

Karen People's Struggle for Equality and Freedom

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The Karen people's struggle in Burma or Myanmar is long and hard, as it is against the entrenched power and prejudices, and in an environment of the World that favors mainly the seemingly strong groups. For a quick study, a brief history of the struggle is given below.

Early History

1. Historians believe that the Karen people, with a number of sub-groups or tribes, are the earliest settlers of the country now known as Burma/Myanmar. In north-to-south migration, they came into present day Burma, from places in Tibet and the upper reaches of Yangzi River in China, nearly three thousand yearsⁱ ago. That is why, they are found mainly on the plains and hills, in the southern parts of the country. (A few are believed to have reached as far away as Borneo.)
2. In early centuries AD, the Karen people on the plainsⁱⁱ, in the southern parts of the country, had lived more or less mixed with the more developed Mon-Khmer people, who migrated from the east and established a kingdom. When the Burman people in the central part of the country eliminated the Mon kingdom finally in a genocidal war in late 18th Century, the Karen people on the plains had to live under the Burman domination. The Karen people in the hills in the south-eastern parts of the country had remained free and independent, even when the British had conquered the small Burman Empireⁱⁱⁱ and set up their colonial rule.
3. The Burman^{iv} overlords treated harshly, with heavy taxation and forced labor, the Karen people, who had come under Burman feudalism. The annexation of Burma by the British in late 19th Century^v, came as a liberation for the Karen people on the plains. Many Karen people became Christians, because monotheism had been part of the Karen people's animistic beliefs.
4. It was mainly the American missionaries, who worked among the Karens. The missionaries invented new written language^{vi} for the Karen, set up schools and encouraged them to take part in modern developments. Many Karens became school teachers, policemen, soldiers, nurses and mid-level administrators. A few became lawyers, politicians, judges, doctors, engineers, college/university lecturers and high-level administrators.
5. The Burman ultra-nationalists^{vii} regarded the quick development of the Karens under the British rule as a result of British special favor in accordance with the divide-and-rule policy. Hence, whenever the situation allowed, the Burman ultra-nationalists tried to corrupt and impoverish the Karens by introducing narcotic drugs, alcohol and gambling to the Karen communities. The big chance came when the Imperial Japanese Army marched into Burma in early 1942 with the Burma Independence Army (BIA), which was poorly disciplined and dominated by the Burman ultra-nationalists.

6. On the allegation that the Karens were British spies, troops from some BIA^{viii} units attacked and destroyed thousands of Karen homes and villages in the Irrawaddy Delta and Papun District in the eastern hills, and murdered many Karen leaders and innocent civilians. As the Karens resisted, a communal war broke out and went on for 3-4 months before the Japanese realized that it was revenge killings and stopped the atrocities. When Aung San returned from the far north, he met with the Karen leaders and started the Karen-Burman friendship movement.
7. In 1946, almost right after World War-2, the Burman independence movement led by Aung San started. The movement gathered momentum rapidly. In January 1947, Aung San-Attlee agreement was concluded for the independence of Burma, within one year. Aung San also succeeded in concluding an agreement for a unified Burma at the Panglong Conference on 12 February, with the apprehensive non-Burman nationalities, who had been much attracted by the option of remaining under the British protection, instead of taking independence with the Burman, at the same time.
8. Aung San, however, came under severe criticism by the Burman ultra-nationalists without and within his own party, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), for pledging federalism, equality and the right of secession to some of the non-Burman nationalities^{ix}.
9. The AFPFL was a conglomerate of far right and far left political parties, and a number of community based organizations. It was more a popular front organization than a political party, held together by the popular leadership of Aung San, and then U Nu, who had been leaders in the radical movement of the university students against British colonialism.
10. Aung San was assassinated on July 19, 1947 - 6 months before independence, supposedly by his political rival, U Saw, who denied the charges until the end of his trial. Before boarding the flight home, U Saw's British lawyer affirmed to the news reporters that the case was a frame-up.
11. The Karen leaders, who had had an amicable relationship with Aung San, were shocked^x by the assassination, to say the least. The AFPFL vice chairman, U Nu^{xi}, succeeded Aung San. The first Constitution of Burma, drafted under the leadership of U Nu, deviated away from the guideline for the constitution laid down by Aung San. Political analysts termed the Constitution as federal in form but unitary in essence.
12. Realizing that they had to fend for themselves, more than ever in an independent Burma, the Karen leaders merged their four organizations namely, the Karen National Association, the Karen Central Organization, the Buddhist Karen National Association and the Karen Youth Organization into the Karen National Union (KNU) on February 5, 1947.

