

THE BURMESE FEAR

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Introduction

According to the 2014 census, Burmese people or those who identify as Burmese make up over 65% of Myanmar's population. From the colonial era until the 2021 military coup, the Burmese were considered the leaders of Myanmar's politics. Myanmar's economy, education, healthcare, and other key aspects of the country are concentrated in the Ayeyarwady River delta, where the majority of Burmese people live.

Therefore, in the changes in Myanmar's politics, the thoughts, beliefs, and stances of the Burmese people and Burmese political leaders have been in a central position. It can even be said that they still are. In this presentation, I will do a little analysis of the fears that Burmese leaders have held onto throughout the ages.

The reason is that this fear has been destroying the interests of the Union. If this fear can be corrected, it will be beneficial in building (at least) the federal union that the people of Myanmar are eagerly wanting.

However, due to the ever-changing political climate in Myanmar, the leading role and importance of the Burmese, who have a large population based on the current map of Myanmar, which has been ingrained, may also change. New realities without the participation of the Burmese may even emerge. Therefore, this analysis is done with the hope of a better future for Myanmar.

Burmese Fear (1)

(the Fear of the equality and self-determination rights of the ethnic nationalities)

Burmese political leaders and Burmese military leaders have been very reluctant to grant equal rights to the non-Burmese indigenous ethnic groups who fought alongside them in the Myanmar independence struggle. In the 1947 constitution, the General Aung San and other leaders of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) granted states to the Shan, Kachin, and Karenni, ethnic groups who would not unite with the Burmese in any way if they were not enacted as states, but they did not grant states to the Rakhine, Mon, and Chin, who could be easily set aside.

Even in granting states, the appointment of state chief ministers, the issue of the president approving the laws made by the states, state taxes and budgets, etc., were all reduced and restricted as much as possible. It is found that after 1948, Prime Minister U Nu and the Burmese AFPFL leaders repeatedly rejected the demands of the Rakhine and Mon for states.

In 1960, after the Pyidaungsu (Union) Party government came to power, when the ethnic nationalities began to move for equality and federal principles, the Burmese military, which had been wanting power, carried out a military coup in 1962. In 1974, the Burma Socialist Programme Party constitution was introduced, which stipulated that an indigenous ethnic group received (1) kyat, while Burmese received (7) kyats.

In the 2008 constitution, not only was this old path continued, but the Union Territory was added, making the price even lower, with Burmese receiving (8) kyats and one ethnic nationality group receiving (1) kyat. Moreover, the fact that state chief ministers can only be appointed by the president is a continuation of the legacy of previous constitutions.

In the 1947 constitution, the number of Burmese representatives in the House of Representatives was increased, or by virtue of this surplus, the government was only accountable to the House of Representatives. Because it did not have the same power as the House of Nationalities, it was able to control the ethnic nationalities.

In the 1974 constitution, there was only one House of Representatives, and the Burmese continued to control the ethnic nationalities by taking (7) shares of the regions. In the 2008 constitution, the president is accountable to the Union Assembly. The Union Assembly has two houses, the House of Representatives and the House of Nationalities, and the Burmese representatives have a majority in these two houses combined. In addition, the Burmese military has also taken a share, so the indigenous ethnic nationalities cannot get any rights in the parliament.

These advantages have been shamelessly enjoyed by successive Burmese governments. Even under the NLD government, which is said to be a democratic front, these advantages in the parliament and the advantageous and controlling tactics over ethnic nationalities enshrined in the 2008 constitution were continued to be used.



The advantageous and controlling tactics over ethnic nationalities enshrined in the 2008 constitution have been shamelessly enjoyed by successive Burmese governments including the NLD government.

No matter how different their ideologies and strategies may be, Burmese political leaders always tend to unite when it comes to granting equal rights and self-determination and self-governance in politics, administration, and economics to indigenous ethnic nationalities. Not only Burmese political leaders and military leaders, but also the majority of Burmese intellectuals, experts, and Burmese media always remain silent.

They are all mortally afraid and reluctant to give the equal rights, self-determination rights, and self-governance rights that are the rightful due of indigenous ethnic nationalities. They do not want to be equal with the Burmese yet.

