdom where all meaningful power rested in the hands of one man, the king, whose power, in turn, was based on his control of a special class of men, the Ahmudan, composed of crown-serfs (of laborers and military men), organized into regiments or Azu, completely dependent on the crown, and segregated from the rest of the population who, in the Burman kingdom, existed "in the base layer
of the system] as subscribers to capricious laws and dictates" of the king and the king's men(21).

Such a configuration, observable in the late twentieth century Burma, is the consequence of two interrelated variables which have been observed by scholars studying "new" states in Africa, such as N. Chazan, and V. Azarya, and by R. McVey, a Southeast Asian scholar. The two variables are, on one hand, the disengagement and withdrawal of the populace or society from the state to "shield themselves from the state's harmful consequences"(22), and on the other, the contraction of the state and the withdrawal of all political resources to the top, thus reducing "the strain on the system by shutting out lesser claimants to power"(23).

The interaction of the two variables meant that the state leaders in Burma had, as stated in proposition six, only "a narrow constituency to cater to, or to manage, control, and reward, and in other ways ensure the loyalty of", which better enabled Ne Win and his subordinates to "maintain their dominance and more efficiently fend off challenges from below". This explains both the longevity of the regime, as well as the political and economic decay in Burma. The narrowing of the base of power and "bare reliance on command from above", on the one hand, and the disengagement of society from the state, on the other, resulted in their mutual alienation which necessitated the employment by the state and its leaders of more coercion, or,
what Eugene Walter terms, the "destructive methods of power" in Burma -- the imposition of a rule of terror to inhibit resistance or opposition, and compel obedience and compliance, the mechanism of which has been described in detail in Chapter V.

What have been viewed as grave symptoms of Burma's de-development as seen in the long drawn-out internal war in the non-Burman peripheries, the systematic repression of society, and economic decline, contributing to the trade in contraband and narcotics and a blackmarket which constitutes a sizable unofficial economy, have ironically contributed to the power-stability of the regime. These symptoms of de-development have provided Tatmadaw members and officers with opportunities for career advancement, personal enrichment through extortion and corruption, and influence building (i.e., building a patron-client bureaucratic empire to buttress one's position in the patrimonial hierarchy), and this has bound them closer to the regime, and conversely, has given them a stake in perpetuating, what one would regard as the country's woes, in the manner of a se-saya (healer) nurturing the yaw-ga (disease) in order to make more money from the patient, as goes an old saying in Burma. This is a classic and extreme example of the maintainence of power purchased at the price of political and economic decay.
(c) Concluding Observations

The process of de-development in both the economic and political spheres in Burma, which began in the early 1960s, has now reached a very advanced stage. The "institution" which outside observers have sometimes praised as a socialist, "modernizing", state- and nation-building "professional" body, the Tatmadaw, is in fact nothing but a partisan political faction of the "military" Thakins, which, in the process of executing the will of its patron-in-chief, Aba Ne Win, for more than twenty-eight years, has been transformed into his patrimonial Praetorian Guard, owing loyalty and obligation to none but Ne Win and itself. As in pre-colonial kingdoms, which are, basically, what one could describe as a form of "Asiatic despotism", the "government" in Burma (and in many Third World countries) has become "separated" from the society it is supposed to protect and administer. Instead, government has become, as in medieval times, a golden palace symbolizing cosmic harmony, and the elite's source of wealth, which society is obliged to serve, as well as one of the Five Enemies of Mankind, an elemental force beyond the ken of mere mortals, which must therefore be endured and propitiated on suitable occasions. On the part of those at the top, "governance" has become a right -- a right which is theirs by virtue of their superior might.
Such is the extent of de-development in Burma that the likelihood of arresting this process, regardless of the amount of "development" aid and economic assistance that is made available, is, contrary to conventional expectations, infinitesimal. Well-intentioned and highly-motivated foreign assistance has proved counter-productive, at least in Burma, and has reinforced de-development. However, there is a possibility that once Ne Win exits from the political stage, the Tatmadaw, because it would lack a super-patron with Ne Win's superior political skills, might be inclined, or compelled, to accommodate other Burman elite factions, such as those led by Aungsan Suu-kyi (the daughter of the Tatmadaw's own hero, Aung San), Aung Gyi, Tin U (former MIS head, recently released from prison), old-time leaders like U Nu and others. It is possible, in such a scenario, that various non-Burman "war leaders", such as Brang Seng (Kachin), Bo Mya (Karen), and so on, may emerge as junior partners of a new "Burmese" coalition.

