

# Promoting Democracy in Myanmar Political Party Capacity Building

Aung Aung (IR)

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## Executive Summary

Democratization in Myanmar started officially in March 2011. The President and the speakers of the parliament have often urged the population to actively participate in this historic period in Myanmar. In order to support democracy, there are many important stakeholders: the government, parliament, political parties, civil society and media. This paper highlights the importance of the political parties in the country and their role as the creators of the future of the country. The course of the present developments relies on the ability of the political parties. Indeed it will be these parties that decide whether the future will be democratic or dictatorial. In the past, according to the experiences of the political history of Myanmar, cooperation and mutual understanding among political parties was weak, so people lost trust in the capacity of political parties to develop Myanmar as a peaceful, united and prosperous country.

This paper highlights the role of political parties, the conflict history of the country and the current situation. In order to understand party politics it is also important to know Myanmar's history as it is full of conflicts and has seldom seen sustainable development. The conflicts of Myanmar have been divided into four periods: 1948–1962, 1962–1988, 1988–2011 and 2011 to today. From these conflicts, readers will understand how the country is prone to conflicts without democratic culture.

The current situation is also important because the development of political parties is intertwined with the current situation. In the section on the current situation, the role of the president, the leader of National League for Democracy, political parties, ethnic armed groups, the '88' Generation Students Group, people, civil society, the media and the military are explained as they are important stakeholders that affect politics.

Currently, there are 54 political parties in Myanmar. They are divided into four groups: 1) Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), the current ruling party; 2) National League for Democracy (NLD), the largest opposition party; 3) 19-small mainland party roughly led by Burmese, the majority ethnic group; and 4) 33-minority ethnic party. In evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the political parties, six categories are used with four parties graded from poor to excellent: 1) autonomy (freedom,



sovereignty, decision-making and leadership rotation); 2) coherence (loyalty, solidarity, cooperation and tolerance on intraparty conflicts); 3) roots in the society (history of the party, people's support, links to civil society and the media); 4) organization (material and human resources); 5) interparty relations (interparty cooperation, alliance forming); and 6) international relations (foreign media, international diplomats, international organizations, exchange visits and obtaining rewards).

In order to strengthen the political parties, this paper makes several policy recommendations to actors in Myanmar. This includes 29 recommendations to the USDP, 37 to the NLD, 23 to the 19-small mainland party and 27 to the 33-minority ethnic party. These deal with intraparty relations (within the party), interparty relations (between parties), domestic relations (people, NGOs, government offices and local media) and internal relations (diplomats, international NGOs and foreign media). Twenty general policy recommendations are related to all parties. In addition, a number of policy recommendations are directed to the government and INGOs.

## List of Acronyms

- AFPFL: Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League**
- AMRDP: All Mon Region Democracy Party**
- ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations**
- BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation**
- BGF: Border Guard Force**
- BIA: Burma Independent Army**
- BNA: Burma National Army**
- BSPP: Burma Socialist Programme Party**
- CCP: Chinese Communist Party**
- CEC: Central Executive Committee**
- CPB: Communist Party of Burma**
- CPP: Chin Progressive Party**
- DPM: Democratic Party Myanmar**
- DVB: Democratic Voice of Burma**
- EU: European Union**
- HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus**
- ISDP: Institute for Security and Development Policy**
- INGOs: International Non-Governmental Organizations**
- IR: International Relations**
- KIA: Kachin Independence Army**
- KIO: Kachin Independence Organization**
- MMCWA: Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association**
- MNHRC: Myanmar National Human Rights Commission**
- MP: Member of Parliament**
- MDRI: Myanmar Development Resource Institute**
- MPSI: Myanmar Peace Support Initiative**
- NCGUB: National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma**

**NDF: National Democratic Force**

**NDSC: National Defense and Security Council**

**NLD: National League for Democracy**

**NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations**

**NUP: National Unity Party**

**PBF: Patriotic Burmese Forces**

**PSDP: Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party**

**RC: Revolutionary Council**

**RFA: Radio Free Asia**

**SEAP: South East Asia Peninsular Games**

**UNFC: United Nationalities Federal Council**

**USDA: Union Solidarity and Development Association**

**USDP: Union Solidarity and Development Party**

**U.S.: United States of America**

**VOA: Voice of America**

**YMBA: Young Men's Buddhist Association**

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# Introduction

“Success would not be achieved with the mere emergence of a constitution and a parliament and by holding election[s] again in [the] democratic transition of Myanmar. Therefore, democratic culture which has been lost for a long time in Myanmar society must be resurrected.”

U Thein Sein, President of Myanmar <sup>1</sup>

“Harvard Scholars advised that the capacity of people in Myanmar is very poor so even the ministers in Myanmar need capacity training and democracy training.”

U Aung Min, Minister of the President’s Office <sup>2</sup>

“If political parties in Myanmar do not practice democratic procedures within their parties, to which political party people will have to rely on?”

The Myanmar Herald Weekly News Journal <sup>3</sup>

“The democratic opening in Myanmar is a huge step forward, but one that could easily be reversed.”

Professor Francis Fukuyama <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, President Office, “President U Thein Sein gave a speech to members of Asia Society at Asia Society Headquarters in New York,” <http://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/briefing-room/news/2012/09/29/id-745> (accessed November 5, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Khant Khant (Philosophy), “Myanmar ministers also need capacity training,” *The Hot Weekly News Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 101 (August 2–8, 2012), 9, <http://www.hotnews-weekly.com/journal-download> (accessed November 5, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Maung Nhat Htwinn, “Democracy practice within NLD and USDP is weak,” *The Myanmar Herald Weekly News Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 22 (August 11–17, 2012), 40, <http://www.facebook.com/myanmartandawsint> (accessed November 5, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “What Myanmar needs,” *The American Interest*, September 6, 2012, <http://blogs.the-american-interest.com/fukuyama/2012/09/06/what-myanmar-needs/> (accessed November 5, 2012).

Today, changes in Myanmar are widely discussed by experts, scholars and politicians both inside and outside the country. It is incredible to see this sudden change from military rule to democratic rule in a country that was tightly controlled by the military for nearly five decades. Some people doubt if the changes are genuine. Indeed, the history of Myanmar is full of conflict and political “good news” is rarely seen.

It is true that political changes in Myanmar have been seldom seen and rarely sustainable. Its people have lived under monarchs throughout history until British occupation began in 1885. Monarchs were authoritarian and as a result there was no renaissance or enlightenment in the history of Myanmar. Some monarchs such as King Mindon (1853–1878) led some reforms, but they were not political reforms.<sup>5</sup> When he died in 1878, his reforms died with him. Other Asian countries began sustainable reforms at this time. Japan started its all-round reforms in the 1870s and these reforms became the basis of modern Japan. In Thailand, all-round reforms began in the 1870s under the King of Rama V and these reforms became the basis of modern Thailand.<sup>6</sup>

However, for the first time in 50 years, the people in Myanmar today are enjoying their civil rights which at least to a certain extent include freedom of assembly and freedom of media.<sup>7</sup> In the eye of the international community, especially in the West, changes might be awkward and not fully meeting global standards, but for a people who have lived under authoritarian regimes this is a huge change. Perhaps as a result, the people hold high expectations of the future of these reforms, and people are now talking about development projects, foreign investments, human rights, peace, politics, and job opportunities.

In order to move forward with this change and to sustain democracy in Myanmar, capacity building is needed in every sector and it needs to involve everyone from individual citizens to ministers, from political parties to defense services. When we talk about changes, it is important to know the role of political parties in the country as politicians are the leading stakeholders of

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<sup>5</sup> “King Mindon,” *Myanmar Net*, <http://www.myanmars.net/myanmar-history/king-mindon.htm> (accessed November 5, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> “History of Thailand,” *One World Nations Online*, <http://www.nationsonline.org/onenworld/History/Thailand-history.htm> (accessed November 15, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Helen Pidd, “Burma ends advance press censorship,” *The Guardian*, August 20, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/aug/20/burma-ends-advance-press-censorship> (accessed November 15, 2012).

the reforms. Parties can promote democracy but they can also hinder the process by infighting and fragmenting the democratic process. In order to promote political knowledge among people, it is very important that the role of parties and the knowledge of political members is strong because they have to disseminate information about democracy and civil rights among the public. Cooperation among parties serves as an example of unity for the people. Allowing democracy in parties must be the examples of tolerance and mutual respect for the people.

There are internal problems among party members within the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). Members of the parties are expressing undemocratic practices of parties via private media. Some members take to the streets to demonstrate against their own parties. Some are resigning from their parties. People are worried about the situation and the future of democracy. Throughout their lives, many have had experiences with conflicts between the government and parties, but they are now surprised to find that conflicts exist among parties members within their own parties. Aung San Suu Kyi, at her speech in Thone Khwa township in Yangon in October 2012, apologized to the people for the disunity within the party as a natural occurrence for any organization.<sup>8</sup> However, people are now questioning the political capacity of the parties. Nonetheless, the future of the country is in the hands of politicians. Thus, it is important to promote understanding of democracy and to nurture tolerance and mutual respect in political parties.

I will therefore focus on the strengths and weaknesses of political parties using my personal experiences and will write about how to address the weaknesses and how to promote strengths. Although the focus will be on the role of political parties, the overall political situation will also be dealt with as well as the history of conflicts in Myanmar. It is also important to discuss the current situation, focusing on important stakeholders such as U Thein Sein, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, political parties, civil organizations, the media, the people and the military. In the conclusion recommendations will be given on the best way to promote peace and democracy focusing on empowering political parties. As there is little information about political parties in Myanmar, I will draw heavily on my personal experiences and local private news journals.

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<sup>8</sup> Radio Free Asia, "Suu Kyi Sorry for 'Disunity'," October 11, 2012, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/burma/disunity-10112012173657.html> (accessed November 22, 2012).



## Myanmar: Land of Conflicts?

Often called the Land of Pagodas, Myanmar has also been known for its conflicts. In fact, the period of political instability began right after the country won independence in 1948. Ethnic armed conflicts began in 1948 and still exist, making this civil war the longest in the world. In order to build a sustainable democracy, it is important to understand the history of the conflicts, especially from 1948 until today. Conflicts in Myanmar can roughly be divided into four periods: democratic regime (1948–1962), military/socialist regime (1962–1988), military regime (1988–2011) and democratic regime (2011 to date).

Before analyzing the modern history of Myanmar, it is important to observe its history during the 1870s. In 1879, in order to protect the power of the King, over 70 princes and princesses were executed during the reign of King Thibaw (1878–1885).<sup>9</sup> This incident shocked the West, and became one of the reasons for the British to invade upper Myanmar to depose the tyrant. Prior to this, Crown Prince Ka Naung, who was widely regarded as the modernizer of Myanmar during Kone Baung Dynasty (1752–1885), was assassinated in 1866 by two princes who wanted to seize the throne of Myanmar,<sup>10</sup>

Myanmar was at three wars with Britain 1824–1826, 1852–1854 and 1885 and lost its sovereignty in the last war.<sup>11</sup> Under the British occupation, many revolts took place led by students, workers and peasants against colonial rule, costing thousands of lives.<sup>12</sup> Myanmar allied with the Japanese during World War II but later the country fought against Japan. During the war, which was largely fought between British and Japanese troops, the infra-

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<sup>9</sup> Directorate of Archaeological Survey, *Mandalay Palace* (N.p.: Ministry of Union Culture, Revolutionary Government of the Union of Burma, 1962), 13–14, <http://www.lib.washington.edu/myanmar/pdfs/MP0001a.pdf> (accessed November 14, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Phone Kyaw (Natmauk), *History of Anglo-Burma War* (Yangon: Bagan Publishing House, 1966), 392.

<sup>12</sup> "British Rule in Burma," *Online Burma/Myanmar Library*, <http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=261&lo=&sl=1> (accessed on November 15, 2012).

structure was severely damaged.<sup>13</sup> In 1947, General Aung San, the architect of the country's independence, and his cabinet were assassinated.<sup>14</sup>

### The Democratic Period (1948–1962)

Myanmar gained independence from Britain on January 4, 1948, and the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) formed a civilian government.<sup>15</sup> However, the nascent democracy was challenged by military and party rifts and ethnic armed conflicts. Some parts of the AFPFL such as the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) went underground to fight against the government.<sup>16</sup> The AFPFL government had plunged into civil war with not only insurgent groups but also ethnic minorities including the Karen National Union (KNU).<sup>17</sup> Kuomintang from China assaulted the territory via Shan state in 1949,<sup>18</sup> so Myanmar fought them back to China. General elections were held in 1947, 1952–53, 1956 and 1960, and all became victories for the AFPFL.<sup>19</sup> In 1958, the League split into two factions. As a result, the military served as a caretaker government from 1958 until 1960.<sup>20</sup> However, the situation continued to deteriorate. With the justification of protecting against the disintegration of the Union, the military seized power as the Revolutionary Council on March 2, 1962.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Michael Hickey, "History: The Burma Campaign 1941–1945," *BBC*, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/burma\\_campaign\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/burma_campaign_01.shtml) (accessed November 15, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> "Independence & General Aung San," *Oxford Burma Alliance*, <http://www.oxford-burmaalliance.org/independence--general-aung-san.html> (accessed December 7, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> BBC, "Burma Profile," <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12992883> (accessed November 8, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> "Brief History," *Communist Party of Burma*, <http://cpburma.org/briefhistory.htm> (accessed November 8, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Ashley South, *Burma's Longest War: Anatomy of the Karen Conflict* (Amsterdam: Transitional Institute, Burma Center, Netherlands, 2011), 8.

<sup>18</sup> Alfred W. McCoy with Cathleen B. Read and Leonard P. Adams II, "The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia," <http://www.scribd.com/doc/524830/The-Politics-of-Heroin-in-Southeast-Asia> (accessed November 8, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> New Statesman, "Burma: A Brief History," <http://www.newstatesman.com/asia/2010/06/aung-san-burma-british> (accessed November 26, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> BBC, "Burma Profile," <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12992883> (accessed November 8, 2012).

<sup>21</sup> Global Security, "Myanmar-Military Rule under General Ne Win," <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/myanmar/ne-win.htm> (accessed November 15, 2012).

## The First Military Period/Socialist Period (1962–1988)

On July 4, 1962, the Revolutionary Council established the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP).<sup>22</sup> In the following years the regime had to face demonstrations organized by students, workers and ordinary citizens. In July 7, 1962, the student union building on the campus of Yangon University was ruined by the government. In 1967, rice shortages sparked severe riots between security forces and people in Sittwe in Rakhine state.<sup>23</sup> In 1969, the fifth South East Asia Peninsular Games (SEAP) was held in Yangon. University students took advantage of this event to launch a strike calling for the restoration of democracy and an end to the military dictatorship.<sup>24</sup> In 1970, the Golden Jubilee of the Yangon University was celebrated.<sup>25</sup> Students took advantage of the ceremony, organized students and discussed the history of Yangon University and the demolishing of the student union building. In 1974, workers in Yangon demonstrated against the government in the demand of better living.<sup>26</sup> The same year, U Thant, the third secretary-general of the UN, passed away in the US, and his corpse was brought back to Myanmar. There were severe clashes between the government, who wanted to bury his body at the foot of the Shwedagon Pagoda, and those who wanted to bury him at the site of the student union building.<sup>27</sup> In 1976, students celebrated the centenary birthday of Thakin Kodaw Hmaing (1876–1964),<sup>28</sup> the famous Burmese nationalist and peace activist, and clashed with the government. In 1987, the Socialist government demonetized the currency

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<sup>22</sup> "Constitution of the Burma Socialist Programme Party for the Transitional Period of Its Construction," July 4, 1962, [http://archive.org/stream/TheConstitutionOfTheBurmaSocialistProgrammePartyForTheTransitional/MicrosoftWord-Document1\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/TheConstitutionOfTheBurmaSocialistProgrammePartyForTheTransitional/MicrosoftWord-Document1_djvu.txt) (accessed November 22, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Alex Ellgee, "Mae Sot-based Arakanese Remember Famine," *The Irrawaddy*, August 14, 2009, [http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=16560](http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=16560) (accessed November 15, 2012).

