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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

Case No.: 200701753

MAR 25 2010

I refer to your letter dated March 11, 2007 regarding the release of certain Department of State material under the Freedom of Information Act (Title 5 USC Section 552).

We searched for and reviewed the self study guides that you requested and have determined that all except one of them may be released. They are on the enclosed disc. One of the guides is being released with excisions.

An enclosure provides information on Freedom of Information Act exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made excisions, the applicable exemptions are marked on each document. With respect to material withheld by the Department of State, you have the right to appeal our determination within 60 days. A copy of the appeals procedures is enclosed.

We have now completed the processing of your case. If you have any questions, you may write to the Office of Information Programs and Services, SA-2, Department of State, Washington, DC 20522-8100, or telephone us at (202) 261-8484. Please be sure to refer to the case number shown above in all correspondence about this case.

We hope that the Department has been of service to you in this matter.

Sincerely,

for Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures:
As stated.

63934 Federal Register/Vol. 69, No. 212
Rules and Regulations

Subpart F – Appeal Procedures

§171.52 Appeal of denial of access to, declassification of, amendment of, accounting of disclosures of, or challenge to classification of records.

(a) *Right of administrative appeal.* Except for records that have been reviewed and withheld within the past two years or are the subject of litigation, any requester whose request for access to records, declassification of records, amendment of records, accounting of disclosure of records, or any authorized holder of classified information whose classification challenge has been denied, has a right to appeal the denial to the Department's Appeals Review Panel. This appeal right includes the right to appeal the determination by the Department that no records responsive to an access request exist in Department files. Privacy Act appeals may be made only by the individual to whom the records pertain.

(b) *Form of appeal.* There is no required form for an appeal. However, it is essential that the appeal contain a clear statement of the decision or determination by the Department being appealed. When possible, the appeal should include argumentation and documentation to support the appeal and to contest the bases for denial cited by the Department. The appeal should be sent to: Chairman, Appeals Review Panel, c/o Appeals Officer, A/GIS/IPS/PP/LC, U.S. Department of State, SA-2, Room 8100, Washington, DC 20522-8100.

(c) *Time limits.* The appeal should be received within 60 days of the date of receipt by the requester of the Department's denial. The time limit for response to an appeal begins to run on the day that the appeal is received. The time limit (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) for agency decision on an administrative appeal is 20 days under the FOIA (which may be extended for up to an additional 10 days in unusual circumstances) and 30 days under the Privacy Act (which the Panel may extend an additional 30 days for good cause shown). The Panel shall decide mandatory declassification review appeals as promptly as possible.

(d) *Notification to appellant.* The Chairman of the Appeals Review Panel shall notify the appellant in writing of the Panel's decision on the appeal. When the decision is to uphold the denial, the Chairman shall include in his notification the reasons therefore. The appellant shall be advised that the decision of the Panel represents the final decision of the Department and of the right to seek judicial review of the Panel's decision, when applicable. In mandatory declassification review appeals, the Panel shall advise the requester of the right to appeal the decision to the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel under §3.5(d) of E.O. 12958.

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

(b)(1) Withholding specifically authorized under an Executive Order in the interest of national defense or foreign policy, and properly classified. E.O. 12958, as amended, includes the following classification categories:

- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
- 1.4(b) Foreign government information
- 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
- 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
- 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
- 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
- 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
- 1.4(h) Information on weapons of mass destruction

(b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency

(b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:

ARMEX	Arms Export Control Act, 22 USC 2778(e)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g)
EXPORT	Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 App. USC 2411(c)(1)
FSA	Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4003 & 4004
INA	Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f)
IRAN	Iran Claims Settlement Act, Sec 505, 50 USC 1701, note

(b)(4) Privileged/confidential trade secrets, commercial or financial information from a person

(b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product

(b)(6) Information that would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy

(b)(7) Information compiled for law enforcement purposes that would:

- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
- (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
- (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
- (D) disclose confidential sources
- (E) disclose investigation techniques
- (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual

(b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions

(b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request, excised with the agreement of the requester

BURMA

SELF STUDY GUIDE

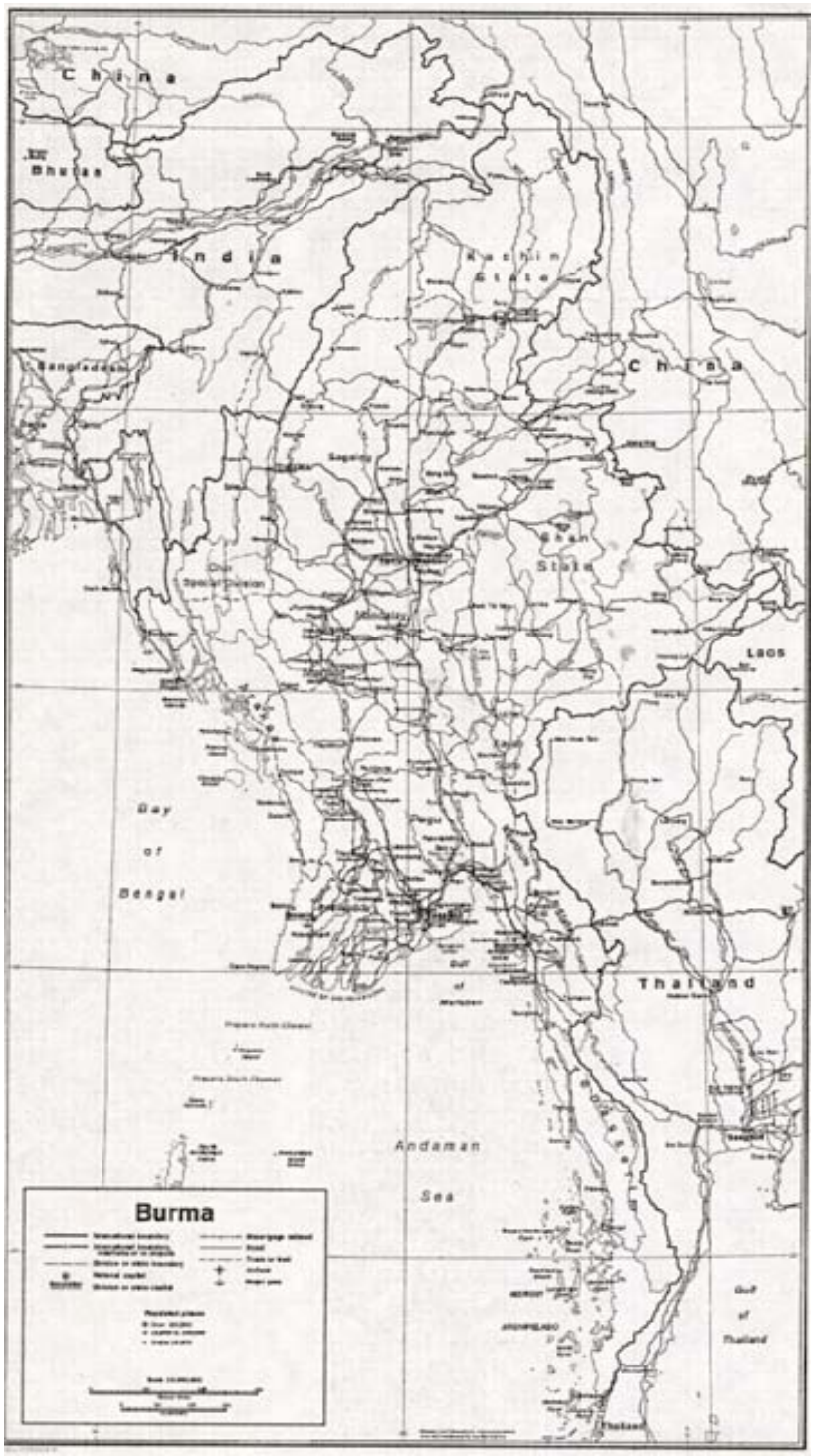
NATIONAL FOREIGN AFFAIRS
TRAINING CENTER

School of Professional and Area Studies
Foreign Service Institute
U.S. Department of State

The **Self-Study Guide: Burma** is intended to provide U.S. Government personnel in the foreign affairs community with an overview of important issues related to history, geography, politics, religion, culture, economics, and international relations. The guide serves as an introduction and should be used a self-study resource. Burma is far too complex and diverse a society to be covered in any depth using only the text in this guide. Therefore, the reader is encouraged to explore the questions and issues introduced using the Internet site guide and articles and books listed in the bibliography. Most of the bibliographic material can be found either on the Internet or in the Foreign Service Institute or Main State Libraries.

The first edition of this Guide was prepared in 2001 by Dr. Josef Silverstein, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Rutgers University. The second edition includes updated information provided by David Jensen, Coordinator for Southeast Asia Studies at the Foreign Service Institute of the National Foreign Affairs Training Center. The views expressed in this guide are those of the authors and attributable sources and do not necessarily reflect official policy or positions of the Department of State or the National Foreign Affairs Training Center

Second Edition
March 2006


China
Bhutan
India
Kachin State
China
Bangladesh
Shan State
Laos
Bay of Bengal
Thailand
Andaman Sea
Gulf of Thailand
Burma

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GEOGRAPHY

A. THE LAND

Burma[1] is the westernmost nation in Southeast Asia. It shares a common border with India and Bangladesh to its west, and with China, Laos and Thailand to its north and east. Burma extends south and southwest to the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. The modern state of Burma encompasses approximately 262,000 square miles; it is approximately the size of the State of Texas and about twice the size of Japan. Lying between the northern latitudes of 10 and 28, most of the land mass and population centers are in the tropics.

The country has two distinctive geographical features. First, its most prominent feature is the north-south valleys, mountains and rivers. Burma's longest and most significant river is the Irrawaddy, which flows from the northeast south to the Andaman Sea. The Chindwin River, which begins in the northwest of Burma, is a tributary of Irrawaddy. The confluence of the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin Rivers is near the town of Myingyan in central Burma. The Irrawaddy and the Chindwin are navigable for 900 and 400 miles respectively; both can be used for commerce throughout the year. The Sittang River lies in the eastern part of Burma. Its origin lies in central Burma, flows through the area east of the Pegu Yomas, and empties into the Gulf of Martaban. The Sittang is important for irrigation but only has limited commercial value as a navigable waterway, because of its changing currents and natural obstructions. The fourth important river is the Salween River; it rises in Tibet, passes through Yunnan, China, and flows southward through the eastern hill states of Burma and empties into the Andaman Sea near Moulmein. Parts of the Salween serve as the border between Burma and Thailand. It cannot be used for extensive travel because of rapids and other obstructions. The Salween is important as a means for floating teak and other commercial logs to seaports at its mouth.

Because the major lines of communications follow the contours of the land and rivers, the early important cities and towns were located along a north-south axis. Several capitals of the Burman Empire were located on the Irrawaddy River near its confluence with the Chindwin, approximately 400 miles from the sea. After the British conquest, the capital was shifted to the banks of the Rangoon River near the mouth of the Irrawaddy River and the cities along the south and southwestern coast became the loci of administration, trade and commerce.

Second, the country is naturally divided into two distinct areas: the delta and plains and the Tenasserim form lower and central Burma; the upper Irrawaddy valley and the semicircle of

[1] On May 27, 1989, the military rulers of Burma decreed that the nation's name be changed to "Myanmar." This was one of many name changes made by the military rulers to eliminate the last vestiges of British colonial rule (1824-1948). "Myanmar" is used by the government and appears in all documents and newspapers in the country. However, in international documents and in diplomatic correspondence, opponents use the name "Burma" in defiance of the regime. In this Guide, the name "Burma" will be used and the name "Myanmar" will appear only if it relates to a document or contained in a speech.

hills and mountains in the north form upper Burma. The political and cultural heartland of the Burmans[2] is located in central Burma. Lower Burma and the delta is the home of the Pyu and Mon peoples, who preceded the Burmans, establishing their villages and political centers in the coastal region of lower Burma. In the 18th century, the Burmans defeated the Mon and, later, the Arakanese, who lived in the southwest coastal region, and united the territories under their rule.

The Irrawaddy valley is the center of the Burman population. The greatest concentrations live in and around Rangoon and Mandalay. Thousands of pagodas erected during the Pagan era, still standing today, attest to the handiwork of the Burmans and the importance of Buddhism as their faith and inspiration.

The hills and mountains to the north, west, and east protect central and lower Burma from neighbor states. This area is the least developed in Burma and is sparsely populated by a variety of ethnic groups.

The hills and border regions are rich in minerals and timber. With only primitive roads and bridges across gorges and rivers, resource extraction and travel in these areas is difficult.

Today, upper Burma is connected to the central and southern regions of the country by river, rail, road, and air transport. China and India are accessible via traditional roads and modern air transport; prior to the Second World War the all-weather "Burma Road" was constructed, connecting China and Burma. In recent years, roads in the hill areas have been strengthened and resurfaced for all-weather use to sustain passage by heavy trucks and military equipment. The traditional homelands of many of the indigenous groups of this area straddle the international borders and the peoples have closer ties with their ethnic kin in China and India than with the lowland settlers of central and lower Burma. Following World War II, the upper and lower regions of the country united to form the modern state of Burma.

B. WEATHER

Two-thirds of Burma lies within the tropical zone and is subject to annual monsoons. The country experiences three seasons: the wet (mid-May to mid-October), the dry (mid-October to March), and the hot (March to mid-May). During the wet season, the monsoon blows from the southwest across the Bay of Bengal, delivering approximately 200 inches of rain annually in the coastal areas of Arakan and Tenasserim. The delta plains of the Irrawaddy River receive

[2] Consistent with scholarly and popular usage, "Burman" is used as the ethnic term for the majority group, while "Burmese" is used as the political term for all the inhabitants of the country.

approximately 100 inches during the same period. The central area of Burma (the dry zone) receives approximately 25 to 50 inches of rainfall annually. The rain in this region is irregular, making farming difficult in areas without supplemental irrigation. Approximately 80 to 90 inches of rain fall annually on the Shan plateau and in the Kachin State. In far-northern Kachin, the mountains around Putao reach 20,000 feet and are snow capped most of the year.

Burma experiences a variety of temperatures from the delta and coast in the south to the high mountains in the northern Kachin State. During the cold, dry season, the temperature in lower Burma ranges between 67-88 degrees (F), in central Burma, 58-84 degrees (F), and in northern Burma, 55-76 degrees (F). Humidity is generally low during this time. In the hot, dry season, the temperature in the lower region ranges between 75-95 degrees (F), in the central region, 75-98 degrees (F), and in the north, 65-88 degrees (F). In the wet season in lower Burma, it is between 76–86 degrees (F), in central Burma, 77-91 degrees (F) and in the north, 74-87 degrees (F) with high humidity at low elevations.

C. NATURAL RESOURCES

Burma has an abundance of natural resources. The regular seasonal rainfall and rich soils allow for extensive food production—including rice, millet, beans, and fruit—both for domestic consumption and for export. On the Shan plain in the temperate zone, fruits, vegetables, tea, and coffee are grown. Farmers in the Shan State have a sericulture industry and produce silk cloth for domestic use.