Post-Independence Period

13. Burma became independent on the 4th of January 1948. As the Burman in power started marginalization of the Karens by refusing to create a separate state, give equality and autonomy, promised by Aung San, the KNU started a peaceful movement for freedom^{xii}. On February 11, 1948, four hundred thousand Karen people staged silent demonstrations nationwide, with demands for a state, equality and freedom. (The date is being commemorated as Karen National Day, every year.)
14. The Burmans, especially the ultra-nationalists or radical elements in the political parties, left and right, and Burma armed forces, viewed the Karen people's movement as a plot by the British. The Burmese language press came out with inflammatory charges and hate propaganda against the movement, accusing the Karens of paving the way for the return of British colonialism and demanding rights far above their station.
15. The Karens pressed on with their movement. Prime Minister U Nu was sympathetic with the Karen people's movement for a homeland. However, he was only one of the few Burmans in the position of power, who had any understanding and sympathy for the non-Burman nationalities of the country. He even complied with the KNU leaders' request to form a self-defense force known as the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO)^{xiii} in July 1948, when the activities of insurgencies were on the increase.

Karen Resistance

16. In late December 1948, power-mad and ever conspiring Gen. Ne Win^{xiv} of Burma Armed Forces (Tatmadaw^{xv}) used his pocket army troops^{xvi} to attack some Karen villages in Taninthayi Region, when his attempt to disarm the village KNDO failed. In January 1949, Karen quarters in Ahlone, Rangoon (Yangon), Thamine and Insein^{xvii} came under attack, in quick succession. On January 31, 1949 the Karen people had no option but to take up arms in self-defense, and January 31 has been observed as the anniversary of Karen Resistance, or Revolution.
17. The Karen armed resistance was joined by the Karen troops in the Burma Armed Forces and it soon spread to the Irrawaddy Delta, Yangon, Bago and Taninthayi Regions, Karenni and Mon States, and Salween Sub-District (nowadays Karen State), where the Karen people formed a sizable part of the population. The Insein Battle lasted for 112 days.
18. At one point during the battle of Insein, Ne Win was said to have broken down and asked the Prime Minister U Nu to relieve him, due to high casualty on the side of the Burma Army and tough resistance put up by the Karen forces. However, U Nu urged him to continue the fight and asked the Chin and Kachin leaders to send in more troops to Insein front. The British^{xviii} complied with his request to send more arms and ammunition from the stockpile in India, for the Burma Armed Forces.
19. It was and still is the salient nature of Burman ultra-nationalists^{xix}, such as Ne Win and the likes, to always overestimate their own strength. Probably, it is partly due to belief

by them in the false population data that the Burmans form an overwhelming majority of the population of the country. The Burmans generally believe or claim to form nearly 70% of the population.

20. Knowing that democracy is based on majority rule and wanting to show that they are leaders of a large nation, the Burman politicians, ever since the British days, have influenced the census takers on the ground to register all the Karen, Mon, Arakanese, Shan etc. Buddhists on the plains^{xx} in lower Burma as Burman. In the days of the military dictatorships, many non-Buddhist members of the non-Burman nationalities were tricked into registering themselves as Burman, when they wanted to get national identity cards^{xxi} in a hurry.
21. According to some records, the Burmans form no more than 28% of the population. If the Burman were nearly 70%, they would have wiped out not only the Karen freedom movement but all the other non-Burman movements also, long ago. To remain in dominant position, the Burman ultra-nationalists have to resort to all kinds of lies, brutality and treachery. To most Burmans in power, treachery and duplicity have become a second nature.