In the Spring Revolution and the NUG that started in 2021, it cannot be said that there has been a clear, precise, and strong enough voice for these equality, formation of Burmese states, truly federal principles, and formation of a truly united union. It cannot be said that there has been any practical implementation of processes aimed at these.

The NUG is still clinging to the election results obtained under the 2008 constitution and coveting the ruling power over the whole of Myanmar, including the ethnic nationality areas. They are still afraid of losing the controlling tactics over ethnic nationalities in the 2008 constitution. The current coup council is also the same in this regard, and the Burmese political leaders and military leaders are still afraid of the equality and self-determination rights of the ethnic nationalities.

The Burmese Fear (2)

(the Fear of building a truly civilian democratic government without military intervention)

Among the ethnic groups within the current boundary of Myanmar, the Burmese kings fought against the Siamese (Thai), the Mon, the Rakhine and etc. The Burmese were eager for military power and often used the military to annex and occupy other ethnic groups and territories. During the British colonial era, many Burmese were not allowed in the British army. Therefore, the Burmese joined forces with the Japanese and established their own army.

After that, they allied with the British to fight against the Japanese and then reorganized the Myanmar Permanent Army. Later, in order to seize administrative power, General Aung San left the army, and the fact that the army chief was a Karen and that Karen military officers dominated the army was disliked by the Burmese chauvinist politicians. Therefore, even with the Myanmar Permanent Army in existence, the socialist group established the Civil Service Army.



Stable AFPFL leader U Ba Swe and General Ne Win

After 1948, the Burmese's 1947 constitution, due to its lack of true federal principles and political ideological differences, led to one after another internal rebellions. The AFPFL had to rely heavily on

the army. Moreover, in the split of the AFPFL, both the Stable AFPFL and Clean AFPFL factions courted the Burmese army. And so, the Burmese army gradually grew stronger and more arrogant. It can be said that the Burmese army went beyond its original duty and coveted political power. Or, it can be said that for Ne Win, who originally wanted political power, he saw an easy way to get it. In this way, the bad habit of military coups was started to be planted.

Although it can be said that a civilian democratic government reappeared in 2015, this civilian government did not prioritize the essence of democracy, which is freedom, equality, and justice, and even freedom of expression was lost. It waged the Arakan war and praised and honored the Burmese soldiers who fought in that war. Regarding the problem of the Bengali Muslims confined in Arakan Land, instead of trying to solve the root cause, it relied on the Burmese army and launched military operations. The civilian government also took responsibility for the ensuing problems (e.g., ICJ). Just like the old ways of the AFPFL and Pyidaungsu party era, while being stubborn on ethnic nationality issues, it tried to appease the Burmese army. And so, as per the usual calendar, the 2021 military coup was encountered again.

Until today, the Burmese military has not given up intervening in political affairs and cannot accept the structure that the military should only be a national defense organization under the civilian government, and they are still dominated by the fear of returning to the barracks.

Similarly, the Burmese civilian governments that have ruled since independence, fearing that they would have to give other ethnic groups their due self-governing rights and political equality, have been noticeably relying on and pleased with the strength of the Burmese army in their subconscious, and the fear of resolutely and bravely building a truly civilian democratic government without military intervention has once again brought the people of Myanmar back to the old, decaying, and outdated era of military rule.

The Burmese Fear (3)

(the Fear of losing the ethnic territories and their natural resources)

In the Myanmar that the British put together, after the British colonial system took root, the Burmese politicians who emerged seemed to have a good understanding of the British way of governing Myanmar. It can even be said that they took lessons from the extraction and sale of natural resources of ethnic groups, keeping them underdeveloped, divide and rule, etc.

In fact, if the AFPFL Burmese leaders' catchphrases "Equality for Ethnic Nationalities," "Don't be a slave to the Burmese," "Self-Governance," etc., were truly meant in that sense, the 1947 constitution would have clearly and precisely stipulated the formation of equal states for all major indigenous groups, including the Burmese, the transfer of nationwide powers to the Union, with the remaining powers being held by the states, and the states having self-determination and self-governance.

The ethnic states, including the Burmese state, should have the right to own and manage their water, land, and natural resources. The states should be able to approve, control, collect taxes and funds related to these, and collect and spend the resulting tax revenue and income. Among these, only the amount to be contributed to the Union fund by the decision of the state parliament should be required.

