

**THE NECESSITY FOR AN INTEGRATED  
INTERNATIONAL APPROACH TO ADDRESS THE  
HUMANITARIAN CRISES IN BURMA/MYANMAR**

**By  
Elizabeth Brown**

*Submitted to  
Central European University  
Department of Public Policy*

*In partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts in Public Policy*

Supervisor: Professor Valentina Dimitrova-Grajzl

Budapest, Hungary

2008

## **ABSTRACT**

The humanitarian crises in Myanmar are rapidly deteriorating and there is an increasing international appeal to the military regime in Myanmar to improve the situation in the country. The lasting colonial legacies of ethnic fractionalization and a pervasive fear of foreigners in Burmese society have been exacerbated and perpetuated by the international community's politicized actions and approaches towards the regime. This thesis analyzes the institutional, geographical, historical, and socio-political aspects of Burmese society and the contradictory approaches currently being pursued by the international community in an effort to change the situation within the country. The UN and ASEAN are among the few international actors that have not generated extremism from the military regime, and their current access to the regime and the country in the 2008 cyclone aftermath provide a working framework for these two international actors to be at the forefront of an apolitical international humanitarian effort in Myanmar.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Abstract</i> .....	<i>ii</i>
<i>Table of Contents</i> .....	<i>iii</i>
<i>List of Tables</i> .....	<i>iv</i>
<i>List of Abbreviations</i> .....	<i>iv</i>
<i>Introduction</i> .....	<i>1</i>
<b>Chapter 1: The Current Crises</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Burmese Context</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>2.1 Enduring Institutions and Characteristics</b> .....	<b>6</b>
2.1.1 Ethnic Diversity and Religion .....	6
2.1.2 Conceptions of Power and Internal Conflict.....	7
<b>2.2 Resources and Geopolitics</b> .....	<b>9</b>
2.2.1 Resource abundance .....	9
2.2.2 Strategic geopolitical location .....	9
<b>2.3 Historical Overview and the Role of Foreigners</b> .....	<b>10</b>
2.2.1 Colonialism (1885-1948) .....	10
2.2.2 Democratic Socialism (1948-1962) .....	12
2.2.3 General Ne Win and Burma Socialist Programme Party (1962-1988).....	14
2.2.4 SLORC/SPDC (1988 to present).....	16
<b>2.4 Concluding Remarks</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Current Strategies Employed by International Community</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>3.1 Appealing for a UN Security Council Resolution on Myanmar</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>3.2 Supporting the Democracy Movement and its Goal of Regime Change</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>3.3 Economic Isolation</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>3.4 Humanitarian Aid</b> .....	<b>30</b>
3.4.1 Politics of Humanitarian Aid.....	30
3.4.2 Global Fund Pull Out.....	32
3.4.3 SPDC Restrictions .....	35
3.4.4 2008 Cyclone Relief Efforts.....	35
<b>3.5 Engagement with the Regime</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>3.6 Primary Actors</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>Conclusion and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>Appendix A: Determining Factors Resulting in UNSC Intervention</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>Appendix B: Excerpt from ICG Report on Differences Between South Africa and Myanmar</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>Appendix C: Global Fund Safeguards</b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>50</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Breakdown of Primary International Actors

p.43

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
AFPFL	–	Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League
ASEAN	–	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BNA	–	Burma National Army
BSPP	–	Burma Socialist Programme Party
EU	–	European Union
FDI	–	Foreign Direct Investment
ICG	–	International Crisis Group
INGO	–	International Non-governmental Organization
IMF	–	International Monetary Fund
KMT	–	Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party)
LDC	–	Least Developed Country
NGO	–	Non-governmental Organization
NLD	–	National League for Democracy
R2P	–	Responsibility to Protect
SLORC	–	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC	–	State Peace and Development Council
TCG	–	Tripartite Core Group
UK	–	United Kingdom
UN	–	United Nations
UNAIDS	–	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	–	United Nations Development Programme
UNSC	–	United Nations Security Council
US	–	United States
USDA	–	Union Solidarity and Development Association (regime’s civilian organization)

## INTRODUCTION

With pervasive government repression, forced labor, ethnic conflict, forced displacement, military condoned rape, poverty, the highest rates of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis in the region, and devastation from the May 2008 cyclone, the humanitarian crises in Myanmar<sup>1</sup> are rapidly deteriorating. The crises can be attributed to forty-eight years of repressive and economically unstable military rule (1958-1960, 1962-present) as well as to historical and foreign influences. There is an increasing international appeal to the military regime in Myanmar to improve the human rights and humanitarian situation in the country. However, the international approaches toward the regime have been contradictory: the US has resorted to economic and diplomatic isolation; ASEAN has pursued ‘constructive engagement;’ while China has provided economic, political and military support.

Recent attention and literature regarding Burma/Myanmar<sup>2</sup> for the most part fails to take a comprehensive approach to evaluating the Burmese crises and possible solutions. It views “economic problems, health issues, minority relations, refugees, human rights, and other fields most often as if each were self-contained—compartmentalized or at best related only to immediate political issues” (Steinberg 2006b, p.xxxviii). Moreover, Burma/Myanmar has become the new “moral cause” of the West after the South Africa apartheid, particularly in challenging the military leadership and supporting Aung San Suu Kyi,<sup>3</sup> and the focus of

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<sup>1</sup> In 1989, the military government changed the name of the country from the Union of Burma to the Union of Myanmar. The UN and most countries have accepted the change, but the US and the regime’s political opposition have not. The use of one or the other has clear political connotations, thus in an effort of neutrality, I will use ‘Burma’ when referring to the country prior to the name change and in reference to the democracy movement, ‘Myanmar’ after the name change, and ‘Burma/Myanmar’ for historical continuity. The word ‘Burmese’ is used for a citizen of the country, the language of the Burman ethnic majority, and as an adjective (adapted from Steinberg).