Geo-politics & Military Dictatorships

22. Opportunity presented itself to power-mad Ne Win and his cohorts to take advantage of the Western Bloc's fear^{xxii} of communist expansion in South-East Asia, during the Cold War period. On March 2, 1962, he overthrew the democratically elected government led by U Nu^{xxiii} and set up a military junta^{xxiv}. He accepted military and financial aid from the Western Bloc and Japan, not only to fight the communists but to subjugate also all the non-Burman nationalities for total control and enslavement, as colonial subjects.
23. In 1963, Ne Win made an overture for peace talk to all the non-Burman armed resistance organizations^{xxv} and the communist insurgent groups. His attempt at peace can only be termed as perfunctory, because he mainly engaged in telling the rebels to give up arms^{xxvi}, without any offer in return for addressing their grievances and political aspirations, especially those of the non-Burman nationalities. Apparently, he and his regime were certain of wiping out all the freedom movements militarily and implementing the Burman ultra-nationalist agenda of setting up the 4th Burman Empire, with the aid and support from the Western Bloc and Japan.
24. Without warning, he demonetize the large currency notes of 50 and 100 Kyat in 1963. The demonetization of currency was made three more times, during his rule. To control all major activities of the people, he nationalized the industry, the lands, the banks, private schools and hospitals, expelled foreign entrepreneurs and dismissed foreign workers. The visit of foreigners was restricted to 3 days and even foreign aid organizations were banned. The aid permitted was on an intergovernmental level only.
25. In spite of massive aid, the cost^{xxvii} of Ne Win's war of aggression and mismanagement of the economy impoverished the country. In 1987 the regime had to apply for the Least

of Least Developed Country (LLDC) status with the UN. Brutal suppression of the nationwide pro-democracy movement in 1988 by Ne Win's regime shocked the civilized World. Ne Win resigned and his regime was replaced by an open military dictatorship, styling itself as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)^{xxviii}. The Western Bloc, especially the US, placed broad sanctions on Burma, because of the brutal crackdown.

Strategy for Buying Time

26. The new dictatorship known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) pledged to hold multi-party elections in 1990, so as to appease the restive population. In the pre-election year of 1989, 93 political parties registered for election. One of them was the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of Burma's independence hero, Aung San.
27. In the election held in May 1990, in spite of many disadvantages and restrictions^{xxix} the NLD won nearly 80% of the seats contested, while the National Unity Party (NUP), the party favored by the dictatorship won only 2 % of the seats and the rest went to other smaller and ethnic opposition parties.
28. When its party was soundly defeated, the dictatorship reneged on its promise to transfer power^{xxx} to the NLD, which had won a landslide victory. Instead, the dictatorship imprison most of the defiant members^{xxxi} of the parliament-elect. Some were made to draft a constitution for the country. In 1993, it set up a constitution drafting body, known as the 'National Convention' (NC) the membership of which was stacked with the dictatorship's handpicked representatives.
29. The dictatorship signed easy ceasefire agreements with the northern non-Burman resistance organizations and invited them to participate in the National Convention to work for inclusion of the non-Burman nationality rights in the constitution. It was part of the strategy to divide non-Burman resistance organizations and isolate the ones in the south, especially the KNU.
30. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest in 1995, but her movements were restricted. The NLD withdrew its representatives^{xxxii} from the National Convention. The constitution drafting process was suspended in 1996, as a result. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was put under house arrest again in 2000, when she and her party travel to Mandalay and farther up. Her entourage was broken up brutally by the SPDC thugs and she narrowly escaped from the violent assault^{xxxiii} and death.
31. The Convention was called again in 2004, and it was not until 2008 that the draft constitution was put to national referendum. In the closely manipulated referendum, the draft was said to receive the unbelievable 92.6 % approval vote. It came to be known as Nargis^{xxxiv}, or 2008 Constitution.
32. Like the previous constitutions of Burma, the constitution, drafted by the SLORC/SPDC organized and controlled National Convention, is for a unitary State. In

it, there is no provision or mention of federalism and equality promised to the non-Burman nationalities in the Panlong Agreement, hoped for by the non-Burman nationalities. Moreover, the constitution gives the military representatives 25% of the seats in all elected bodies, at all levels of the government.