This is not to say that the Tatmadaw would abandon its agenda or give up its position as the ruling class, and it might even attempt to perpetuate the terror process which has been crucial to its dominance. It would indeed be more compelling for the Tatmadaw to do so, especially since the threat of civilian retribution for the various massacres in 1988, and earlier ones, now hangs more heavily over the heads of its leaders. However, without Ne Win, the Tatmadaw's solidarity and cohesion might be difficult to maintain, for it is a patrimonial and parochical
organization which has so far been united by the skills of Ne Win, and the abject fear of Aba, not unmixed with respect and gratitude.

There is, therefore, no question of the military "returning to the barracks", since the whole country, including the state itself, has become its private domain. Its main problem would be that of retaining its superordinate position and its terror process without a master-manipulator and super-patron to reinforce its solidarity after Ne Win departs. Its difficulty is further compounded by the fact that so long as Ne Win lives, no heir apparent will be allowed to emerge who could later take control.

It is difficult, if not potentially misleading, to make bold political predictions for some Third World states, because their politics are basically the product of interactions between personal elite factions operating in an institutional vacuum where rational calculations make little sense, and carry lesser weight than the skills and ability of men to manipulate other men. Also, the settings are such that power is restrained not by institutionalized patterns and boundaries, or law, but, as noted by R. Jackson and C. Rosberg, only by the countervailing power of other men.

Nevertheless, some possible scenarios can be ventured. It is likely that the process of de-development in Burma will continue, but, possibly in a different form. It is ventured
that without Ne Win, the terror process will be moderated, and one or several "military" factions will try to reach some accommodation with the more prominent Burman elite factions. An arrangement, ensuring the Tatmadaw its special position as a superordinate power, could be worked out by a new Burman elite coalition amidst the rising praetorian tide resulting from the moderation of the terror process. And, depending on personalistic factors, there could, in the long run, arise in Burma, a business-military coalition which would eventually establish in Burma a "bureaucratic-authoritarian" regime such as in Thailand, Indonesia, Taiwan and South Korea, leading in time to what could be termed, a patrimonial-oligarchic "semi-democracy". Or there could occur, although it is now far-fetched, a people's power revolution led by skilled elites committed to democracy and unafraid of "the people" (a fear which has afflicted many Third World elites and rulers), which would eventually transform Burma into a genuinely democratic and free society. However, given Burma's past, there could also begin anew, what has been termed, a Burmese despotic cycle.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER SIX

1. Here, the term "military" includes former military men as well since they are provided with access to the preferences and privileges enjoyed by those on active service, although perhaps to a lesser degree. Most former military men, even those purged, are given jobs and positions either in the party or in the state apparatuses, agencies, and enterprises.

2. The earliest ethnic uprising occurred in Arakan in 1947 led by a monk U Sein Da, allied to Thakin Soe's Red Flag Communists. The Karen uprising began in 1949, and shortly after, the Mon, PaO (in the Shan State), and the Karenni joined in. The Shan State erupted in a spontaneous peasant uprising led by a Wa national and an officer of the Armed Police, Bo Mong, in 1959. The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) emerged in 1960, led by Zau Seng, a former Captain, and his two brothers, Zau Tu and Zau Tan.