<sup>2</sup> There was a scarcity of academic literature regarding Burma between 1962 and 1988, due to the extreme isolationist policies of General Ne Win’s regime.

<sup>3</sup> Aung San Suu Kyi is “the dynamic and now iconic Nobel laureate leader of the political opposition who has been jailed, periodically been put under house arrest, and otherwise subjected to detention, indignities and vilification since 1989” (Steinberg 2006b: p.xxxiv).

attention has been primarily for advocacy purposes (Steinberg 2006b: p.xxxiv). This has an inherent bias towards democratization and political change from the status quo, which may not be feasible or appropriate at Myanmar's current stage of development.

For academic literature, focus on specific issues rather than a comprehensive analysis facilitates detailed analyses, which is indeed essential for understanding the predicament of Burma/Myanmar, for example: Callahan's (2001) work on military institutions and Smith's (2007) policy study on the dynamics of ethnic conflict. Compartmentalizing aspects of Burmese society can, however, neglect "the dynamics of intersectoral relations and positive or negative internal-external influences" (Steinberg 2006b: p.xxxviii). One recent exception is David Steinberg's work (2006b) which considers contemporary Myanmar in a holistic manner using the framework of political legitimacy. This thesis also uses a comprehensive approach towards Myanmar. It however employs the lens of foreign involvement in Burma/Myanmar to identify the current, most feasible approach which the international community can pursue to alleviate the humanitarian crises in Myanmar.

Utilizing the existing literature on different aspects of Burmese society and taking into account the interdependence of these aspects, this thesis analyzes the crises in Myanmar by identifying their origins and how the international community has aggravated and perpetuated these crises. I conclude that the past actions of the UN and ASEAN have not generated extremism from the military regime and their current access to the regime and the country in the cyclone aftermath provide a working framework for these two international actors to interact with the regime and respond quickly to the remaining humanitarian crises in Myanmar.

The thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter One briefly gives a picture of the current humanitarian, human rights, and economic crises in the country. The complexity of the Burmese context is then addressed in Chapter Two, in terms of the enduring characteristics of Burmese society, the geopolitics of Myanmar's location, and historical developments, which together determine and help explain both the military regimes' and the international community's actions. The contentious environment for international influence in Myanmar is further explored in Chapter Three through a discussion and analysis of the strategies pursued by the international community in an effort to alleviate the crises described in the first chapter. The last section concludes and provides recommendations.

## CHAPTER 1: THE CURRENT CRISES

The humanitarian crises in Myanmar are deteriorating; poverty is increasing, living standards are decreasing, one-third of the children are chronically malnourished, infant and maternal mortality rates are high, and the health crisis is dire. “While Burma saw a 2000% increase in FDI between 1995 and 2005,” primarily in the natural resource extraction sector, which directly benefits the military regime, “95% of the population lives on less than 1\$ a day, and 90% with less than 65 cents a day” (FIDH-ITUC 2007: p.33); rampant inflation further devastates living standards. Myanmar is classified as a least developed country (LDC), and the UNDP 2007/08 Human Development Report (2008), ranks Myanmar 132<sup>nd</sup> out of the 177 countries ranked. The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)<sup>4</sup> budget allocates less than \$1 per person per year for both education and health combined, and the World Health Organization ranked Myanmar’s healthcare system as the second poorest in the world (Beyrer et. al 2006). Myanmar’s HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria epidemics are the worst in Southeast Asia, and the health situation is notably worse in the areas near the border populated by ethnic minorities. Intravenous drug use along the border contributes to the spread of HIV (DLA 2005, Beyrer et. al 2006, UNDP 2006, and HRW 2008). The natural disaster of Cyclone Nargis which hit the Irrawaddy Delta on 2-3 May 2008 has further devastated the country.

Additional factors in the humanitarian crises are the gross human rights violations committed by the SPDC and the military (HRW 2008). Military violence and abuse against ethnic minorities is especially pervasive, including forced labor and conscription, child soldiers, summary executions, torture, condoned rape and sexual abuse against women and girls, land confiscation, extortion, and the use of landmines to disrupt civilian food production and

distribution. Half a million people, primarily ethnic minorities, have been displaced internally, and nearly 700,000 have fled the country (HRDU 2007 and HRW 2008). The SPDC's atrocious human rights record is also evident in its repression of political opposition.<sup>5</sup> Political rights and civil liberties, such as freedom of speech and assembly, are strictly denied throughout Myanmar (Freedom House 2007). Anything that could possibly be construed as dissent is not permitted, and there are at least 1,100 political prisoners in Myanmar's prisons (HRDU 2007 and HRW 2008).

In addition to atrocities committed by the SPDC against the people of Myanmar, the SPDC has extremely restrictive control of many areas of the economy, which encourages a flourishing black market constituting the majority of the Burmese economy (Brown 1999). The Heritage Foundation's (2008) assessment of economic freedom estimates Myanmar's economy as the fifth least free economy in the world. This is a direct result of inconsistent and nontransparent government regulation, intervention, and pervasive corruption.<sup>6</sup> Such haphazard and restrictive management of the economy is an unequivocal cause of the lack of economic development in Myanmar.

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<sup>4</sup> SPDC is what the current military regime calls itself.

<sup>5</sup> This was illustrated recently with the violent military suppression on Buddhist monks' peaceful protests against poor economic conditions at the end of 2007 (HRW 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Myanmar is ranked last out of 179 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2007 (Transparency International 2008).