33. Most of the non-Burman resistance organizations had no choice but to prepare themselves for further struggle for equality and freedom from oppression. However, some became influenced by the political line of appeasement, surrender and gradual change, introduced by one German NGO.

Changing of Mentor

34. When the Western Bloc nations reduced or cut off aid^{xxxv}, the dictatorship immediately turned to China, Russia and, gradually, to North Korea^{xxxvi}, to beg for economic and military aid, political support and financial assistance, with the pretense of having to fear the Western colonialists. The world, being still in the Cold War mode, China and Russia naturally received the military dictatorship with open arms, a regime that could become dependent on them as a client. To China it appeared as a good client to serve as a buffer against Western containment.
35. The dictatorship, first known as the SLORC and later the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), borrowed heavily from China^{xxxvii} and bought weaponry from Russia, China and North Korea, at friendship prices, to continue war of aggression and occupation against the non-Burman nationalities.
36. In Ne Win's time, only Ne Win and his close lieutenants stole from the country's coffers. During the time of the SLORC/SPDC rule, corruption among the regimes' members was rampant. The worst corruption was the use of the artificially low exchange rate of keeping one USD equivalent to 6 Kyat of the Burmese currency, when one USD was fetching more than 1,000 Kyat on the black market. Thus substantial Dollar income from selling gas, timber, rice, minerals etc. went into the pockets of the top generals and only a small portion went into the country's coffer.
37. Corruption among the lower generals, serving in the rural areas, took the form of making fortunes by collecting protection money from the drug traffickers, logging and mining companies and cross-border trade. When it was time to pay back loans from China, the regime gave mining, logging, hydro-power dam concessions mainly in conflict zones, in the non-Burman nationalities' areas. The regime's officials even pocketed much of the compensation given by the Chinese companies to the people, affected by mega economic projects^{xxxviii}, and used brute force to quell related protests.

One-at-a-Time Strategy

38. It was a time when thousands of protesters of the 1988 pro-democracy uprising fled to the non-Burman areas and continued their opposition activities, mainly in the KNU areas. With the help of one German political NGO^{xxxix} and partly by China, the SLORC/SPDC dictatorship started the strategy of isolating the KNU by making easy ceasefire agreements quickly with the non-Burman resistance organizations in the

north, such as the MNDA, NDAA, UWSP, SSPP/SSA-North, PSLO etc. and finally the KIO, from 1989 to 1994. Then the SLORC declared the ceasefires to the world as peace in the respective areas.

39. When it called on the KNU for peace talk in late 1989, the KNU proposed for negotiation together with the other organizations, with which it had formed two alliances, namely the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) and the National Democratic Front (NDF). The dictatorship turned down the KNU's proposal and told the KNU to come alone, for amicable settlement.
40. When the KNU went finally to hold talks in late 1996, it insistently demanded the KNU to enter the legal fold and renounce armed resistance program, which together meant surrender. The KNU naturally refused. By that time, the dictatorship had declared to the international community that it had made peace with 17 groups and the KNU simply did not want peace.
41. In 1997, the dictatorship concentrated its military might against the KNU, with the aim of wiping it out totally, in accordance with the strategy of wiping out the resistance forces, one at a time. In those days, the Burma Army, or Tatmadaw was about 250,000 strong, but the dictatorship like to portray its army to be four hundred or five hundred thousand strong.
42. We may say that the KNU was isolated in 1994, when its strongest allies, the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) signed ceasefire agreement in February of the year and later and the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)^{x1} followed suit. The dictatorship concentrated all its military forces against the KNU, which had to carry on the resistance almost singly until the end of 2011, a period of nearly 18 years. However, the dictatorship failed to wipe out the KNU as it had intended.
43. In November 2010, the SPDC held a general election under the new 2008 Constitution, which the NLD and some non-Burman nationality organizations boycotted. As expected, the military party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) candidates, who were mainly former military men, won the election, which was closely manipulated by the dictatorship.
44. From 1997 up to this day, the NGO known as Euro-Burma Office (EBO), with the financial support of the German NGO, mentioned earlier, and some European countries, has been brain washing, with the political line of appeasement, gradual change and defeatism, on the democratic oppositions inside the country and the non-Burman resistance organizations, which have to carry on armed resistance.
45. In 2009, taking advantage of a split in the ceasefire Kokang resistance group, the SPDC attacked and drove away the relatively small Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDA) of Kokang, which had signed ceasefire agreement with the military dictatorship in 1989, and installed a puppet administration. This made the other ceasefire organizations to start questioning the sincerity of the Burman dictatorship. It

also upset China, which had served as a mediator, from 1989 onward, for ceasefire agreements with most of the northern resistance organizations, including the MNDAA.