Burma's forests are high in biodiversity. These forests contain the largest stands of teak wood in mainland Southeast Asia, as well as other hard and softwoods and bamboo. These are valuable resources for export. Until recently, the forests were well managed and cutting was controlled. However, in recent decades, legal and illegal cutting of the most valuable hard woods has occurred. Forests are fast disappearing as timber firms and poachers cut other trees to access the teak stands.

Before World War II, Burma was the second largest exporter of oil in Southeast Asia. At the outset of the Second World War, Burma sabotaged machinery with the intent to deny oil to the Japanese. In the post-war period, oil never again became a major commodity either for domestic use or export. During the 1990s, natural gas was discovered in large quantity offshore in the Andaman Sea. With the application of modern technology, additional gas fields have been located. This reserve will be an important energy and revenue source for Burma in the future.

The coastal waters in southern Burma contain plentiful fish stocks. In the pre-World War II period, fish paste and salt fish were in demand both for domestic consumption and export. Today, shell fish is harvested, frozen, and packed while fleets are out to sea; once the boats return to harbor, the catch is sold throughout the world. Burma also is developing fish farms in the coastal areas of lower Burma and raising and exporting shrimp. With an expanding worldwide market faced with depleting global fish stocks, the farms are seen as a more

sustainable alternative. Also, along the coast of Tenasserim is an abundance of pearl producing oysters. The pearls are of high quality and in demand by international jewelers.

Burma is well endowed with minerals, concentrated in the sparsely populated border areas and in the hills and mountains in upper Burma. Tin, tungsten, lead, silver and copper, jade, and other precious stones are common. Tin and tungsten also are found in the Kayah State and in Tavoy, in the south. In the l950s, coal was discovered in the western part of Burma proper and in the Chin Hills. In 2001, new large copper deposits were also discovered in upper Burma. The export of these and other minerals are an important source of income for the government, but little of this revenue reaches the local labor force. Due to the internal wars and political unrest in the minority areas, full exploration of Burma's natural resources has not yet been undertaken. But once internal security is guaranteed, Burma's abundance of minerals and other natural resources will generate income for decades to come.

Discussion Questions

1. Is it in the interests of Burma's government to encourage migration from the crowded urban areas to the sparsely populated central and northern regions of the country? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this policy?

2. Before the Second World War, Burma was the largest exporter of rice. Could Burma reclaim its market share? How?

3. If the state could only find a single sector of the economy, what would be the benefits and drawbacks of investment in agriculture versus natural resources?

4. What is the importance of the three-season pattern of weather to the economy of Burma?

5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of adopting Burmese English or some other local or international language as Burma's national language?

Suggested Readings

In the last two decades there have been no new authoritative sources on Burma geography. In addition to Item 1 in the Bibliography, consider the following:

1. Knappen Tibbet Abbett McCarthy, *Economic and Engineering Development of Burma,* Aylesbury, Hazell, Watson &Viney, Ltd., l953, Chapter I.
2. E.H.G. Dobby, *Southeast Asia.* London, University of London Press Ltd., l961, Chaps. 9, 10, 11.
3. Reference works: *The Far East and Austrialasia*; any year, beginning

with the first edition published in 1969. Also, The Encyclopaedia Americana and The Encyclopaedia Britannica.

HISTORY

A. EARLY HISTORY TO BRITISH RULE

Between the 11th and 19th centuries, the Burmans unified the peoples and the territory under their leadership on three separate occasions. In 1044 A. D., the Pagan Dynasty was founded on the banks of the Irrawaddy River in central Burma; the Kings expanded their authority to include their immediate neighbors. The Pagan Dynasty, which lasted until the Mongol invasion in 1287, is considered Burma's "Golden Age." During this period, its Kings brought Theravada Buddhism to the people and inspired a flowering of Mon- and Indian-influenced arts and culture. Pagodas were first introduced during this time.

The fall of Pagan was followed by an interregnum that lasted for 200 years. During that period, the Shans sought to succeed the Burmans and establish a political center at Ava, though they failed to maintain a strong and united state. Fleeing warfare, many Burmans migrated east and south during the period and established a new political center in Toungoo.

The second unification of Burma occurred from 1486 to 1752. The Toungoo Kings expanded the territory and population under their authority to an area almost the size of modern Burma. This period was marked by wars, the conquest of the Shans, and the destruction of the political center of Siam at Ayuthaya. But the wars with Siam reached stalemate. Internal power struggles led to Toungoo's decline, and the Kingdom left no great cultural or architectural legacy.

The third Burman unification came in the 18th century under a new line of Kings. The Konbaung Dynasty was established by Alungpaya in 1752 and lasted until 1886. The founder of the dynasty defeated the Mons and Arakanese and united the south with the heartland. His successors on the throne renewed Burma's wars with Siam and launched assaults beyond the western frontiers against Assam and Manipur. The rulers of the Konbaung Dynesty fought off four invasions by the Chinese. Westward expansion led to clashes with the British, the new Asiatic power. In 1824, the British invaded and won the first of three wars with the Burmans that brought a permanent end to the Kingdom.

There are three political legacies of the period of Burman rule. First, Theravada Buddhism remained at the core of the beliefs and values of the Burmans. Many ethnic minority groups remained as animists or spirit worshippers, or as converts to Christianity, and underwent different cultural development from that of the Burmans.

Second, the Burmans never established a peaceful succession to the throne nor never developed a strong and autonomous administrative system. While the King was absolute, the administrative system was weak. In day to day affairs, local authority was exercised under a patron-client system.

Third, there lacked a strong, continuous, centralized authority over the ethnic minorities in the hills and upland areas. As long as the minorities accepted the suzerainty of the Burman King, the local leaders were free to govern the lands in their traditional ways. The Burmans never sought to acculturate or assimilate the minorities.

The economy was subsistence-based, and rice was the staple crop. Foreign trade was a royal monopoly, but the Burman rulers and people had little contact with the outside world. The coastal dwelling Arakanese and Mons had foreign contacts as they traded and repaired ships. Warfare between the Burmans and neighbor states encouraged further intermingling; defeated peoples were taken captive and forced to settle in Burmese villages where intermarriage often took place.

B. COLONIAL RULE: 1824-1948

Burma and the British fought three wars between 1824 and 1886. The British were victorious in each because of superior modern weaponry and Western military science. After each war, the British annexed large portions of Burma to their empire. The first war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826 and Burma's loss of Arakan and Tenasserim. After the second war in 1852, the Burmans lost all of lower Burma. After the third war in 1885, the British seized the remainder of the Burman Empire and exiled its king and court to India. On February 26, 1886, Burma was annexed to India.

Under foreign rule, Burma underwent vast changes. The British established a strong hierarchical administrative system that linked the central government with the villages. Authority was dictated through the village headman who served as a salaried employee of the government and its link to the people. It was based on colonial laws and recognized local customary practices.

The British rulers separated religion from government. Without political backing, authority and discipline within the religious orders broke down. Also, the demand for traditional education provided by the Buddhist monks declined as Christian missionary schools emerged and siphoned off students who wanted instruction in English and subjects the monks were unable to teach. In the 1920s, the government began to establish English-language and Anglo-vernacular schools. These changes in the roles and functions of the religious orders contributed to their loss of place and social significance in Burma's changing society.

The economy underwent major changes. Commercial agriculture replaced subsistence farming. Farmers were encouraged to move from their villages in upper to lower Burma and take up new land. To do so, they had to borrow money. Lenders – predominantly Indian – provided loans at high rates of interest and when the peasants could not pay, they were evicted. The land was given to new farmer-debtors who repeated the process. The movement of farmers contributed to social alienation and the growth of crime and discontent. The system produced

more rice and, in 1939, Burma became the world's largest exporter. It also produced indebted peasants, moneylenders, and wealthy absentee landowners.

The world depression that began in 1931 caused the world market price of rice to plummet. Burman farmers migrated to the cities where they competed with Indian laborers for employment. Often, Burmans were used as strikebreakers who were excused once labor disputes were settled. This generated hostility between Burmans and their Indian peers, causing a major race riot in Rangoon in 1936.

Early in the 20th century, the urban Burmans organized the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) to protest Westerners' violation of pagodas and shrines. This marked the political awakening of the Burmans. In 1917, the YMBA broadened into the General Council of Burmese Association (GCBA) and became fully political. In 1920, university students made their entry into politics by calling a national strike to protest plans for the new university.

In 1923, the people were given a partially elected legislative council and control of two government ministries, but no real political power. In 1930, the Saya San revolt, which sought to end British rule and restore the monarchy, erupted in the countryside. The revolt was put down with military force. At about the same time, young intellectuals in Rangoon started Thakins, a new political movement that called for the use of the Burmese language in print and speech to strengthen nationalist objectives. In 1937, Burma was separated from India and given its own constitution, a bicameral legislature and responsible government. The Governor continued to control several key departments and to administer the Frontier Areas—minority areas—without consulting parliament or his ministers. The system lasted four years and four Prime Ministers made a credible start at tackling some of the nation's worst problems. World War II and the Japanese invasion of Burma halted the political and constitutional experiment.

The Japanese invaders scored quick successes against the British and drove them from lower and central Burma and parts of the hill areas. Aiding the Japanese was a new Burman army secretly organized and trained by the Japanese before the war. The Burma Independence Army served alongside the Japanese invaders. In 1943, Japan granted Burma nominal independence, and allowed it to form a government with the pre-war leader, Dr. Ba Maw, as the Adipadi (leader). Dissatisfied over its lack of real authority, Burman military and civilian leaders formed a secret resistance movement, Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). On March 27, 1945, the Burman army—now called the Patriotic Burmese Forces (PBF)—joined forces with the British and hastened the defeat of Japan in Burma.

The war disrupted Burma's society and destroyed the economy. Cut off from India and the West, the peoples of Burma returned to subsistence agriculture. As the British retreated in 1942, nearly a million Indians emigrated from Burma back to their homeland. The British reoccupied Burma in 1945.

At the war's end, the British issued a White Paper that called for the revival of the economy and society so that political progress could resume. The Burman nationalists rejected

this formula and an impasse developed. A change in British government in August 1946 led to an invitation in December to U Aung San, the leader of the AFPFL, to come to London to discuss Burma's political future.

The London meeting of Burma and British leaders agreed that the Burmans and the minorities should meet to decide on the political unification of Burma, schedule an election, and form a constitution. When the delegates returned to Burma, Aung San and AFPFL leaders met with Shan, Kachin and Chin leaders at Panglong in the Shan State, where they agreed to cooperatively devise a union of Burma.

While the constituent assembly was in session, Aung San and six members of his cabinet were murdered. The governor appointed U Nu, a close ally of Aung San, as his successor. The constitution was completed and on January 4, 1948, Burma became a free and independent state. The loss of Aung San and the failure to find a satisfactory way to divide power and create national unity through a federal union was a major cause of the civil wars that followed independence and lasted through the next half century.

C. THE CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD: 1948-62

Confrontation groups within the Burma Communist party (BCP) attempted to displace the government and bring about the Karen and Karenni secessions from the Union. Burman and Karen battalions defected and joined the war against the state. Ethnic battalions of Burman soldiers swelled the ranks of the army and assumed leadership ranks throughout the military. The army proved successful in the field where the opposition forces failed to form a unified military and political opposition. The Burma army reclaimed the Irrawaddy Valley and drove the enemy into the hills and jungles, making it possible for the state to take back former rebel-held areas. In 1952, when Nationalist Chinese and the BCP forces occupied parts of the Shan States, martial law was declared in the occupied areas and the military assumed control; its occupation acquired a reputation for brutality and illegal behavior toward civilians which continues to the present. Burma also sought the aid of the UN to expel the invaders.

National elections were held in 1952 and 1956. In both, the AFPFL won overwhelmingly. In 1958, the party split. To avoid a relapse to civil war, Prime Minister Nu appointed General Ne Win to form a Caretaker Government, hold new elections, and restore civilian democratic rule. The interim Government lasted for eighteen months. When national elections occurred again in 1960, U Nu's faction, the Clean AFPFL, won a landslide victory. The Stable AFPFL, the opposing faction, accepted the election results. In 1961, U Nu's announced that he would not seek a second term, sparking a power struggle within the party. The intra-party dispute provoked fears amongst the people of a repeat of 1958. On March 2, l962, General Ne Win led a coup, dismissed the constitution, and established a Revolutionary Council (RC) that consisted of senior military officers.

D. MILITARY RULE—FIRST PHASE: 1962-74

The RC governed through a hierarchy of Security and Administrative Councils (SAC) of military personnel, police and civil servants. The SAC replaced the former federal system, and formed a dual hierarchy of Workers and Peasant Councils. In July 1962, it organized a political party, the Burma Socialist Program Party (Lanzin) as the first step in the creation of a new political system. Also, during this early period, it issued a political manifesto, the "Burmese Way to Socialism," that outlined the ideas of the "new order."

The RC isolated Burma from the outside world. It halted student exchange programs with the West, expelled aid groups, and suspended or limited cultural contacts with Western nations. In 1963, the RC nationalized the banks as the first step to implement its goals. Later, the same year, it nationalized all production, distribution, import and export. The farmers continued to plant and sell their products to the state while the private business sector came under government control and administration. Without adequate preparation and trained administrators, the economy deteriorated. To fill the void, black markets developed. Throughout this period, the government was unable to restore production, improve distribution, or win popular support. By 1964, its new economic policies, which were detrimental to the private sector, caused thousands of Indians to emigrate from the country. The RC tried to appease minority factions in 1963 though talks broke down and the opposition resumed armed conflict against the state. During this period, corruption and popular discontent took root among society.

In 1967, the Chinese Cultural Revolution led to conflict as Burma sought to prevent Chinese politics from influencing its internal affairs. Relations between the two were not restored until l970. During that interval, China gave military assistance to the BCP, located along its border with Burma. When relations between the countries resumed, China halted its aid to the BCP; it, in turn, became involved in the illegal opium trade in the border area it occupied as a way to finance its war against the state.

Former Prime Minister Nu, whom the military arrested at the time of the coup, was released from jail in 1969. Nu then proceeded to the Burma-Thai border and organized a revolt against Ne Win. Despite support from the ethnic minorities in the area, the coup failed. Other revolts by Shans, Kachins, Karens, and Chins erupted in search of either secession or autonomy from the Union. By the end of the RC period, it was clear that the Burma army could neither successfully negotiate peace nor defeat the dissident groups. The stalemate continued until the end of the 1980s.

In 1971, the rulers announced that a new constitution would be written and civilian rule restored. Less than a year later, the members of the RC transformed themselves from soldiers to civilians and changed the RC to the Government of the Union of Burma.

The new constitution was ratified in l973 and came into effect March 2, 1974, following a parliamentary election.

E. CONSTITUTIONAL DICTATORSHIP: 1974-1988

The new constitution declared that the BSPP was the leader of the nation. The same article declared that Burma was to be a one-party state. The Constitution stipulated that the BSPP was responsible for selecting parliamentary candidates and advising the government at all levels.

The constitution also declared that the People's Assembly was also solely responsible for its interpretation. The state was divided into seven divisions and seven states. There were four levels of government, and all were united by the principles of democratic centralism, collective leadership and decision making.