<sup>24</sup> BBC, "Violence amid Burma Protest," October 4, 2007, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid\\_7010000/newsid\\_7013900/7013964.stm?](http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_7010000/newsid_7013900/7013964.stm?) (accessed November 15, 2012).

<sup>25</sup> Mizzima, "Mizzima Election 2010," <http://www.mizzima.com/political-pro/newparties/dpp.html> (accessed November 15, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> "The Ne Win Year: 1962-1988," *Oxford Burma Alliance*, <http://www.oxfordburmaalliance.org/1962-coup--ne-win-regime.html> (accessed November 15, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Kyaw Thu, "Ceremony on U Thant's Crisis will be held as the first time in 38 years," *The Yangon Times*, Vol. 8, No. 44 (November 15–21, 2012), 10, <http://www.yangonmedia.com> (accessed November 15, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> The Irrawaddy, "Thakin Kodaw Hmaing (1876-1964)," Vol. 8, No. 3 (March 2000), [http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=1836](http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=1836) (accessed November 15, 2012).

without prior notice to the public.<sup>29</sup> As a result, people lost heavily and public confidence in the government decreased. In 1988, a large demonstration against the government took place, led by university students, later known as the “88 Uprising.”<sup>30</sup> The demonstration was crushed by the military on September 18, 1988, and the military re-took power.

### The Second Military Period (1988–2011)

In 1988, after the coup d'état, thousands of students and people went into the jungle to join ethnic armies. More military conflicts intensified, but the military government controlled the situation. In 1990, a general election was held, and the NLD won a landslide victory. However, the government did not implement the results of the election, which made some of those who had been elected go underground. They formed the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) in Manerplaw in Karen state in October 1990.<sup>31</sup> In 1991, students held a demonstration in Yangon to celebrate that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>32</sup>

Human rights violations in Myanmar cannot be confined to the responsibility of the government. Sadly, there was a mass killing in the northern part of the country in 1992 among students who went to ground in 1988 to fight against the military regime.<sup>33</sup> In 1996 and 1998, there were also a series of student demonstrations in Yangon against the military government.<sup>34</sup> In 2003, Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters were attacked in upper Myan-

<sup>29</sup> BBC, “Burma’s 1988 Protests,” September 25, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7012158.stm> (accessed November 15, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> The National Coalition of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), “A Brief History,” <http://www.ncgub.net/NCGUB/staticpages/indexad9b.html?page=history> (accessed November 08, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Reuters, “Burma troops disperse thousands after novel protest,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 11, 1991, <http://www.csmonitor.com/1991/1211/11032.html> (accessed November 15, 2012).

<sup>33</sup> Khin Su Wai, “ABSDF survivors, relatives prepare petition and lawsuit,” *The Myanmar Times*, September 24, 2012, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/1768-absdf-survivors-relatives-prepare-petition-and-lawsuit.html> (accessed November 16, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> The New York Times, “Thousands of Burmese Students Protest as Political Tension Rises,” September 3, 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/03/world/thousands-of-burmese-students-protest-as-political-tension-rises.html> (accessed November 15, 2012).

mar.<sup>35</sup> In 2007, Buddhist monks took to the street in order to raise the voice of people. The demonstration became known as the Saffron Revolution.<sup>36</sup> In 2008, the Delta region was hit by Cyclone Nargis, killing 84,500 people, and the fates of a further missing 53,800 was unknown.<sup>37</sup> During the military period, the international community, led by the US, imposed economic and trade sanctions against the military regime. Restrictions on Myanmar started under the Reagan administration in September 1988. In 1995 and 2003, broad economic and trade sanctions against the military junta were adopted under the Freedom Burma Act and the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act.<sup>38</sup> In 2010, the military government held a general election without the participation of the NLD, and the USDP won a landslide victory.<sup>39</sup>

### The Democratic Period (2011 to today)

In March 30, 2011, the new government was sworn in and the military government was officially dissolved.<sup>40</sup> Since then, a series of positive political changes have taken place. Aung San Suu Kyi was freed from house arrest in November 2010. Hundreds of political prisoners were also released.<sup>41</sup> In

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<sup>35</sup> Joseph Allchin, "Depayin and the Driver," *Democratic Voice of Burma*, November 12, 2010, <http://www.dvb.no/analysis/depayin-and-the-driver/12828> (accessed November 15, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Aung Hla Tun, "Myanmar junta sets curfew," *Reuters*, September 25, 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/09/25/us-myanmar-idUSB58859920070925> (accessed November 15, 2012).

<sup>37</sup> "Myanmar: Cyclone 'Nargis' 2008 Facts and Figures," International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), May 3, 2011, <http://www.ifrc.org/en/news-and-media/news-stories/asia-pacific/myanmar/myanmar-cyclone-nargis-2008-facts-and-figures/> (accessed November 16, 2012).

<sup>38</sup> Michael F. Martin, "U.S. Sanctions on Burma," *Congressional Research Service*, 7-5700 October 19, 2012, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41336.pdf> (accessed November 8, 2012).

<sup>39</sup> Democratic Voice of Burma, "USDP wins 80 percent of seats," November 9, 2010, <http://www.dvb.no/elections/usdp-wins-%E2%80%9980-percent-of-seats%E2%80%99/12728> (accessed November 22, 2012).

<sup>40</sup> Daniel Schearf, "Burma's Military Government Dissolved, 'Civilian-Led' Government Sworn In," *Fox News*, March 30, 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/content/burma-swears-in-civilian-president-ending-overt-military-rule-118904049/137262.html> (accessed November 22, 2012).

<sup>41</sup> Ian MacKinnon and Dean Nelson, "More than 200 Burmese political prisoners released," *The Telegraph*, October 12, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/burmayanmar/8822471/More-than-200-Burmese-political-prisoners-released.html> (accessed November 16, 2012).

April 2012, the NLD, led Aung San Sui Kyi, participated in the by-election. Unlike previous demonstrations in Myanmar, this time they were directed toward business owners and political parties. Workers have been demanding higher salaries and better welfare.<sup>42</sup> Members of political parties have been asking their leaders to promote transparency and accountability.

Meanwhile, there have also been inter-communal conflicts between Buddhists and Muslims in the west of the country in May and October 2012. As a result, social cohesion among Muslims and non-Muslims seems to be decreasing.<sup>43</sup> In the North, Myanmar troops are still fighting with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). However, compared to the past two periods there are fewer military conflicts while anti-government demonstrations are creating room for freedom of assembly and politics.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Nyein Nyein , "Striking Workers Left in the Dark," *The Irrawaddy*, May 31, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/5526> (accessed November 16, 2012).

<sup>43</sup> International Crisis Group, "Myanmar: Storm Clouds on the Horizon," *Asia Report*, No. 238, November 12, 2012, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/238-myanmar-storm-clouds-on-the-horizon.pdf> (accessed November 16, 2012).

<sup>44</sup> Article 19, "Myanmar: The Decree on the Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession: Legal Analysis," September 20, 2012, <http://www.article19.org/resources.php/resource/3440/en/myanmar:-law-on-assembly-and-procession-inconsistent-with-human-rights> (accessed November 16, 2012).

## **The End of the Military Regime and the Start of the Democratic Process**

If we discuss the current changes, it is important to understand why the military government decided to change. This sudden political change surprised not only people outside of the country but also inside Myanmar. In the past, people thought that the generals would never voluntarily hand over power without significant uprisings or pressures.

From 1988 to 2010, the military rulers were confronted with pressure from inside and outside Myanmar. People in Myanmar demonstrated vigorously for an end to the military rule. Ethnic armed groups also fought against the regime. Simultaneously the military junta had to battle international pressure from the US, the EU, ASEAN and others. However, neither pressure from inside or outside the country diminished the power of the junta. Instead it became stronger and stronger year by year.

It is important to understand that current changes in Myanmar are based on the political willingness of the military leaders to implement changes. However, this does not mean that public demonstrations in the past were useless. The reforms were also due to indirect results of democracy movements in the country. In other words, the changes were not bottom-up but top-down. Here it is important to understand what kind of factors pushed the military leaders towards change. There are different opinions and assumptions of the root causes of the changes. Some think that they were fruits of the economic sanctions. Others believe that they were the result of the impact that domestic and international pressure, while others see them as a result of the impact of the Arab Spring.

Nobody knows exactly why Myanmar suddenly changed, but it is a fact that the military leaders understood the nature of the people and knew when and what they should do in order to avoid any sudden popular uprising such as the 2007 Saffron Revolution. In fact, the military government wanted to be recognized. Throughout the military regime from 1988 to 2010, the regime built 735 bridges (above 180 feet) and 23,966 bridges (under 180 feet), 7,129 schools (high, middle and primary), 37 universities/colleges, and



267 hospitals throughout the country.<sup>45</sup> The government also made peace agreements with 17 armed ethnic groups meaning that during their time, the government could end the longest civil war in Asia.<sup>46</sup> The 7-Step Roadmap to democracy was also announced in 2003.<sup>47</sup> However, the military government felt that the international community tended to turn a blind eye to the achievements of Myanmar under the military regime, overtly favoring the opposition. They were unhappy to be isolated in the world.

According to one of the ministers in U Thein Sein's government, the current changes were introduced by the military junta some 20 years ago.<sup>48</sup> The president also told the reporters that this historic change took two decades to be implemented. According to him, the military understood that people longed for democracy, but the military needed to take time because sudden change would cause danger to the stability of society.<sup>49</sup>

Before the 2010 election, the military government urged the NLD to register as a political party in accordance with the new Political Parties Registration Law (No. 2/2010),<sup>50</sup> but the party refused to do so. As a result, there were some threats to the existence of the NLD from the government, but later the government amended the Political Parties Registration Law so that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and ex-political prisoners could participate in the election.<sup>51</sup> Finally, the party decided to participate in the 2012 by-election and since then, the political environment has changed. More people dare to talk about politics and join political forums. People purchase the photos of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi without fear for the first time in their lives. Private media has been overwhelmed by political news and articles.

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<sup>45</sup> Chronicle of National Development: Comparison between Period Preceding 1988 and After (up to 31.12.2010) (Yangon: Ministry of Information, 2010), 471; 474; 514.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>47</sup> Mizzima Election 2010, "7 Step Roadmap," Mizzima, January 10, 2010, <http://www.mizzima.com/political-background/7-step-roadmap.html> (accessed November 16, 2012).

<sup>48</sup> Aung Kyaw Soe, "Two leaders in Myanmar democratization," *The Voice Weekly News Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 40 (October 8–14, 2012), Special Reports A, B & C, <http://thevoicemyanmar.com/2/> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>49</sup> *The Voice Weekly News Journal*, "Special Report," Vol. 8, No. 40 (October 8–14, 2012), <http://thevoicemyanmar.com/2/> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>50</sup> Altsean Burma, "Laws: 2010 Election," <http://www.altsean.org/Research/2010/Resources/Resources.php> (accessed November 22, 2012).

<sup>51</sup> Agence France-Presse, "Myanmar amends election law, clearing Suu Kyi's return to politics," *The National*, November 5, 2011, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/south-asia/myanmar-amends-election-law-clearing-suu-kyis-return-to-politics> (accessed November 22, 2012).



In the beginning of the democratization, many were in doubt. Were the changes real or only cosmetic? Regardless, many steps toward democratization have been made. The president met Aung San Suu Kyi, political parties, and the media. Political prisoners were released. Myanmar politicians outside the country returned and politicians active inside Myanmar travelled aboard. The right to peaceful assembly and peaceful procession has been achieved, and labor organizations law has been designated.<sup>52</sup> Media censorship has also been abolished. An anti-corruption law has been drafted.<sup>53</sup> President U Thein Sein and the NLD's leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi went to the US, and President Barack Obama visited Myanmar. Today, there is less doubt among people about the political willingness of the government, but whether the democratization will progress or not depends on how competent the government, political parties and the people are.

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<sup>52</sup> Myanmar President Office, "Right to Protest & Labor Organizations Law," <http://www.president-office.gov.mm/hluttaw/laws?page=1> (accessed November 22, 2012).

<sup>53</sup> *Kyaw Hsu Mon*, "Draft law publication wins praise," *The Myanmar Times*, Vol. 32, No. 635 (July 16–22, 2012), <http://www.mmtimes.com/2012/news/635/news63522.html> (accessed November 22, 2012).

## The Current Situation

Myanmar is now on the way to democracy. As part of the state building, the government has been trying to rebuild state institutions such as educational and legal institutions<sup>54</sup> and build new institutions such as the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) in September 2012.<sup>55</sup> As part of the nation building, the government is also trying to build trust among ethnic groups and political parties. However, ordinary people feel that changes are happening at the top level and benefits of the reforms do not reach the grass-root level.<sup>56</sup>

### U Thein Sein and the Union Solidarity and Development Party

“Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw Speaker U San Sint from the USDP late last month [September, 2012] accused the party’s leaders of pressuring MPs and encouraging party centralization.”<sup>57</sup>

October 8, 2012, *The Myanmar Times*

U Thein Sein is the president of Myanmar as well as the head of the National Defense and Security Council (NDSC).<sup>58</sup> He assumed his office in March 2011. In the 2010 general election, he was elected as the USDP candidate to the People’s Assembly (Pyitthu Hluttaw) in Zabuthiri Township in the Mandalay region. He joined the army in 1964 and became the prime minister in the military government, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC),

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<sup>54</sup> Thomas Kean, “MPs recommend jury trials,” *The Myanmar Times*, September 3, 2012, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/1358-mps-recommend-jury-trials.html> (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>55</sup> BBC, “Burma sets up human rights commission,” September 6, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-14807362> (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>56</sup> “Analysis: How real are Myanmar’s reforms?” *Integrated Regional Information Networks*, November 19, 2012, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/96818/Analysis-How-real-are-Myanmar-s-reforms> (accessed November 19, 2012).

<sup>57</sup> Win Ko Ko Latt and Ei Ei Toe Lwin, “Internal conflict threatens to derail USDP assembly,” *The Myanmar Times*, October 8, 2012, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/2300-internal-conflict-threatens-to-derail-usdp-assembly.html> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>58</sup> “Formation of the National Defense and Security Council, in Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (2008) (N.p.: Myanmar President Office, 2008), 75.

in 2008.<sup>59</sup> In order to strengthen democracy, he met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in August 2011 and in April and August 2012.<sup>60</sup> He also met with political parties in Myanmar in July and August 2012 and local media in October 2012.<sup>61</sup> In addition, he has improved relations with the West, especially the US, while he maintains a stable relationship with China.<sup>62</sup> During his speech at the UN, he commended the role that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi had played for promoting democracy and told the world that Myanmar's democratic reforms would not be reversed.<sup>63</sup> He has been widely praised among people in Myanmar for overseeing sweeping reforms.<sup>64</sup> U Thein Sein and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were both praised by the Time magazine as two of the most influential leaders in the world in 2012.<sup>65</sup> The Straits Times, a Singapore daily, also honored the president by naming him the Straits Times Asian of 2012 (Appendix 1).<sup>66</sup>

The currently ruling USDP party won the 2010 general election. The party was founded in May 2010 and sprang from the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), a military-backed social organization.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Thant Kyaw Zin, "Biography of President U Thein Sein," *The Yangon Times*, Vol. 8, No. 40 (October 18–24, 2012), <http://www.theyangontimes.com/> (accessed November 11, 2012).