However, in the 1947 constitution, the 1974 constitution, and the 2008 constitution, the state declared itself the original owner of all water and land. In the 1948 constitution, land was the main focus, and there was less strictness regarding natural resources, but in the 1974 and 2008 constitutions, it was stipulated more and more broadly that "all resources above and below ground, above and below water, in the atmosphere, and all land are owned by the state, and the state (central government) has the right to manage them."



Mogoke, the city where the world's best rubies are found, the territory of Momeik, was added to Mandalay Region.

This shows how much Burmese political leaders and Burmese military leaders covet the water, land, and natural resources owned by ethnic nationalities, want to be their original owners, and want to legally obtain the right to do whatever they want with them. It is also one of the main reasons for not wanting to form a truly federal union, the civil war, the building of the Burmese army's strength, and its growing power.

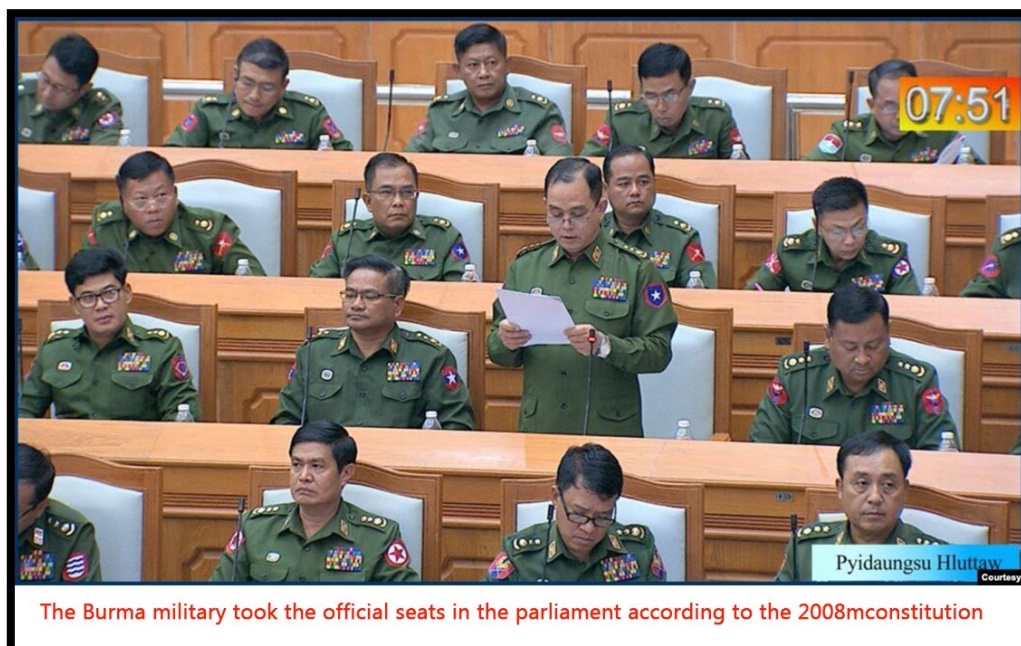
In fact, the Burmese leaders and successive Burmese governments are still very afraid of losing the natural resources owned by the ethnic regions and ethnic nationalities. Therefore, not the kind of country where the Burmese people alone rule the country, not the kind where the central government is formed by the parliaments with the majority of Burmese, but the kind of union that will be formed with equal states including the Burmese state is still far away, and the interests of the Union are still just practicing calligraphy in books.

The Burmese Fear (4)

(the Fear of not being able to lead the country and to control the ethnic nationalities)

Burmese politicians believe that only Burmese should lead politics and rule the other ethnic nationalities in Myanmar. Most Burmese political leaders in the AFPFL era wanted the ethnic nationalities to participate only as divisions within the Burmese state. They did not like giving states and forming a union. The words spoken by U Nu and U Ba Swe regarding these have become historical records. Even Widhura Thakin Chit Maung, a leader of the opposition party to the AFPFL, the PamaNyaTa, said that the formation of the Union based on the Burmese mainland, in other words, the Burmese leadership of all ethnic nationalities, is " **this very thing given by God, this very thing given by Life.**" Considering this, it is clear that the Burmese want to dominate and rule the indigenous people. This has been enshrined in successive constitutions to make it legally sound.