The people had rights and duties that were not absolute. All citizens, regardless of race or sex, were equal before the law and enjoyed equality of opportunity. It established the broad principles of citizenship that could be altered by ordinary law. Basic rights, as recognized in the Declaration of Human Rights, existed but could be revoked if the Government ruled that such rights undermined the unity and solidarity of the national groups, security of the state, or the socialist social order.

Within three months following the establishment the new regime, riots occurred in Rangoon and elsewhere over food shortages. A year later, student riots broke out over a proper burial of U Thant, the retired third Secretary General of the UN. The government used violence to restore law and order. In 1976, assassination attempts were made on the life of General Ne Win. Much of the disorder resulted from the lack of jobs, food shortages, and widespread corruption in government. International foreign financial aid did little to restore stability in the economy or confidence in the government.

On August 10, 1987, Ne Win admitted publicly to "failure and faults" in the past management of the economy. Amid deteriorating economic conditions, exacerbated by poor agriculture output, economic mismanagement, and increased inflation, the government took its first steps away from socialism. In early l988, the government ended its 25-year monopoly on rice exports. Also, it demonetized much of the currency, without replacing it, to combat the black market. The policy was misguided, however, as it only affected students who carried cash instead of using bank accounts. The students responded with demonstrations, and the government closed the universities.

In March l988, new students/police clashes broke out at Rangoon Technical Institute and spread to Rangoon University. The police and military used extreme violence to put them down; public demonstrations followed. A major demonstration in central Rangoon led to rioting with 41 known student deaths. Again, the universities were closed.

When the universities re-opened, student demonstrations resumed, more killings occurred, and, despite the invocation of martial law, the general public joined the student demonstrations calling for the restoration of civilian democracy. At the extraordinary BSPP Congress in July, Ne Win resigned as party Chairman and recommended a national referendum on the issue of restoring a multiparty system. The Congress rejected the proposal and voted in favor of making General Sein Lwin the new Chairman. Lwin was known as the "Butcher of Burma" for his violent suppression of student demonstrations in l962 and again in l976. He lived up to his reputation during a mass demonstration on August 8, 1988. More than a thousand were killed. General Sein Lwin resigned and was replaced by Dr. Maung Maung, a civilian lawyer/writer and close friend of General Ne Win. He took a more accommodating stance toward those arrested for political demonstrations and promised a referendum on the political system.

At a mass rally on August 26, the daughter of Aung San, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, spoke for the first time. Her words electrified the people and thrust her into the leadership of the movement to restore freedom and democracy.

On September 18, the military struck again; this time they overthrew the constitution they wrote in 1974 and the government they supported. The new leaders formed a ruling body, called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), and issued their first announcement that outlined their immediate goals, which included restoration of law and order, peace, and new elections. They sent the army into the streets where the civilian demonstrators were shot and killed. Thousands of civilians were killed and more than 10,000 students fled to the hills and border areas seeking refuge.

F. MIITARY RULE—SECOND PHASE: 1988-The Present

The new government faced worldwide criticism for using violence against unarmed and peaceful demonstrators. There were few professional journalists inside of Burma when the soldiers struck, and the information reported was based on rumors and unverified reports, with the most reliable coming from foreign embassies in Rangoon. As participants and victims of the military sought escape and refuge amongst the minorities along the borders, first-hand accounts gave a clearer picture of what had taken place inside of Burma that confirmed earlier accounts. A week after the military seized power, General Saw Maung, leader of the SLORC, announced his intention not to retain power for long. The regime's objectives, he said, were national defense, security, the maintenance of law and order, and transferal of power following free and fair elections. However, the regime had dismissed the l974 constitution, and abolished the legislature, judiciary, and governmental institutions. SLORC thus ruled by martial law, force and decree. It systematically used violence against all suspected of belonging to the opposition.

In November, the military altered Burma's economic and foreign policy. On the 14th, Thailand's General Chaovalit became its first high-ranking foreign visitor. Burma rewarded

Thailand when it entered into agreements that allowed the Thais to cut and export Burmese teak and fish in its waters. The Thais promised to round up and return "misguided" students who had taken refuge in Thailand. In August 1989, a Burmese high-ranking delegation, led by General Than Shwe, went to China and purchased US $1.2 billion in new weapons and training. The weapons arrived a year later.

Also at this time, a number of western oil companies took advantage of the new investment law in Burma to search for oil and natural gas. Little oil was found, though commercial quantities of the natural gas were located in the Andaman Sea.

In March 1989, the BCP split when its ethnic cadres forced the Burman party leaders to flee to China. The cadres announced their rejection of Communism and formed independent nationalist groups. The SLORC sent representatives to negotiate cease-fire agreements with the new groups to allow them hold their weapons, continue to administer their own areas, and pursue local economic activity without interference. In exchange, the minorities promised not to make war on Burma or to join other minorities with whom SLORC remained at war. The offer was accepted and set off a chain of cease-fires with most of the ethnic minorities. Only the Karen, Shan, Karenni and Chin maintained armed conflict with the state. Also, in July 1989, SLORC placed Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest, which was maintained until l995.

The promised national election took place on May 27, 1990. Ninety-three parties contested for 485 seats. The National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won a large majority with 392 seats. The real loser was the National Unity Party (NUP), the renamed BSPP, which won only 10. The Shan Nationalities League for Democracy won the second-highest stake with 23. However, the NLD win proved to be a pyrrhic victory. The military refused to allow the new Government to assume power. SLORC issued Declaration 1/90 that stated that it was no longer bound by any constitution, ruled by martial law, and would continue to rule. To the consternation of SLORC, Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

Just as SLORC was on the verge of silencing its opposition and begin making strides in the economy, the party underwent changes in both leadership and policy. General Than Shwe replaced General Saw Maung as the leader of SLORC. Within days, he announced an end to the war against the Karen (but they soon resumed fighting), the release of political prisoners, and the formation of a national convention to write a new constitution. These changes did not ease SLORC's rule or alter the way the world viewed it. Both the UNHRC and the UNGA adopted strong resolutions unanimously condemning SLORC's human rights violations and called upon it to honor the election results. SLORC ignored them.

In January 1993, the National Convention was assembled with 702 hand picked delegates. Only 99 of the elected Members of Parliament were invited to attend. The sessions were carefully orchestrated and controlled. After several months of meetings, 104 principles for the new constitution were announced. The most controversial was the maintenance of the military's leading political role in the future state. In November l995, the 86 delegates from the

NLD withdrew from the National Convention after SLORC rejected its appeal for democratic reforms of the Convention. In March 1996, the military adjourned the Convention indefinitely. When the NLD announced that it would draft a constitution, SLORC issued Law 5/96 to make such action illegal.

The government eased restrictions on Aung San Suu Kyi in 1992 to permit visits by her family. In l994, it allowed U.S. Congressman Bill Richardson, the first non-family member, to visit her. On July 10, 1995, the rulers released Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest.

The release of Aung San Suu Kyi did not bring real political change to Burma. Instead, her "freedom" was restricted, and while she made one trip out of Rangoon she was denied several others. She sought to initiate dialogue with SLORC, but was refused. She managed to "meet the people" through informal talks at the gate of her house where people assembled, but the meetings grew so large and popular that the SLORC closed off the road to block public access.

The signs of economic improvement during the first half of the l990s did not last. Initially, there was a burst of activity to exploit natural resources and to develop tourism and industry. Tourism drew foreign investment for hotels, shopping centers, entertainment, infrastructure, and transport services. But as international boycotts proliferated, the number of visitors declined and tourism stagnated. Hotels stood empty and business in imported expensive merchandise came to a halt. Also, Burma's inability to create and maintain a stable currency had the effect of discouraging both visitors and investors.

The SLORC went through a second political change in l997. The name of the ruling group became the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), to indicate that Burma was going in a new direction—from law and order to peace and development. The three leading generals, Than Shwe, Maung Aye and Khin Nyunt, continued to lead, while several of the senior members of SLORC were dropped and two were investigated for corruption. The new ruling group added the twelve regional commanders; the administration also changed personnel and added a few civilians.

A new political crisis developed in 2000 when Aung San Suu Kyi and a few NLD leaders tried to travel outside of Rangoon on party business. As before, the military intercepted her and returned her to her home. After a second try, she was placed under house arrest. Unlike the period since 1992, however, the SPDC denied access to her by all but a few NLD leaders who were not under arrest. As tensions rose over this new contest between the NLD and the SPDC, the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General, Ambassador Razali Ismail, came to Burma to hold discussions with SPDC leaders and with Aung San Suu Kyi. As a result, secret talks between the rivals began in October. They continued the next year with no word about their subject matter and results. But changes began to take place which suggested progress—high ranking political prisoners were released, the press no longer called Aung San Suu Kyi disparaging names, attacks on the NLD stopped, and party headquarters reopened.

On May 6, 2002, Aung San Suu Kyi was allowed to leave her home, and she subsequently traveled widely throughout the country. On May 30, 2003, she and a convoy of her supporters were attacked by a group of government-affiliated thugs. Many members of the convoy were killed or injured and others remain unaccounted. Aung San Suu Kyi and other members of her party were detained, and the military government forcibly closed the offices of the NLD. Although NLD headquarters in Rangoon is still open, all the party's other offices remain closed, and Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD Vice Chairman U Tin Oo remain under house arrest.

On October 19, 2004, hard-line members of the senior leadership consolidated their power by ousting Prime Minister Khin Nyunt and removing him and his allies from control of the military intelligence apparatus. In late November 2004, the junta announced it would release approximately 9,000 prisoners that it claimed had been improperly jailed by Khin Nyunt's National Intelligence Bureau. In July 2005, Burmese authorities released at least 323 political prisoners. Those released since November 2004 include Min Ko Naing and Ko Ko Gyi, both key figures in the 1988 demonstrations.

The central government has had a contentious relationship since the country's independence with minority ethnic groups who call for autonomy or secession for their regions. In 1948, only the capital city itself was firmly in control by the authorities in Rangoon. Subsequent military campaigns brought more and more of the nation under central government control. Since 1989, the regime has signed a series of cease-fire agreements with insurgent groups, leaving only a handful still in active opposition.

In April 2005, an explosive device detonated at a busy market in Mandalay, killing at least three people. In May 2005, three large bombs exploded simultaneously in Rangoon at two crowded shopping areas frequented by foreigners and at an international trade center, killing at least twenty people and would several hundred. Both events were a significant departure in terms of targeting and level of sophistication from other bombings that had occurred in recent years. The junta blamed the bombings on political opposition groups, which they denied.

At the dawn of the 21st century, Burma stands still politically; there is no end of military rule in sight. The cease-fires between the ethnic minorities and the SPDC remain in place with no evidence of what will be the next step in majority-minority relations or how the gulf will be bridged. The past two decades brought no significant economic progress or improvement in Burma's standard of living. Burma remains perceived as a political pariah to most states in the world.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways does the study of the history of Burma help you understand the issues in the present political impasse which confronts the nation?

2. In what ways does the present regime (SPDC) resemble the royal governments of Burma before the British conquest? In what ways does it resemble British rule?

3. Considering that Burma's history since independence has seen the pursuit of three kinds of economic policy—mixed, socialist and state capitalist—what influence has economic policy had on Burma's politics?

4. Both India and Malaysia have multicultural, multi-religious societies and were former British colonies. How do you explain the fact that they have been able to transcend these facts and become peaceful, unified states while Burma has not?

5. What was the impact of the Japanese occupation of Burma between 1942 and 1945 on the country's political institutions and processes that followed?

Suggested Readings

Note: The bibliography lists some of the best recent historical studies. The following sources provide background information for the questions below.

Sources: Item 11 in the bibliography is a good place to begin. In addition,

- The more traditional history of D.G.E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*. (3rd edition) London: Macmillan, 1968. Chapters 14, 20, 21, 22, 34, 35.
- An excellent history of the Toungoo Period and an original theory of cycles of Burmese Kingship is in Bibliography Item 26.
- For a good examination of the modern Burman-minority problems, see Bibliography Items 40 and 44.
- For a topical survey of the present, see Bibliography Item 39.

PEOPLES AND CULTURES

A. SOME GENERALIZATIONS.

The total population of Burma was estimated at 50.5 million in 2005 (according to estimates of the UN Fund for Population Activities -- UNFPA), and is growing by about 1.3 percent per year. About 31 percent of the population is considered urban while the remainder is categorized as rural. Youth between the ages of 15 and 24 constitute about 20 percent of the total population. Public funding for health and education is among the lowest in the world, under 0.2 percent and 0.5 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), respectively for the 1999-2000 period.

The last official national census was taken in l983. It was neither complete nor accurate because there were areas in the country where civil war and political unrest made it impossible for the enumerators to visit and make their count. The Census Department made estimates of the people in the uncounted localities and added those to the total counted and published the result as the nation's population. It reported that the total population was 35,307,913 million people including an estimated 1,183,005 persons in areas not counted. Because there has been no new national census, the government annually estimates population increases on the basis of a growth factor of approximately 2% and adds that to the previous year's announced population.

Burma is a multiethnic society. The l983 census identified eight major groups:

Burman	69.0%
Chin	2.2
Kachin	1.4
Karen	6.2
Kayah /Karenni	0.5
Mon	2.4
Rahine (Arakanese)	4.5
Shan	8.5

There were several smaller groups—those with a population of less than 168,000—who were aggregated and reported as 0.1% of the total population. Today, for political reasons, the military government argues that there are 125 distinct ethnic groups and insists that all must be represented and given some local power over their own group in the future constitution of Burma.

Anthropologists find it useful to classify the peoples of Burma according to whether their culture can be identified either as plains or hill. Plains culture is defined as people living in settled communities with relatively complex social and political organization that extends beyond the family and village. Their centers of population are permanent, their religions, languages, arts and crafts are influenced by India. Religion is fundamental to their values and beliefs; it is organized beyond the village and is a permanent fixture of the society. The peoples have written languages. Their major occupation is wet-rice farming, and they supplement their incomes through household crafts such as weaving, pottery-making, and metal working as well as vegetable cultivation and animal husbandry. The Burmans, delta Karens, Mons, Rahine, and Shans fit generally into this classification.

Hill culture refers to people who live in small groups on the slopes and tops of hills, with relatively autonomous and uncomplicated political organization. Despite the number and size of some groups, there is no tendency to form into larger political organizations or challenge the dominance of the plains people. Their religions generally are animistic, although some of the hill peoples converted to Christianity during and after the arrival of European missionaries. Their economies are based on a shifting, slash-and-burn type of agriculture called *taungya.* Rice is their chief crop, mainly grown for consumption rather than trade. In addition, hill people cultivate vegetables and hunt and gather fruits and other jungle products to supplement their diets. In some of the upland areas, they grow tea. The Chins, Kachins and Karens who live in the eastern hill areas of Burma, together with numerous small ethnic groups, fall into this category.