<sup>60</sup> Kyaw Hsu Mon, "President, NLD leader meet for third time," *The Myanmar Times*, Vol. 32, No. 640 (August 20, 2012), <http://www.mmtimes.com/2012/news/640/news13.htm> (accessed November 13, 2012).

<sup>61</sup> Yadana Htun, "Thein Sein Holds Milestone First Press Briefing," *The Irrawaddy*, October 21, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/16984> (accessed November 22, 2012).

<sup>62</sup> Qin Zhongwei, "Myanmar to deepen relations with China," *China Daily*, November 19, 2012, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2012-11/19/content\\_15939805.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2012-11/19/content_15939805.htm) (accessed November 22, 2012).

<sup>63</sup> Rick Gladstone, "At U.N., Myanmar Leader Highlights Steps to Reform," *The New York Times*, September 27, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/28/world/asia/at-un-myanmar-leader-highlights-steps-to-reform.html> (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>64</sup> Dennis Aung Aung, "Thein Sein Receives Hero's Welcome in Rangoon," *The Irrawaddy*, October 1, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/15382> (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>65</sup> Time, "The World's 100 Influential People," April 18, 2012, [http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2111975\\_2111976\\_2112089,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2111975_2111976_2112089,00.html) (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>66</sup> The Straits Times, "Straits Times Asian of the Year," December 15, 2012, [http://www.straitstimes.com/st\\_asian\\_of\\_year](http://www.straitstimes.com/st_asian_of_year) (accessed December 15, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> "Mizzima Election 2010: Union Solidarity Development Association/Party," *Mizzima*, <http://www.mizzima.com/political-pro/military/usdausdp.html> (accessed November 17, 2012).

The pillars of the national policy of the USDP are non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity, and perpetuation of sovereignty.<sup>68</sup> The party has also built a close relationship with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).<sup>69</sup> There is no doubt that President U Thein Sein's popularity is increasing in Myanmar, but it is also important to understand that his support does not mean that people support the USDP and the government.<sup>70</sup>

Compared to its closest political rival, the NLD, the USDP is less attractive and its public organizing skills lag far behind those of the NLD. Like the NLD, there are strong critics among senior members of the party because of the poor democracy within the party.<sup>71</sup> There are also rumors that a power struggle is going on between President U Thein Sein and U Shwe Mann, the speaker of the Lower House (People's Assembly).<sup>72</sup> However, at the party conference, the spokesperson of the party refused to admit that the party is not united, and assured the people of Myanmar that there is no serious problem in the party. In order to improve the image of the party, President U Thein Sein was reelected as the chairman of the USDP in October 2012.<sup>73</sup> He is now planning to reform its structure to be more democratic.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> "Union Solidarity and Development Party," Union Solidarity and Development Party <http://www.usdp.org.mm/2010-08-24-03-18-48.html> (accessed November 13, 2012).

<sup>69</sup> Patrick Boehler, "Chinese Communist Party Builds Ties with Burma," *The Irrawaddy*, May 24, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/4957> (accessed November 12, 2012).

<sup>70</sup> Aung Aung (IR), "Enabling Environment and the future of Myanmar," *The Messenger Weekly News Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 18 (September 24, 2012), 19; 28, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Messenger-News-Journal/127099574018030> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>71</sup> Win Ko Ko Latt and Ei Ei Toe Lwin, "The Myanmar Times: Internal conflict threatens to derail USDP assembly," *The Myanmar Times*, October 8, 2012, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/2300-internal-conflict-threatens-to-derail-usdp-assembly.html> (accessed November 21, 2012).

<sup>72</sup> David Eimer, "President Thein Sein under pressure as Burma's ruling party contemplates bleak future," *The Telegraph*, October 16, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/burmayanmar/9611171/President-Thein-Sein-under-pressure-as-Burmas-ruling-party-contemplates-bleak-future.html> (accessed November 13, 2012).

<sup>73</sup> The Associated Press, "USDP Re-elects Thein Sein as Chairman," *The Irrawaddy*, October 17, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/16628> (accessed November 12, 2012).

<sup>74</sup> Soe Than Lynn, "I'm running USDP, says U Shwe Mann," *The Myanmar Times*, October 22, 2012, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/2606-i-m-running-usdp-says-u-shwe-mann.html> (accessed November 13, 2012).

## Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy

“We’ve been working for the NLD for more than two decades but the head office does not care about us. The leaders directly appointed people who are very close with them. That is why we will resign.”<sup>75</sup>

U Nyunt Hlaing, NLD member from the Delta region, a former NLD MP who was elected in the 1990 election

October 29, 2012, *The Myanmar Times*

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is the daughter of Myanmar’s national hero, General Aung San, who was assassinated in July 1947. She has led democratic movements since 1988 and is the icon of democracy in Myanmar. She is the Chairperson of the NLD and widely regarded as the most influential politician in the country. She was under house arrest in 1989–1995, 2000–2002, 2003–2010, removed from society for more than 15 years.<sup>76</sup> She joined the 2012 by-election and was elected as the NLD candidate of the Kaw Muu Township in Yangon region to the People’s Assembly (Pyithu Hluttaw). She is also appointed by the People’s Assembly as the chairperson of the Committee for Rule of Law and Stability in August 2012.<sup>77</sup> She told the media that the parliament led by the USDP is more cooperative and democratic than she had thought.<sup>78</sup> However, when she visited India in November 2012, she reminded the world of the need to balance its expectations on current changes in Myanmar (Appendix 2).<sup>79</sup>

The NLD is the most popular party in Myanmar and won the 2012 by-election. It was founded in September 1988 and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was one of the founders. The party also won a landslide victory in the

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<sup>75</sup> Kyaw Hsu Mon, “NLD members in Patheingyi to resign,” *The Myanmar Times*, October 29, 2012, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/2767-nld-members-in-patheingyi-to-resign.html> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>76</sup> “A Biography of Aung San Suu Kyi,” *Burma Campaign UK*, <http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/index.php/burma/about-burma/about-burma/a-biography-of-aung-san-suu-kyi> (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>77</sup> Nyein Nyein, “Suu Kyi to Head ‘Rule of Law’ Committee,” *The Irrawaddy*, August 7, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/11057> (accessed November 13, 2012).

<sup>78</sup> Htet Naing Zaw, “Aung San Suu Kyi expressed the needs of education, economics and politics in Myanmar,” *Venus News Weekly Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 12 (October 11, 2012), Special Supplement C, <http://www.myanmarjournaldownload.com/journal/venus-news-weekly.html> (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>79</sup> Agence France-Press, “Suu Kyi warns India against over-optimism,” *Democratic Voice of Burma*, November 13, 2012, <http://www.dvb.no/news/suu-kyi-warns-india-against-over-optimism/24730> (accessed November 17, 2012).

general election in 1990,<sup>80</sup> but this result was not accepted by the military junta. Instead, the party was severely suppressed, and many party members including some who had been elected in the 1990 election fled from the country.

The NLD refused to join the 2010 election as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was under house arrest. Subsequently, the party was dissolved by the military government in September 2010.<sup>81</sup> A small number of party members left to establish a new party, the National Democratic Front (NDF), to participate in the 2010 election.<sup>82</sup> However, in November 2011, the new government amended the Political Parties Registration Law so that NLD could participate in the by-election.<sup>83</sup> The party joined the 2012 by-election and won a majority of the seats up for grabs. Its three main challenges are to reform the rule of law, to amend the constitution and to build national reconciliation.<sup>84</sup>

Today, there are some conflicts inside the NLD between senior and new party members. The conflict seems to be escalating as party members across the country from Yangon, Mandalay, Irrawaddy and Thaninthari regions are demonstrating against the party's undemocratic practices.<sup>85</sup> In October 2012, 132 party members left the party in Patheingyi Township of the Irrawaddy region.<sup>86</sup> In December 2012, a further 137 party members left the party in

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<sup>80</sup> "NLD to celebrate 1990 Burmese general election anniversary," *Mizzima*, May 26, 2012, <http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/5324-nld-to-celebrate-1990-burmese-general-election-anniversary.html> (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>81</sup> "Burmese junta electoral body formally dissolves NLD," *Mizzima*, September 14, 2010, <http://www.mizzima.com/news/breaking-and-news-brief/4358-burmese-junta-electoral-body-formally-dissolves-nld.html> (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>82</sup> "Mizzima Election 2010: National Democratic Force," *Mizzima*, <http://www.mizzima.com/political-pro/new-parties/ndf.html> (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>83</sup> Agence France-Presse, "Myanmar amends election law, clearing Suu Kyi's return to politics," *The National*, November 5, 2011, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/south-asia/myanmar-amends-election-law-clearing-suu-kyis-return> (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>84</sup> Lawi Weng, "Rule of Law is our Priority: NLD," *The Irrawaddy*, April 2, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/1803> (accessed November 21, 2012).

<sup>85</sup> Phyto Wai Kyaw, "More dispute emerge in NLD over past assembly under the strength and weakness of the political parties," *The Myanmar Times*, Vol. 33, No. 649 (October 22–28, 2012), <http://www.mmmtimes.com/> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>86</sup> Kyaw Hsu Mon, "Democracy Network formed in wake of Patheingyi's NLD resignations," November 2, 2012, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/2846-democracy-network-formed-in-wake-of-patheingyi-s-nldresignations.html> (accessed November 23, 2012).

Htan Ta Bin township of Yangon region.<sup>87</sup> Among the public there are many questions about the future of the party and whether it can survive without Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Activities tended to stagnate while Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was under house arrest. In the past, diplomats in Myanmar were disappointed with poor leadership as the party was strictly hierarchical and did not encourage youth enough to play a role.<sup>88</sup>

## Other Political Parties

“A multi-party political platform will only be possible when small parties are also able to be involved. Political issues undertaken by the president, such as peacemaking and [lifting of] economic sanctions, will have a better chance of success if all parties are involved and working together.”<sup>89</sup>

U Kaung Myint Htut, Chairman, Myanmar National (Democracy) Congress

In the 1990 general elections, there were 485 parliamentary seats up for grab. Some 93 parties joined the election, including the NLD which won 392 seats. The National Unity Party (NUP), the pro-military party, won ten. Other parties and independents won the rest.<sup>90</sup> In the 2010 general election, there were 1,154 parliamentary seats and 37 parties (the NLD did not participate). The USDP won 883 seats and the NUP 63.<sup>91</sup> In the 2012 by-election 45 vacant parliamentary seats were to be distributed. Seventeen parties including the NLD joined the election. The NLD won 43 seats, the USDP and the SNDP won one each.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Kyaw Soe Oo (Kha Yan), “137 NLD members resigned,” *The Myanmar Herald*, Vol. 1, No. 39 (December 8–14, 2012), <http://www.myanmarjournaldownload.com/> (accessed December 07, 2012).

<sup>88</sup> Ewen MacAskill, “Wiki-Leaks cables: China ‘fed up’ with Burma’s foot dragging on reforms,” *The Guardian*, December 9, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/Dec/09/wiki-leaks-china-impatience-with-Burma> (accessed October 11, 2012).

<sup>89</sup> Kyaw Hsu Mon, “Small parties lobby president for help,” *The Myanmar Times*, Vol. 32, No. 640 (August 20–26, 2012), <http://www.mmmtimes.com/2012/news/640/news12.html> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>90</sup> Derek Tokin, “The 1990 Elections in Myanmar (Burma): Broken Promises or a Failure of Communications?” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* Vol. 29, No. 1 (April 2007).

<sup>91</sup> Thar Gyi, “USDP Wins 76.5 Percent of Vote,” *The Irrawaddy*, November 18, 2010, <http://election.irrawaddy.org/news/612-usdp-wins-765-percent-of-vote.html> (accessed November 14, 2012).

<sup>92</sup> BBC, “Burma’s Aung San Suu Kyi wins by-election: NLD party,” April 1, 2012,



As of November 30, 2012, there are 54 political parties in Myanmar including the NLD and the USDP (Appendix 3; Appendix 4). They can roughly be divided into two groups: 21 majority ethnic parties (Burmese) and 33 minority ethnic parties (non-Burmese). Throughout Myanmar's political history, Burmese-led parties such as the NLD and the USDP have more or less influenced the entire political environment. Ethnic minorities including Burmese have traditionally been intertwined, meaning that they are usually working together under one umbrella as one party. However, it is clearer that more ethnic parties have emerged to represent their regions.

Among the 54 parties, some are allied with others. The Democratic Friendship Group/Group of Friends of Democracy Parties (10 parties), including five ethnic parties, was established in March 2011 (Appendix 5). The six ethnic parties including five in the alliance also formed the Nationalities Brotherhood Forum (NBF) in order to raise the voice of minorities in Myanmar (Appendix 6). Three other small parties, which criticized the victory of the NLD of the 2012 by-election, established the Burma Political Friendship Parties (Appendix 7).

The National Unity Party (NUP), the National Democratic Front (NDF), the New National Democracy Party (NNDP) and the Democratic Party (Myanmar) are well-known in Myanmar. Among ethnic parties, the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP) and the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) are the largest.<sup>93</sup> There are also two Muslim parties, the Kaman National Progressive Party and the National Development and Peace Party. Unlike the NLD and the USDP, small parties need financial assistance and more capacity building.<sup>94</sup> The NDF called for Canada to provide democracy promotion training for Myanmar during a Canadian diplomatic visit to the NDF's office in November 2012.<sup>95</sup>

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<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17577620> (accessed November 14, 2012).

<sup>93</sup> Sai Zom Hseng, "Main Ethnic Parties Plan to Sit in New Parliament," *The Irrawaddy*, November 20, 2010, <http://election.irrawaddy.org/news/613-main-ethnic-parties-plan-to-sit-in-new-parliament.html> (accessed November 14, 2012).

<sup>94</sup> Kyaw Hsu Mon, "Smaller parties struggle amid NLD media storm," *The Myanmar Times*, Vol. 31, No. 618 (March 12–18, 2012), <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/932-smaller-parties-struggle-amid-nld-media-storm.html> (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>95</sup> Han Lay (Bumi), "Canadian diplomat comments that Myanmar will face challenges," *The Myanmar Post*, Vol. 4, No 46 (November 28, 2012), 11, <http://www.themyanmarpost.com/>(accessed November 28, 2012).



The NLD has been criticized by small parties as they feel that people have less political knowledge and the NLD took advantage of media and financial resources.<sup>96</sup> In order to ensure a vibrant, multi-party political system, small parties asked the president for further assistance, especially funding.<sup>97</sup>

### **Ethnic Armed Groups**

“We still may see some new parties in ethnic areas if the peacemaking process is successful.”<sup>98</sup>

U Khine Maung Swe, Chairman, National Democratic Force (NDF)

It is very important to understand the role of the ethnic armed groups in Myanmar because without building sustainable peace with these groups it may not be possible to create a meaningful democratic country. There are eight major ethnic groups, including 135 sub-ethnic groups. Many of them have their own different culture, languages, flags and armed groups. This ethnic diversity is one of the reasons why there has been a struggle to escape from the circle of conflict and build a sustainable peace among ethnic armed groups. As a result, the civil war has lasted for more than 60 years.

In the past, there were more than 27 ethnic armed groups in Myanmar, but some have been incorporated into a Border Guard Force (BGF) under the military regime.<sup>99</sup> In February 2011, the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) was created to establish a federal union in Myanmar with 11 members including the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO).<sup>100</sup> Under

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<sup>96</sup> Nyein Ei Ei Htwe, “Parties criticize NLD over by-elections,” *The Myanmar Times*, Vol. 32, No. 624, April 30–May 6, 2012, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/2012/news/624/news62417.html> (accessed November 21, 2012).