In the 1947 constitution, the House of Representatives, where the Burmese are the majority, should have almost twice as many representatives as the House of Nationalities (Article 83 (2)). The President of the Union is elected by a joint session of both houses (Article 46). The Prime Minister is elected by the House of Representatives (Article 56 (11)). The Prime Minister submits the list of ministers (Article 56 (2)). The Prime Minister submits the list of the Chief Ministers of the States (Articles 160, 173, 181 (2), 189). The Central Government is collectively accountable to the House of Representatives (Article 115). The Parliament can legislate for the Union or for the states (Article 91 (1), Article 94 (1)). All taxes, except for the insignificant taxes assigned to the states, go to the Union (Article 96 (1) (2)). It is not clearly stated how much the states should receive from the Union, and if a supporting document is received stating that support is needed, it may or may not be supported. For that there is no fixed amount (Article 96 (Exception)). The above are some of the provisions intended for the Burmese to form the government with the support of the House of Representatives, where the number of Burmese representatives is greater, and for the Burmese to control and rule the ethnic nationalities.



Similarly, in the 1974 constitution, the country was divided into (7) divisions and (7) states, and the Burmese took (7) shares (Article 31). There is only one parliament in the country (Article 32). Representatives elected on a township basis are elected to this parliament (Article 176). Therefore, the majority of Burmese representatives arrive in the parliament. The State Council is formed by the representatives elected by the parliament from among them (Article 64 (a) (b)). The Chairman of the State Council is the President of the State (Article 66-a). The State Council members submit the list of ministers, and the People's Assembly elects them (Article 82 - a). One of the ministers is appointed as the Prime Minister (Article 82 - b). The Council of Ministers is the highest public administrative body of the State (Article 83). The country is led by the Burma Socialist Programme Party alone (Article 11). Only the Burma Socialist Programme Party submits the list of candidates for the People's Assembly and the People's Council at each level (Article 179). In this way, it can be seen how the whole country is ruled by the Burma Socialist Programme Party with a central leadership system, and the People's Assembly, which has the most Burmese representatives, forms the central administrative body and controls the ethnic nationalities.

Similarly, in the 2008 constitution, even taking the (7) divisions and (7) states model of Ne Win, the Burmese have taken advantage of the ethnic nationalities by adding the Union Territory (Article 49). They even changed "division" to "region." They are very eager to be "greater." Even though the 1947 constitution used the term "state and division," the 2008 constitution uses the term "region and state," which shows that the Burmese are those who are satisfied only if they are even a little bit superior to the ethnic nationalities.

Based on the fact that many townships with a Burmese majority are formed in the (7) divisions, the House of Representatives is formed with representatives based on townships (Article 109 - a). In the House of Nationalities, (12) representatives are taken from each region, making a total of (84) representatives (Article 141 - a). The Burmese military takes (166) seats in both houses combined (Article 109 - b), (Article 141 - b). With this majority of Burmese representatives, the joint session of both houses elects the President of the State (Article 60). The President of the State appoints the Chief Ministers of the States with the consent of the State Parliaments (Article 261). The President of the State approves and appoints the list of State Ministers submitted by the Chief Minister (Article 262). The President of the State appoints the Union Ministers (Article 232) (except for Defense, Home Affairs, and Border Affairs).

Therefore, it can be seen that the majority of representatives in the parliament, the President of the State with this advantage, the legislation and collection of taxes and funds with this advantage, the appointment of Union Ministers by the President of the State to form the central government, and the right of the President of the State to appoint Chief Ministers to govern the ethnic nationalities, etc., are all taken over. Among the articles of the 2008 constitution that the NLD, the civilian government wanted to amend, there were no articles that controlled the ethnic nationalities. Moreover, these articles were even effectively used.

Therefore, it is clear that the Burmese leaders are very afraid of not being able to lead the country and to control the ethnic nationalities, and they have been holding on to this right throughout the ages. As long as this grip is not loosened, a federal constitution will not emerge, and the interests of the Union will remain lost.

The Burmese Fear (5)

(the Fear that the ethnic nationalities becoming powerful, united, independent and developed)

It can be said that Burmese leaders have well understood that in order for Burmese people to dominate and rule over ethnic nationalities, they must strengthen their own power and weaken the power of ethnic nationalities.