The second largest group of the hill peoples in Burma is the Karens. This group is believed to have migrated to modern-day Burma from China in the 6^{th} or 7^{th} century. The Karens consist of three major subgroups: the Pwo, who live in lower Burma and the Tenasserim;

the Sgaw in the watershed between the Sittang and Salween rivers, and the Bwe in the eastern hills close to the border with Thailand. Karens have their own languages and customs, which still persist today. The Bwe were animists and Buddhists; many of the Pwo and Sgaw converted to Christianity. Historically, the Karens never were united with the Burmans, who looked down on the Karens and treated them as inferiors. In the 19th century, during the Anglo-Burman wars, the Karens aided the British and this deepened the divide between the Karens and Burmans. The separation between the two continued under British rule and into the present.

The Bwe Karens, who live in the area of the present Kayah State, formed groups larger than the village and organized themselves into feudal states. A treaty between the Burman King and the British in 1875 recognized the independence of the people of the "State of Western Karenni." It is this treaty which the Kayahs look back upon as the basis for their claim to independence after the British transferred power to the peoples of Burma in 1948.

The Kachins and Chins are both true Hill peoples. The Kachins live in northern Burma, and the Chins are found in the west. Both live in small groups or tribes and are hunters and gatherers. Each has its own languages and traditions. As hill dwellers, they moved their villages frequently in search of new fertile ground for agriculture. Both were animists and, like the Karens, accepted conversion to Christianity by the American Baptist missionaries who lived among them. In the pre-colonial period, the Burmans governed neither group directly nor did they interfere in local affairs. Both the Burmans and, later, the Chins, were recruited for service in the army by the British due to their reputation as excellent soldiers.

In the north and eastern sector of Burma are the Shan, the largest ethnic minority in the country. They are believed to have originated in Yunnan, China and were part of a vast Tai migration to the south. The Shan are not hill peoples in the same way as the Karen, Kachin and Chin. They had a feudal social organization and lived under local hereditary chieftains, called *Sawbwas.* They lived apart from the Burmans and had their own language, written script, history and literature. The Shan cultivated rice, which was the mainstay of their diet. As Theravada Buddhists, Shan culture had many similarities to the Burmans. In the areas where the two lived in close proximity, intermingling and acculturation took place. Despite this, the Shans retained their separate identity and way of life.

After the fall of Pagan in the 13th century, the Shans united to assert their authority over the fallen Kingdom. But the unity among the Shans did not last. Wars against the Burmans continued through the beginning of the 17th century, when the Shans were defeated. They were forced to accept indirect rule and maintained their traditional ways.

Two other important ethnic minorities are the Mons and Arakanese. These groups settled in lower Burma in the coastal regions. The Mons migrated to Burma long before the Burmans arrived. They had contacts with the Indian subcontinent, and it was from India that they acquired Theravada Buddhism, developed an alphabet, and adapted Indian law to their local needs. The Mons were in contact with the Pagan Kingdom in the north, and it was from the Mon that the Burmans acquired their present form of Buddhism. In the 11th century, the Burmans conquered

the Mons, who later broke away and restored their independent status. Over the centuries, the two engaged in wars that ended in the defeat of the Mons in the 18th century. After their victory, the Burmans made a serious effort to assimilate the Mons, but to the present, separate Mon identity and culture persists.

The Arakanese were part of the original Burman migration from the Himalayan region in Asia. After this group entered the present area known as Burma, it continued southward, to establish its own Kingdom in the southwest coastal area of the country. Like the Burmans, the Arakanese became Theravada Buddhists. They came as farmers, using wet-rice techniques to grow their crop. Many also became seafarers and traders. The Arakanese developed trade with India and other seafaring nations and used money as a medium of exchange. In the 18th century, the Burmans conquered the Arakanese and moved many of their Buddhist sacred items to the Burman capital in central Burma. Despite their defeat and integration into the Burma Kingdom, the Arakanese retained their separate identity and language.

Peoples of foreign origin form a small but important segment of the population. In the l983 census, the Chinese and Indians were aggregated together with other unnamed foreigners; the two constituted the largest portion of the 5.3% of non-Burmese. Using language as a criteria and assuming the enumerated Muslims and Hindus were Indians, the Indian Muslims composed 3.83% and Hindus represented 0.5% of the total population. Assuming the remaining foreigners as Chinese, they constituted approximately 1% of the population. Most are Buddhists of sects found in China. They blend into society through adoption of Theravada Buddhism, local languages and dress. Most reside in or near the cities and towns and are engaged in business and other urban activities. They find it easy to intermarry with Christians and animists. Since the present government of Burma seized power in 1988, there has been a steady increase of Chinese in northern Burma, especially in Mandalay. There, the city is changing as new hotels, amusement centers and businesses are built and run by the Chinese. These changes displace older buildings and occupations and give the city, which Burmans considered the center of Burman-Buddhist culture, a strong Chinese veneer.

Before the Second World War, the Indians were the largest community of foreigners in Burma; they, too, lived primarily in the urban areas. At the beginning of the war, there was a large exodus of Indians due to fear of the invading Japanese. After the war, most of those who left were prevented from returning by Burmans who were intent upon reducing their number. Most Indians in Burma either are Hindu or Muslim. Since both religions discouraged out-marriage with members of other faiths, they live apart in their own areas and use their traditional dress and languages. Before the Second World War, there were racial clashes between Burmans and Indians. In l964, new laws that reflected Burman nationalism administered by a military government, resulted in a new Indian exodus from the country and a permanent reduction in the numbers. Those who remained have lived peacefully and accepted the laws and rules that favored the indigenous population. In recent years, with the military again in power, there have been racial and religious disputes between Burmans and Indians, which are believed to have been caused or used by government agents as a way to deflect criticism away from the government.

In its analysis of the religions of the peoples of Burma, the l983 census reported that 89% of all the people declared themselves to be Theravada Buddhists. The Burmans and Mons were the largest groups in this category. Among the hill peoples, the Baptist and Catholic Churches had the largest numbers of converts. The form of Christianity practiced by those who converted or inherited from their parents is a mixture of indigenous religions and Christian rituals that have become the basis of their values and traditions.

Taken together, religion, physical separation and cultural differences form dividing lines between plains and hill peoples; there is no evidence that the differences have diminished since the Union of Burma was formed in l947.

B. IMPORTANT CHANGES IN BURMA SOCIETY

As the 21st century began, Burma was ruled by a military government that was strongly nationalistic and identified nationalism with one group—the Burmans. One of the first things it did after it seized power in September 1988 was to change many of the names and spelling of other existing names to reflect the fact that Burma is a Burman state. The rulers changed the name of the country, by dropping the English spelling of Burma and replacing it with the Burman word, *Myanmar*. It also changed the names of several cities for the same reason.

Burman became *Bamar,*
Karen became *Kayin,*
Rangoon became *Yangon,*
Pegu became *Bago,*
Moulmein became *Mawlamyaing,*
Irrawaddy became *Ayeyarwady.*

In 1946, the British administration created a new Burma army of 10,000. It consisted of 50 percent Burmans, while non-Burmans constituted the remainder. When it was created, the units carried the ethnic name of the group of which it was composed. Today, few ethnic minorities exist amongst the officers and probably no more than 15-20 percent of the rank soldiers remain non-Burmans.

The 1947 constitution designated Burmese and English as the official languages, and local languages only could be used at the local level for education and informal communication. Today, Burmese is the only national language, and while local languages are still used in a variety of informal ways, these have no standing in law and government.

Households of single families are typical in Burman villages. Members of the same family group together and establish enclosed compounds. When couples first marry, they often

live for a short period in a parent's household. Once they can afford to live independently, they build a house in the family compound. In contemporary urban areas, families who live in apartments and houses prefer to live near family members, but this is not always possible.

In Burman society, there is near equality between the sexes. Equal education is open to both; in the professions, except in the military, both can rise to the top. In the market place, women conduct "business" with customers, and in the household they control the family money. Marriage is a secular affair; if a married couple decides to separate, divorce is a simple civil act. Property is divided and each party is free to remarry.

One of the few things that have not changed from pre-colonial times is the dress of the Burman people. Traditional clothing for both sexes is the *longyi* (sarong), *aingyi* (short fitted jacket), and open slippers. Sex difference is recognized immediately by the colors and patterns of the *longyi* and the way it is worn. The clothes are ideally suited for the hot tropical weather.

Religion is at the center of family life. Buddhism has long been the core of Burman culture. The importance of the practices of the faith is made obvious in the daily activities of the people. These include: giving food to the monks who pass the homes daily, giving to charity, giving presents to monks on auspicious days, and holding a *shinbyu*—celebration at the time a son enters the monastery. More important is the absorption of the teachings of the faith and living accordingly. To send a child to the monastery to learn from the monk-teacher is one of the most important ways the faith is passed from generation to generation. Theravada Buddhism is not a jealous faith, and one can marry outside it.

Social stability in pre-colonial Burma drew its main strength from the common faith that Burmans and many of the minorities under their rule shared. The religion had no centralized bureaucracy. In each village, there was a monastery under a semi-independent abbot. The abbot and monks were under the authority of the head of the faith that was appointed by the King. Only this head could disrobe a monk who disobeyed his vows. In most other ways, the local order and monastery was autonomous under its own organization.

Burmans have always valued education. Traditionally, there was a strong tie between education and religion as the monasteries served as schools, with the Buddhist monks serving as the teachers. The content of education was moral training—how to live and behave. The students learned to read religious tracts and to memorize the teachings of the Buddha and his disciples. Under colonial rule, the form and content of education changed. Christian missionaries opened schools in which English was the language of instruction and students were taught subjects as preparation for employment in the lower rungs of the civil service or in business. To learn about their religion and its values, they had to attend monastery schools.

The government failed to broaden the curriculum of monastery schools. As a result, it funded lay schools, opened to both sexes, which instructed modern subjects in Burmese, but the level of teaching was poor. After World War I, these were replaced by government-supported, Anglo-vernacular schools, where English and Burmese were the languages of instruction and a

more modern curriculum taught by better teachers. The missionary schools continued and offered stronger programs and preparation for university and the professions. Monks and monasteries continued to offer traditional education in the rural areas but no longer enjoyed the status and standing that their calling once gave them. Class sizes diminished, and the best students were drawn away to Western schools and a future life in the modern economic and political sectors of society.

C. SOME RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR IDEAS IN BURMESE THOUGHT

There is no God or author of the universe in Theravada Buddhism. Buddhists believe that fixed and orderly laws govern the universe. Everything and everyone is subject to the law of impermanence and change. Man is part of the changing world of appearances, and according to the doctrine of *samsara*—the wheel of rebirth—he passes through an endless cycle of births, deaths and rebirths until he realizes the true nature of things. The Buddha expressed these ideas as the Four Noble Truths.

The Buddha also taught that man is free and can escape from the wheel of rebirth if he follows the Eight-Fold Path of right living, right thought, and right actions. Power, prestige, and material things are false and impermanent. Once man realizes the truth of the Buddha's teachings and lives accordingly, he can escape. Because man's present condition is based upon his acts in his previous existence, he can do little in this lifetime to change his condition. But by following the teachings of the Buddha and accepting the truths the Buddha taught, man can effect his future existence and ultimately escape the wheel of rebirth.

While Buddhism places full responsibility upon each person for his condition, the idea of individual freedom and responsibility did not transcend from the religious realm and become part of secular thought. Instead, Buddhism taught that government was one of the five evils that man must endure. The right to rule, to occupy the palace, and to hold the symbols of power came to the King because of the merit he acquired in previous existence. As the ruler, he was expected to follow the Ten Duties of the King and other codes of behavior. No matter how far the King departed from the Ten Duties, there was no right of revolution in Buddhist thought to justify his overthrow.

As a result of these and other beliefs, ordinary people were not concerned with the affairs of state. They did not expect the state to do anything to improve their lives and did not think of the state as a vehicle for social or economic change.

Many of these beliefs continue to the present and help explain the Burman's willingness to accept bad government, its excessive demands, and its victimization of the people through theft, war, and plunder.

Burmese thought has a second and newer root, i.e., the idea of democracy and the peoples' right to rule themselves. British colonial rule spawned an unintended revolution in

thought and action by introducing a new way of looking at the individual, government, and society. The British did not come to Burma to introduce Western ideas of liberty, freedom, and self-rule. These and other ideas entered the minds of the people as a by-product of the study of British history and ideas and the concern of colonial government for the rule of law, order, and property.

Western secular political thought rested on several important principles. First, the state and its rulers were of this world. Second, all men, rulers and subjects alike, were under law. Third, authority under law was the basis of power to govern and not the accumulation of merit in past existence. Fourth, the state and its officers could be challenged when either had transcended legal limits.

Freedom in modern Burma is not contrary to tradition; it stands at the heart of the Buddhist faith. What has been overlooked is that Burman-Buddhists learned new meanings and uses of freedom from British and other Western sources and incorporated them into their own beliefs and values.

As Burma became more involved through colonial rule and trade with the world beyond its borders, these and other Western ideas entered Burman thought and action at the same time the colonial order moved away from being a purely administrative to a participatory political system. The peoples of Burma became aware of their power to change things through the application of their modern learning, the use of the law, political organization, and agitation.

The hill peoples, who make up approximately 30% of the population and live apart from the Burmans as well as each other in villages scattered over high elevations, never were integrated into Burman society. As noted above, they continue to use their own languages and live in their traditional ways. The emergence of a strong Christian and Western orientated overlay, together with community leadership that was initially supplied by the missionaries, and later, by local ministers and lay leaders, widened the gap between the Burmans and non-Burmans. These differences grew under British rule when the minority areas were legally separated from the Burma heartland, when the minorities were able to attend university and enter the professions, the police, and the military. During the Second World War, the split between the Burmans, who organized an army under the tutelage of the Japanese to fight the British, and the minorities, was complete. Only after the Japanese-sponsored Burma army revolted and joined the British in 1945, did the two move closer together.

During the colonial experience, the Karens developed a nationalist ideology to counter that of the Burmans. Before the Second World War, Karen leaders began to call for a separate Karen state and the use of the Karen language either instead of, or in addition to, Burmese in schools, government and business. The Burman army assault upon the delta Karen, early in the war, deepened the historic rift between the two and played a major part in keeping them apart at the time the Union was being contemplated. When the time came to discuss and decide Burma's political future, the Shans, Chins and Kachins supported the idea of a Burma federation uniting

all groups while the Karens rejected it; like their distant relatives, the Kayah, they wanted a state of their own outside of the Union.

National disunity in the post-independence period traces it roots to these and other differences which, more than a half century later, remain unsolved.

Discussion Questions

1. The narrative in this chapter implies that social statistics on Burma are unreliable. What are the implications of this for social scientists who study Burma?

2. What is the basis for the Burman claim to rule the land?

3. Why has there been no real assimilation and integration of the minorities in modern Burma?

4. Are Buddhism and Western thought and ideas at such variance that the two cannot blend and support democracy in Burma?

5. It is a common argument in the Western business community today that if foreigners visit and do business in Burma it will help the people to know and understand democracy better and want to live under a democratic system. In the light of this, why didn't Burma's long contact with the British and Americans have a stronger impact on the political values and attitudes of the post-independence Burma army and its leaders?