## CHAPTER 2: BURMESE CONTEXT

In addition to the current regime's detrimental role in creating and exacerbating the various crises in Myanmar outlined in Chapter One, there are a wide range of other contributing factors. One cannot fully understand the complex dynamics influencing the regime's and international actors' actions without considering the institutional, geographical, historical, and socio-political aspects of Burma/Myanmar. First, the enduring context of Burma/Myanmar is given in terms of ethnic diversity, religion, conceptions of power, and the ongoing internal conflict. Second, the context of Burma/Myanmar is tied to the international community with a discussion of its resource abundance and geopolitical location. Finally, a historical overview of Burma/Myanmar is given focusing on the role international actors have played in the country.

### ***2.1 Enduring Institutions and Characteristics***

#### **2.1.1 Ethnic Diversity and Religion**

Myanmar's population of 50.52 million (World Bank 2008) is extremely ethnically diverse.<sup>7</sup> Burmans account for 68% of the population and live in the center of the country. Ethnic minorities, who make up the remaining 32%,<sup>8</sup> live in the periphery states near Myanmar's borders, occupying about 55% of the land area in the country (HRDU 2007: p.405 and James 2003: p.2). Minority cultural identities, which are closely associated with language, are threatened by the prohibition of teaching minority languages in public schools. This is one of many methods of assimilation pursued by successive military regimes collectively referred to as 'Burmanization' (Steinberg 2006b: p.85).

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<sup>7</sup> The government officially recognizes 135 ethnic groups and languages which comprise eight main ethnic families in Burma/Myanmar (Steinberg 2001: p.182).

<sup>8</sup> Shan account for 8%, Karen 6.8%, Kachin, Mon, Chin and Kayah around 2% each (HRDU 2007: p.405)

Theravada Buddhism is the predominant religion in Burma/Myanmar (practiced by 89% of the population), and there are clear links between ethnicity and religion.<sup>9</sup> As with ethnicity, religion has also been extremely politicized throughout Burma/Myanmar's history. Buddhism has been used by those in power as a source of political legitimacy, nationalism, and as a basis for repression of non-Buddhists. The state has continually sought control over the *sangha* (Buddhist monastic community), and the "religious and the secular have become intertwined" in contemporary Myanmar (Mercer and Philp 2002: p.1590). Every post-colonial ruler has participated in patronage through building shrines and pagodas and paying the appropriate homage to the *sangha*, a practice which originated in monarchal times (Steinberg 2001: p.45).

### **2.1.2 Conceptions of Power and Internal Conflict**

Buddhist philosophy has shaped the conceptions of power in Burma/Myanmar since monarchal times. Those in power are assumed to have good karma, and because the power of any ruler is earned through his karmic cycle, it is conceived as finite and unable to be shared. Power thus becomes extremely personalized with loyalty shown to the individual not the institution, and the efficacy of administration depends on patron-client relationships and entourages. Furthermore, any alternative center of power or any form of pluralism of ideas of institutions, including the media and civil society, is viewed as a threat and destructive to national unity. This conception of power has led the current military regime to believe itself to be the only institution capable of keeping Myanmar united (Steinberg 1999b: pp.293-5 and 2006b: pp.37-49).

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<sup>9</sup> In the Burman ethnic majority, as well as the Shan, Arakanese, and Mon ethnic minorities, Theravada Buddhism is the dominant religion. Christianity (4% of the population) is the dominant religion among the

The military regimes in Burma/Myanmar see Burmese citizens as threats and potential enemies, which is an underlying cause of the enduring conflict and militarization in post-colonial Burmese society (Callahan 2003: p.5). Smith (2007: pp.3-4) describes Burma/Myanmar to be “a pre-eminent example of a post-colonial state subsumed in...a ‘conflict trap,’” where no single issue can be identified as the cause of conflict, which has its origins in the state’s “complex geo-politics and history.” This trap is seen in the “paradox of apparent stability” of the conflict environment in Burma/Myanmar, where “there have been no final winners or losers on the battlefields—only a growing militarization” (Smith 2007: p.5). Callahan (2003: pp.2-3, 174) also identifies this ‘stability’ of conflict in Burma/Myanmar, asserting that war and crisis in Burma/Myanmar have created institutions with “staying power” and “coercion-intensive” relations between the state and society, which has produced “the most durable incarnation of military rule” in the postwar world.

The military regimes’ conceptions of power and governance have also had a tremendous effect on its relations with the international community. The regime considers all of its Asian neighbors as potential enemies, a fear partly based on past foreign support for insurgent movements within Burma/Myanmar. Foreign criticism of the regime invokes negative and nationalistic responses, and pressure for reform is viewed as an infringement of Burmese sovereignty (Steinberg 1999b: pp.293-5 and 2006b: pp.37-49).

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Kachin, Chin, and Naga ethnic groups, and Islam (4% of the population), widely practiced in the Arakan State, is the primary religion of the Rohingya minority (HRDU 2007 and percentages from US State 2007).

## **2.2 Resources and Geopolitics**

### **2.2.1 Resource abundance**

Burma/Myanmar is an extremely resource rich country. The soil in Burma/Myanmar is very fertile and the economy essentially agrarian (James 2003: p.2). Part of the Southeast Asia's 'Golden Triangle'<sup>10</sup>, Myanmar has excellent conditions—geographic, ethnographic, and political—for opium production and is currently the second largest producer of opium in the world (Martin and Romano 1992: p.127). Both insurgent leaders and the regime benefit handsomely from the production and trade of opium (Brown 1999). Due to substantial forests, Burma/Myanmar is one of the world's largest exporters of teak and other hardwoods. Burma/Myanmar is also rich in mineral resources, which include natural gas, lead, petroleum, silver, tin, zinc, and rare gems (UNDP 2006). Autarky and economic crisis in Burma/Myanmar has led to the growth of the informal economy and “cross-border trade in teak, jade and opium for legally unavailable consumer goods” (Brown 1999: p.240). The black market trade of these resources is intertwined with the continual internal conflict<sup>11</sup> discussed in the previous section.