<sup>97</sup> Kyaw Hsu Mon, “Small parties lobby president for help,” *The Myanmar Times*, Vol. 32, No. 640, August 20–26, 2012, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/2012/news/640/news12.html> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>98</sup> Kyaw Hsu Mon, “Small parties lobby president for help,” *The Myanmar Times*, Vol. 32, No. 640, August 20–26, 2012, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/2012/news/640/news12.html> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>99</sup> “Cease-Fire Agreements with the Junta – Women Excluded from the Process,” Global Justice Centre, <http://www.globaljusticecenter.net/projects/burma/ceasefirechart.pdf> (accessed November 18, 2012).

<sup>100</sup> Ei Ei Toe Lwin, “UNFC expected to meet government peace team,” *The Myanmar Times*, October 29, 2012, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/2734-unfc-reps-expected-to-meet-govt-peace-team.html> (accessed November 18, 2012).

the new government, 12 peace/cease-fire agreements including 10 members of the UNFC, except the KIO, have seen the light of day (Appendix 8). The UNFC has urged the government to declare a nationwide ceasefire, to settle political issues using only political means and to finalize cease-fire agreements with all resistance groups and to work together toward resolving the ongoing conflict in Kachin state during the discussion with the government in Thailand in November 2012.<sup>101</sup>

Upon receipt of the agreements with the government, the armed groups may establish their own political parties on the ground. The environment of political parties especially in ethnic areas can be expected to be affected. In order to support the peace process, in January 2012, the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) supported by Norway was set up to create local dialogue among stakeholders, in order to support the ceasefires and the building of trust and confidence. As well as this Initiative, the Peace Donor Support Group held its first meeting in June 2012. Its aim was to provide a common platform for dialogue between the donor community and the government.<sup>102</sup> In May 2012 the government formed the 11-member Union-level Peace-making Central Committee with the vice-president of Myanmar as its chairman.<sup>103</sup> In November 2012, the EU-funded Myanmar Peace Center was also opened in Yangon to serve as a platform for dialogue between all parties involved in the peace process.<sup>104</sup> Currently, the government is holding peace talks with the KIO, one of the members of the UNFC, and is also tackling communal conflicts in Rakhine state between native Rakhine Buddhists and Muslims.

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<sup>101</sup> Mizzima, "Ethnic bloc calls for nationwide cease-fire," November 15, 2012, <http://www.mizzima.com/news/regional/8403-ethnic-bloc-calls-for-nationwide-cess-fire.html> (accessed November 18, 2012).

<sup>102</sup> "Peace Donor Support Group and Myanmar Peace Support Initiative," Norway's Official Website Abroad, [http://www.emb-norway.or.th/News\\_and\\_events/MPSI/Peace-Donor-Support-Group-and-Myanmar-Peace-Support-Initiative/](http://www.emb-norway.or.th/News_and_events/MPSI/Peace-Donor-Support-Group-and-Myanmar-Peace-Support-Initiative/) (accessed November 18, 2012).

<sup>103</sup> New Light of Myanmar, "Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham attaches great importance for peaceful Myanmar," August 12, 2012, <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/open9/120812brief.html> (accessed November 18, 2012).

<sup>104</sup> Zaw Win Than, "Historic opportunity for peace: EU chief," *The Myanmar Times*, November 12, 2012, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/yangon/3048-historic-opportunity-for-peace-eu-chief.html> (accessed November 18, 2012).

## The '88' Generation Students Group

"I think in the future some may join or form a political party while others will remain with civil society and non-governmental organization."<sup>105</sup>

U Mya Aye, one of the leaders of the '88' Generation Students Group

The '88' Generation Students Group is a well-known student group comprising a generation of students who actively participated in the uprising in 1988. After the uprising, student movements were crushed by the military and students were scattered throughout Myanmar. The Group gathered these students across the country and they formed this group in 2005.<sup>106</sup> Its leader is Min Ko Naing who is regarded as the second most important leader for democracy in the country after Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Min Ko Naing, and the leading members of the Group were sentenced to more than 60 years in prison for their active role in democracy movements during the military rule.

In 2011, the leaders of the group were released. They held their first press conference in Yangon on January 21, 2012.<sup>107</sup> They told that they would continue to be involved in the politics, empowering civil society in order to promote justice, freedom and fairness. Although the group is reiterating their support to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, some still see the group as a potential rival to the NLD in upcoming election 2015.

The group also plays an important role in Myanmar in negotiations involving the government, dissidents and ethnic groups. Currently, the leaders of the group endeavors to build up a country-wide open society and to meet vulnerable people.<sup>108</sup> The group also has gone to Kachin state to intervene in the conflict between the government and the KIO. Ko Ko Gyi, a senior member of the group, is also one of the members of the Commis-

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<sup>105</sup> Lin Thant, "88 Generation Considers Forming Political Party," *The Irrawaddy*, September 25, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/14871> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>106</sup> Min Lwin, "88 Generation Students to hold talks with president," *Democratic Voice of Burma*, July 24, 2012, <http://www.dvb.no/news/88-generation-students-to-hold-talks-with-president/23009> (accessed November 18, 2012).

<sup>107</sup> "'88' Generation Students Group Press Conference," January 21, 2012 (Yangon: Bagan Publishing House, 2012), 3–13.

<sup>108</sup> Mizzima Burmese, "88 students start their tour in Mon state," November 13, 2012, <http://www.mizzimaburmese.com/news/inside-burma/10364-2012-11-09-15-41-06.html> (accessed November 18, 2012).

sion to investigate the communal violence in Rakhine state.<sup>109</sup> Although no concrete result has been seen from the efforts of the group on Kachin and Rakhine conflicts, it successfully mediated between the government and Buddhist monks who were injured during a police raid at a Chinese-backed copper mine in November 2012.<sup>110</sup> The group is also being invited by the chairman of Union Election Commission to watch the 2015 election.<sup>111</sup>

## People, Civil Organizations, and the Media

### *People*

“The resilience of civil society in Burma is remarkable, despite all the years of political repression. The fact that so large a degree of citizen participation exists in a country that has been one of the world’s most repressive dictatorships is nothing short of amazing.”<sup>112</sup>

Professor Francis Fukuyama

Myanmar is one of the least developed countries in Asia. 67 percent of the population lives in rural areas in poverty according to the World Bank data in 2011.<sup>113</sup> Politics heavily relies on leadership charisma. The success of the NLD led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is one example of this. Indeed, if for any reason she would not be involved in national politics this may threaten the very future of democracy in Myanmar. People’s understanding of democracy and civil rights remains weak, largely due to the fact that they do not have time to follow politics. However, the results of the elections in the past indicate that people long for democracy and support Daw Aung San Suu

<sup>109</sup> The Associated Press, “Burma Sets Up Internal Probe of Sectarian Unrest,” *The Irrawaddy*, August 18, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/11817> (accessed November 18, 2012).

<sup>110</sup> Kyaw Phyto Tha, “Govt. Apologizes to Monks Injured in Copper Mine Raid,” *The Irrawaddy*, December 16, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/21326> (accessed December 17, 2012).

<sup>111</sup> Thaug Htun, “The Union Election Commission invites 88 Group to cooperate in the 2015 election,” *The Yangon Times*, Vol. 8, No. 38, October 4–10, 2012, <http://www.yangonmedia.com/> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>112</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “What Myanmar needs,” *The American Interest*, September 6, 2012, <http://blogs.the-american-interest.com/fukuyama/2012/09/06/what-myanmar-needs/> Francis Fukuyama (accessed on November 23, 2012).

<sup>113</sup> The World Bank, “Data: Rural population (% of total population),” <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS> (accessed November 19, 2012).

Kyi and the NLD. People voted for the NLD in the 1990 general election and also in the 2012 by-election, but the USDP won the 2010 general election as the NLD did not participate. From these records, it is assumed that dictatorship can defeat people physically but cannot defeat their spirit or desire for change.

In order to build up a sustainable democratic country, the role of the people is extremely important because they are creators of the future of the country. Depending on their human capacity, people can guide politicians or can be guided by politicians. In retrospect, people were often manipulated and suppressed by political opportunists and autocrats. It is therefore important for people to improve their human resource skills by all means. In fact, Myanmar's society is peace loving, and humanitarianism and volunteerism exist in the country. During the Cyclone Nargis in 2008, people throughout the country took part in organizations that assisted victims in the Delta region and did so without instructions from the government and international aid organizations.<sup>114</sup>

There are some weak points of Myanmar people in building a democratic country. Unity among the people is seldom to be seen, and people are not accustomed to working in groups except in crisis situations such as Cyclone Nargis. As a result, it is easy to rule people through a policy of divide-and-rule. In the country's history, individual heroes often emerged and ruled, but they could not initiate any long-term development. People are easily inflamed but also tend to forget. A culture of negotiation is also rare so people tend to assume that if you have weapons, you win.<sup>115</sup> The spirit of empathy and sympathy needs to be cultivated through democratic principles. If there are tragedies, people often tend to blame fate.<sup>116</sup> Under the military regime, some used to say that people get the government they

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<sup>114</sup> Su Lin Lewis, "WHD: People helping people in Myanmar," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, September 4, 2012, <http://www.unocha.org/top-stories/all-stories/whd-people-helping-people-myanmar> (accessed November 19, 2012).

<sup>115</sup> Aung Aung (IR), "Does Myanmar hunger for bloodshed?" *The Messenger Weekly News Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 16 (September 10, 2012), <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Messenger-News-Journal/127099574018030> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>116</sup> Aung Aung (IR), "What current Myanmar politics need," *The Messenger Weekly News Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 21 (October 15, 2012), Supplement D, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Messenger-News-Journal/127099574018030>, (accessed November 19, 2012).

deserve. In order to sustain democracy and change the mindset of people, urgent assistance to develop human capacity is needed.

### *Civil Organizations*

“INGOs need to change to do more capacity building. The rules of engagement still see local NGOs as subcontractors because their capacity is weaker.”<sup>117</sup>

U Aung Tun Thet, senior adviser to the UN Resident Coordinator in Myanmar

Civil organizations refer to institutions and groupings that are outside of government. Throughout history, Myanmar’s civil society has lived predominantly under totalitarianism, meaning that there was no enabling environment for civil society to flourish as independent organizations.

Under British rule, civil organizations were mostly religious organizations at villages to support local Buddhist activities. The British did not allow people to form political parties so independent religious organizations became the centers of religious purpose and national movement such as the Young Men’s Buddhist Association (YMBA).<sup>118</sup> After independence, during the period of 1948–1962, civil organizations flourished but most were affiliated to the AFPEL, the ruling party at the time, such as the All Burma Peasant’s Organization, the All Burma Worker’s Organization and the All-Burma Women’s Freedom League.<sup>119</sup> As a result, there were no powerful free civil organizations that could intervene in conflicts in the country or balance of the power of political parties.

Under the first military regime/Socialism (1962–1988), the nascent civil organizations were suppressed. No independent organizations were allowed under the Burmese Way to Socialism. There were some small private organizations, but they were powerless and none of them worked for pluralism. Under the military regime (1988–2011), the numbers of NGOs

<sup>117</sup> “Myanmar: Call to build up local NGOs,” Integrated Regional Information Networks, March 1, 2011, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/91949/MYANMAR-Call-to-build-up-local-NGOs> (accessed November 19, 2012).

<sup>118</sup> “British Burma: The Emergence of Political Movements,” Global Security, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/myanmar/history-british-3.htm> (accessed November 19, 2012).

<sup>119</sup> “AFPFL Politics and Issues,” Global Security, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/myanmar/government-1948-62-1.htm> (accessed November 19, 2012).

increased from 30 in 2001 to 86 in 2009.<sup>120</sup> They were allowed to be registered but the process of registration took time, and most NGOs only received registration numbers. There were huge private organizations such as the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) and the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA), but none were autonomous or worked toward pluralism. The military government was accused of creating its own civil society in the guise of the USDA and the MMCWA. However, after the Cyclone Nargis, the number of local NGOs dramatically increased. As of 2011, according to the Ministry of Home Affairs, 280 local organizations had been registered.<sup>121</sup> In 2011, under the new government, current NGOs registration law is planned to be amended in order to increase cooperation with NGOs.

Local NGOs in Myanmar seem to be flourishing. However, most of them are weak in systematic organizing and institutional organization so there is little capacity among local NGOs to work with INGOs in Myanmar shoulder-to-shoulder. In addition, there is less cooperation between local NGOs, and most NGOs are not so trusted by the public and not seen to be able to increase pluralism in society.

### *The Media*

“Most of the media only covers Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s campaign trips. We do not blame you but [the media coverage] should be fair.”<sup>122</sup>  
U Kyaw, New National Democracy Party, an MP in the Yangon Region Assembly

Media in Myanmar had been tightly controlled by the government since 1962. Under the military regime, people had to rely on foreign broadcasting services in Burmese such as British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), Radio Free Asia (RFA) and Voice of America

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<sup>120</sup> Kim Wallis and Carine Jaquet, “Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN): Local NGOs in Myanmar: vibrant but vulnerable,” *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine*, no. 51 (July 2011), <http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-51/local-ngos-in-myanmar-vibrant-but-vulnerable> (accessed November 20, 2012).

<sup>121</sup> Shwe Yee Saw Myint, “Govt relaxes NGO registration process,” *The Myanmar Times*, Vol. 32, No. 623 (April 16–22, 2012), <http://www.mmtimes.com/2012/news/623/news62305.html> (accessed November 19, 2012).

<sup>122</sup> Tun Tun, “New political party says it wants to work for a peaceful Burma,” *Mizzima*, August 24, 2011, <http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/5828-new-political-party-says-it-wants-to-work-for-a-peaceful-burma.html> (accessed November 23, 2012).



(VOA) if they wanted to listen to domestic political news and international news. DVB, the Irrawaddy, Mizzima, and Moe Ma Kha were also well known among Myanmar people as Myanmar news websites outside Myanmar.

Restrictions on media were gradually decreased in 2008, because the military government wanted the media to advocate in the 2010 general election. Myanmar's first B.A. journalism program in 27 years was offered by one of the state colleges in Yangon in 2008.<sup>123</sup> In 2011, the new government allowed 178 non-political periodicals to be published without submitting to the government's censorship board. In August 2012, the government abolished the censorship policy that was adopted in 1964, and reporters were thus allowed to publish their articles (except films) without having to go through the censorship board.<sup>124</sup> Up to June 2011, there were 176 journals and 180 magazines and newspapers in circulation. In order to act as a news source for domestic and foreign media, the government has formed an information team in November 2012.<sup>125</sup>

For the first time since 1962, the government has announced that state-owned media including newspapers, TV and radio would be transformed into public service media outlets before 2015.<sup>126</sup> Currently, there is no private daily newspaper in Myanmar, but it is also expected to be allowed soon. Anti-government media outside Myanmar such as Mizzima based in India and Democratic Voice of Burma based in Norway also return to establish their offices in Myanmar.<sup>127</sup> As a result, the country's score of press freedom for 2011 has been improved from 94 to 85 points according to the Freedom of the Press 2012.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Minh Zaw, "College to offer first journalism degree," *The Myanmar Times*, Vol. 20, No. 384 (September 17–23, 2007), <http://mmtimes.com/no384/n002.htm> (accessed November 20, 2012).

<sup>124</sup> BBC "Burma abolishes media censorship," August 20, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19315806> (accessed November 20, 2012).

<sup>125</sup> The Irrawaddy, "Govt Forms 'Information Team' to Liaise with Media," November 15, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/18925> (accessed November 20, 2012).

<sup>126</sup> Min Lwin, "Gov't to transform mouthpieces into public service media outlets," *Democratic Voice of Burma*, November 9, 2012, <http://www.dvb.no/news/gov%E2%80%99t-to-transform-mouthpieces-into-public-service-media-outlets/24687> (accessed November 20, 2012).