Suggested Readings

There are a number of good studies cited in the bibliography that focus upon the broad general topic. For an examination of social and economic statistics, consult recent reports of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

- To put the broad topic in perspective, read Bibliography Item 5 on land tenure at the beginning of the 20th century.
- On ethnic issues, see Bibliographic Item 29 on the Burman family.
- On religion and politics, consult Bibliographic Item 43.
- On ethnic politics, read Bibliographic Items 41 and 44.

SOCIAL ISSUES

A. NATIONAL UNITY

The basic problem in Burmese politics is the absence of national unity among the people. It takes three forms -- unity between the Burmans and the minorities, unity among the several minorities, and the place of immigrant minorities.

Unity in Burma never meant full assimilation and integration of the minorities and the majority Burmans. Throughout Burmese history, the people have lived apart, meeting at the margins where they came in contact. There, some assimilation and integration took place through the use of common languages and sharing of common culture. But even at the margins, the separate identities continued.

No government, from pre-colonial times to the present, had an integration or assimilation policy. Governments were content to leave the people alone so long as they obeyed the laws and did not interfere with each other. The Burmans, as Buddhists, were not proselytizers, and neither were the animistic ethnic minorities. Religion was identified with particular groups, and it remained that way.

At the root of ethnic pluralism in Burma was the geographic pattern of population settlement. The land was large and the total population was small; there was no overcrowding and therefore peoples lived apart and settled in the pattern discussed earlier. Even when Burmans moved from the central areas of Burma to the delta and coastal regions to live amongst the Mon and Arakanese, they retained their separate identities and cultures. There was some assimilation and intermarriage, but it wasn't forced. It also was not extensive enough to obliterate the historic identities of the several groups in Burma.

The 1947 constitution was supposed to identify the division of power between the central government and the states. The minorities thought that the constitution established a federal government, but the law never included that word and, as it turned out, it was more unitary than federal. There were no state courts. These and other restraints and omissions denied the states the local power they assumed they received when the constitution was written and adopted (for more on this topic, see Chapter on Politics below).

Within the states, the smaller ethnic minorities were not guaranteed any seats in the State Councils, nor were they assured of any powers to control the use of their languages and protection of their cultures.

These problems within the states highlighted the inequalities between the minorities and the Burmans and between the dominant minority and others in the several states.

B. THE IMMIGRANT POPULATION

Under British rule, the government encouraged Indians to settle in Burma. They initially recruited farmers, but most of those who came did not remain long on the land, but instead moved to the cities and towns in search of urban employment. Later, others came to work for the government as soldiers, police and civil servants. As Burma opened up, Burmans in upper Burma were encouraged to move south, Indian moneylenders came and financed the development of commercial agriculture. Chinese also came during this period, as they had earlier, but in smaller numbers and without encouragement and support from the government.

They, too, moved to the towns and cities and became shopkeepers, merchants and bankers. Together, the Indians and Chinese formed the basis of a middle class and the beginnings of an Asian financial class. The indigenous peoples were not encouraged or assisted in moving to the cities and taking up urban jobs and adopt urban lifestyle; instead most remained as farmers.

As political changes came in the early 20th century, the Indians were provided with communal seats in the 1923 Legislative Council, and the Chinese received the same in the 1937 parliament. While Burman-immigrant relations were harmonious before l930, afterward, as the world depression hit Burma and rice farmers lost their land, racial tension between Burmans and Indians emerged. In 1936, there was a major racial riot in Rangoon and elsewhere in urban areas. At issue were both religious matters and economic competition for jobs.

In the beginning of World War II, the Japanese invasion and the British retreat from Burma compelled a million or more Indians to seek refuge in India because of fear of being left without Burman protection. After the war, the Burman leaders blocked many Indians from returning, even though the British argued against this. During the war, the Chinese remained in their adopted land and shared the hardships of occupation with the Burmans.

Once the course of Burma's independence was set, the authors of the constitution defined citizenship broadly. There was one form of citizenship throughout the Union and all people were equal before the law, regardless of birth, religion, gender, and race. The citizenship provisions in the constitution were not absolute, however, as ordinary law could change them. Before the end of the first year of independence, parliament passed new ordinary laws to limit their original intent.

In 1954, parliament passed a Citizenship Act that outlawed dual citizenship. This was directed at the Chinese because the government in China held that their people could never surrender Chinese citizenship. This conflicted with Burma law that declared that to become a naturalized citizen, a person had to renounce allegiance to a foreign government. When the military seized power in l962, it withdrew citizenship from the Indian population in Arakan. While it gave every person a registration card that verified his citizenship status, the *Rohingyas,* or Indians, were given foreign registration. Despite the law, many were denied cards of any kind with no explanation. An identity check in 1977 in Arakan led to the flight of over 200,000 *Rohingyas* and created an international incident involving Bangladesh, where the refugees took refuge. In the face of international pressure, the Burma government agreed to allow the return of the refugees and received them in stages.

In 1982, the Burma government promulgated a new Citizenship law that recognized three different grades—full, associate, and naturalized. Full status was awarded to those people who could prove that their ancestors settled in Burma before 1823. Associate citizenship went to those who could not offer the required proof. Naturalized citizenship went to those persons who had one parent who was a foreigner, or whose parents were a union of a foreigner and an associate citizen. Again, Indians with a long history of residency in Burma were victimized.

The severity of the law did not apply to the Chinese. Through intermarriage or assimilation, they were able to live and work in Burma and procure registration cards illegally. The law took its heaviest toll on indigenous peoples living in war zones who were not properly registered. These individuals were declared as stateless.

After the SLORC seized power, it was initially more tolerant of the Indians in Arakan and allowed them to form parties and contest the 1990 election. But in 1991, the Indian parties were dissolved, and the army began harassing people of Indian descent. This forced a second outflow of more than 250,000 to Bangladesh and again provoked an international incident. Although Burma eventually allowed more than 200,000 to return, new incidents occurred during the decade that kept Burma-Indian relations tense.

The Chinese experience in Burma under SLORC/SPDC was different. China provided weapons and aid, and recognized the SLORC when the rest of the world did not. Perhaps consequently, Burma's military rulers took no action as new immigrants flooded northern Burma and settled in and around Mandalay where they bought property, erected buildings, and transformed the former capital into a Chinese commercial city.

Although these changes disturbed many Burmese, they did not challenge government indifference nor seek to stop it. But, toward the Indians in Mandalay, the Burmese acted differently. There, incidents and rioting occurred as the Burmans accused the Indians of ridiculing Buddhism or making other attacks on the faith and the Burman-Buddhist people. As noted earlier, many saw the military actions as a way to deflect popular criticism from the rulers.

C. OTHER SOCIAL ISSUES

Historically, there were two classes of people—the King (plus members of his family and court) and the people. The latter were divided between those who owed service (military individuals who were *Ahmudan*) and those who paid taxes in lieu of service (the *Athi.*). These classes were not rigid, and intermarriage occurred. Anyone could become a member of a Buddhist religious order and gain prestige and honor through practice of the faith regardless of their origins and class standing before joining.

British rule replaced the King with a colonial administration that consisted of European members of government, military, and business. As education broadened and Burmese gained higher Western education and professional standing, they rose in the social order but remained inferior to the British elite.

In post-independence Burma, educated persons and professionals enjoyed the highest rank. But, following the seizure of power by the military, the professional officers and soldiers rose to the top of the social order, regardless of education and standing. This may be changing as the military has created special communities for military officers and their families with schools through the university only for the children of the Armed Forces. The system remains fluid as

once high-ranking soldiers retire or leave the military, they lose their standing and prestige. General Ne Win was an exception. As a leader during World War II, Ne Win had been head of the army since 1949. There is a popular belief that he had both *ana* and *auza* (power and influence)—characteristics of one whose past merit was the basis for his high standing and authority which people recognized and acknowledged. Aung San Suu Kyi, too, is recognized by the people as the daughter of the nation's founding father and has *ana* and *auza*.

In Burman society, women have equal standing with men in most matters. They control trade in the market, have equality in inheritance, exercise control over their dowries both in marriage and divorce, share governance of the household, and control the family wealth. Women have full access to education and a large percentage of medical doctors and other professionals are women. In the democratic era, they enjoyed high standing and positions in parliament, state government, and the parties. This has declined since the military came to power; there are no high ranking female military officers outside of the medical corps.

Most of the populations live without basic sanitation or running water. In 2000, the World Health Organization (WHO) ranked Burma among the lowest countries worldwide in healthcare delivery to its citizens. High infant mortality rates and short life expectancies further highlight poor health and living conditions. The HIV/AIDS epidemic poses a serious threat to the Burmese population, as do tuberculosis and malaria. In 2004, the UNDP's Human Development Index, which measures achievements in terms of life expectancy, educational attainment, and adjust real income, ranked Burma 132 out of 177 countries.

There are numerous documented human rights violations in Burma (see annual human rights reports compiled by the United Nations and the U.S. Department of State), and internal displacement of ethnic minorities is also prevalent. Several million Burmese, many of whom are ethnic minorities, have fled Burma for economic and political reasons to the neighboring countries of Bangladesh, India, China, and Thailand to seek work and asylum. More than 160,000 Burmese now live in nine refugee camps in Thailand and two in Bangladesh, while hundreds of thousands of other Burmese work and reside illegally in the countries in the region.

Discussion Questions

1. Compare and contrast the ways the democratic government of Burma (1948-62) and the military government (since 1962) treated the ethnic minorities.

2. How do you account for the differences in the way Burmese governments treated the Chinese and the Indians?

3. What was the basis for citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship Law and how does it differ from the original ideas of citizenship under the 1947 constitution?

4. Does the military form a new class in Burma's society and if so, what social class has it displaced at the top of the social order? What does its existence in 2006 tell you about social classes in Burma?

5. Why do the ethnic minorities cling to the idea of a federal union as the only way to unite the ethnic groups in Burma? Why do the military leaders reject it as a solution?

Suggested Readings

- On the immigrant population, read Bibliography Item 10; also see, Chakravarti, N.R., *The Indian Minority in Burma*, London, Oxford University Press, 1971.

- Also see Silverstein, J., "Fifty Years of Failure in Burma", Brown, M.E. and Ganguly, S. (eds.), Government Politics and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific, Cambridge, The MIT Press, pp. 171-196.

- Also see Smith, M., Ethnic Groups in Burma, London: Anti-Slavery Society, 1994.

- On the subject of culture, see Singer, N.F., *Burmese Dance and Theater*, London, Oxford University Press, 1995.

- Also see LeMay, R., The Culture of South-East Asia, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1956, Chapter III, and Lowry, J., Burmese Art, London, HMSO, 1974.

ECONOMICS

A. THE ECONOMY DURING DEMOCRATIC RULE

Under British rule, Burma's economy shifted from subsistence to exchange. By the beginning of the Second World War, Burma was the world's largest exporter of rice. Burma also became the area's second largest producer of oil; in addition, it earned large revenues from the export of timber and various minerals. Burma had no large industry, but it had many small factories that produced consumer goods for the domestic market. Burma had great economic potential with its variety of untapped natural resources.

During World War II, the British denied all economic resources they could to the invading Japanese by destroying oil wells, bridges, roads and transportation equipment.

The Japanese victory isolated Burma from India, its major source of manufactured and consumer goods and a large market for its rice. As a result, the Burmese people stopped growing rice for export and reverted to subsistence rice agriculture. Once the war ended, the British focused on rebuilding the economy as its first priority; this, as noted earlier, put it in conflict with the Burman nationalist leaders who wanted to recover freedom first so that they could decide how to rebuild the economy and the nation.

Burman nationalists in the prewar period were determined to end the nation's economic dependence on rice. They hoped instead to build a more balanced economy based on both agriculture and manufacturing. In 1947, Aung San called the Sorrento Villa meeting of party and other leaders to devise a two-year economic plan for the nation's development. The plan called for the state to develop industry, to provide loans to the farmers to restore agriculture, to eliminate landlordism, to end land alienation, to experiment with mechanization of agriculture, and to establish collective farms. The plan was never implemented because of internal conflict after independence that limited the reach of the government. New economic plans were formulated in the 1950s with the help of foreign advisors who were drawn from the West. The strong Leftist social objectives of the AFPFL leaders gave way to more traditional ways of farming, organization of rural society, and development of the economy's industrial sector.

During this period, the state was the exclusive buyer of rice at fixed prices and seller to the world at market prices. The differential was kept by the state to be used to modernize the economy. While the system produced rice, it also caused discontent among the farmers who had no real incentive to improve either productivity or the quality of their product. After the Korean War, the international market for food declined. Burma lost markets and had large unsold stocks of rice. The East European countries helped reduce the surpluses through barter. Imports were not always of high quality or suitable for use in tropical climates. There also was little or no variety. Burma turned to the U.S. for needed consumer goods, purchased by special arrangement for local currency that the Americans promised not to convert to dollars. This worked well for the few years it was in effect.

In the cities, the Indians and Chinese continued to dominate the sale and distribution of consumer goods. The state was their competitor through cooperatives it formed and used to import items to sell to the public. But the coops never had stocks large enough or sufficiently varied in style and quality to satisfy the public. As a result, the private sector remained dominant.

By 1957, Prime Minister Nu called for a change from socialism to a mixed economy to hasten the nation's recovery. He encouraged more involvement by cooperatives and the private sector in the economy. This was a temporary measure to create the economic basis for a future socialist state. When the military seized power in 1962, the economy was well on its way to achieving the levels of 1939, and rice exports had risen to almost 1.5 million tons annually, nearly equal to those of 1939. The harvest was completed, and the economy was moving forward.

B. THE ECONOMY UNDER THE MILTARY: 1962-1988

Following the March 2, l962 coup, military rulers imposed economic changes. They issued their ideology in a statement, *Burmese Way to Socialism* (see below in the chapter on Politics). The basis of the new society was said to be equalitarian; the state would work to reduce the gap in wealth and power between individuals. In January 1963, the coup leader, General Ne Win, announced that the functions of production, distribution, import and export would be taken over by the state. The next month the rulers nationalized all banks.

In contrast to its haste to socialize the urban economy, the military regime moved more slowly to reform the agricultural sector. While the state owned all the land, the farmers worked it and made the planting and harvesting decisions. The state returned to purchase the product at prices it set. The rulers sought to make the farmer more secure through elimination of rent on farmlands. Also in January, the state ended joint ventures with foreign companies and nationalized large foreign firms.

But the new system did not succeed. The bureaucracy was incompetent, inexperienced, and corrupt. In May 1964, the state circulated a new currency in an effort to break the black markets. Since the public and small businessmen did business in cash, the state action fell hardest upon the Indian merchants. As noted earlier, this led to a large exodus of those who believed that they were the real targets of the new laws. As a result of these and other actions, the economy faltered, provoking public discontent in all sectors of society. The government withdrew some of its more drastic decrees and allowed a return of a small portion of private economy activity. For the next several years, agriculture production rose and fell in response to whether or not the weather was good or bad.