### **2.2.2 Strategic geopolitical location**

Myanmar is in a very strategic geopolitical position, in relation to its neighbors.<sup>12</sup> A neutral state in both the Cold War and the Sino-Soviet dispute, its geographic and demographic vulnerability to China is nonetheless evident, “given the long, indefensible border with China and China's massive population” (Steinberg 2006a: p.223). Myanmar has been described as

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<sup>10</sup> Opium-growing area and economy, around 150,000 square miles primarily in Myanmar, encompassing the entire Shan State in Myanmar and extending into China, Thailand and Laos (Martin and Romano 1992: p.127)

<sup>11</sup> The black market economy has benefited from the conflict. In particular, “protracted conflict and violence...have been conducive to the growth of the opium industry, Burma's single financial success in recent years of economic crisis and authoritarian rule” (Brown 1999: p.234).

<sup>12</sup> Situated along the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal, Myanmar shares borders with Thailand and Laos to the southeast, China to the northeast, and Bangladesh and India to the northwest.

“a nexus of potential rivalries among China, India, and the ASEAN states” (Steinberg 2006a: p.227). Presently, China’s growing military and economic influence in Myanmar, construed as an expansion of geopolitical power and influence into Southeast Asia, is of great concern to India, Japan and Myanmar’s ASEAN neighbors (Steinberg 2006a: p.228).

In sum, the significant ethnic fractionalization, predominance of the Buddhist religious tradition, high level of conflict and militarization, abundance of natural resources, and important geopolitical location all have played a role in the current crisis. Given this already complex context, the following section illustrates how, since colonialism, foreigners in Burmese society have ignored and/or exacerbated these characteristics, intensifying the humanitarian crises in Burma/Myanmar.

### ***2.3 Historical Overview and the Role of Foreigners***

Burma/Myanmar’s colonial and post-colonial history and the influence foreigners have had on Burmese society and its various governments are extremely important in explaining the current crises and the polarized dynamic of foreign actions regarding the country today. Before British colonialism, Burma was ruled by monarchies, and stability was maintained through soft borders and control. Power was decentralized and shared in ethnic minority regions which were largely under local control as long as taxes were paid (Smith 2003: p.3 and Taylor 1987: pp.13-65).

#### **2.2.1 Colonialism (1885-1948)**

The British arrived in Burma as traders in the 1700s. Burma was officially annexed into Great Britain’s Indian Empire in 1885 after three Anglo-Burmese wars conducted over a fifty-nine year period (Smith 2003: p.3 and Webster 2000: p.1003). One of Britain’s primary goals was

to turn Burma into a rice supplier for the British-Indian Empire, which transformed the rural economy from subsistence farming to a commercially dominated agriculture export economy. Foreign labor was imported by the empire for farming and to implement bureaucracy (Oo 1989: pp.236-7 and Suwannakij 2004: p.152). As part of the British-Indian Empire, Burma was ruled from India; this and the large influx of labor and capital from India and China generated a fear of foreigners in Burmese society and became a unifying notion for the Burmese people (Aung-Thwin and Myint-U 1992: p.68).

The origins of the destabilizing and paralyzing ethnic conflict can be traced to policies adopted by the British during colonialism. “Administrative simplifications” created arbitrary “political, economic, and social boundaries that continue to divide the country today” (Callahan 2003: p.16). Britain employed a ‘divide and rule’ policy consolidating power and development in central Burma, referred to as ‘Burma proper,’ while leaving ethnic minority ‘frontier regions’ with the ability to rule themselves (Smith 2007: p.83 and Suwannakij 2004: pp.152-4). “This division compounded political and economic differences in a time of rapid social change” (Smith 2007: p.83). As there was no contact between the regions, the modernization and globalization of Burma’s economy and society was limited to ‘Burma proper.’ ‘Two Burmas’ were created through bureaucratic and security mechanisms, which politicized violence, and “established durable administrative structures that precluded any significant integration throughout the territory for a century to come” (Callahan 2003: p.16).

In the early 1940s at the beginning of WWII, the Japanese trained Burman ethnic-majority nationalists, known as the ‘thirty comrades.’ and helped create the Burma National Army (BNA). In 1942, the Japanese brought an end to British colonialism and occupied Burma until 1945 (Suwannakij 2004: p.154). During WWII, alliances within Burma compounded

ethnic tensions, “where some ethnic groups fought for the British and the Burman ethnic-majority nationalists first fought with the Japanese against the British” leaving “a legacy of mutual distrust and suspicion” (Brown 1999: p.238). In doubt of Japanese motivation, the BNA, along with the Communists, formed the nationalist Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL), which emerged as an extremely influential political organization, and revolted against the Japanese colonizers (Smith 2003: p.5 and Suwannakij 2004: p.154).

The British regained control of Burma for a short period of time in 1945, with the publicly declared intention to help create an independent state. In 1947, ethnic groups worked together for independence, elections were held, and a constitution was written. Aung San, one of the ‘thirty comrades’ and Burma’s national leader, was assassinated before the official implementation of the constitution and U Nu became the new leader of the AFPFL and Burma. The Union of Burma was formed and Burma gained official independence on 4 January 1948 (Smith 2003: p.5). The following fourteen year period was the only time Burma experienced democratic governance.

### **2.2.2 Democratic Socialism (1948-1962)**

Directly after independence, the Communists and Karens, both competing for control of the state, led armed rebellions. This resulted in a two year civil war which was ended by the army’s reinstatement of the government. It is clear early on that the civilian-led democratic government was fragile and increasingly reliant on the army for stability and survival (Suwannakij 2004: p.154).