Burmese kings are said to have attacked Siam and captured hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war. It is also found in historical records that when Rakhine State was invaded, hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war were taken away. It can be analyzed that these were intended to weaken the people they invaded and occupied.

After independence, successive Burmese governments did not develop the ethnic nationalities. However, at the same time, they tried to develop the Irrawaddy delta region of Burma in all aspects. It can also be said that they created and prospered the Burmese mainland with the taxes and revenues obtained from the ethnic nationalities' regions.



Yangon City at the mouth of the Irrawaddy

Therefore, as a first consequence, it is for the ethnic nationalities to admire the Burmese mainland and the Burmese people. The second consequence is that if you want to grow and prosper in education, health, economy, etc., you have to go to the Burmese mainland. The third consequence is that the population of the Burmese mainland will increase and become more complete. The ethnic nationalities will be mixed in the Burmese mainland. The ethnic nationalities will live in the Burmese mainland and think of their blood relatives in their own ethnic regions as narrow-minded extremists, and they will think of themselves as broad-minded and liberal, and they will become assimilationists who are in love with the Burmese and become harmonious.

During the British colonial period, when the Patriotic (Wunthanu) associations were formed, during the Japanese revolution, and also the political organizations such as the AFPFL, NLD, etc., and the

organizations such as the BCP and the People's Army, they were based in the Burmese mainland and penetrated into the territories of the ethnic nationalities. Thus, these Burmese organizations became stronger.



The school in Rakhine State, where the Shwe natural gas project generates over one billion US dollars annually for the Myanmar government

Thus, it weakens the organizations of the ethnic nationalities. It causes division. In the ethnic nationalities' areas, the Burmese government and Burmese political parties can try to cause regional divisions with budget, positions, ideology, belief, etc. The ethnic nationalities' political parties and ethnic revolutionary armed organizations can also be weakened and their unity broken by such methods. By instigating conflicts based on religious and ethnic differences in the region, the ethnic nationalities' areas can be made unstable and thus underdeveloped.

Meanwhile, Burmese things are constantly entering the daily lives of the ethnic nationalities. Burmese language, Burmese literature, Burmese history, Burmese heroes, Burmese culture, Burmese customs, Burmese music, Burmese movies, Burmese political parties, Burmese military, Burmese government employees, Burmese entrepreneurs, Burmese workers and Burmese products are being penetrated and continuously indoctrinated in various ways.

The Burmese are afraid that the ethnic nationalities will become powerful. They are afraid of becoming united. They are afraid of becoming independent. They are afraid of developing. It can be assumed that one of the goals of successive Burmese leaders is to gradually reduce and disappear the other ethnic nationalities in Burma and become a single Burmese majority. In John F. Cady's book "A History of Modern Burma", on page 638, he quoted U Po Latt and U Tun Pe and commented, "**The majority Burmese are prepared to assimilate with other minority nationalities in political and cultural affairs. Their goal is to become a single Burmese nation.**"

However, because of these incorrect methods, the ethnic nationalities are becoming more united. They are becoming more cautious. The underground revolutionary forces and the above-ground political forces are becoming stronger. This fear of the Burmese rulers not only prevented the ethnic nationalities from becoming what they wanted, but also created the opposite results.

Concluding Remarks

Therefore, the Burmese leaders are still craving for a unitary dictatorship and are still reluctant to form a genuine federal union that includes the Burmese state. The indigenous peoples in Myanmar, whether historically, geographically, by population size, by religious beliefs, by cultural traditions, by economic, educational, etc., without distinction that one race is superior, noble, inferior, or developed than another, are politically equal, with ethnic-specific self-determination and self-governance rights, and with economic, educational, and health equality, one race and another, one state and another, helping each other, with the federal government leading, "This is our country" is far from the kind of situation that everyone can be satisfied and proud of. In other words, the interests of the Union are still lost.

Because of this, Burma has not been able to escape from the hands of the military dictators, nor has it been able to prevent the emergence of new militarists. It has not been able to escape from the cycle of internal revolts and civil wars. The people are enduring the fear and terror in the smoke of gunpowder, the deaths, destruction and losses, and the poverty, while being immersed in the Stone Age laws of everyone for himself in the absence of the rule of law.

Jan 22, 2022