In 1971, the state wrote a 20-year economic plan. During the first three years, the improvement barely kept pace with the natural increase of the population. The political changes

of 1974 did not bring improvement. Two years later, the rulers turned to the World Bank and Western nations to help improve the economy. The introduction of "miracle" rice, developed in the Philippines, brought real improvement in output. But it required good soil, fertilizer, insecticide, and tractors that had to be imported. With limited funds, Burma could not raise production to levels needed to make significant improvement in the economy. By 1987, the country was deeply in debt and faced with ever more needs and no real improvement in its income. The rulers turned to the UN and asked to be declared a "least developed country".

C. THE ECONOMY UNDER THE MILITARY: 1988-The Present

With the overthrow of the constitutional dictatorship and the restoration of a military rule, the economy again went through change. The new military leaders sought to woo the world with promises for an open economy. Having first created the Myanmar Holdings Corporation and the Myanmar Economic Corporation to handle the business of the state, the rulers became partners with foreign firms to develop industry and trade, and to exploit natural resources. Foreign firms rushed in to exploit the minerals, forests, and fishing resources, to develop tourism, and to improve transportation. The initial investors seeking oil onshore in Burma dropped out following their failure to locate commercial deposits. But those who sought natural gas offshore were more successful, and two pipelines later were built to bring the gas ashore from beneath the Andaman Sea to the market in Thailand.

In the early 1990s, investors from Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong built hotels and created a tourism industry. They also invested in the construction of modern shopping centers. However, Japan, Germany and other European states, which in the past had helped Burma most, stayed away because of the military's human rights record since seizing power. During the first few years, the new investments stimulated business, constructed new buildings in Rangoon and Mandalay, improved roads, and established new businesses and banks. But by the end of the decade, many investors left, either because of the difficulty of doing business or because of consumer boycotts in several countries.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Burma is a country rich in natural resources with a strong agricultural base. It has vast timber and fishery reserves and is a leading course of gems and jade. Tourist potential is great, but remains undeveloped because of weak infrastructure and Burma's damaged international image caused by the junta's human rights abuses and oppression of the democratic opposition. The economy has been further affected by U.S. sanctions, which include bans since 2003 on the importation of Burmese products into the U.S. and the export of financial services from the U.S. to Burma. A number of other countries, including member states of the European Union, Canada, Australia, Japan, and Korea, have joined the U.S. in applying some form of sanctions against the regime.

The regime's mismanagement of the economy has created a downward economic spiral. The vast majority of Burmese citizens now subsist on an average income that equates, as of 2005, to about $225 per capita. Inflation, caused primarily by public sector deficit spending,

stagnant wages, and the eroding value of the local currency (the kyat), has undermined living standards. The limited moves toward a market economy begun in the late 1980s and early 1990s have been accompanied by a significant rise in crony capitalism. A handful of companies loyal to the regime has benefited from policies that promote monopoly and privilege.

Agriculture, light industry, and transport dominate the private sector of Burma's economy. State-controlled activities predominate in energy, heavy industry, and the rice trade. The military, through its commercial holdings, also plays a major role in the economy.

Burma remains primarily an agricultural economy with about 54% of its GDP derived from agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and forestry. Manufacturing constitutes only about 9% of recorded economy activity, and state industries continue to play a large role in that sector. Services constitute only 8% of GDP.

Government economic statistics are unavailable or very unreliable. According to official figures, GDP growth has been over 10% annually since FY 1999-2000. But the real numbers are likely much smaller. Burma's top export markets include: Thailand, India, China, and Singapore. Burma's top export commodities include: clothing, natural gas, wood and wood products, and fish and fish products.

Burma remains the world's second largest producer of illicit opium, although production has generally declined in recent years. Burma also has been the primary source of synthetic, methamphetamines in Asia, producing hundreds of millions of tablets annually. The Burmese Government has publicly committed itself in recent years to expanded counter-narcotics measures.

Discussion Questions

1. Why was Burma the first and only country to return unused foreign aid to the U.S,?

2. Why did the "Burmese Way to Socialism" and the command economy the soldier-rulers put in place fail to improve the lives and well being of the people?

3. It often is argued that international embargoes fail in their objective to reform internal policies of the target nation. Using Burma since 1988 as a test, is the proposition valid or invalid? Discuss.

4. How important is national unity to the development of both natural and human resources? Can it be imposed by military force or must there be a real political solution to the problems in Burma before there can be unity, sustained economic growth and development?

Suggested Readings

A good place to begin is with Bibliographic Item 1; which can be examined together with Bibliographic Item 5, especially Parts I and II. The best study of the economy during the democratic period is Bibliographic Item 51, especially Parts II and III. Finally, for the current period, see Bibliographic Item 39, in which opium is examined along with the normally standard topics of economics.

POLITICS

A. TWO CONSTITUTIONS: LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC AND AUTHORITARIAN

Burma became independent in 1948 under the authority of a liberal-democratic constitution that guaranteed civil, political, and human rights for all. The document further established freedom for all people from traffic in human beings, forced labor and restrictions on religion. The state recognized the special position of Buddhism as the faith of a majority of Burma's citizens. The constitution recognized the right of private property and economic initiative; at the same time, it declared that all land belonged to the state and that the economy be managed through government intervention. The dialectic of socialism and liberalism remained and divided the leaders and the general population during the life of the first constitution.

The political system was modeled on the British. All power emanated from the people and was exercised by parliament and the state councils. The president became the head of state and the Prime Minister was established as the political leader, responsible to parliament. The members of the original parliament were the representatives elected to the constituent assembly who served until 1952, when a new elected government was installed.

The legislature was bicameral; the division of seats in the Lower House was based on population and in the upper house, the number of seats each state received was established in the constitution. As a result, the Burmans had a majority of seats in the Lower House and the ethnic minorities together had a majority of seats in the upper house. When important issues called for a joint meeting and decision by parliament, the number of Burmans from the Lower House was so great, they were assured of victory. The constitution included legislative lists that determined which topics were given to parliament and which were granted to the states.

The constitution created a unique federal union. The head of each state was the person chosen by the Prime Minister from the state's delegation to parliament to serve as Minister of State in his cabinet. Members of the state councils obtained their seats through election or appointment by parliament. There was no separate Burma state, as there were states for the minorities; instead, the parliament dealt with the affairs of Burma proper as national affairs in the national assembly and the peoples of Burma proper were governed by the Prime Minister. There was an independent national judiciary and a hierarchy of courts. There were no state courts and justices. Two of the states, the Shan and Karenni, had the right to secede from the Union, while the other states and the Special Division of Chins did not.

The fundamental law was flawed, but workable. There was a party system in Burma. Similar to the U.S. Constitution, it was not mentioned or recognized in the basic law. Nevertheless, the parties were the key institution which made the political system work by finding and choosing candidates to run for office, selecting leaders, developing the program to be pursued in parliament and acting as the link between the people and the government. Until 1956, the governing party, the AFPFL, was so strong that it could ignore the small, divided

opposition in parliament and govern as if it did not exist. In that election, an opposition played a responsible role in parliament. In 1958, the AFPFL monopoly of power ended when the party divided. Following the election of 1960, the two rivals continued as separate parties.

The strongest opposition parties in Burma included the Burma Communist Party (BCP) (which, after the constituent assembly, never took part in the legal political system) and the Karen National Union (KNU) (which also never participated at the legal level after 1949). The first and only parliamentary opposition of significance was the coalition of small left and right parties, the National Democratic Front (NDF), which emerged during the 1956 election. It won 30% of the vote and 48% of the seats in parliament. It had sufficient seats to force a vote of confidence and challenge the ruling party on issues of governance.

The 1958 AFPFL split made the parliament unworkable. U Nu's faction, the Clean AFPFL (later renamed the Pyidaungsu or Union Party), had a slim majority that depended on continued support from the minorities and the NDF. However, the Burman members gave overwhelming support to the rival Stable AFPFL, led by U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein. In the November 1958 budget session, Nu resigned over uncertainty that his majority would hold. Nu asked parliament to replace him with the unelected army head, General Ne Win—an act permissible under the constitution—to form a Caretaker Government to restore internal peace and to hold a new national election.

The Caretaker Government lasted until April 1960. It was a non-party government whose members included civil servants and military leaders. It provided strong leadership, improved and diversified the economy, and held free and fair elections. Under its strict rule, the government was intolerant of law infractions and dealt harsh punishments to offenders. It pressured the Shan and Karenni chiefs to surrender their hereditary administrative power to popularly chosen leaders. In the 1960 election, the Stable AFPFL, the faction the Caretaker Government favored, was defeated overwhelmingly; it only won 30% of the vote and 42 seats. The Clean AFPFL won 53% of the vote and 157 seats. The NDF proved no match for either party and only gained 5% of the vote and 4 seats. During the election campaign, Nu declared that if his party were elected, he would make Buddhism the state religion. He also promised to allow the Arakanese and Mons to form states of their own.

Throughout the first decade of democratic rule, the government and people engaged in multiple wars with political and ethnic groups who sought different goals. One such group desired to obtain total power, while another preferred to secede and a third group wanted to remain in the union although with greater autonomy and the right of self-determination. From 1948 through 1952, the BCP sought to overthrow the government and replace it with a communist state. During this same period, the Karens revolted and sought to take their people out of the union, form an independent state and win British support and protection. Other ethnic and political wars erupted and the Burma government authority was temporarily reduced to control of Rangoon and several cities scattered about the state. The Union of Burma survived because the minorities fought one another as well as the Burma army. The internal wars continued throughout the 1950s, although the Burma army gradually gained control of the Burma

heartland and drove the forces in revolt into the hills and delta. During the Caretaker Period, new ethnic opposition forces in several states rose to fight the army as in an effort to obtain the autonomy which they were promised at independence. These groups gained large areas, but no complete victories. At the same time, the government was unable to defeat them.

The last government under the constitution took office on April 4, 1960. Its political goals were to establish unity and democratic governance in Burma. The split in the Prime Minister's party in 1961 overshadowed other problems of his administration. He made good on his promise to make Buddhism the state religion. But, this widened rather than healed the divisions in society, as non-Buddhists feared the effects this change might have on their religious freedom. On the question of creating new states, Nu delayed the fulfillment of his promise of statehood for Arakan. This eroded support for his leadership as it was seen as retreating from an important campaign promise. Finally, in his effort to end national disunity by peaceful means, he met with leaders of the ethnic minorities and agreed to hold a conference in February 1962 to discuss divisive issues. This frightened the military, which feared he might allow one or more groups to secede. While the promised meeting was in session on March 2, the military overthrew the government, arrested Burman and ethnic minority leaders who were in Rangoon, set the constitution aside, and ended democracy and freedom in Burma. The new military rulers said that they had to act to save the union, which was on the verge of disintegration.

The politics of this period were marked by several factors. First, Burma was governed by authoritarian rule, even under the Caretaker Government. It possessed a strong judiciary that upheld the rule of law. It had three national, democratic elections. Finally, it showed that emotionally charged political issues, such as constitutional amendments to make Buddhism the state religion, were as dangerous to the constitutional government as an actual revolution. Liberal democracy ended when the military leaders violated their oath to defend the constitution and destroyed it.

Authoritarianism replaced democracy. Between 1962 and the present, it went through three distinct forms. Initially, a small group of senior military officers formed the Revolutionary Council (RC) and governed by selective laws. Until l974, there was no constitution and no parliament or independent court to challenge its actions.

In place of the federal system, the RC established a national centralized hierarchy of Security Administrative Committees (SACs) composed of representatives of the military, police and the bureaucracy. Although there were no civilians at the outset, they were added later. The soldier-rulers anticipated a long stay in office and issued two documents during their first year in office, "The Burmese Way to Socialism" and "The System of Correlation of Man and His Environment", which declared the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the new ideology that would guide their actions and identify their goals.

The immediate goal of the government was to transform the mixed economy and elected political system into a socialist command economy and a dictatorial political system. The government closed the country to foreign tourists, aid groups, and others as it sought to make the

transformation without outside help or interference. It took away freedom of speech, press, and other rights that were guaranteed in the initial constitution. The soldier/rulers shut down the political parties and mobilized the people in new and different ways. First, the government laid the foundation for a cadre political party that reflected their beliefs, views, and objectives. Second, they created two mass organizations of workers and peasant organizations with branches everywhere in the country. Their stated purpose was both to listen to and inform the people. Third, the government reduced their contacts with Western nations and encouraged connections with Eastern European countries.

The first authoritarian government ended with the promulgation of a new constitution in 1974. In place of unbridled dictatorship, Burma came under a constitutional dictatorship. The transition began in 1971, when the RC initiated the process of writing Burma's second constitution. It differed with the original in many ways. The original was authored by a national constituent assembly; a small committee of party members wrote the second constitution. Unlike the original document, which was developed in parts by several committees of the assembly and then compiled into a final draft, the second went through three drafts, each of which was submitted to public meetings for comments and criticism. Unlike the original constitution, which never was adopted by the public, the final version of the second constitution was adopted in a national referendum.

The new constitution departed from its predecessor in several important ways. The new basic law declared that the BSPP was the author and leader of the nation. It also declared that Burma was a one party state, and the BSPP was the only party. The constitution declared that it was the supreme law of the land and that only the *Pyithu Hluttaw* (People's Assembly) could interpret its meaning. Unlike the first constitution, where anyone—independent or party member—could contest for a seat in parliament, the second directed the party to draw up a list of candidates for seats and only one candidate could stand for election. The constitution empowered the BSPP to give advice to the government at all levels on most subjects.

The original federal union differed from its successor in structure; while the original was divided into four states, one special division, and a combined national government and Burma state, the new federation was divided into seven divisions and seven states. The states included the originals together with three new ones carved out of the former Burma proper, and all were given ethnic names reflecting the majority group in each.

In reality, Burma became a unitary state. There were four levels of government—national, states/divisions, townships, plus wards and villages. All were united under the principles of democratic centralism and collective leadership.

Another important difference between the two constitutions is found in the area of rights. Unlike the original document, where the rights of individuals were set forth near the beginning of the document, in the second constitution they were discussed near the end. The new constitution established no absolute rights; all were conditioned on the goals of the state. No right could be invoked if it undermined the unity and solidarity of the national groups, security of the state, or

the socialist social order. Only citizens, regardless of race or gender, were equal before the law, enjoyed equality of opportunity, had the right of inheritance, and could enjoy the benefits of their labor in proportion to their contribution.

The new law did not bring order and stability. During the next fourteen years, there was widespread unrest. Within three months of establishing the new regime, riots occurred in Rangoon and elsewhere over food shortages, mal-distribution, and other issues. At year's end, the university students clashed with the police and military over a proper burial for the late U Thant, who had been the 3rd Secretary General of the UN. In 1976, there were two attempts on the life of General Ne Win and an effort by young military officers to overthrow the government and reestablish democratic rule.

In 1987, Ne Win admitted publicly to "faults and failures" in the past management of the economy. The government moved away from state control to free the purchase, sale, transport and storage of basic foodstuffs, in the hope that this would be an incentive to farmers to release their crops for trading in the local markets. To combat the growing black market, it demonetized much of the currency without replacing it with new—in effect it confiscated the money in the hands of the people. In early 1988, the government ended its 25-year monopoly of rice exports.