<sup>127</sup> Kyaw Hsu Mon, "Mizzima preparing to open Yangon branch office," *The Myanmar Times*, Vol. 31, No. 613 (February 12, 2012), <http://www.mmtimes.com/2012/news/613/news61317.html> (accessed November 20, 2012).

<sup>128</sup> Freedom House, "Freedom of the Press 2012," <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2012> (accessed November 20, 2012).



Today more people use blogs and social media in order to express their views on politics and other social things. According to Freedom House, the U.S.-based independent watchdog organization, one percent of the population in Myanmar could access the Internet in 2011.<sup>129</sup> Currently, the website of the President's Office of Myanmar<sup>130</sup> is the most updated government website in Myanmar. Each Ministry has also launched its own website. In the recent by-election, small parties felt that private journals in Myanmar were focusing too much on the activities of the NLD and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and wanted to see a fair media campaign.<sup>131</sup>

Today's media in Myanmar is at an important juncture because they can promote democracy as well as make it deteriorate. It can aid in building peace but can also inflame conflict. In the case of the conflict in Rakhine state, many thought that foreign media were biased toward Muslims in Rakhine state paying attention to the plight of Muslims all the time.<sup>132</sup> On the other hand, some people also thought that local media were biased towards Buddhists worsening the situation.<sup>133</sup>

### *The Military*

"According to the National Constitution, taking the seats of military personnel in various Hluttaws (Parliament) is to serve for the benefits of the nation because of the previous history passed through."<sup>134</sup>

Vice Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services

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<sup>129</sup> Freedom House, "Burma: Freedom on the Net 2012," <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2012/burma> (accessed November 20, 2012).

<sup>130</sup> Republic of the Union of Myanmar, President Office, <http://www.president-office.gov.mm> (accessed November 20, 2012).

<sup>131</sup> Kyaw Hsu Mon, "The Myanmar Times: Smaller parties struggle amid NLD media storm," *The Myanmar Times*, March 12, 2012, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/932-smaller-parties-struggle-amid-nld-media-storm.html> (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>132</sup> "Criticism of foreign media reporting on Burma," *Bangkok Pundit*, June 28, 2012, <http://asiancorrespondent.com/85020/criticism-of-foreign-media-reporting-on-myanmar/> (accessed November 20, 2012).

<sup>133</sup> "Free press necessary in Burma to properly address Rakhine conflict," Open letter from SEAPA Executive Director Gayathry Venkiteswaran to President U Thein Sein, November 8, 2012, reprinted by IFEX (the global network for free expression), [http://www.ifex.org/burma/2012/11/08/rakhine\\_conflict/](http://www.ifex.org/burma/2012/11/08/rakhine_conflict/) (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>134</sup> New Light of Myanmar, "To possess high defense power: State, people & Tatmadaw will have to join hands," Vol. 19, No. 342 (March 28, 2012), <http://myanmargeneva.org/NLM2012/eng/3Mar/n120328.pdf8> (accessed November 21, 2012).

Without understanding the role of the military, further discussion on Myanmar's politics would not be accomplished, as the military is the only powerful institution in the country to date that has been systematically organized. In 1940, thirty comrades led by General Aung San left Burma for Japan via China to receive military training to fight against the British in Burma. The Burma Independent Army (BIA) was founded in 1941 in Bangkok. A year later, the name was changed into the Burma Defense Army (BDA), and in 1943, the BDA was again renamed into the Burma National Army (BNA). In 1945, the BNA was renamed the Patriotic Burmese Forces (PBF). The BIA or PBF fought against British and Japanese during the Second World War II.

From 1958 to 1960, the military served as a caretaker government according to the request of the civilian government. In 1962, the military ousted the civilian government in order to maintain the solidarity of the Union. Later, the military government transformed itself into a Socialist government. In 1988, the military seized power from the Socialist government in order to safeguard the solidarity of the Union. The military governed until March 2011, when it handed over the power to a civilian government. According to the historical experience of the nation, the military always emphasizes that it defends non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty.

Although the military regime was officially dissolved, the military still plays an important role. According to the 2008 National Constitution, a part of the government is reserved for the military. This includes a quarter of the seats in the People's Assembly/Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) and the National Assembly/Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House), as well as the Ministries of Defense, of Home Affairs, of Border Affairs, while one of the positions of the two vice-presidents is also to be reserved for the military. Experts suggest that the powerful National Defense and Security Council is currently influenced by the military as 10 out of 11 members of the Council are, or were previously, from the military.

There are different opinions on the role of the military in Myanmar. Respect of the military has decreased since 1962 but there are different opinions on the role of the military in the political transition. Some see the military as both architect and guardian of the recent changes and want the military to take a significant role in the country's politics. Others view the military as violators of human rights and want the military to leave politics.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD have also repeated that they wanted to change the 2008 National Constitution that grants the military an upper hand. However, nobody can deny their importance in Myanmar because only the military can guarantee the security and safety of the people in emergency situations such as was seen during the Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 and also in the Rakhine Crisis in June/October 2012.<sup>135</sup>

Regarding the role of the military today, there are rumors that the ex-military leader, Senior General Than Shwe, may still be in control of the military or the government from behind the scenes. U Htay Oo, General Secretary of the USDP, told the Irrawaddy News that Senior General Than Shwe is like the father of the military so he may still influence the military, but the military is officially under the control of President U Thein Sein.<sup>136</sup> The president told the Straight Times newspaper that the military no longer command power but will play an important role in the future of Myanmar.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Mizzima, "Suu Kyi calls for more troops in Rakhine State," November 8, 2012, <http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/8368-suu-kyi-calls-for-more-troops-in-rakhine-state.html> (accessed November 21, 2012).

<sup>136</sup> "Ex-Senior General Than Shwe still influences the Military?" *The Public Image Weekly News Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (October 19, 2012).

<sup>137</sup> The Irrawaddy, "Military Not Involved in Govt, Says Thein Sein," July 12, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/8945> (accessed November 21, 2012).

## **Strengths and Weaknesses of the Political Parties**

In the past, the military played a vital role in the politics of Myanmar. Since 2011 when the military left politics, the political vacuum has been filled by political parties. In order to sustain democracy, it is important to have a sound political knowledge among the people. Members of parties may have to serve as trainers in order to restore democratic values into Myanmar communities. Political parties are indispensable for democracy. As the central intermediate structures between society and government, parties must act as a bridge. They must protect national unity by resolving conflicting interests. Public discussion must be stimulated and channeled by political parties. They are responsible for finding candidates for voters and also voters for candidates. Parties should serve as a bridge among conflicting actors such as in the cases of Rakhine state and Kachin state.

People in a country need to be good citizens with a sense of knowledge about democracy if they want to enjoy the real taste of democracy. They may have to change their mindset to follow regional and international development and to adapt to a new democratic culture such as tolerance, mutual understanding and mutual respect. Although there are hundreds of local NGOs in Myanmar, their capacity is still weak. NGOs mostly focus on education, health and humanitarian assistances which makes the role of political parties extremely important in promoting democracy. If the knowledge of politicians is poor, the knowledge of people will be poor. If the knowledge of people is poor the future of democracy in Myanmar will be pernicious.

Political parties had to struggle to survive under military rulers and, thus, do not have any experience with state building and nation building. Democratic culture among parties has been lost for more than five decades. Under the military regime, the main focus of parties was to liberate them from the junta but today they have different interests and different objectives. Small parties have formed alliances to raise their voices, but some rifts have occurred among them. The NLD is struggling not to disintegrate as its old and new members compete for positions in the party. The USDP has its own problems, but people have placed high expectations on the NLD. As a result news of the NLD's internal conflicts is particularly frustrating to Myanmar people.

In 1962, the military took the power when the democratic ruling party failed to build the foundation of democracy. Political parties need to learn from history. If they forget it, history is likely to be repeated. In other words, if the parties cannot work together or build a democratic culture within their organizations, the future of Myanmar's democracy is bleak. In order to understand the health of its democracy, I will now analyze the strengths and weaknesses of political parties. In doing so, I will divide political parties into four categories: 1) USDP, 2) NLD, 3) small Mainland parties, and 4) ethnic parties. Six categories are used to assess the strengths of the political parties in Myanmar: 1) autonomy, 2) coherence, 3) roots in society, 4) organization, 5) interparty relations, and 6) international relations. In grading, four grades will be used: excellent, good, fair, and poor.

## **Union Solidarity and Development Party**

### *Strengths & Weaknesses*

#### 1) Autonomy

The autonomy refers to the rights the party members have in terms of aspects such as freedom, sovereignty, decision-making and leadership rotation. Unlike in the past, members of the USDP have nowadays more freedom of expression and the right to criticize what they see as undemocratic practices of the party. It is important to note these changes as members of the USDP, unlike the NLD, were not accustomed to be able to criticize and were not outspoken under the centralization of power. This was because the USDP sprang from the USDA, a pro-government social organization chaired by military leaders. However, ordinary party members' participation in the decision-making process in the USDP is still weak and not transparent. Like the NLD, the leadership rotation in the party is not transparent, but in order to garner public support, President U Thein Sein, whose popularity is burgeoning among the public for his democratic reforms, was reelected in the party's first conference as the chairman of the USDP. The overall grading for this category is Poor.

#### 2) Coherence

The coherence within the USDP refers to the solidarity of the party with aspects such as loyalty, cooperation among party members and tolerance

of intraparty conflicts. Loyalty among the party members is an important question for researchers. According to experience, the loyalty to the USDA, the mother of the USDP, was extremely poor. However, the role that the USDP plays for the public as well as the spirit of party members is slowly growing. The reason is that the country's president is the head of the party. The USDP is widely regarded as pro-military and its top leaders are ex-military generals from the previous military regime, making tolerance towards intraparty conflicts limited. Generally, however, the unity of the party seems to be quite good, because of its nature that makes the latent consent of the members not easy to discern. The overall grading for this category is Fair.

### 3) Roots in the Society

The roots in society of the USDP refer to its history, the degree to which it is supported by the people, and the links to civil society and the media. The party was established in May 2010, but its development can be connected with the history of the USDA. It was quite an unpopular organization under the military regime. The party was established by military leaders in 1993 to assist social needs but it was transformed into the USDP in 2010. This party was formerly the most powerful organization in Myanmar in terms of its membership. Nevertheless, its numbers and quality were questioned. Compared to the NLD, the election experience of the USDP is quite low as it did not exist in 1990. Although it was a powerful social organization, its activities did not make it win the heart of the people. While the party appeared strong in 2010 because of the resources granted to it by the USDA, it also inherited the USDA's bad reputation. However, the popularity of President U Thein Sein is increasing so today the USDP enjoys more media attention and some public support. The overall grading for this category is Fair.

### 4) Organization

The organizational skills of the USDP refer to its material and human resources. In the past, the party had more than 24.6 million members.<sup>138</sup> After the transformation, its membership has not been made public. According to Mizzima news, it is ca. 18 million nationwide.<sup>139</sup> Like the NLD, the USDP

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<sup>138</sup> Mizzima, "Union Solidarity and Development Association/Party," <http://www.mizzima.com/political-pro/military/usdausdp.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

has an organization that covers the whole country. Although the party is powerful and is also the ruling party, it has no history of democracy. In that sense, democratic principles need to be promoted in the party in order to strengthen its organization. The strength of the party membership is also questioned by the USDP as, unlike the NLD, youth participation in the party is small. However, the USDP is engaging in social activities throughout the country after the election campaign.<sup>140</sup> The overall grading for this category is Fair.

#### 5) Interparty Relations

Interparty relations of the USDP refer to interparty cooperation, alliance forming, and confidence-building with ethnic parties. The inter-relations can be divided into three categories: 1) relations with the NLD, 2) relations with other mainland parties, and 3) relations with ethnic parties. Under the military regime, the USDP (USDA) had poor relations with the NLD and both saw each other as antagonists but, today, the relations between the two parties are quite good. Compared to the NLD, the USDP enjoys less confidence from ethnic people as it is led by ex-military leaders. However, ethnic groups have recognized its political role since it remains the ruling party. The party is also working with other mainland parties and ethnic parties.<sup>141</sup> The overall grading for this category is Fair.

#### 6) International Relations

International relations of the USDP refer to how it works with foreign media, international diplomats, international organizations, exchange visits and obtaining rewards. The USDA (USDP) has a history of dealing with other countries since 1993 but the level of international relations of the party has not improved. In the past, it was regarded as one face of the military junta so the international community, especially Western countries, did not recognize its role as a social organization. However, its relations with the international community have improved. Since Myanmar's opening in 2011, the USDP takes part in more meeting with state-level officials, international

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<sup>140</sup> Union Solidarity and Development Policy, <http://www.usdp.org.mm/2011-09-05-03-33-24.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).

<sup>141</sup> Ko Wild, "10-party Burmese coalition meets with ruling USDP," *Mizzima*, December 7, 2011, <http://www.mizzima.com/news/by-election-2012/6253-10-party-burmese-coalition-meets-with-ruling-usdp.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).



diplomats and media.<sup>142</sup> Specifically, its relations with the Communist Party of China are quite good.<sup>143</sup> Like the NLD, the leader of the USDP, U Thein Sein, also draws attention from international media due to his leadership in democratic reforms. He has received a doctoral degree from Yangon University<sup>144</sup> and a peace award from the International Crisis Group.<sup>145</sup> The overall grading for this category is Fair.

## National League for Democracy

### *Strengths & Weaknesses*

#### 1) Autonomy

The autonomy of the NLD members refers to the rights of the party members regarding matters such as freedom, sovereignty and decision-making. It also includes the party's leadership rotation. While party members enjoy freedom of expression and the right to criticize the party and its leadership, the youth are often excluded from the decision-making process.<sup>146</sup> Lower level members have decision-making power, but many members have felt that their perspectives are often neglected by the leadership, favoring those who are close to it.<sup>147</sup> However, as a whole, the appreciation of the members towards the party is quite high due to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

<sup>142</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, "The Prime Minister in Action," June 14, 2012, [http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/noda/actions/201206/14myanmar\\_e.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/noda/actions/201206/14myanmar_e.html) (accessed November 28, 2012).

<sup>143</sup> Patrick Boehler, "Chinese Communist Party Builds Ties with Burma," *The Irrawaddy*, May 24, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/4957> (accessed November 28, 2012).

<sup>144</sup> Myanmar President Office, "President U Thein Sein on 19 September visited Yanglin Northwest Agriculture & Forest University of Yanglin High Tech Agriculture Sector Demonstration District," <http://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/briefing-room/news/2012/09/23/id-712> (accessed November 28, 2012).

<sup>145</sup> International Crisis Group, "In Pursuit of Peace Award Dinner 2013," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/support/event-calendar/annual-award-dinner-2013.aspx> (accessed November 28, 2012).

<sup>146</sup> Saw Yan Naing, "Suu Kyi Rules Out Replacing NLD Leadership," *The Irrawaddy*, December 18, 2010, [http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=20345](http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=20345) (accessed November 27, 2012).

<sup>147</sup> Democratic Voice of Burma, "NLD senior-level expansion 'undemocratic'," January 12, 2012, <http://www.dvb.no/uncategorized/nld-senior-level-expansion-undemocratic/2868> (accessed November 27, 2012).



The leadership rotation in the party is not transparent but is expected to be changed when the party holds its conference in January 2013.<sup>148</sup> Internal autonomy needs to be strengthened. The overall grading for this category is Fair.