3. As observed by Aristide Zolberg, Donald Rothchild, Naomi Chazan, V. Azarya, and Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg, and a host of scholars writing on military intervention and Third World politics in general, such as S.P. Huntington, W.Wriggins, Gerald A.Heeger, Christopher Clapham, Joel Migdal, Samuel Finer, Henry Bienen, Claude E.Welch, Ruth McVey, and so forth, on which the theoretical framework in Chapter III of this thesis is based.

4. These were the BCP (Burma Communist Party, or the White Flags) of Thakin Than Tun; the CPB (Communist Party of Burma, or the Red Flags) of Thakin Soe; the leftist faction of the PVO (People's Volunteer Organization), and "aboveground" communists, such as Thakin Thein Pe Myint, Thakin Chit Maung, U Ba Nyein, and so on.

5. From the viewpoint of the Kachin, Shan, Karenni, Chin, Karen, and other non-Burman segments, the Tatmadaw's "state- and nation-building" activities represented Burman interference with and violation of their autonomy and rights as recognized and insured by the 1947 Panglong Agreement, and the 1947-1948 Constitution. The bullying and predatory behaviour of Burman soldiers, and the military's exercise of arbitrary power, by the MIS especially, in the non-Burman areas alienated the state governments and the populace as well. The Tatmadaw, wedded to Dobama ethnonationalism, viewed as intolerable the autonomy and rights of territorial-ethnic groups. And convinced that it was the military and the Burman segment which "fought for" and "won" independence, the Tatmadaw believed that the non-Burmans should not enjoy what it viewed as "special rights".

6. The military has been, it must be recognized, a long-time powerful player in Burma's politics, as evident from the role it assumed for itself as the guardian, protector, agent,
and vanguard of the "Burmese" state, penetrating into regions out of the AFPFL's reach in both the Burman and the non-Burman areas, and ruling directly in many cases. What outsiders observed during the caretaker period, 1958-1960, such as the Tatmadaw's economic empire represented by the Defence Services Institute (DSI), its Security and Administrative Councils (SACs) which administered the country, and the National Solidarity Associations (NSA) which mobilized the people against insurgents, were obviously not overnight creations. They were the end-products of the Tatmadaw's power accumulation efforts in the first decade of independence. Of the independent agencies constructed by the military, only the "Em-Eye" (Military Intelligence Service), Ne Win's most important and effective instrument of control and domination, remained, strangely, unnoticed by outsiders. This is quite puzzling because the "Em-Eye", had been active for some time before 1958, and was well-known and dreaded by the populace.

7. It is quite inexplicable, in my opinion, that many have overlooked the fact that military organizations are based on strict hierarchy of command, with their own laws, and with a penchant to the use of force to secure desired results. When Third World militaries seize power, they are prone, therefore, to exercise power arbitrarily in the political sphere. Most Third World militaries are, in fact, merely armed bodies of men owing loyalty foremostly to "the army" and are often required to be treated with great tact and circumspection by civilian powerholders.

8. In Burma, even Aung San, the most "charismatic" Burman leader, engaged in a great deal of accommodation, not only with the non-Burman ruling elites of the "Frontier Areas", but with other Burman factions as well. He consulted and cooperated with non-Thakin figures, such as with Dr. Ba Maw during the war, and afterwards with U Tin Tut (a British-appointed senior civil servant), Dedok U Ba Choe, U Razak, Mahn Ba Khaing, and even Saw Ba U Gyi, the Karen leader most distrustful of Aung San and the AFPFL. Within the Thakin movement itself, Aung San accommodated a variety of personalities and factions in order to maintain a facade of unity during the negotiations for independence.

9. One plausible reason for this may stem from the fact that communist rulers, like military ones, attain power at the head of organizations conditioned to follow orders from above, not unlike the armed forces, and display similar impatience with and intolerance for lesser elites and rivals.

10. This is a claim politicians, especially illegitimate rulers and despots, are fond of making, and is frequently trotted out to justify the usurpation of power, and all manner of state violence and terror. The fact of the matter is, however, that very few countries have fallen physically apart in the last quarter of this century, except Pakistan when
Bangladesh emerged (in 1970). This was due to the convergence of several strategic-political factors, the most crucial one was that the East was already physically separated from the Western wing by India. Lebanon and Sri Lanka have not, however, disintegrated nor disappeared though they have been split into two or more armed and warring camps for quite some time.