Prime Minister U Nu was a devout Buddhist and his democratic rule between 1948 and 1962 has been characterized as “Buddhist Socialism” (Aung-Thwin and Myint-U 1992: p.69).

Burma/Myanmar became known as a “neutralist nation *par excellence*” (Steinberg 1990: p.588). In an effort to become free from foreign control, U Nu pursued a planned socialist economy and refused to accept foreign aid (Jaffe 1955: p.24). This refusal was common amongst all post-colonial Burmese governments as they felt “the need to demonstrate that the economic structure of the state was no longer, as in the colonial era, in the hands of foreigners” (Steinberg 2005: p.52).

During the Cold War in the 1950s, the neutrality of Burma’s civilian government was evident throughout its policy and actions, e.g. the insistence to pay for any kind of service or economic assistance from both the Soviet Union and the US (Steinberg 1990: p.588).

However, army leaders sought and received military support from Cold War superpower rivals without any oversight by the civilian government (Callahan 2003: p.18). The army wanted to build its capability to defend against international threats. This was prompted by the possible invasion of Burma by Communist China as a retaliation against the operations of the US trained Chinese political party KMT, based inside Burma (Callahan 2003: p.17). Over the decade, the army grew in size from 2,000 loyalists to more than 100,000 troops and also grew in economic power becoming the “largest commercial organization in the country” (Smith 2007: p.30). “The redeployed, colonial vintage security apparatus was restored as the core of the Burmese state in the 1950s...Cold War dynamics and military rule provided the motive, manpower, and firepower to take state violence further out to the countryside than had the British and to label, quarantine, and disempower large portions of the population as ‘enemies’” (Callahan 2003: p.19).

Throughout the entire duration of democratic rule, political and ethnic rebellions were pervasive in Burma undermining the democratic government’s authority and ability to

govern. With the civilian government on the brink of collapse, in 1958 in a ‘constitutional coup’ Prime Minister U Nu permitted General Ne Win and the military to rule temporarily in order to restore order (Alamgir 1997: p.338). During this eighteen month period of military leadership, the military not only suppressed the insurgencies, but further increased its control in economic and non-security realms (Steinberg 2005: p.56).

### **2.2.3 General Ne Win and Burma Socialist Programme Party (1962-1988)**

The military stepped down briefly in 1960, when U Nu’s party easily won elections, however General Ne Win led a military coup seizing power in 1962. Political power was centralized in the ‘Revolutionary Council,’ which was established to unify Burma under military rule. Ne Win and the Revolutionary Council’s justification for the coup was “economic, religious and political crises, ‘with the issue of federalism as the most important reason for the coup’” (Aung-Thwin and Myint-U 1992: p.72). Ne Win sought to unify Burma through isolation from the world and a military version of socialism with nationalist and autarkic ideologies known as the ‘Burmese Way to Socialism.’ Under the military junta, all political parties, with the exception of the newly formed Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), as well as any form of dissent were banned. In 1974, a new military constitution was written, instituting a unitary government and removing any autonomy given to states (Alamgir 1997: p.338, Aung-Thwin and Myint-U 1992: p.72, Smith 2007: p.32 and Thomson 1995: p.274).

Ne Win’s attempts to unify Burma under the ‘Burmese Way to Socialism’ failed (Steinberg 2006a: p.220). Burmanization led to intense armed conflict between 1968 and 1975, which was exacerbated by international influence. China openly condemned Ne Win’s government as ‘fascism’ and supported, both militarily and financially, the insurgent Communist Party of Burma. The Thai government pursued ‘buffer state’ policies, benefiting non-communist

ethnic insurgencies along the border in a successful effort to prevent this military assistance from reaching the Communist Party of Thailand (Smith 2007: pp.33-35). Steinberg (2001: p.185) notes that foreigners helped foster revolts by giving “minorities false hopes that they would somehow be rescued with foreign support. This specter of potential foreign intervention (specifically by the US), however unrealistic, is one that still haunts the SLORC/SPDC leadership.”

In contrast to China’s policy, not all countries condemned the regime. The BSPP received large amounts of foreign assistance, primarily from Japan<sup>13</sup> and multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and on a smaller level from European countries and the US (Steinberg 1999a). Ne Win had close personal ties with the Japanese as he was one of the ‘thirty comrades’ trained by Japanese intelligence officers in the early 1940s. Furthermore, “from Burma’s point of view, a continuation of Japanese aid was vital to keep the economy in gear.” As a non-aligned state “wary of superpower rivalries, a demilitarized Japan was an attractive source of support” (Lintner 1991).

While accepting substantial amounts of aid and development assistance, Ne Win’s economic policies were extremely xenophobic. The precipitant nationalization of industries, two and a half decades of central planning, “the expulsion of most foreigners (including many Chinese and Indians who were essential in business),” the cutoff of nearly all foreign direct investment, and “the autarchic dogmas of Ne Win’s ‘Burmese Way to Socialism’” all ensured the collapse of the state economy, and the booming of the black market (McCarthy 2000: p.234 and Smith 2007: p.19). Ethnic armed opposition along the border was strengthened and

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<sup>13</sup> Half of all economic assistance to Burma from independence to 1988 was from Japan (Steinberg 2007: p.224).

sustained by both international support and the black market.<sup>14</sup> Civil unrest and dissatisfaction with the demonetization of 70% of the currency and in general with Burma's socio-economic collapse led General Ne Win to resign in July 1988 (Smith 2007: pp.36, 38).

#### **2.2.4 SLORC/SPDC<sup>15</sup> (1988 to present)**

Immediately following Ne Win's resignation, the entire BSPP government was brought down by society-wide pro-democracy demonstrations, sparked by student-led protests against the government in response to the failing economy. In September, a faction of the military led by General Saw Maung, formed a new government called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and seized control. The SLORC abolished the 1974 constitution, imposed martial law, and violently suppressed the demonstrations (Smith 2007: p.38).