With no outlets for the people to criticize government policies and actions, rioting and demonstrations began in early 1988 and turned into mass peaceful demonstrations in Rangoon and elsewhere calling for an end to one party rule. As the number of demonstrators grew and included members of the military in their marching ranks, the army violated the constitution it put in place, overthrew the government, seized power and created a second military dictatorship, which it called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). In doing so, it used extreme violence against the people to insure the success of its actions.

Since September 18, 1988, there has been no constitution. The SLORC rules by martial law, the laws and decrees of the past that it choses to honor and uphold, plus new decrees and declarations it announces. One of the most important was Declaration 1/90 (July 27, 1990), which briefly outlined SLORC's claim to rule. It said that: (1) the SLORC "is not bound by any constitution;" (2) it rules by martial law; and (3) it is a military government.

When the SLORC seized power, it promised to hold new elections and transfer power back to the people. It took two years for it to develop the rules and conditions for an election. Parties began to form almost immediately, but it was not until March 1989, that SLORC issued a new election law. By the time of the election, 234 parties had formed throughout the nation. Campaigning was permitted to begin in 1990 under strong and restrictive laws. The election was held on March 27, 1990; 93 parties contested, but only a few had widespread support. The junta backed the renamed and reformed BSPP, which now was called the National Unity Party. The party with most popular backing was the National Democratic League (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi and several former military officers, including Aung Shwe, Tin U and Aung Gyi. The voting was free and fair, and the NLD won an overwhelming victory; it gained 392 of the 485

seats contested and 69% of the vote. The Shan National Democratic League won 23 seats and was the second largest party elected. The NUP won 10 seats.

At the time of this writing (March 2006), the military rulers have not transferred power to the people, arguing that there must be a new constitution in place to assure peace, unity and stability. During most of the 1990s, there were no talks between SLORC and NLD leaders. In October 2000, with the aid of the then Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Ambassador Razali Ismail, talks began. But after several years of sporadic, private talks, there were no announced results, and with the exception of the release of a small number of political prisoners, no real movement toward political change.

Throughout the period of military rule, the leadership group remained at nineteen. In 1992, the original leader, General Saw Maung, was replaced by General Than Shwe, who added General Maung Aye as head of the Armed Forces. General Khin Nyunt, the head of the Directorate of Defense Services and Intelligence, who was an original member of SLORC, was the third ranking in the ruling junta. In 1997, SLORC changed its name to the State Peace and Restoration Council (SPDC) and reorganized its membership to add all the Regional Commanders and replaced a few of the original members at the top. Military generals continue to lead the SPDC.

During the past fifty years, political parties have existed and taken important part in the politics of their day. Parties, other than those associated with the military, tended to be loose coalitions of groups and individuals leading both to splits and individual defections. These parties placed heavy reliance upon their leaders and when one resigned or died, there usually was no known successor; as a result, the parties tended to split and lose their political significance.

The BSPP and the BCP were ideological parties based on strong organization and leadership. The BSPP looked to the army as a source from which to recruit both active and retired soldiers to serve in its ranks. It never inspired the people to freely join its ranks. Since its direct connection with the government was broken in 1988, it has lost its status, and as demonstrated in the 1990 election, had a small following among the people. The BCP was formed during the Second World War and recruited young intellectuals as well as ordinary citizens whom it indoctrinated with its ideology and how to lead at all levels; it relied upon them to serve its cause whether or not the party was above or below ground. Both parties exercised control from the top down, ran schools to train members, and emphasized loyalty and willingness to carry out orders without question. Since 1989, when the BCP imploded and the cadres broke away, it has moved to the underground and has played no visible part in contemporary politics. The NUP continues even though it was routed in the 1990 election. The NLD is based on open recruitment and organization with all power concentrated in the leadership. Leadership domination is necessary because of constant harassment to the party and its leaders by the military. When and where possible, it practices democracy. Ideas come from the top and, while it is possible for members in the lower levels to offer suggestions, there appear to be few ideological or strategic recommendations to the leaders. Despite the efforts of the military to

demean its leaders and break up its organization, it appears to remain the party of the people who are ready to support it if given the chance.

In the last fifty years, Burma has experienced both liberal-democratic and authoritarian forms of government. In the former case, members enjoyed relative liberty and freedom. In the latter case, they enjoyed neither and received nothing in substitution. Both constitutions were drawn up and implemented without first solving the problems of national unity so that a political society might develop and hold together in times of stress and conflict. Whenever the Burmese people have a chance to speak out, they call for the return of liberal democracy, an end to authoritarianism, and unity and equality among the people. But until national unity is achieved, no free and democratic, peaceful and united society can evolve.

B. DRAFTING A NEW CONSITUTION

Burma has been operating without a constitution since 1988, when the junta suspended the 1974 Constitution and abolished all state institutions, including parliament and the civilian courts. The junta claimed (after the conclusion of the 1990 election) that the 1990 election had been held only to elect representatives to a National Convention, which would draw up a new constitution. The National Convention was convened on January 9, 1993, although only 99 (14 percent) of its 702 members were elected representatives, with the rest appointed by the junta. The Convention was suspended in March 1996 shortly after the NLD members were expelled after protesting the lack of free debate and the harassment of delegates by the military.

In August 2003, the SPDC, under intense international pressure following the renewed detention of Aung San Suu Kyi in May of that year, announced a new road map for political reform, which included reconvening the National Convention to draft a new constitution, arranging a national referendum to approve the new constitution, holding parliamentary elections, and then forming a new government based on those elections. In May 2004, the junta reconvened the National Convention without the participation of any delegates from the NLD or from the largest of the ethnic-based political parties. Some NLD officials were invited to attend, but they chose not to take part after the junta refused to meet their demands, one of which was the release from house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi and Tin O.

More than 1,000 delegates, largely hand-picked and approved by the junta, attended the opening session in May 2004. The junta placed tight restrictions on debate, with delegates not permitted to question the government's objectives or to challenge the military in any way. Convention rules stated that delegates could not protest by walking out of any meeting or make "anti-national" comments. Any criticism of the convention risked attracting a prison term of up to 20 years. UN officials and numerous national governments, including the U.S., stated that the convention could not be regarded as a credible step towards democracy unless these restrictions on debate are lifted and all political parties are fully involved.

This reconvened Convention was recessed in July 2004. Another session was held from February to March 2005. A third session, convened on December 5, 2005, was suspended on January 31, 2006. Press reports indicated that the Convention would not be convened again until an unspecified time after the October/November 2006 harvest season.

The junta has given no timetable for the completion of the Convention or the road map itself. Until the constitution is complete, no other activities under the road map, including a new election, can be considered.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did liberal-democracy fail in Burma?

2. What role did political parties play in Burma under the military?
   What role did political parties play in Burma under democratic rule?
   What role did political parties play in Burma under the present regime?

3. Can a true federal system solve Burma's political problems?

4. Can a unitary system solve Burma's political problems?

5. Is it vital for Burma to have a written constitution in order to be a well-ordered democratic society?

Suggested Readings

- See Bibliographic Item 40 for a short background to Burmese politics up to World War II.

- Also see Bibliographic Item 30 and Silverstein, J., "The Idea of Freedom in Burma and the Political Thought of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi", in Kelly, D. and Reid, A. (eds.), *Asian Freedom*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 187-203, and Bibliographic Item 2 for discussion of political ideas and systems in Burma.

- For the early history of parties and political movements, see Bibliographic Item 33.

- For the politics of the ethnic minorities, see Bibliographic Items 41 and 44.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

A. PRINCIPLES OF BURMA'S FOREIGN POLICY.

Over the past half-century, the Burma governments generally have followed several principles in developing and executing foreign affairs. The founding fathers set the original direction in the l947 constitution, by including a section on International Relations. There were three key provisions. The first renounced war as an instrument of policy. The second accepted the generally recognized principles of international law. The third declared that all international agreements must be referred to parliament before implementation. The 1974 constitution eliminated this chapter and any discussion of international relations.

By 1949, Burma adopted a new principle to follow a nonaligned and neutralist approach to foreign policy. Although it was not added to the constitution, it nevertheless served as a guide for the next half century. In 1954, Burma and China agreed to abide by the Five Peoples' Principles, which included the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. This principle had been accepted earlier when Burma adopted the UN Charter (Art.2.7).

B. BURMA'S FOREIGN RELATION WITH SPECIFIC COUNTRIES

When Burma recovered its independence in 1948, it began its foreign relations in a modest way. Although it recognized all nations, over the past half century its relations with China, Thailand, India, the U.S., and international organizations are among the most frequent or important in its foreign affairs.

One of Burma's first international acts was to join the United Nations; the Chinese Nationalists, who then formed the government of China, sponsored its membership. When, a year later in 1949, the Communists came to power in China, Burma was the first non-communist Asian state to extend recognition to it. But, from the very beginning of their relations, all did not go well between the two nations. In 1948, Burma-China relations encountered difficulties over disputed borders, which had not been settled between Britain and China before power was transferred to the new government of Burma. This remained a problem until 1960 when, after four years of negotiations, it was resolved. The borders were demarcated with both nations agreeing to surrender territory to each other and signing two treaties: a border agreement and a treaty of friendship and non-aggression.

In 1949, the civil war in China between the Nationalist and Communist forces led some Nationalist troops to take refuge in northern Burma. They refused to surrender their weapons and accept Burma authority in the territory they occupied. After four years of warfare with the invaders, Burma took the question of their presence in Burma to the UN and asked for help to remove them. The result was not fully satisfactory to the Burmese because the UN agreed upon a voluntary Chinese withdrawal, which the Burmese saw as not comparable to the strong stand

the world body took against "aggression" earlier in Korea. A large number of Nationalist forces remained in Burma and threatened both its sovereignty and relations with the PRC. The Burma army continued to fight on alone, neither fully defeating nor expelling the intruders from their country.

In 1954, the leaders of China and Burma, Chou En-lai and U Nu respectively, took a major step to improve the relations between their countries. They signed a treaty that established the Five People's Principles of International Relations which were: mutual respect for each other territorial integrity and sovereignty; non-aggression; noninterference in each other's internal affairs; equal and mutual benefits; and peaceful coexistence. This treaty was followed two years later by negotiations to resolve the border questions. During this period, Burma played a key role in cosponsoring the Bandung Conference of Asian and African states in Indonesia and extended an invitation to China to participate. China's presence at the conference gave it a means to meet all participants and break out of the isolation the U.S. had encouraged states to follow. By entering into agreements with a few and talking to all, China reached states it previously had not been able to engage. During this period, Burma supported the PRC's efforts to obtain membership in the UN, which the U.S was blocking; in response, China gave Burma economic and technical assistance and made large purchases of rice when the Burmese found no immediate market for their product.

All this changed in l967 when the Chinese Cultural Revolution demonstrations came to Rangoon and local Chinese rallied at their Embassy's prompting, leading to fighting between Burmese and local Chinese, an invasion of the Embassy, and a rupture on Burma-China relations. The Chinese government responded by giving large-scale aid to the Burma Communist Party and called for the overthrow of the Ne Win government. Tensions between the two lasted for three years, while Burma-China trade dropped nearly to nothing. In 1970, the Pakistan Prime Minister brought the leaders of the two nations together, and the impasse ended. But, if state to state relations improved, party to party connections continued and the Chinese government gave military aid to the BCP in its war against the Burma government. As the decade drew to a close, China's policy changed, and it stopped helping the BCP; instead, it used its good offices to try and heal the internal conflicts in Burma between the BCP and ethnic groups and the state. From this point on, China's aid to Burma grew and official visits between the leaders of the two nations restored their unity.

The 1988-89 period marked a new milestone in Burma-China relations. Against a background of internal struggle between the Burma government and the people, Burma leaders met with the Vice-Governor of Yunnan, and the two nations signed an agreement on August 1988 that opened their common border to trade. A state visit to China by Burma's new military rulers a year later produced an agreement whereby China sold over a billion U.S. dollars in new weapons to Burma. Later, China was reported to have helped rebuild Burma defenses in the Andaman Sea and to construct new roads between the two countries which could provide China with access to the Indian Ocean. This was followed by Chinese investment in Burma and the settling of Chinese immigrants in the Mandalay area, where they engaged in trade, commerce,

and real estate construction. The increasing friendliness between the two nations disturbed Burma's neighbors in Southeast Asia and India.

Relations between Burma and Thailand have a long and often strained history, with memories on both sides of bitter wars and unresolved enmity. Following the end of the Second World War, Thailand returned to Burma the two Shan States that Japan had given to it for aiding their war effort. After Burma regained its independence, it established formal bilateral relations in August 1948; one year later, it invited Thailand and other Theravada Buddhist nations to participate in the Sixth Buddhist Council which the Burmese planned to hold between 1954 and 1956. Burma also waived its wartime claims for reparations from the Thais and apologized for the sacking of Ayuthia in the 18th century. The two exchanged high-level state visits between their leaders.

But there were other sides to their relations. The communist parties in Thailand and Burma threatened their national governments. Burma stood alone in its war against the two Communist parties that were fighting to overthrow its government, while the Thais looked for international help to defend the Bangkok government. In 1954, Thailand supported the US-supported, anti-communist, Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), headquartered in Bangkok. Although invited, the Burmese refused to join as it was contrary to Burma's policy of nonalignment and neutrality.

Also during this period, Thailand gave secret military and financial aid to Burmese ethnic minorities to help create a buffer between the two states in an effort to keep the Communist parties of the two countries from joining together. Beginning in the late 1950s, the Chinese Nationalists who left Burma established themselves in northern Thailand, and there they organized the international trade in opium which, grown in Burma, was smuggled across the Thai border and sold abroad. This trade involved Thai businessmen who also were involved in smuggling consumer goods into Burma for distribution through its growing black-markets. The Burmese were unable to control their side of the border to stop the illegal trade.

In November 1988, Burma announced a new law that allowed foreign investment. Thailand's General Chaovalit was the first important foreign visitor after the policy announcement and its first beneficiary. In response to his visit, Burma allowed Thai businessmen and military associates to invest in the cutting and export of teak wood as well as in the exploitation its mineral resources and to fish in Burma waters. In exchange, General Chaovalit promised to "persuade" Burma students, who had taken refuge in Thailand after the military seized power, to return home.

As the newly armed and expanded Burma army grew in the early 1990s and gained control of the Burma heartland, it turned its full attention to the defeat of the ethnic minorities in the border regions. By 1993, it recovered control of significant portions of the Burma-Thai border and cutoff most of the illegal trade in and out of Thailand. At the same time, it encouraged legitimate trade across the China frontier, and China became the chief source of imported consumer goods to Burma. Thailand, in its eagerness to recover lost business, agreed

in 1994 to help SLORC by: (1) closing its borders to Burman leaders and ethnic minorities who sought to escape from Burma or to travel abroad by way of Thailand; (2) stopping arms from getting into the hands of Burma's opposition; and (3) building a "friendship bridge" across the Moei River to encourage legal trade between the countries.