12. For most people in Burma, the Tatmadaw's Burmese Way to Socialism was a repetition in a different combination of the standard rhetoric of every post-1948 politician. It was "stale wine in new bottle", peddled by a set of more dangerous armed salesmen. The formula had very little positive impact on a large sector of the public, for example, the non-Burman segment, and the Burman peasantry, and, as well, the professional and the commercial strata of the population.

13. For an account of the nationalization measures, or "indigenism" dealing mainly with the AFPFL period, see "Burma" in Frank H. Golay, et.al, ed. UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC NATIONALISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp.203-65 (Chapter 4).

14. It is interesting to speculate on the possible outcomes of Aung Gyi's "entrepreneurial socialism" had he won the day in 1962. Burma might have achieved some economic growth through a marriage of convenience between soldiers and businessmen. There might have been established a "bureaucratic-authoritarian", but patrimonial (and oligarchical) regime as in Thailand, Indonesia, Taiwan, and South Korea. But, on the other hand, given the leftist Dobama tradition (at a time when "socialism" was not yet discredited), and with the BCP still intact, given China's anxieties the over escalating U.S.presence in Vietnam and Laos, and Mao's cultural-revolution radicalism, it is also likely that the far-left in Burma might have, under Thakin Than Tun's leadership, gained a strong foothold in the crucial Burman areas. Also, much would have depended on how Aung Gyi fashioned his personal rule, and on how skilfully he could have won over and neutralized the lesser elites and other societal groups (in contrast to Ne Win's style of neutralizing and excluding them).
15. The Burman segment, especially the civilian bureaucrats, workers, and the peasants initially appeared to have accepted Ne Win's military rule, and did not appear alienated. But, it must be remembered that numerous student-led protests, workers strikes, and the withdrawal by peasants from the state-controlled economy (i.e., reverting to subsistence agriculture and dealing with the blackmarket, for example), occurred almost at once. Also, the split within the BCP of Thakin Than Tun, who was popular with the peasantry, and its bloody disintegration, deprived the Burman peasants of leadership. The neutralization of the BCP, as related previously, was the result of Ne Win's skillful manipulation of the Dobama "socialist" creed.

16. Actually, the largest indigenous "capitalist" enterprise then was the military's own Defence Services Industries (DSI). It should also be noted that the AFPFL was also committed to "socialism" and nationalization. Therefore, what the "socialist" military regime nationalized were mainly the economic and commercial activities which the AFPFL deemed as unprofitable or not significant enough to take over, such as the retail trade, small family enterprises, barber shops, street corner stores, and internal trade in agricultural products and produce.

17. In view of the failure of Marxist socialism in the "Socialist bloc", including the Soviet Union, now evident and admitted by socialist rulers and managers themselves, the attempt by Ne Win and the Tatmadaw to construct a "socialist order" in Burma must perhaps be seen as foredoomed right from the start. For a complex and compelling analysis of the failure of socialism in Eastern Europe, see Ferenc Feher, Agnes Heller, and Gyorgy Markus, DICTATORSHIP OVER NEEDS (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983). The authors are self-admitted socialists who argue that socialism has been transformed (corrupted) into a form of dictatorship (i.e., "dictatorship over needs") by various communist parties and "managers of socialist enterprises" due to their excessive concern with central planning and state control (pp.16-19). The result has been, according to the authors, the "dictatorship over needs" which is "neither a novel, modified form of state capitalism", nor socialism, but a social formation "completely different" from any that has existed in history to date. It is a self producing social order in which many transitory elements (for example, charismatic legitimation of rulers, antagonistic class dichotomy, totalitarian tendencies, oligarchic trends, Asiatic despotism, traditional autocratic norms and values, and so forth) are "constitutive of and indispensable for its functioning" (p.221). It is a response to capitalism and its contradictions. In the final analysis, it is not socialism, but a "historical dead-end" (p.221).