After the protests turned deadly, the SLORC attempted to assuage the population's anger and gain international legitimacy by promising elections for the transfer to a multi-party democratic state. Despite the SLORC's subversion tactics and restrictions, once elections were finally held in 1990 the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, enjoyed an overwhelming victory (ICG 2001: p.6). However the military refused to recognize the election results and step down from power (DLA 2005). In 1993, the regime again tried to elicit both international and domestic appeasement, through a military controlled National Convention to write a new constitution which centralized power in the military (BLC 1999). This so-called democratic reform was and still is seen widely in the international community as a farce and does not appease the opposition, but rather gives

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<sup>14</sup> In 1987, the black market comprised an estimated 40% of the gross national product, and Burma was given Least Developed Country Status at the UN (Smith 2007: p.19).

<sup>15</sup> The military junta, State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), changed its name in 1997 to State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). SLORC/SPDC will be used for historical continuity.

those countries supporting the regime an international diplomatic ‘out’ from pressuring the regime for reform.

In 1988, all development aid from Western countries was cut off in response to the violent military reaction to the protests. This response was sustained when the SLORC refused to recognize the 1990 election results. Furthermore, the US used its influence over the World Bank, ADB, and the IMF, prohibiting assistance to Myanmar (McCarthy 2000 and Steinberg 2007: p.223). The withdrawal of assistance based on the lack of human and political rights is a contradiction to the period of Ne Win’s socialist rule, when these same countries and agencies were quite active in Burma, “and the absence of political and other rights...were not issues in their assistance programs” (Steinberg 2006a: p.211). US policy towards Burma/Myanmar between 1988 and 2001 was “dictated and supported by an effective human rights lobby” and essentially focused solely on the moral cause of human rights, neglecting economic, strategic, narcotics, and humanitarian issues (Steinberg 2006a: p.225).

Directly after the coup in November 1988, the SLORC regime embarked upon a policy of economic liberalization (Steinberg 2006a: p.225). Incentives for foreign investors included tax relief and exemptions, cheap labor, and abundant natural resources. During the 1990s, international private interests, including the US and France, exploited Burmese natural resources, with the bulk of FDI in Myanmar going towards oil and gas exploration (McCarthy 2000: pp.244-5 and Steinberg 2006a: p.226). A major disincentive for FDI was the overvaluation of the currency’s official rate by over 60 times that of its black market rate. The SLORC was reluctant to devalue the currency for fear of “massive unemployment, runaway inflation and social unrest,” and “believed that a lasting resolution of the currency

issue depended upon the IMF.” However, the “IMF was unwilling to assist,” due to the strict policy of the US (McCarthy 2000: p.241).

Ceasefires between the SLORC and opposition groups beginning in 1989 gradually quelled ethnic conflict, however substantive peace agreements or political talks were never held. The collapsing economy and isolationist policy from the West left neither side with the funds to rebuild conflict ravaged communities, thus within this “economic vacuum,” the black market flourished once again in resource wars and the new lucrative trade of methamphetamines (Smith 2007:40-42). Poor infrastructure forced foreign investors to locate in urban areas and leave “large parts of the countryside beyond the reach of the market” (McCarthy 2000: p.242). Both foreign investors and the regime were desperate for the resumption of international assistance for infrastructure development projects, but the regime was forced to seek funding elsewhere (McCarthy 2000: pp.241-2).

Myanmar’s neighboring governments became the military junta’s “most vital lifeline,” in a policy shift from supporting opposition groups to a “new strategy of ‘constructive engagement’ with the regime” and non-interference in Burmese domestic affairs (Smith 2007: pp.43, 61). Of the minuscule amount of foreign aid coming to Myanmar,<sup>16</sup> the majority of non-humanitarian assistance came from China (Steinberg 2006a: p.215). China also “became the largest source of foreign military supplies” to the SLORC/SPDC (Smith 2007: p.43). However, the generals were and still are wary of an over reliance on China and desire to diversify their dependencies on foreign actors as much as possible (McCarthy 2000: p.243).

The West's policy of isolation hindered Myanmar's ability to improve the state of its economy and inadvertently strengthened relations between China and Myanmar (Guan 2001: pp.469, 478). Others in the region, most notably India, who initially pursued anti-SLORC policies in the early 1990s along with the West have shifted over to engagement and increased their commercial interests in Myanmar in an attempt to curb China's influence in the region (James 2004: p.536). These dynamics illustrate the importance of the geopolitics and economic interests in Myanmar, where international actors' actions are often in response to one another and have often exacerbated the quagmire of the Burmese people.

The two competing strategies of isolation from the West and engagement from Asia were further illustrated in 1997 by admission of Myanmar into ASEAN and the new round of US sanctions banning all new investment within Myanmar. This also coincided with the Asian financial crisis of 1997 which had profound detrimental effects on Myanmar.<sup>17</sup> In reaction to these effects, the military ended its ten-year policy of economic liberalization in 1998, re-establishing direct control over the economy by imposing restrictions on imports and exports (McCarthy 2000: pp.250-7). Economic conditions in Myanmar further deteriorated to the point that resident UN agencies announced in June 2001 that the "situation had reached crisis proportions and called on potential donors to respond to this as quickly as possible with more humanitarian assistance" (Steinberg 2006a: pp.228-9).