46. China became gradually aware of the faithless nature of Burmans in power. The Kokang people are ethnically Chinese, but they have been recognized as one of the non-Burman nationalities of Burma, since the British days. China urged the dictatorship to maintain peace and stability, especially along the China-Burma border.
47. The quasi civilian government of President U Thein Sein, which came to power in the rigged elections of November 2010, pressured the northern resistance organizations such as the KIO, SSPP-North, UWSA, etc. to transform their armed wings into Border Guard Force (BGF), under its total control. It was plain to see that Thein Sein government's plan, like its predecessors, was and still is to disarm the non-Burman resistance organizations, and get them into the legal fold, for total control under the military-drafted unitary and imperialistic 2008 Constitution.
48. Most resistance organizations refused and called for dialogue to resolve the country's problems peacefully by political means. The call for dialogue has been the position of the non-Burman resistance organizations even before the 1988 nationwide pro-democracy uprising. As it has been mentioned earlier, the call was deflected with the so-called National Convention.
49. This time round, the regime picked the KIO and the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP-North) for isolation and elimination by military means. On June 9, 2011, the Burman Tatmadaw^{xli} troops started attack on the KIO forward positions, with the aim of eliminating the KIO in two months^{xlii}. At the time of writing this briefing, the war against the KIO and SSPP-North has been going on for nearly 4 years, without end in sight.
50. The Palaung State Liberation Organization (PSLO), in Northern Shan State, had to sign ceasefire agreement in 1991 because of withering military offensives and gross human rights violations against the innocent civilians, by the SLORC dictatorship. It was forced to surrender arms and disbanded in 2005.
51. Widespread drug production by government militia groups in Palaung Region made a new batch of Palaung leaders to come back as Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF) for armed resistance. The MNDAA of Kokang in Northern Shan State also, which the Burman Tatmadaw drove out of Kokang in 2009, came back and resumed armed resistance, starting from early February of this year.
52. The resumption of hostilities in 2011 by Thein Sein government against the KIO and the SSPP-North, which had maintained ceasefire for 17 years, was no help for China's policy of peace and development. China again had to urge Thein Sein government to main peace and stability, when the Burman Tatmadaw failed to wipe out the KIO and the SSPP-North, in two months, as it had been assured.

Peace Process

53. When the war against the KIO and SSPP-North did not go according to plan, Thein Sein government started making overture for peace talk in August 2011 and set up a committee known as the Union Peace-making Work Committee (UPWC) headed by a union-level minister, Aung Min, under the Union Peace-making Central Committee (UPCC) headed by President Thein Sein. As usual, the UPWC started to contact individual organizations to sow dissension^{xliii}, according to the Burman ultra-nationalist divide-and-rule policy.
54. The UPWC did not meet with the new non-Burman nationalities alliance known as the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), founded on February 16, 2011, consisting of 11 non-Burman resistance organizations, until November 2012. The Western powers meanwhile were lauding Thein Sein government as a moderate, reformist, committed to democratic change etc.
55. The non-Burman nationalities called on Thein Sein government to declare nationwide ceasefire and start dialogue for resolving the problem of the civil war that has been going on for over 60 years. Organizations, which had been under influence of the political line of ‘appeasement, surrender and gradual change’, especially the ones in the south, threw caution to the wind and rush to meet UPWC, at its command.
56. Misled by EBO and enthusiasm of some Western countries, a number of resistance organizations, including some UNFC members, signed preliminary ceasefire agreements in early 2012 in bilateral negotiations. The chief government negotiator, Aung Min, accepted all the demands of the resistance organizations, *in principle*. He declared the signing of even preliminary ceasefire agreement as peace and made the signatory organizations to set up quickly liaison offices.
57. Meanwhile, the UNFC consistently called on the government to declare nationwide ceasefire. President Thein Sein’s order to Tatmadaw troops for unilateral ceasefire or reduction of hostilities in Kachin State went unheeded. Later meetings made it clear that Aung Min and his patron, President Thein Sein, were unable or unwilling to declare nationwide ceasefire.
58. In a flagrant act of craft, the Burmese government reversed the roles of aggressor and victim, by calling on the non-Burman resistance organizations in February 2013 to sign a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) first, meaning that the resistance forces have to stop resistance against military attacks on them for NCA. By that time 11 resistance organizations had signed bilateral ceasefire agreements at the state as well as at the union levels, while 3 had signed at the state level and 3 had to carry on armed resistance.
59. None of those signatories, however, did not receive their due considerations for consolidating the ceasefire agreements, such as demarcation of areas for activities of troops of the two sides, code of conduct for troops of the two sides, joint ceasefire monitoring mechanism, relocation of some troops away from farms and fields, the return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and refugees etc.