## 2) Coherence

The coherence within the NLD refers to the solidarity of the party taking into account loyalty to the party, cooperation among party members and tolerance on intraparty contention. Some senior party members left in 2010 and established another party.<sup>149</sup> Nevertheless, in general, party members have high loyalty to the party and feel strong solidarity. Loyalty is expected to remain unchanged as long as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remains in the party. However, some members, who have worked for the party for 20 years under suppression, left as they felt that party democracy was poor. While NLD members were cooperating with each other in the past as they had a common goal to liberate from the military regime, the unity among them has diminished, and the level of cooperation is based on which groups or individuals within the party they prefer. The unity of any particular party office seems to improve following a visit by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Party members cooperate with each other for the integrity of the party, but when she leaves the office, the situation remains unchanged. The tolerance towards intraparty conflicts has also raised questions as to the coherence of the party as it used to dismiss active members when it faced hard times. From this point, coherence within the party needs to be promoted. The overall grading for this category is Fair.

## 3) Roots in the Society

The roots in the society of the NLD refer to its history, the support it enjoys from the people, and the links to civil society and the media. The party was established in September 1988 by politicians, businesspersons, lawyers,

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<sup>148</sup> Myo Thant, "NLD to hold first party conference," *Mizzima*, May 10, 2012, <http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/7093-nld-to-hold-first-party-conference.html>, (accessed November 2, 2012).

<sup>149</sup> *Voice of America*, "Burma Opposition Members Split to Form New Party," May 6, 2010, <http://www.voanews.com/content/burma-opposition-members-split-to-form-new-party-contest-controversial-elections--93065454/117167.html> (accessed November 27, 2012).

doctors and technocrats. At that time, the ruling military regime allowed the establishment of political parties. Since one of the party's founding leaders, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, is the daughter of Myanmar's national hero Aung San, the party enjoyed popular support. It has also been a beacon for democracy and human rights throughout its history, which has helped it win the hearts of ordinary people.<sup>150</sup> Today, it is closely working with some civil organizations and the media.<sup>151</sup> Most private weekly journals have news about the party and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. As a result, small parties and opponents often accuse the media of being biased. In addition, some small parties conceived that they had won landslide victories in the elections as people have not had enough knowledge on politics.<sup>152</sup> Nonetheless, the roots in the society of the party are well connected with people, civil organization and the media. The overall grading for this category is Excellent.

#### 4) Organization

The organizational skills of the NLD takes into account the party's material and human resources. There is no official figure of its membership but it is believed to have hundreds of thousands active members throughout the country. It has an organization that covers the whole country with more than 300 branches.<sup>153</sup> Party members need more political training on democracy and international relations as the party was under suppression for 20 years.<sup>154</sup> Members are young and energetic and mostly function as community leaders in their regions. In the past material resources were poor, which was understandable as no businessperson dared work with the party.

<sup>150</sup> Network Myanmar, "The 1990 Elections in Burma," <http://www.networkmyanmar.org/component/content/article/61/1990-Elections-in-Myanmar> ; "April 2012 By-Elections," <http://www.networkmyanmar.org/component/content/article/88/By-Elections> (accessed November 27, 2012).

<sup>151</sup> Ko Pauk, "NLD starts social networking for youth," *Mizzima*, February 10, 2011, <http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/4865-nld-starts-social-networking-for-youth.html> (accessed November 27, 2012).

<sup>152</sup> Nyein Ei Ei Htwe, "Parties criticize the NLD over by-elections," *The Myanmar Times*, April 30, 2012, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/yangon/775-parties-criticise-nld-over-by-elections.html> (accessed November 27, 2012).

<sup>153</sup> Phanida, "One third of NLD offices reopen," *Mizzima*, March 11, 2010, <http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/3651-one-third-of-nld-offices-reopen.html> (accessed November 27, 2012).

<sup>154</sup> Kyaw Hsu Mon, "NLD leaders again urge unity," *The Myanmar Times*, October 22, 2012, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/2599-nld-leaders-again-urge-unity.html> (accessed November 27, 2012).

Today, the party is different, and more businessmen and famous artists support it.<sup>155</sup> However, its formation is often criticized as its leadership has a poor record on democracy.<sup>156</sup> The overall grading for this category is Fair.

#### 5) Interparty Relations

Interparty relations of the NLD takes into account interparty cooperation, alliance forming, and confidence-building with ethnic parties. These interrelations can be divided into three categories: 1) relations with the USDP, 2) relations with other mainland parties and 3) relations with ethnic parties. The NLD had a bitter relationship with USDA that had been founded by the military regime (now the USDP) but, today, the relations between the two parties are quite good on the ground. In the past, the party was the center for democracy movement so mainland parties and ethnic parties surrounded the party. In 1998, it formed a Committee Representing the People's Parliament (CRPP)<sup>157</sup> including four ethnic parties which won the 1990 election in their states. However, the relations between the NLD and other parties, including ethnic parties, are diminishing after it won the 2012 by-election. Other mainland parties worry that the party strives for political hegemony among parties. Ethnic parties also perceive it as a potential rival in their constituencies.<sup>158</sup> In addition, ethnic parties denounced it when it raised funds in the name of ethnic people in January 2011.<sup>159</sup> However, ethnic issues play an important role in the policies of the party, and Daw Aung San San Suu Kyi is still admired among ethnic people so the overall grading for this category is Fair.

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<sup>155</sup> May Sandy, "Art sales support NLD education network," *The Myanmar Times*, July 9, 2012 <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/lifestyle/456-art-sales-support-nld-education-network.html>, (accessed November 28, 2012).

<sup>156</sup> WikiLeaks, "Viewing cable 04Rangoon1149, Inside Burma's NLD party: Young Turks vs Old Lions," <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2004/09/04RANGOON1149.html> (accessed November 27, 2012)

<sup>157</sup> The Irrawaddy, "Committee Representing the People's Parliament (CRPP)," January 1, 2003, [http://www2.irrawaddy.org/research\\_show.php?art\\_id=448](http://www2.irrawaddy.org/research_show.php?art_id=448), (accessed November 28, 2012).

<sup>158</sup> Radio Free Asia, "NLD, Shan Party Lead Opposition Assault," April 3, 2012, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/burma/election-04032012163822.html> (accessed November 27, 2012).

<sup>159</sup> Chin Land Guardian, "NLD's Gestures Raise Eyebrows," March 28, 2012, <http://www.chinlandguardian.com/news-2009/1741-nlds-gestures-raise-eyebrows.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).

## 6) International Relations

International relations of the NLD involve working with foreign media, international diplomats, international organizations, exchange visits and obtaining rewards. The relations between international organizations, as well as individuals, and the party are quite good. It has a long history of dealing with foreigners and foreign media after its establishment in 1988. During the military rule, the party was regarded as the last stronghold of democratic movements in Myanmar by international media so the plight of its members and the party itself were often highlighted in the media. The party still enjoys the attention of foreign media as the party of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. It has strong relations with foreign embassies in Yangon and is also often visited by foreign senior officials. Its social network is also well connected with international organizations working in Myanmar. Since 2011, the party often sends its members abroad to improve the individual members' political capacity.<sup>160</sup> Its leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has received more than 90 international rewards, including the 1990 Rafto Human Rights Prize, the 1990 Sakharov Prize, and the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>161</sup> The overall grading for this category is Excellent.

## Small Mainland Parties

### *Strengths & Weaknesses*

#### 1) Autonomy

There are 19 mainland parties, apart from the NLD and the SPDC. Although many of them are small in terms of financial capacity and membership, some are not, such as the National Unity Party (NUP)<sup>162</sup> and National Democratic

<sup>160</sup> National League for Democracy, "NLD Youth Members Visit Poland," December 21, 2011, <http://www.nldburma.org/international-affairs/europ/459--nld-youth-members-visits-poland-.html> (accessed November 27, 2012).

<sup>161</sup> Burma Campaign UK, "A Biography of Aung San Suu Kyi," <http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/index.php/burma/about-burma/about-burma/a-biography-of-aung-san-suu-kyi> (accessed November 2012).

<sup>162</sup> Mizzima, "National Unity Party," <http://www.mizzima.com/political-pro/military/nup.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).

Force (NDF).<sup>163</sup> However, except the NLD and the USDP, the rest of parties have experienced financial problems and human resources problems.

In order to grasp the scope of the autonomy of the members, the rights of the party members such as freedom, sovereignty, decision-making and leadership rotation will be taken into account. The parties are democratic and party members enjoy freedom of expression and the right to criticize the party and their leadership. Members can freely shift from one party to another. Unlike the NLD and the USDP, there is less centralization within small mainland parties which makes it possible for them to take quick decisions when it comes to releasing statements or conducting party conferences. Leadership rotations are rare. The overall grading for this category is Good.

## 2) Coherence

Coherence within mainland small parties refers to the solidarity of the party taking into account aspects such as loyalty to their own parties, cooperation among party members and tolerance on intraparty conflicts. Mainland parties are small and lack resources so some of their members, including members of parliament, move from one party to another, especially to the NLD.<sup>164</sup> Although some party switching is seen in small mainland parties, their sizes result in that the parties have less internal conflicts and members are more cooperative towards each other. The overall grading for this category is Fair.

## 3) Roots in the Society

The roots in the society of the NLD take into account the history of small mainland parties, people supports, and the links to civil society and the media. Most of these parties, except the Democratic Party (Myanmar)<sup>165</sup> and the NUP, were established in 2010 in order to participate in the 2010

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<sup>163</sup> Mizzima, "National Democratic Force," <http://www.mizzima.com/political-pro/new-parties/ndf.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).

<sup>164</sup> "NDF members from Bago Region will join NLD," *Radio Free Asia*, July 11, 2012, <http://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/ndf-member-nld-07112012220145.html> (accessed November 28, 2012); Myo Thant, "NDF MPs rejoin NLD," Mizzima, April 9, 2012, <http://www.mizzima.com/news/by-election-2012/6922-ndf-mps-rejoin-nld.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).

<sup>165</sup> Mizzima, "Democratic Party (Myanmar)," <http://www.mizzima.com/political-pro/new-parties/dp.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).

general election. However, some senior leaders of parties such as the NDF, the New National Democracy Party, the Myanmar Democracy Congress, and the Wunthanu Democratic Party are ex-NLD members and have much political experience and experience in public relations. However, a majority of these parties have poor links to civil society organizations and the media as their activities are small and are not transparent. The overall grading for this category is Poor.

#### 4) Organization

The organizational skill of small mainland parties refers to their material and human resources. The parties vary in size, and none has released membership numbers. Except the NUP, NDF and DPM, the rest of the parties have less than ten offices in the country. Many of them are active during the election times, and, beyond the election, their activities among the public are abeyant. Clearly, small parties lack financial resources and human resources. In order to survive, they have called for the president of the country to assist them from the state's budget and urged international organizations to provide capacity-building training for party members. The overall grading for this category is Poor.

#### 5) Interparty Relations

Interparty relations of small mainland parties take into account interparty cooperation, alliance forming, and confidence-building with ethnic parties. These inter-relations can be divided into three categories: 1) relations with the USDP, 2) relations with the NLD, and 3) relations with other parties. Most of these parties are pro-democracy, and their leaders or members have long histories of going against the military government and, therefore, the relationship between the USDP and small mainland parties is vigilant. However, as small parties, they also recognize that they cannot be too far away from the USDP as the USDP-influenced Government can support them. Some parties are cautiously managing the relations with the NLD, the party they once split from. Some see that party as pro-democracy but, at the same time, worry that it will strive for hegemony among the parties. Small parties are unhappy with the media that often pays more attention to the NLD. Interparty relations among small mainland parties and ethnic parties are generally good. Some mainland parties have built alliances with

each other, such as the Ten-Party Alliance and the Three-Party Alliance.<sup>166</sup> The overall grading for this category is Fair.

#### 6) International Relations

International relations of small mainland parties take into account working with foreign media, international diplomats, international organizations, exchange visits and obtaining rewards. Unlike the NLD and the USDP, these parties receive little attention from international organizations and the media, except the NDF.<sup>167</sup> Foreign diplomats and international organizations have little information about them so they often do not appear in international reporting. Overall, the parties lack human resource skills needed for international contacts, although the DPM, the NDF and the NUP have more international relations. The overall grading for this category is Poor.

### **Minority Ethnic Parties**

#### *Strengths & Weaknesses*

##### 1) Autonomy

There are 33 ethnic parties, apart from the NLD and the USDP. Size and power of the ethnic parties vary but unlike small mainland parties, they are well-known in their regions and can compete well with the NLD and the USDP.

In order to understand the autonomy of the members of ethnic parties, the rights of the party members such as freedom, sovereignty, decision-making and leadership rotation will be evaluated. Any restriction of freedom of expression and right to criticize the leadership of the parties has not been reported. Ethnic parties are also independent and democratic so their decision-making processes are liberal and democratic but may be based on nationalism. Like small mainland parties, they do not have much of a problem in the decision-making process as ethnic parties have been organized by their own ethnic group, so divergence in parties can more or less be avoided. The overall grading for this category is Good.

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<sup>166</sup> Appendix 5; Appendix 6.

<sup>167</sup> Han Lay (Bumi), "Canadian diplomat comments that Myanmar will face challenges," *The Myanmar Post*, Vol. 4, No. 46 (November 28, 2012), 11, <http://www.themyanmarpost.com/> (accessed November 28, 2012).



## 2) Coherence

Coherence within ethnic parties takes into account the solidarity of the party focusing on loyalty to their own parties, cooperation among party members and tolerance of intraparty conflicts. Ethnic parties are mostly homogenous which makes it easier for them to maintain unity compared to the NLD and the USDP and cooperation among party members is more prevalent. Based on their own ethnic interests, they often act as unified organizations, and the enthusiasm of members is also easily activated. There are different ethnic parties within the same ethnicity so party switching can be seen among ethnic parties. The overall grading for this category is Good.

## 3) Roots in the Society

The roots in the society of ethnic parties take into account the history of ethnic parties, support, and the links to civil society and the media. Like small mainland parties, most of the ethnic parties were established in 2010, except the Arakan League for Democracy and the Mon Democracy Party.<sup>168</sup> However, unlike small mainland parties, ethnic parties have considerable influence in their local communities. Although most of them were founded in 2010, their leading members are former politicians and activists so these parties have links to civil society in their regions that are well rooted. They also receive local media attention as one of the top priorities for Myanmar is to address ethnic discontents. The overall grading for this category is Excellent.

## 4) Organization

The organizational skills of ethnic parties take into account the material and human resources of the party. Like other parties, there is no official figure of the memberships of these parties. Among them, CPP SNDP, RNDP, AMRDP, and PSDP are regarded as well-organized as they won more than nine seats each in three parliaments (region/state, Lower and Upper Houses) in the 2010 general election.<sup>169</sup> The remaining ethnic parties also are

<sup>168</sup> Theingi Tun and Min Min, "Mon Democracy Party to open branch office in Rangoon," *Mizzima*, September 14, 2012, <http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/8022-mon-democracy-party-to-open-branch-office-in-rangoon.html> (accessed November 29, 2012).

<sup>169</sup> Democratic Voice of Burma, "2010 Election Results," <http://www.burma2010election>.



regarded favorably by locals. Since ethnic parties are founded in their own ethnic regions, they do not have a nationwide organization. However, powerful ethnic parties such as the SNDP and the RNDP have opened offices throughout their states. Compared to the small mainland parties, the material and personal resources of ethnic parties are not so poor but in order to survive, they need financial and human skill resources, like other parties in Myanmar. The overall grading for this category is Fair.