On the political front, perhaps due to the economic crisis, Myanmar became more open to change, illustrated by several changes initiated by Secretary One of the SPDC, General Khin Nyunt (Kinley and Wilson 2007: p.371). Most notable was the acceptance in April 2000 of

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<sup>16</sup> "In 1997, when foreign economic assistance to Myanmar was about US\$1 per capita, it was US\$14.70 in Vietnam, US\$41.70 in Cambodia, and US\$82.40 in Laos" (Steinberg 2006a: p.215).

the new UN Special Envoy, Razali Ismail from Malaysia. In October, Ismail, who was supported by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir, facilitated intermittent dialogue between Aung San Suu Kyi and the military regime. Although the “content of the meetings was shrouded in secrecy,” this was the first dialogue between the two parties since 1994, and according to Ismail in January 2001 both parties were “satisfied with the results so far in the area of confidence-building” (Guan 2001: p.70).

In May 2003, an SPDC organized group, including the USDA,<sup>18</sup> attacked an NLD motorcade in northern Myanmar, where dozens of people were killed, and Aung San Suu Kyi was injured and rearrested (HRW 2007: p.20). This attack, along with subsequent violent action against opposition groups led to further international condemnation of the military regime (HRDU 2007: p.18), and ended the previous dialogue between Suu Kyi and the regime, with the “level of distrust and acrimony” falling to new lows (Steinberg 2006a: p.234). The US responded to the attacks in July with a new wave of more severe sanctions (Steinberg 2006a: p.234).

Soon after, in August 2003, General Khin Nyunt became Prime Minister and announced a seven-step road-map to democracy which included plans for the reconvening of the 1993 National Convention (which had been on an eight-year hiatus), the drafting of a constitution, and a national referendum on the constitution followed by free and fair elections (HRDU 2007: p.18 and ICG 2008: p.21). Although these were superficial gestures at democratic reform designed to mitigate international pressure on the regime, Prime Minister Khin Nyunt was the “junta member responsible for and most interested in international relations,” and his

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<sup>17</sup> By 1998, foreign investment approvals fell by more than 70%. An expansionary monetary policy to finance increased military spending (40% of the budget in 1999) led to rampant inflation. The budget deficit rose and the SPDC was at “serious risk of defaulting on its external debts” (McCarthy 2000: pp.255-6).

dismissal in 2004 deteriorated the situation in Myanmar further (Steinberg 2006a: p.237). In 2005, with pressure on ASEAN from the US and the EU, the regime stepped down from hosting the 2006 ASEAN summit (Steinberg 2006a: pp.237-8).

In August 2007, the SPDC announced its decision to drastically raise fuel prices by as much as 500%. This was one of the catalysts for what turned into massive society-wide protests, led by Buddhist monks, against the military regime calling for economic and political reform. As with the 1988 protests, the military regime violently suppressed the demonstrations (HRW 2007 and ICG 2008). International pressure on the regime following the protests was strong, and in an effort to alleviate some of this, the SPDC announced in February 2008 that the draft constitution had been completed and would be put to a referendum in May, followed by “multi-party democratic elections” in 2010 during which Aung San Suu Kyi is barred from running (ALTSEAN-Burma 2008: pp.1-2). Many opposition and civil society groups deemed the entire process illegitimate and called for a boycott and campaigns for ‘No’ votes on the referendum (NCGUB 2008 and UNPO 2008). Only seven days before the referendum was to be held on 10 May 2008, Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar devastating the Irrawaddy Delta. The referendum proceeded as scheduled in the areas of Myanmar not affected by the cyclone and was held two weeks later in the Delta regions. In both instances, the constitution was affirmed by over 92% (Kwin 2008). Foreign involvement in the aftermath of the cyclone is discussed in the section on humanitarian aid in the next chapter.

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<sup>18</sup> In 1993, the regime formed the civilian organization called Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) to support the military state and intimidate opposition in society (ICG 2006: p.7).

## **2.4 Concluding Remarks**

International influence within Burma/Myanmar has been highly contentious and very often not cognizant of the enduring institutions within the country. Disregarding the significant ethnic diversity of Burma, Britain's imposition of Western notions of ethnicity, nations, and borders created ethnic tensions that had not previously existed. The overthrow of democratic governance, which was weak due to ethnic fractionalization and conflict, was then enabled by the Cold War dynamics of superpower rivals funding the military.

Another lasting colonial legacy is the pervasive fear of foreigners in Burmese society. Since colonialism, the international community has pursued a wide variety of contradictory policies in Burma/Myanmar, often exacerbating Burmese governments' extreme suspicion of international motives, to the detriment of the humanitarian situation in Burma/Myanmar. The necessity for an integrated international approach is clear, as these competing policies have also often ensured the failure of the opposite side's policy goals in encouraging or pressuring for change within Myanmar. This is explored in greater depth in Chapter Three, which looks specifically at the strategic approaches pursued by different parts of the international community in an effort to improve the humanitarian and political situation within Myanmar.

## CHAPTER 3: CURRENT STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Heretofore, I have analyzed the initial conditions and historical developments in Burma/Myanmar which together provide a complex explanation for the current crises described in Chapter One. Through the lens of historical legacies and initial conditions, this chapter analyzes how the international community has tried to alleviate the crises and/or intervene in Myanmar. It concludes with a summary of the primary international actors with the potential for influence in Myanmar.

Five core strategies are being pursued and proposed by the international community in an attempt to help the Burmese people and change the situation in which they live.

- 1) Appealing for a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution on Myanmar
- 2) Supporting the democracy movement and its goal of regime change
- 3) Economic isolation of the regime
- 4) Humanitarian aid
- 5) Engagement with the Regime

### ***3.1 Appealing for a UN Security Council Resolution on Myanmar***

The UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council have both passed numerous resolutions reflecting the increasing international appeals for change in Myanmar, and several UN Special Envoys have been sent in an attempt to work towards national reconciliation in Myanmar. For the most part the military regime has ignored these efforts, leading many in the international community to urge for UNSC intervention.