18. That is, the Council of State, the Council of Ministers, the whole administrative and bureaucratic machinery, all state boards and corporations, the Pyithu Hluttdaw (the
national legislature), all local administrative-political people's councils (pyithu gaungs1), the people's courts and inspectorates, and so forth.

19. As far as the "Burmese" public was concerned, Ne Win was a "flawed" character known for wining and dining women or marrying and divorcing them frequently, and as a man who regularly bet on horses, and abandoned his first wife. In political circles, he was never considered a master player of the game (which he, in reality, undoubtedly is), until the early-1970s when U Nu, considered a skilled politician, and genuinely popular, failed to overthrow Ne Win from guerrilla bases on the Thai-Burma border. This is not to say that Ne Win lacked the mystique usually surrounding long-lived rulers. He was, in fact, abjectly feared and revered by his "children", the armed Ahmudan (servicemen). The public viewed him as a powerful, intolerant, and dangerous ruler who owed his position to strong magic and astrology, and believed that he frequently practiced yadaya-che magical rites which pre-empted approaching harm and misfortune. It can be said that Ne Win reinforced the traditional and popular perception of rulers and governments as being the most dangerous of the Five Enemies of Mankind.

20. Such sentiments were expressed by General Saw Maung, the Chairman of the SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council), in an interview with foreign journalists. See "Saw Maung: 'I Saved Burma'", Interview, ASIAWEEK (January 27,1989), pp.24-5. Also see "SLORC Chairman General Saw Maung Meets Local and Foreign Journalists", NEWS OF MYANMAR, Special Issue (July 1989), Washington: The Embassy of the Union of Myanmar, p.6. Moreover, former Brigadier Aung Gyi, who was purged soon after the 1962 coup, jailed many times by Ne Win, and who figured prominently in the 1988 "people's uprising", also referred to Ne Win thusly: "he is like my godfather" and "he has been the prime father-like figure in the army". See "Ne Win Wants an Election", Interview with Aung Gyi, ASIAWEEK (October 21,1988), pp.4-5. Sentiments of gratitude for one's patron or benefactor is a common cultural trait, at least in Asia. But this norm, which has its positive side, has been almost uniformly abused by rulers and leaders, thus contributing to the de-institutionalization of many Third World political systems. In the Tatmadaw, there is scant awareness, even among the officer class, that soldiers are the armed servants of the state, thus owing loyalty to the state rather than to "the army" or Ne Win. From social dealings with former army officers, it appears to me that their loyalty is to Ne Win, "the army", the Burman "race", their family and kin, friends and colleagues, in the order mentioned.

21. See, Mya Maung, "The Burma Road to Poverty: A Socio-political Analysis", THE FLETCHER FORUM OF WORLD AFFAIRS, Summer 1989, p.293. He was, in fact, referring to the current plight of the populace under Ne Win's rule, and he is quoted here
to highlight the striking similarity between present-day and pre-colonial Burma.

22. V. Azarya, "Reordering State-Society Relations: Incorporation and Disengagement", in D. Rothchild and N. Chazan, ed. THE PRECARIOUS BALANCE: STATE AND SOCIETY IN AFRICA (Boulder: Westview, 1988), p. 8. Also see N. Chazan, "Patterns of State-Society Incorporation and Disengagement in Africa", in THE PRECARIOUS BALANCE, op cit, p. 123. Disengagement and withdrawal from the state on the part of society is characterized by keeping a distance from the state, evasion and dissimulation, moving away from the state-cash nexus to a subsistence economy or to the blackmarkets and smuggling, the diversion of production away from state control, distrust of laws and ordinances, satire and ridicule of the state, retreat into ethnic identity or a narrower solidarity, the flight of human and capital resources. In the more active and extreme forms, disengagement may be manifested as strikes, protest marches, armed resistance, attempted secession, and so forth.

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