#### 5) Interparty Relations

Interparty relations of ethnic parties refer to interparty cooperation, alliance forming, and confidence-building with ethnic parties. These inter-relations can be divided into three categories: 1) relations with the USDP, 2) relations with the NLD and 3) other small mainland parties. In the past, ethnic parties like the SNLD worked together with the NLD under the hard times, but, nowadays, the relations between old and new ethnic parties and the NLD are decreasing. Some ethnic parties do not want the NLD to be active in their ethnic constituencies as they see it as their biggest rivalry. In the past, ethnic parties felt that they were suppressed by the government but under the new USDP-led government, the relations between the USDP and ethnic parties seem to be improving somewhat. Unlike ambiguous relations with the USDP and the NLD, interparty relations among small mainland parties and ethnic parties are generally good. Some ethnic parties have built political alliances with other ethnic parties such as the Six-Party Alliance (Chin National Party, Kayah National Party, All Mon Regions Democracy Party, Pha-lon sawaw Party, Rakhine Nationalities Development Party, Shan Nationalities Democratic Party) and with small mainland parties such as the Ten-Party Alliance (Chin National Party, All Mon Regions Democracy Party, Pha-lon sawaw Party, Rakhine Nationalities Development Party, Shan Nationalities Democratic Party, National Democratic Front Democratic Party (Myanmar), Democracy and Peace Party, National Democratic Front, Peace and Unity Party, Union Democracy Party). The overall grading for this category is Fair.

#### 6) International Relations

International relations of ethnic parties take into account working with foreign media, international diplomats, international organizations, exchange visits and obtaining rewards. Ethnic conflicts play a significant role in the politics of Myanmar so international organizations and the media often pay attention to the campaigns of ethnic parties. Diplomats meet with their leaders. Unlike small parties, powerful ethnic parties constitute the core of political life in their regions so the relations between diplomats, international organizations, the media and ethnic parties are good, even though the information of ethnic parties are difficult to access. The overall grading for this category is Good.

## **How to Strengthen Political Parties: Recommendations**

Attempts to strengthen governance and promote democracy cannot ignore the key role that political parties play. In Myanmar, donors and international organizations are supporting civil society and government ministries in order to improve governance and accountability. However, political parties are often not involved as international organizations have concerns over political sensitivities. Furthermore, it is difficult for international organizations to obtain reliable data from political parties in Myanmar as most of them do not have their own websites. However, disrespecting the role of political parties would disturb the path of the country's transitional democratization. So it is important to consider how to support the parties in relation to a wide range of governance and accountability processes not only during elections. Considering this fact and in order to strengthen democracy in Myanmar, I will present some recommendations to the NLD, the USDP, small mainland parties, ethnic parties, international organizations, and the government on how to strengthen their intraparty and interparty relations as well as their domestic relations (people, NGOs, government offices and local media) and internal relations (diplomats, INGOs and foreign media)

### **To the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)**

1) In order to improve intraparty relations:

- Change the mindsets of the leaders first, from authoritarian mindsets to democratic mindsets.
- Encourage party members to internally criticize their party, put complaint boxes at the branches and also let them send copies of their complaint letters to the Headquarters. If the HQ does not respond to the criticism, the criticism should be disclosed via private media.
- Encourage party members to perform self-criticism in order to identify weaknesses of the party and anticipate how to strengthen it; allow for in-depth analysis of why it lost the by-election, why less people join it, etc.

- Reward party members who criticize the party for the sake of the party and its leadership.
- Build more effective relations between party leaders and members at the grass-root level and assign younger people including women at decision-making levels.
- Establish a social network to support party members in such matters as healthcare, funerals, etc.
- Set aside a fund to be used for social support to party members at the grass-root level.
- Create a list that documents property of party leaders such as parliamentarians, and publicize it internally if they are elected.

2) In order to improve interparty relations:

- Work altogether with the NLD on different levels so that political competition does not become adversarial.
- Build regular contact with small mainland parties and minority ethnic parties.
- Celebrate joint-memorial days with other parties if possible.
- Invite people occasionally from other parties in groups to the HQ to explain the developments of the party.
- Invite small parties or minority ethnic parties to use the party offices or compounds for conferences or celebrations if requested.
- Send messages, directly via telephone or mail, to winners from other parties in elections to congratulate their victories, also send "Happy New Year" wishes, or Thingyan festival cards to other political parties.
- Establish an interparty relations unit and do research on interparty developments of the USDP.
- Form more alliances with other parties, particularly with minority ethnic parties, and agree not to compete against them in some ethnic constituencies.

3) In order to develop domestic relations:

- Collaborate with civil organizations and government departments/offices.

- Work closely with the media, accept interviews, and invite the media to party meetings at different levels.
- Establish a domestic relations unit and conduct research on the development of relations between domestic stakeholders such as people, NGOs, local media and the party.
- Set up a network of emergency response teams in states and regions and prepare to send material assistances or volunteers in the uniforms of the party to disaster-affected areas.
- Publish a weekly journal and distribute it among the public for free.
- Establish an emergency fund to be used during emergency periods such as earthquakes or floods.

4) In order to develop international relations:

- Collaborate with international organizations and foreign diplomats as much as possible.
- Work closely with foreign media, accept interviews and inform the media clearly about the goals of the party and its reforms.
- Appoint skillful party members, with good English who understand international relations, to work with diplomats and the media.
- Establish an international relations unit and conduct research on party-based organizations around the world and find possible partnerships.
- Work with different parties around the world, but do so carefully with the parties from non-democratic countries as this can do more harm than good.
- Set up a website in English presenting the party's brief history, ideology, constitution and contact information, and update the website regularly.
- Reply to inquiries on the party via its constant email format under a Q&A section.

## **To the National League for Democracy**

1) In order to improve intraparty relations:

- Reduce the party's centralization and encourage party members to raise questions to the leadership and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
- Reform the Central Executive Committee (CEC), retire old CEC members but have them stay in advisory role positions and replace the committee with youth including women at the committee.
- Be aware of those in the party who attempt to win favors by adulating the party's leaders and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
- Empower the party's ex-political prisoners who lived in jails for years. Send them abroad as a group tour, respect them as moral heroes and assist their family members in terms of education, health and job opportunities.
- Pay more attention to senior party members who remained with the party through hard times, recognize their roles, send them abroad, and support their welfare.
- It is good to be kind to party members but relationships should not be too close and should remain professional. In the society of Myanmar, some do not care if others are close to leaders. Their focus is how to win the hearts of leaders, not colleagues and the people, so they will never tell the truth to leaders, so it is important for the party not to rely on those memberships.
- Set up small committees to assist or discuss education, health and job opportunities of members and their families at grass-root level.
- Open a new section at the party's D-Wave weekly journal so that people or party members can openly criticize the party and its leadership.
- Pay attention to minority ethnic members at the party and recognize their roles.
- Build a strong local party structure (focus on quality not quantity).
- Open the doors to those who resign from the party to rejoin the party at any time with dignity.
- Create a list that documents property of party leaders such as parliamentarians, which should be internally announced if they are elected.

2) In order to improve interparty relations:

- Work altogether with the USDP on different levels so that political competition does not become adversarial.
- Build regular contact with small mainland parties and minority ethnic parties.
- Demonstrate at all levels that the party is working hard on inclusiveness and reconciliation.
- Celebrate joint-memorial days (national days) with other parties if possible.
- Send messages, directly via telephone or mail, to winners from other parties in elections to congratulate their victories, also send “Happy New Year” wishes or Thingyan festival cards to other political parties.
- Be humble when the party works with other parties and listen carefully to what they want and give them feedback.
- Consult more with minority ethnic parties when the NLD acts to promote the welfare of ethnic people such as education, health and donations.
- Develop a system that will give a greater say to marginalized minority ethnic groups within the political framework.
- Establish an interparty relations unit and do research on interparty developments of the party.
- Do not focus too much on one religion. The party is like the Union of Myanmar so when the party works on ethnic areas or donates something, include different religions.
- Express more concerns about current conflicts in Kachin state and stand with the Kachin people morally.
- Work closely with Rakhine ethnic parties when the NLD finds a sustainable peace in Rakhine state but also communicate with other non-Rakhine parties in Rakhine state.

3) In order to develop domestic relations:

- Educate the party’s youth to treat the people and the media more politely during public meetings despite views that they are not considered to follow the party’s requests.
- Party supporters and members are everywhere so remind them to behave as good citizens not to eat betel nuts (Kwan Yar) in

public. Those representing the party should be encouraged to be the model of good citizens.

- Join different working groups of the UN and INGOs, particularly those concerning women, children, HIV and forced labor. Build a social network within these organizations.
- Invite government officers including local level staff to the ceremonies held by the party.
- Response inquiries to the party via emails and set up an automatic “thank you message” for contacting the party.
- Establish an emergency fund to be used during emergency periods such as earthquakes or floods.

#### 4) In order to develop international relations:

- The party has a long history of relations with foreign embassies and the media so ask them for opportunities for party members to study or visit abroad.
- Invite foreign universities and researchers to visit the party's offices and let them do short internships at the Head Office.
- Establish an international relations department and conduct research on party-based organizations around the world and find possible partnerships.
- Work with different parties around the world but also pay attention to the political parties from Asia.
- Build and develop a relationship with the Communist Party of China/Chinese Communist Party (CPC/CP).
- Publish the NLD's D-Wave News journal in English and send them to international organizations and foreign embassies in Myanmar for free.
- Update regularly the party's website in Burmese and in English so that the website can be used as a reliable source for researchers both inside and outside Myanmar.

### **To Small Mainland Parties**

Strengths and weaknesses of the 19 small mainland parties are varied. Some of them such as the DPM, the NDF, the NNDP and the NUP are stronger than others as the parties are led by well-known experienced politicians and



also are well rooted in the society. The recommendations below are applicable to each party, big or small.

1) In order to improve intraparty relations:

- Conduct formal and informal workshops or gatherings at the Head Offices every week or every month in order to promote the solidarity among party members.
- Establish a social network to support party members in such matters as healthcare, funerals, etc.
- Set aside a fund to be used for social supports to party members at the grass-root level.
- Let party members know that every one of them can participate in the decision-making process of the party and can be elected as party leaders if they are skillful.
- Encourage party youth to join English classes or IT training to improve their human resource skills and pay half or some portion of the fees on their behalf.
- Party leaders should often visit party branch offices and meet with local activists.

2) In order to improve interparty relations:

- Work altogether with the NLD, the USDP, and minority ethnic parties.
- Establish a network of political parties (alliance) but be sure all parties have the same goals in order for the network to be sustainable.
- Set up one focal person or a small group to cooperate effectively within the network (alliance).
- Be sure all the parties in the network (alliance) agree on statements before they are released; they should be released as a statement of the group.
- Pay attention to the voices of ethnic parties in the group/alliance and foster and practice democratic culture within groups.
- Send messages, directly via telephone or mail, to winners from other parties in election to congratulate their victories and send New Year cards.

## 3) In order to develop domestic relations:

- Collaborate with civil organizations and government departments/offices.
- Build a social network with NGOs/INGOs by participating in their working group meetings.
- Work closely with the media, accept interviews and invite the media to the party's meetings at different levels.
- Party organizers need to be well trained and equipped with resources such as pamphlets and banners.
- Information table with party logos should be set up at bus stops or public areas to recruit more party members.
- Set up websites or Facebook pages about the party, and update them regularly.
- Very small parties should be merged or abolished if no effective activities can be organized.

## 4) In order to develop international relations:

- Bring forth skillful party members who speak English and understand international relations.
- Publish party leaflets or banners in English and deliver them to international organizations and embassies in Myanmar, if possible.
- As an awareness campaign, publish yearly reports in English including about the party's activities and send them to international organizations and embassies in Myanmar as an awareness campaign.
- Launch a website or Facebook in English presenting the party's brief history, ideology, constitution and contact information.

**To Minority Ethnic Parties**

## 1) In order to improve intraparty relations:

- Conduct formal and informal workshops or gatherings at parties' offices in order to promote the solidarity among parties' members.
- Establish a social network to support party members in such matters as healthcare, funerals, etc.

- Set aside a fund to be used for social support to party members at the grass-root level.
- Do not focus too much on own ethnic interests or religion.
- Pay attention to different ethnic members within the party and recognize their roles.
- Establish parties' own news journals for funds.

2) In order to improve interparty relations:

- Work together with the NLD, the USDP and small mainland parties.
- Establish a network of political parties (alliance) but be sure to share the same goal.
- Consider Burmese as an ethnic group and include them in the network or alliance.
- Appoint one focal person or a small group to cooperate effectively within the network (alliance).
- Be sure all the parties in the network (alliance) agree to statements before they are released, they should be released as a statement of the group.
- Same ethnic parties (same tribes) should be merged so that public votes in their constituencies are not scattered.
- Learn and practice democratic culture within the group.
- Avoid too much focus on nationalism.
- Send messages or call to winners from other parties in election to congratulate their victories, and also send New Year cards.

3) In order to develop domestic relations:

- Collaborate with civil organizations and government departments/offices.
- Establish different sections for women, children and so on and participate in social activities/working group meetings of local NGOs or INGOs in the region.
- Work closely with the media, accept interviews and invite the media to the party's meetings at different levels.
- Party organizers need to be well trained with resources such as pamphlets and banners.

- Publish parties' own weekly journals and sell them among the public for funds.
- Set up websites or Facebook pages about the party, and update them regularly.

4) In order to develop international relations:

- Ethnic parties are often contacted by international organizations, so ask them for opportunities for party members to study or visit aboard.
- Bring forth skillful party members who speak English and understand international relations.
- Set up an international relations unit to promote international relations, work with party-based organizations around the world and find possible partnerships.
- As an awareness campaign, publish party leaflets or banners in English and deliver them to international organizations and embassies in Myanmar if possible.
- Launch a website or Facebook pages in English including the party's brief history, ideology, constitution and contact information.
- Work closely with foreign media and researchers on ethnic issues but counsel them that the disintegration of the Union of Myanmar will never be accepted.

### **General Recommendations for All the Parties**

- Build democracy from the bottom up and develop internal democracy with transparency and accountability.
- Develop a democratic culture (tolerance, respect, equity) by working together in the network/alliance.
- Compromise with other parties to achieve sustainable solutions for the sake of the country even if this compromise may violate party principles.
- Apologize to the public or the media or other parties if the party has made a mistake.

- Rule of law also must be built within parties. The code of conduct must be applied not only for party members but also for leaders.
- Report regularly back to the voters in constituencies concerning what MPs did in the parliament and let people know the venue and the time in advance.
- Set up a political education unit and encourage party members to criticize the party and encourage self-criticisms.
- Set up a special team as a think-tank or a foundation of the party (like advisors to the president) to strategically advise the party leadership on how to act to win the hearts and minds of the people, the media and the government.
- Build positive relations with minority ethnic parties and convince them that future problems will be solved in democratic ways such as non-violence, negotiation and mediation.
- Set up a website or Facebook pages in Burmese and English and have one email address.
- Mention clearly the party's ideology, political goals, and constitution and submit them in Burmese and English to websites or Facebook pages.
- If possible, provide enough money and facilities to party activists/organizers for their campaign-related activities such as transportation fees, pamphlets, etc.
- Support the welfare of party members, such as through education, health, job opportunities as much as the party can.
- Organize small gatherings or picnics among party members so that they can socialize and get to know each other.
- Encourage the participation of women in politics and allocate to them specific positions at different levels if possible.
- Mention clearly gender equality within the party at the constitution of the party, and be sure that decisions made by the party are taken after consultations with women members.
- Educate new members suitably about the party (orientation).
- Send condolence messages to other countries via their embassies in Myanmar if there are earthquakes, floods, assassinations, public shootings and, if possible, go to the embassy to place a flower basket and write a note of condolence.

- Invite local government offices when the party holds its ceremonies in order to build mutual understanding between government offices.
- Balance expectations and do not rely on external assistances as party development is, ultimately, internally driven.