60. The demand on the resistance groups to sign the NCA made the non-Burman resistance organizations to further doubt the sincerity of the Burman government wanting to settle the problems fairly and establish lasting peace. Some political analysts started to view the Burman government as just playing the Bad-Cop Good-Cop game to have the Western sanctions lifted and trick the resistance organizations to give up arms for economic development^{xliv}. However, the UNFC formed the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordinating Team (NCCT), made up of representatives of its member organizations and a few non-member organizations.
61. In the past, the UNFC and UPWC had held negotiations for 6 rounds of talks. The main topics were Development Assistance for Non-Burman nationalities' Areas. Under the heading of "Frame Work for Political Dialogue" were the UPWC 7-Point Road Map, UNFC 6-Point Road Map, the Federal Union Army and Arrangement for Interim Period. Though agreement has been reached by both sides on non-essential points, the UPWC still cannot accept the core demands of the UNFC, which are 'Establishment of a Genuine Federal Union, Genuine Democracy and Human Rights, Equality for All the Nationalities, Federal Union Army and Self-Determination for the Non-Burman Nationalities'.
62. Currently, the NCCT led by the UNFC is having the 7th round of talks with the UPWC in Yangon. Before the talk began, the first-time visit to Naypyidaw by the KIO delegation, one of the strongest resistance organizations, which has to carry on resistance, has caused speculations that final agreement on NCA is at hand. However, the KIO has affirmed that it is not meeting President Thein Sein for a separate deal and it will firmly continue the negotiation as part of the NCCT.
63. The 7th round of talks is still unfinished. It has to make a break for the government's celebration of its Armed Forces Day. It will resume again on the 30th of March and if we have to go on the past records of negotiation with President Thein Sein government for guidance, the future is still uncertain.
64. In the negotiations, the military representatives^{xlv} in the UPWC are openly hard-lined and have been totally against the core demands of the NCCT. If the Bad-Cop Good-Cop game is maintained, the signing of NCA will still be far away.
65. Insinuation by Tatmadaw recently that Kokang MNDAA was receiving foreign assistance might indicate that it wanted to expand the conflict beyond the borders of the country or attract military aid from Western powers. More war with foreign aid is not the answer to resolve the country's problems. The ordinary people are becoming restive again and more war will simply impoverish the country further.
66. Anyhow, we hope that saner heads will prevail among the nominally civilian government of President Thein Sein and Tatmadaw, in order that peace and stability may return soon to the country that has suffered the scourge of civil war for more than 66 years.