In 1997-98, two events poisoned Burma-Thai relations. First, a group of Burmese students seized Burma's Embassy in Bangkok and held its employees hostage. While the world applauded the Thai government's peaceful resolution of the issue, the Burmese government was outraged that the Thai Deputy Foreign Minister negotiated with the students and allowed them to leave with impunity; it retaliated by stopping trade between the two countries. Shortly afterwards, another group of Burmese dissidents crossed the border, seized a Thai hospital, and held its doctors and patients hostage. The Thai military intervened, attacked, and killed the Karen invaders. This time, several governments and human rights groups criticized Thailand's forceful response. Many in Thailand looked favorably upon the military action and hoped it would improve relations and trade between the two countries. But it did not satisfy the Burma government which stopped all Thai fishing in Burmese waters and the exploitation of its resources. Since then, Thai fishermen have still not regained full access to Burmese waters.

In recent years, a new obstacle in Burma-Thai relations developed. In the late 1990s, methamphetamines burst upon the drug scene. Manufactured by the ethnic Wa in the Shan State and marketed in Thailand, these drugs spread rapidly in the cities and nearby countryside. Despite complaints by the Thai government to Burma and demands for an end to the trade, it continued and grew. In 2001, armed clashes between Thai and Burma armed forces erupted. Civilians were killed and, as the nations neared a state of war, the two countries turned to dialogue between leaders who visited each other's country as a way to try and defuse the explosive situation.

Burma has never developed close relations with any non-Asian state. Among Western nations, its strongest involvement was with the United States. American interest in Burma stemmed from its own close relationship with its neighbor states, Thailand and Laos, Vietnam and China

In 1948, Burma and the U.S. established formal relations. During the first few years afterward, the relations between the two were friendly. The Korean War provided the first important opportunity for Burma and the United States to be involved together in an international issue. While the U.S. took a leading role to organize collective security at the UN in behalf of South Korea, Burma supported this UN effort by sending a gift of rice to the South Koreans. Later, when the UN army crossed the 38th parallel and encountered Chinese troops, the U.S. called on the world body to name China an aggressor nation. This time, Burma refused to support the UN resolution. Later, when the U.S. blocked the PRC from occupying the China seat in the UN, Burma refused to go along and became a leading supporter of the PRC for a place at the UN. Despite these differences, the two re-established good relations. High-level meetings between the two countries occurred in 1953 and 1955.

The decade of the 1950s saw the Burmese accept U.S. economic and technical assistance as they sought to restore their economy to modernize the state. As the decade opened, the U.S. and Burma signed several agreements which did not call for any political commitment by the recipient. It was the first Asian nation to do so. This only lasted until 1953 when Burma halted the program so that it could go to the UN and lodge a complaint against the Chinese Nationalists. Three years later, the U.S. resumed economic assistance; in 1958, it began to sell small amounts of military equipment to Burma on very favorable terms.

Throughout the Vietnam War, the U.S. and Burma followed different policies. In 1955, Burma offered its country as a neutral venue for confidential meetings between the U.S. and North Vietnam. Although the offer was refused, it can be seen as consistent with Burma's basic principles of pursuing nonalignment and promoting efforts to help achieve peace in world affairs. Throughout the war and afterwards, the U.S. and Burma continued their relations on the same terms.

Only after the Burma army seized power in 1988, did their relations change. In response to the violence with which the Burma army put down the unarmed civilians, the U.S. halted all aid programs and denounced the Burma army's behavior. While the Burmese continued to argue that no nation had a right to interfere in its internal affairs, the U.S. saw Burma's behavior as a violation of many articles of the UN Charter and the Human Rights Declaration it had pledged to uphold. When the U.S. Ambassador to Burma resigned in 1991, the U.S. Senate refused to confirm a successor. The U.S. downgraded its level of representation in Burma from Ambassador to Charge d'Affaires; the position of Ambassador remains empty to this day. The relations between the two are unlikely to change until there is real political reform in Burma.

The U.S. has imposed broad sanctions against Burma since 1988. Since May 1997, the U.S. government has prohibited new investment in Burma by U.S. persons or entities. In 2003, the U.S. Congress adopted, and the President signed, a law which includes a ban on imports from Burma, a ban on the export of financial services to Burma, a freeze on the assets of certain Burmese financial institutions, and extended visa restrictions on Burmese officials. Congress renewed this law in July 2004 and again in July 2005.

In 1947, Burma and India had very close relations. This was the result of early contact between Aung San and Nehru in 1939. The closeness between Burma and Indian leaders after Aung San's death continued. Burma leaders frequently consulted their Indian counterparts on regional and world affairs. Both countries were leading nonaligned nations and took similar positions at the UN and in their individual foreign affairs. The two also had differences from time to time, but never strong enough to rupture their bilateral relations. One originated from a map attached to the 1960 Sino-Burma border treaty. The Indians complained that the map was erroneous and prejudiced against Indian interests. The Burmese responded by declaring that they did not accept the map as binding and when India and China settled their own boundary disputes, a new map would be drawn and replace the one attached to the Burma-China treaty.

After the Burma army overthrew U Nu's government, the closeness weakened following Rangoon's new policy on currency changes, which Indians in Burma felt were intended to affect them most of all. The press in India and many of the nation's leaders interpreted the law as anti-Indian, anti-Muslim, and anti-Hindu. After leaders of the two nations met and discussed the matter, India agreed that it was an internal Burma affair and halted the discussion by welcoming back Indians from Burma who wanted to return. But India never re-established the same closeness with Burma as had previously existed. Indo-Burma relations remained friendly and correct as each went its own way in international relations.

In 1988, India was the only Asian government to speak out strongly against the military seizure of power and its treatment of the peoples of Burma. India openly supported Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD. By 1994, its policy toward Burma began to change as it became alarmed at the extent of China's involvement in Burma. Through visits to Burma by high-ranking administrators and later by an exchange of visits by leaders, the two began to draw together. Beginning in 2000, India made clear that it stood ready to counter China as a major source of aid to Burma by offering aid and loans, sales of arms, involvement in helping to improve Burma's defenses, and agreeing to construct roads between the two countries as well as within Burma. These Indian initiatives to Burma were welcomed by the members of ASEAN, who, since the mid-1990s, had become concerned about the extent of China's presence in Burma.

Burma has also been involved in world affairs through membership and activities in both the United Nations and the nonaligned movement. As noted above, it joined the UN immediately after regaining its independence. In 1961, it was a founding member of the nonaligned movement. In that same year, the tragic death of Dag Hammarskjold, the second UN Secretary General, saw Burma's representative, U Thant, succeed him. As a representative of a truly nonaligned nation in a period when the world was divided between East and West, he proved to be an ideal candidate, and his ten years as Secretary General brought credit to him and to Burma.

In recent years, Burma's relations with the UN have become more problematic. The UN General Assembly has often criticized the Burmese military government for its abusive human rights and labor practices. Since 2004, the junta has refused requests by the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy and the UN Commission on Human Rights Special Rapporteur for Human Rights to visit the country.

During the Cold War period, Burmese foreign policy was grounded in principles of neutrality, often tending toward xenophobic isolation. Since 1988, however, Burma has been less xenophobic and has sought to build regional ties. In 1997, it became a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and has since then participated actively in that regional forum, even hosting a number of seminars, conferences, and ministerial meetings. Burma became a member of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1952 and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1973. Since July 1987, however, the World Bank has not made any loans to Burma. The IMF performs its mandated annual Article IV

consultations, but there are no IMF assistance programs. The ADB has not extended loans to Burma since 1986, and ADB technical assistance ended in 1988.

Discussion Questions

1. Does the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a nation supercede Burma's obligations to its fellow members under the UN Charter (e.g., Article 1, Article 55, Article 56)?

2. What are the issues which divide Burma and Thailand; how can they be resolved?

3. What are the advantages to Burma of being physically so close to China? What are the disadvantages?

4. Why did India change its policies toward Burma after 1994; does it seem to be paying off?

5. What role does trade play in Burma-U.S. relations?

Suggested Readings

- A good place to begin is with Bibliographic Item 35 and Silverstein, J., "Burma and the World: A Decade of Foreign Policy Under the State Law and Order Restoration Council" in Taylor, R. (ed.), *Burma: Political Economy Under Military Rule*, London, Hurst and Com. Ltd., 2001, pp. 119-136.

- For a study of the military in Burma, see Bibliographic Item 45.

- For a response to question No. 1 above, consult a good test on international law, such as Slomanson, W.R., *Fundamental Perspectives on International Law* (2nd edition), Minneapolis, West Publishing, 1995..

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Notes

Notes on the legacy of Burma's past.
Josef Silverstein

I. Traditional Burma before colonial rule.

1. Centralism under King in Burma area; local rule in hill areas under traditional systems of the peoples who acknowledge the suzerainty of the Burma King.
2. Economy: agricultural, with King monopolizing foreign trade; village economy was subsistance with very small local trade between close by villages.
3. Social system: form of patron-client. two classes: Ahmudan—based on service in military or some other service. Athi—paid taxes in lieu of service.
4. No business class.

II. British rule.

l. Institutionalized Burmese pattern of authoritarian rule; differed in that now it is strong enough to enforce it continuously. Burma King and court removed when British took power and filled by British administrative system. No connection between church and state; weakened the religious order and left it with no central head. Buddhism never was a hierarchical and centralized religion.
2. From 1921, followed the political developments in India. Partially elected legislative council introduced. l937 self government under a constitution introduced. Burma separated from India. Reflected the ideal of rule of law, self government, western education. Lawyers and courts as well as medicine and hospitals were open to Burmese who qualified.
3. Rise of nationalism. YMBA ; university strike; Thakin movement; responsible government and elections.
4. Indian-Burman conflict. British, Indians and Chinese dominated the emerging commercial life in the new cities and towns.

III. World War II.

l. Japanese victory and displacement of British rule.
2. Japan helped form a Burman army, the Burma Independence Army; its leader: Aung San; participations during the War.
3. Japan gave Burma nominal independence in 1943. Dr. Ba Maw, the head.
4. March 27, 1945, Burma army changed sides and joined Allies in the final battles against the Japanese.
5. Secretly, Burma army and civilians formed secret political movement, the Antifascist Peoples Freedom League. After war, emerged to lead the nation.

IV. Transition.

l. AFPFL, under leadership of Aung San, rejected British plans for rebuilding Burma; did not want economics before politics and wanted to be in charge.
2. General Strike in Burma. Governor Dorman-Smith replaced by Hubert Rance in August and implemented new British policy.

3. British created a new Burma army, composed half from PBF recruits and half from ethnic minorities in the British Colonial Army.
4. Aung San invited to London to discuss Burma's future with British PM Attlee.
5. Panglong Agreement between Burmans and ethnic minorities on political future of Burma.
6. Constituent Assembly elections in April 1947.
7. Murder of Aung San and members of his Cabinet; Thakin (U) Nu succeeds him as Burma's leader.
8. Burma becomes an independent state on January 4, 1948.

V. Constitutional Government.

l. Liberal-democratic system with goal of becoming a socialist state. Unique federal system; two states had the right to secede and three did not.
2. Leaders: U Nu, PM; Smith-Dun (Karen), head of army.
3. Civil war begins in March 1948; first against the Burma Communist Party, followed by Karen National Defense Force and later, several other ethnic groups. Smith-Dun replaced by Gen. Ne Win in 1949.
4. Faced foreign invasion from Chinese Nationalist Forces and aid to the ethnic minorities in revolt from Thailand. Government received aid from India.
5. Economy: mixed. Land was the property of the state with private use allowed. Business in private hands, large-scale industry under the state.
6. After 1950, gradually able to begin repairing war damage and expanding the economy. By 1962, Burma exported over 1 million tons of rice.
7. Politics: 3 elections; all free and relatively fair. AFPFL won the first two in 1951-2 and 1956. After second one, opposition was large enough to introduce a vote of no confidence.
8. AFPFL split in 1958; U Nu's faction won in vote in parliament with backing of ethnic and leftist parties. His opponents had the backing of the Burman members.
9. Caretaker Government formed with Gen. Ne Win as PM and no parties represented.
10. New election held in 1960; Nu's faction (now called Pyidaungsu) won on a platform to make Buddhism the state religion and resumed power.
11. Pyidaungsu lost backing as members fought to become Nu's successor as leader.
12. Nu tried to strengthen democracy in the nation and began negotiations with ethnic minorities to permanently end civil war and national disunity.
13. March 2, 1962, military overthrew the government, swept the constitution and parliament aside and created a dictatorship to replace them.

VI. Military Dictatorship, 1962-88.

l. A small ruling council of senior military officers under Gen. Ne Win created the Revolutionary Council to rule.
2. In 1972, the military rulers resigned from the service, changed the name of the government and continued to rule as civilians in the Government of the Union of Burma.

3. Military formed political party in 1962, called Burma Socialist Program Party and recruited members from the armed forces.
4. 1971, party given task to change into a mass organization and write a new constitution. It completed its work in 1973.
5. Revolutionary Council ruled by decree and established a police state, with no rights guaranteed or protected.
6. Burma was closed to tourists and limited in the state's international contacts.
7. Burma's private sector of the economy was nationalized in 1963 as the first step in transforming it into a socialist state.
8. Distribution system broke down, as military appointees with no economic training and experience could not operate it. Black markets rose to fill the gap in wanted and needed consumer goods.
9. Relations with China were suspended following riots and Burmese invasion of Chinese Embassy in Rangoon in June 1967. China began to give open aid to the Burma Communist Party and indirectly to a number of ethnic minorities in revolt. Relations were restored in 1970.
10. The BSPP constitution was ratified by the people in a national referendum in December 1973 and came into effect on March 2, l974.
11. The BSPP constitution differed with its predecessor in many ways. As the authors of the law, the party stood outside and above the constitution. It chose the candidates who stood for election in parliament. As the only party allowed, no opposition could compete for power.
12. Although the name of the state still included the word union, it was a unitary state, with all power in parliament. There were four levels of government with the lower responsible to the level above.
13. The Council of State was the highest executive organ and its members were elected by the parliament. It elected its own chairman who was named President. Gen. Ne Win was the first to hold the office.
14. Unlike the first constitution, rights were not guaranteed and they were coupled with duties.
15. The government faced an economic strike and violence in l974; it also faced the students, at the end of the year following their seizure of the remains of U Thant, who was the 3rd Sec. Gen. of the UN, because they believed that the government would not bury his remains appropriately.
16. Unrest, both in society and the military continued as there were no improvement in the economy and no legitimate outlets for protest.
17. Finally, in 1987, the government moved to free up part of the economy in order to improve conditions. But fear of helping the black market, the government demonetized several units of currency and gave the people no substitutes. This lead to student demonstrations.
18. In February 1988, a student fight with civilians lead to the government using force and leading to violence, the death of students, and a demonstration in Rangoon and the closing of the university.

19. The summer of 1988 was taken with a growing peaceful demonstration by the people for an end to one party rule and the restoration of democracy.
20. On August 8, the police and military killed an unknown number of demonstrators who believed that the military was about to give up power.
21. On August 26, at a mass rally at Shwedagon pagoda, a new voice spoke out; Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (Aung San's daughter) immediately was seen as the new leader of the people.
22. As the demonstrations continued and grew with additions coming from the military, the army, on September 18, seized power, displaced the constitution the government and all its institutions and replaced them with a new military junta, the State Law and Order Restoration Council.