### **To International Non-governmental Organizations**

- This is the best time to support a strengthening of democracy in Myanmar via political parties as the success of democratization in Myanmar will be a signal to other non-democratic countries.
- People in Myanmar often see INGOs working on reports without results so it is important for such organizations to work with political parties directly or indirectly to have more accountability and to improve transparency.
- Support the creation of a center with resource rooms or libraries where political parties can work together in one building through meetings, trainings, forum, workshops and seminars.
- Support parties equally, as one party-dominated political system will marginalize other parties and will ruin the democracy in the long run.
- Most political parties in Myanmar are new so it is important for them to learn about not only democracy but also other skills such as developing party manifestos, party constitutions and campaigning skills.
- Resource mobilization, fundraising, gender, constituency relations, ethnic relations, international relations, working with media, conflict management, mediation, negotiation are also important areas of learning for political members.
- Adopt relatively low-cost approach such as dialogue between party-based youth groups or women groups rather than expensive exchange visits.
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of political parties in Myanmar and adopt suitable training courses with the consultation of local experts.
- Do not adopt very restrictive policy towards political parties in Myanmar as most parties have very poor capacity; more flexible support is appreciated and often more advantageous.

- Indirect or direct support from international organizations should not be a lottery to political parties, and should also not encourage the creation of new parties.
- Find ways of setting up a political party working group to avoid overlapping problems and to obtain consolidated information when INGOs supports political parties.
- Do not focus heavily on religious-based local NGOs. They mostly work on their own ethnic groups.
- Most parties in Myanmar work for civil rights and human rights focusing on poor people, workers, women, and freedom, so it is difficult to select them as sister parties based on their ideologies.
- Support new local NGOs whose work deals with peace, conflicts and civil rights but be sure that they are truly independent and not proxy organizations.
- Educate people and political parties so that they come to understand that in order to enjoy sustainable democracy, the government cannot be blamed all the time. Citizens also have certain responsibilities in exchange for their rights and freedoms.
- In conducting trainings, be sure that all the lectures (and powerpoints, if possible) are translated into Myanmar as people are weak in English.
- Upon receipt of evaluation sheet after training, improve training courses to adapt the strengths and weaknesses of participants for next training.
- Political capacity training should not be confined to Yangon. If allowed, the trainings should be conducted outside Yangon. Provide food (coffee break, lunch) and transportation fees to the participants if necessary.
- Politics in Myanmar is very emotional so try to understand the mindset of the people and the history of the country.
- Consider the Myanmar Development Resource Institute (MDRI) as a good partner in order to support political parties as this institute provides political awareness trainings to the members of different parties and individuals. However, in order to prevent misuse of donations or corruption, be careful when working with any local organizations as many have weak management with poor transparency and accountability.

## **To the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar**

- Win the soul and hearts of the people and political parties via accountability, transparency, and forgiveness.
- Focus on developing healthy political institutions, inclusiveness and reconciliation via supporting political parties.
- Welcome international organizations that support political parties but also monitor them so they do not exacerbate issues by promoting bias, and that they do not harm the unity of the Union of Myanmar.
- Educate people via INGOs what the obligations of the citizens to conserve the democracy with respect for the law and for the rights of others.
- Encourage women participation in politics; the government may consider adopting some rules and regulations on new political parties that at least 20 percent of the members of political parties must be women.
- Be sure there is no social exclusion (blocking from rights, resources) in the society and that every citizen can access political parties without fear.
- Encourage local government offices to accept invitations from political parties and attend ceremonies.
- Empower local government offices to have their own decisions on working with political parties positively, and do not take action against them if they make mistakes.
- Provide land or buildings including resource rooms or libraries in Yangon and Mandalay that can be used for political parties as a common building.
- Adopt a flexible system that prevents an excessive number of small and ineffectual political parties.
- Invite government ceremonies to party leaders and treat them with full respect.
- The Union Election Commission should set up its own Internet website in Burmese and English with the information of political parties.
- Do not practice divide-and-rule policies. People will decide who is more democratic. If political parties make mistakes, people will punish them.



- Do not pass blame onto lower staff, if it is not warranted. Local offices, ministers or director-generals who make mistakes should admit responsibility and be held accountable. They should apologize openly to the public if the mistakes are serious.
- Encourage independent NGOs to monitor misconduct of political parties, political corruption and encourage them to follow whether political parties are following political promises made during elections.
- Build close relations with political parties in Rakhine and Kachin States to mediate and address the conflicts there through political dialogues.
- Find solutions with the NLD and other political parties on how to amend the 2008 National Constitution and how to withdraw military participation in the parliament in future.
- If possible, invite the leaders of political parties to give lectures at military schools/universities to build mutual confidence between the military and political parties.
- For the long term, build a system to monitor political parties by educated citizens or civil society not by the government.



## Appendix 1: The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)



President U Thein Sein meets Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Nay Pyi Taw, August 19, 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/content/burmas-democracy-leader-encouraged-by-meeting-with-president-128118188/144073.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).



President U Thein Sein meets officials from 14 parties in Nay Pyi Taw, August 4, 2012, <http://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/briefing-room/news/2012/08/05/id-513> (accessed November 28, 2012).



President U Thein Sein meets local media in Nay Pyi Taw. October 21, 2012, <http://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/briefing-room/news/2012/10/22/id-861> (accessed November 28, 2012).

## Appendix 2: The National League for Democracy (NLD)



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets President U Thein Sein in New York City, September 25, 2012, <http://world.time.com/2012/09/26/charm-offensive-burmas-president-and-opposition-leader-suu-kyi-visit-the-u-s/> (accessed November 28, 2012).



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets representatives from ethnic parties, March 6, 2012, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/911-daw-aung-san-suu-kyi-meets-ethnic-party-representatives.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets local media in Yangon, July 3, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/8282> (accessed November 28, 2012).



### Appendix 3: List of Political Parties in Number by Regions and States (as of December 21, 2012)

No.	Region/State	Number of Parties
1.	Chin State	5
2.	Kachin State	1
3.	Karen State	4
4.	Kayah State	1
5.	Mon State	2
6.	Rakhine State	8
7.	Shan State	12
8.	Main Land (Bago, Irrawaddy, Mandalay, Magwe, Sagaing, Thanintharyi, Yangon Regions)	21
	Total	54

Sources: "Farmers Party Registers to, Run in 2015" *The Irrawaddy*, September 25, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/14861> (accessed November 28, 2012); Alternative Asean Network on Burma, *Altsean-Burma*, <http://www.altsean.org/Research/Parliament%20Watch/Parties.php> (accessed November 28, 2012).

## Appendix 4: List of political parties in name by Regions & States (as of December 21, 2012)

No	Name of Party
<b>Chin State</b>	
1.	Asho Chin National Party
2.	Chin National Party
3.	Chin Progressive Party
4.	Ethnic National Development Party
5.	Zomi Congress for Democracy
<b>Kachin State</b>	
6.	Unity and Democracy Party of Kachin State
<b>Karen State</b>	
7.	Kayin People's Party
8.	Kayin State Democracy and Development Party
9.	Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party
10.	Kayin Democratic Party
<b>Kayah State</b>	
11.	Kayan National Party
<b>Mon State</b>	
12.	All Mon Region Democracy Party
13.	Mon Democracy Party
<b>Rakhine State</b>	
14.	Arakan League for Democracy
15.	Rakhine Nationals Progressive Party//Rakhine Nationalities Development Party
16.	Mro National Party
17.	Mro or Khami National Solidarity Organization
18.	Rakhine State National Force
19.	Khami National Development Party
20.	Kaman National Progressive Party
21.	National Development and Peace Party
<b>Shan State</b>	



22.	Danu National Democracy Party
23.	Inn National Development Party
24.	Kokang Democracy and Unity Party
25.	Lahu National Development Party
26.	PaO National Organization
27.	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy
28.	Shan Nationals Democratic Party
29.	Shan State Kokang Democratic Party
30.	Taaung (Palaung) National Party
31.	Tailai (Red Shan) Nationalities Development Party
32.	Wa Democratic Party
33.	Wa National Unity Party
<b>Main Land</b>	
34.	88 Generation Student Youths (Union of Myanmar)
35.	Democracy and Peace Party
36.	Democratic Party (Myanmar)
37.	Difference and Peace Party Peace and Diversity Party
38.	Myanmar Farmers Development Party
39.	Myanmar Democracy Congress
40.	Myanmar New Society Democratic Party
41.	National Democratic Force
42.	National Democratic Party for Development
43.	National League for Democracy
44.	National Political Alliances League
45.	National Unity Party
46.	New Era People's Party/Modern People's Party
47.	New National Democracy Party
48.	Party for Unity and Peace
49.	People Democracy Party
50.	Union Democracy Party/Union Democratic Party
51.	Union of Myanmar Federation of National Politics
52.	Union Solidarity and Development Party
53.	United Democratic Party
54.	Wunthanu Democratic Party

Sources: "Farmers Party Registers to, Run in 2015" *The Irrawaddy*, September 25, 2012,

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/14861> (accessed November 28, 2012); Alternative Asean Network on Burma, *Altsean-Burma*, <http://www.altsean.org/Research/Parliament%20Watch/Parties.php> (accessed November 28, 2012).

## Appendix 5: Democratic Friendship Group/Group of Friends of Democracy Parties



No.	Name of Party	Remark
1.	All Mon Regions Democracy Party	Ethnic
2.	Chin National Party	Ethnic
3.	Pha-lon sawaw Party	Ethnic
4.	Rakhine Nationalities Development Party	Ethnic
5.	Shan Nationalities Development Party	Ethnic
6.	National Democratic Front Democratic Party (Myanmar)	Mainland
7.	Democracy and Peace Party	Mainland
8.	National Democratic Front	Mainland
9.	Peace and Unity Party	Mainland
10.	Union Democracy Party	Mainland

Sources: Democratic Friendship Group/Group of Friends of Democracy Parties with the President, Myanmar President Office, <http://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/briefing-room/news/2012/07/18/id-296> (accessed November 27, 2012); *New Light of Myanmar*, July 19, 2012, <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-19op.pdf> (accessed November 28, 2012).

## Appendix 6: Nationalities Brotherhood Forum (NBF)



No.	Name of Party	Remark
1.	Chin National Party	Ethnic
2.	Kayah National Party	Ethnic
3.	Mon Datha Lon Party	Ethnic
4.	Pha-lon sawaw Party	Ethnic
5.	Rakhine Nationalities Development Party	Ethnic
6.	Shan Nationalities Democratic Party	Ethnic

\* Asho Chin National Party, Danu National Democracy Party, Inn National Development Party & Tailai (Red Shan) Nationalities Development Party have also proposed to join the NBF.

Sources: Nationalities Brotherhood Forum, [http://burmanationalnews.org/burma/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2608](http://burmanationalnews.org/burma/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2608); "Other parties will also be consolidated besides ethnic parties," *The Yangon Times*, Vol. 8, No. 29 (Aug 2-8, 2012), <http://www.yangonmedia.com> (accessed November 28, 2012).

## Appendix 7: Myanmar Political Friendship Parties

No.	Name of Party	Remark
1.	Myanmar National (Democracy) Congress	Mainland
2.	National Politic Alliance League	Mainland
3.	Unity and Peace Party	Mainland

Source: "Parties criticize the NLD over by-elections," *The Myanmar Times*, April 30, 2012, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/yangon/775-parties-criticise-nld-over-by-elections.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).

## Appendix 8: List of Cease-fire/Peace Agreements in Myanmar (as of December 21, 2012)

No.	Ethnic Armed Group	Date of agreement	Type of Agreement
<b>Karen State</b>			
1.	Karen National Union (KNU)	January 10, 2012	Cease-fire agreement
		April 6, 2012	13-point cease-fire agreement
2.	Kalo Htoo Baw/a breakaway group of DKBA	December 11, 2011	6-point cease-fire agreement
3.	KNU/KNLA Peace Council/a break-way group of KNU	February 7, 2012	7-point peace agreement
<b>Mon State</b>			
4.	New Mon State Party (NMSP)	February 1, 2012	5-point cease-fire agreement
		February 25, 2012	4-point peace agreement
<b>Shan State</b>			
5.	Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP)/Shan State Army-North (SSA-N)	January 28, 2012	Two peace agreements
6.	Restoration Council of the Shan State (RCSS)/Shan State Army (SSA-S)	January 16, 2012	11-point peace agreement
7.	Mong La group (Special Region (4))	December 27, 2011	6-point peace agreement
8.	UWSA (Wa Special Region 2)	September 09, 2011	6-point peace agreement
<b>Chin State</b>			
9.	Chin National Front (CNF)	January 6, 2012	9-point cease-fire agreement

		December 9, 2012	27-point peace agreement
<b>Kayah State</b>			
10	Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)	March 7, 2012	3-point cease-fire agreement
		June 10, 2012	17-points cease-fire agreement
<b>Rakhine State</b>			
11.	Rakhine State Liberation Party (RSLP)	April 5, 2012	Peace agreement
<b>Sagaing Region</b>			
12.	NSCN-K (Naga armed group)	April 9, 2012	5-point preliminary peace agreement

Source: Compiled from *The Irrawaddy*, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/>, *Mizzima*, [www.mizzima.com/](http://www.mizzima.com/), *The Eleven Media Group*, <http://www.first-11.com> (accessed November 27, 2012).

## Appendix 9: Strengths and Weaknesses of Political Parties

No.	Parties	NLD	USDP	Other Parties	Ethnic Parties
1.	Autonomy	Fair	Poor	Good	Good
2.	Coherence	Fair	Fair	Fair	Good
3.	Roots	Excellent	Fair	Poor	Excellent
4.	Organization	Fair	Fair	Poor	Fair
5.	Inter-party Relations	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair
6.	International Relations	Excellent	Fair	Poor	Good

Source: Private journals in Burmese, Internet sources, radio news & author's experiences



## Appendix 10: International organizations that support political parties

No.	Name of Organizations	Country
<b>Party-based Organizations</b>		
1.	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)	Germany
2.	Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS)	Germany
3.	Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)	Germany
4.	Bundespartei Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	Germany
5.	Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern (CDU/ Bayern)	Germany
6.	Die Linkspartei PDS	Germany
7.	Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (NIMD)	Netherlands
8.	Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD)	Denmark
9.	Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)	England
10.	National Democratic Institute (NDI)	USA
11.	International Republican Institute (IRI)	USA
12.	Norwegian Centre for Democracy Support (NDS)	Norway
13.	Olof Palmes Internationella Center	Sweden
14.	Centerpartiets Internationella Stiftelse	Sweden
15.	Vänsterns Internationella Forum	Sweden
16.	Kristdemokratiskt Internationellt Center	Sweden
17.	Green Forum Foundation	Sweden
18.	Jarl Hjalmarsson Stiftelsen	Sweden
19.	Swedish International Liberal Centre	Sweden

<b>Multilateral organizations</b>		
1.	European Commission	Belgium
2.	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	USA
3.	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance	Sweden

Source: Inge Amundsen, Donor Support to Political Parties: Status and Principles, CMI Report R 2007:6 (Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2007).

## **About the Author**

Aung Aung is a graduate from the post-graduate certificate course “Peace, Democracy, and Development” at the Myanmar Development Resource Institute (MDRI). He studied Biology at the University of Distance Education in Yangon, Economics at the Yangon Institute of Economics and Japanese at Nanzan University in Japan. He also holds a M.A. in International Relations from KDI School of Public Policy and Management in South Korea, and a M.A. in Peace and Conflict Resolution from Duke University in the United States. He is also a Rotary World Peace Fellow. In Myanmar he has worked for the Internal Revenue Department, the Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank, Save the Children and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He regularly writes articles on education, peace and politics in Burmese for journals and magazines under the pen-name Aung Aung (IR). He was a guest researcher at the Institute for Security and Development Policy from November 1 until December 21, 2012. At ISDP, his research focused on the role of political parties in promoting democracy in Myanmar.