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- ⁱ The Karen migration into Burma could be as early as thousands of years BC, because the Karen oral history says that the country was mainly made up of islands, when the early Karen arrived.
- ⁱⁱ The plains nowadays are known as Pegu/Bago, Irrawaddy/Aeyawaddy, Rangoon/Yangon and Tanessarim/Taninthayi Regions.
- ⁱⁱⁱ The Burman Empire consisted of the present day middle and southern plains of the country. The northern, eastern and south-eastern parts of the country were independent or semi-independent entities.
- ^{iv} In the feudal days, the Burman society was a predatory nation, making wars almost constantly with neighboring peoples and states.
- ^v The British annexation of old Burma (Burman Empire) was complete after 3rd Anglo-Burmese War in 1885. The present day Burma/Myanmar is a British creation, which took place a number of years after entering into treaties with China, India, French Indo-China and Siam (Thailand).
- ^{vi} Karen had had a written language known as chicken-scratch writing which was similar to the Chinese system of writing.
- ^{vii} The standard term used by the KNU for ultra-nationalist and ultra-nationalism are 'chauvinist and chauvinism' respectively.
- ^{viii} Head of the BIA was Colonel Aung San, father of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Unfortunately for the Karens he was away in Myitkyina in the far north of Burma, with the Japanese troops, and did not know about the atrocities against the Karens by the BIA troops. He was one of the few Burman leaders, who understood and had sympathy for the non-Burman nationalities of the country.
- ^{ix} The right of secession was provided for the Shan, Kachin and Chin peoples in the 1947 Constitution of Burma drafted under the supervision of U Nu, who succeeded Aung San as chairman of the AFPFL.
- ^x Aung San had promised to work for designation of the Irrawaddy Delta as Karen State, after independence, to the Karen leaders, who were pushing him for creation of a Karen State before independence. He explained to them that there was too much pressure on him within and without his own AFPFL Party, not to concede more to the demands of the non-Burman nationalities.
- ^{xi} U Nu became the first Prime Minister of Independent Burma. He was an intellectual without the charisma, audacity or resolve displayed by Aung San.
- ^{xii} The Karen as well as the Burman use the words "*Da Thablay* (Karen) – *Lutlatyay* (Burmese)" inter-changeably meaning - 'freedom' as well as 'independence'. When the Karen movement used the word *Lutlatyay*, the Burman, especially the ultra-nationalists such as Ne Win, took it as 'independence', and when the Burman used the same word, the Karen took it as 'freedom'. (Perhaps, the Burman ultra-nationalists took advantage the dual meaning of this word, to press for war against the Karen people, in the first place.)
- ^{xiii} A battalion of KNDO was formed in each district, in which the Karen people were a majority.
- ^{xiv} Gen. Ne Win was Vice-Chief-of-Staff, while Gen. Smith Dun, a Karen, was Chief-of-Staff of Burma Armed Forces. Some believed that attack on the Karen was part of Ne Win's plan to get rid of Smith Dun.
- ^{xv} *Tatmadaw* is the term used for the army of Burman kings and may be translated as the *imperial army*.
- ^{xvi} Militia troops known as *Sitwundan* in Burmese. Most of them were former BIA, which eventually became Burma National Army (BNA) troops, who were physically or mentally unfit for inclusion in the Burma Army, reorganized after WW-2 by the British.
- ^{xvii} Thamine and Insein are satellite towns of Rangoon.
- ^{xviii} The British had a treaty responsibility to supply arms and ammunition to Burma government for suppression of communist insurgency. However, in order to get arms and ammunition for suppression of Karen insurgency, a story has it that Ne Win dressed up a contingent of his troops in Karen rebel uniforms and ordered it to wipe out a Burman village. Then he took members of the UK, US, India etc. diplomatic missions to witness scenes of the carnage. In that way and with the help of U Nu, Ne Win managed to get a shipload of arms and ammunition from the British.
- ^{xix} The ultra-nationalist Burmans would like to remind themselves and boast to the others that they have had three empires in history. It is perhaps a way to look down on the non-Burman nationalities of the country and forget about their being colonial subjects of the British for 6 decades.
- ^{xx} On the plains in lower Burma, 70% of the Karen, 98% of the Mon and 99% of the Arakanese and Shan peoples were Buddhists.
- ^{xxi} In strictly controlled society, the national identity card was and still is an all-important ticket to do anything. When a young person, coming of age, applied for the card, mentioning himself/herself as either a member of a non-Burman nationality or a non-Buddhist, he would be advised that it would take several months.

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- ^{xxii} Among member countries of the Western Bloc, such as the US, UK, Germany, Australia etc., the fear of communist expansion, during 'Cold War' period was verging on panic. The war in Vietnam was not going well and there was the so-called 'Domino Theory', meaning that the fall of Vietnam would trigger the fall of other South-East Asian countries in quick succession.
- ^{xxiii} After negotiation with non-Burman nationality leaders, U Nu agreed to set up a federal system of government. On the excuse of preventing the disintegration of the Union, Ne Win seized power.
- ^{xxiv} Ne Win's military junta was known as the Revolutionary Council. In 1974, Ne Win set up Burma as a one party state. The party was known as Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP). It was just a military party.
- ^{xxv} In 1963, of the 7 major non-Burman nationalities 6, except the Chin, had armed resistance movement.
- ^{xxvi} Except a few like the Red Flag Communist Party, a faction from the KNU known as the Karen Revolutionary Council, individuals from the White Flag Communist Party etc., all the armed resistance organizations returned to the jungles to continue the struggle.
- ^{xxvii} Ne Win used a number of drug lords to find black money, to support his war effort. Even then, in later years, he had to confiscate most of the rice produced by the farmers.
- ^{xxviii} In 1997 SLORC military dictatorship was renamed as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).
- ^{xxix} The principal leader of NLD, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, was under house arrest. Election campaigns were banned and the media was strictly controlled.
- ^{xxx} It was believed that the dictatorship refused to transfer power on order from Ne Win, who still had influence over the military even though he was in retirement.
- ^{xxxi} A number of members of parliament-elect fled to the liberated areas of the non-Burman resistance organizations.
- ^{xxxii} The NLD withdrew its representatives, because the NC was a cut and dried affair. The political representatives were there, just for show.
- ^{xxxiii} The incident was known as Depeyin Massacre.
- ^{xxxiv} Nargis was the name of the cyclone that devastated a large area of the Irrawaddy Delta, killing hundreds of thousands of people. In spite of entreaties by many nations, the SPDC held the referendum, while the storm victims were still in the throes of suffering.
- ^{xxxv} Japan and Germany continue to give financial assistance and the petroleum giants of the US and France, Chevron and Total continue to work for those in power, up to this day.
- ^{xxxvi} The dictatorship's approach to North Korea was for acquiring nuclear bomb technology and long-range rocketry.
- ^{xxxvii} Many new roads, bridges and the entire new capital known as Naypyidaw (Imperial City) were said to be built with Chinese loan.
- ^{xxxviii} The ongoing protests against Letpadaung Copper Mine, Myitson Dam, the many dams on Salween, gas pipeline projects, land seizures etc. are a result of the regime and its cronies pocketing too much compensation money given by China.
- ^{xxxix} The NGO is known as Friedrich Neumann Stiftung (FNS), which belongs to the Free Democratic Party. It is one of the do-gooder NGOs of Europe, still fettered with colonialist mentality. It was later joined by another German NGO known as Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), which belongs to the Social Democratic Party.
- ^{xl} After 3 months of ceasefire, the KNPP had to resume armed resistance again, as the government forces violated the terms of ceasefire agreement.
- ^{xli} Tatmadaw is a Burmese word for armed forces, especially the army. It is a term used in the feudal days and have the connotation of "*imperial army*".
- ^{xlii} Thein Sein government told China that it would wipe out the KIO in two months. At the start of attack against the KIO, the Burman troops on the ground however boasted that they wiped out Kokang MNDAA in 3 days and they would wipe out the KIO in 10 days.
- ^{xliii} For example, when it met the Mon organization, NMSP, it urged NMSP to sign ceasefire agreement quickly to prevent the greedy Karen from taking away all the development projects it had to offer. When it met the Karen organization, KNU, the greedy Mon were to be forestalled from taking away all the development projects.
- ^{xliv} The economic development aid and assistances are promised by the Western nations on the condition of building peace and stability. Knowing that they are to be channeled through the Burman government, with a notoriety for corruption, the non-Burman nationalities are not so enticed by them.
- ^{xlv} The military representatives want to carry out Disarm, Demobilized and Reintegration (DDR) program on the resistance armies, and would not hear of the proposal for forming a Federal Union Army (FUA).