There is a consistent and well-founded argument for UNSC intervention in Myanmar: conflict, refugees, disease, and drugs spilling over the borders constitute an international threat. This argument was clearly presented in the report entitled *Threat to the Peace: A Call for the UN Security Council to Act in Burma* (DLA 2005). The report documents the threat posed by Myanmar to regional peace and security. The report discusses the crises and challenges faced in Myanmar, details the transnational effects, and then compares these issues with the problems faced in other countries where the UNSC intervened.<sup>19</sup> In the other cases, five ‘determining factors’ were identified as constituting a ‘threat to the peace’ and justifying UNSC intervention: (1) the overthrow of a democratically-elected government; (2) conflict between the government and ethnic factions; (3) widespread internal humanitarian/human rights violations; (4) substantial outflow of refugees; and (5) other cross-border problems, for instance drug trafficking in the case of Afghanistan. Each country case had its own combination of only some of these factors (DLA 2005).

In Myanmar, however, all five ‘determining factors’ are present. (1) Burma/Myanmar has been ruled by a military junta since 1962 when the only democratically elected government Burma/Myanmar has had was overthrown. In 1990, the military regime refused to recognize the election results and step down from power. (2) Conflict between the SPDC and ethnic groups is widespread and pervasive. (3) The human rights violations are considered to be worse than in previous cases. (4) Nearly 700,000 refugees have fled Myanmar. (5) Myanmar is the second largest producer and exporter of opium and related drugs. In addition to the factors considered in other cases, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is also considered a threat,<sup>20</sup> as Myanmar is the principal source of the spread of HIV/AIDS in Southeast Asia, primarily through heroin trafficking routes (DLA 2005).

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<sup>19</sup> This comparison is illustrated in a chart in Appendix A: Determining Factors Resulting in UNSC Intervention.

After demonstrating the ‘threat to the peace’ with an argument founded on previous UNSC resolutions, the report concludes with recommendations for the UNSC to adopt a resolution calling for a peaceful democratic transition. The recommendations include: requiring Myanmar to work towards political reconciliation and a democratically-elected government; heavy UNSC involvement in a dispute resolution process; “immediate, safe, and unhindered access to all parts of the country” for international humanitarian organizations; and the release of all political prisoners (DLA 2005). A range of reports and calls for a UNSC resolution on Myanmar have been made since then, some additionally calling for an international arms embargoes on the military regime and other economic sanctions.

It seems virtually impossible that the UNSC will pass a resolution, given that its structure gives an inordinate amount of power to its permanent members. The effort to adopt a UNSC resolution has been derailed by Russian and Chinese vetoes, and because China and Russia benefit greatly from Myanmar's cheap natural resources, it seems apparent that this will not change in the foreseeable future.

### ***3.2 Supporting the Democracy Movement and its Goal of Regime Change***

Forty-eight years of military rule, economic mismanagement, and gross human rights violations have generated a contentious national context which has led to two society-wide uprisings in protest against the regime. The international press has classified these protests as part of a democracy movement; however, there are serious barriers to sustained contention

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<sup>20</sup> The UNSC resolution 1308, adopted in 2000, underscores that the spread of HIV/AIDS is considered a threat to international security (DLA 2005).

within Myanmar given the very real threat of violent repression and the fact that Myanmar is a closed society in many respects.

More open pressure for a democratic transition has been made in the international sphere. This has been referred to as both support for and part of Burma's democracy movement. The actors include national governments, the exiled opposition party NLD, think tanks, private foundations, and international, regional and local NGOs. Although shared values exist, the goals, interests, and tactics vary; over the last 20 years, "the movement has lacked the one essential factor: unity" (Mow 2008).

This democracy movement is supported by most countries in the West, which view the 1990 election victory of the NLD as a mandate to speak for the Burmese people (ICG 2002: p.5). Aung San Suu Kyi received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 and has "became an international symbol of the fight against political oppression" (Steinberg 2006a: p.225). The NLD has employed several non-violent strategies to force SPDC from power, including: "civil resistance, political dialogue, international activism (including establishment of a government in exile), and support for international sanctions on the regime" (ICG 2001: p.25). A similar type of strategy was pursued in South Africa and was seen to be effective, however there are crucial differences<sup>21</sup> between the two situations which invalidates the comparison (ICG 2001: p.25). "The only point of comparison is that each country has an attractive, charismatic Nobel Peace laureate" (Steinberg 1999b:293).

The NLD and Burma's democracy movement promulgate a position against tourism, trade, investment, and foreign aid in Myanmar, with the presumption that these engagements

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<sup>21</sup> See Appendix B: Excerpt from ICG Report on Differences Between South Africa and Myanmar

support and legitimize the military regime (Steinberg 2006a: p.225). A justification for this approach regarding FDI is that the regime has sought foreign investment, “particularly in exploiting minerals, oil, and gas-natural resources that the state can claim and control easily” (Alamgir 1997: p.346). Discussing the extremism of this approach towards aid, an International Crisis Group (ICG) report stated that “the argument against aid dovetails with orthodoxy on development in the early post-Cold War era, which sees democracy and good governance not only as ends in themselves, but also as prerequisites for effective poverty alleviation programs and broad-based development” (ICG 2002: p.5).

NLD pressure and the dictum of ‘no development before democracy’ led to the previously discussed 1990s US policy towards Myanmar which was focused solely on human and political rights. It also impelled Western countries to cut aid programs and impose economic sanctions on Myanmar, both of which will be discussed in further detail in the following two sections (ICG 2002: p.7 and Steinberg 2006a: p.225). Steinberg (2001: p.xxix) stresses the importance of placing comments from the regime’s opposition “in perspective, separating wish from reality and advocacy from fact. The political agendas of any group, no matter how sympathetic one might be to the group’s goals, should be given the scrutiny and critical attention they deserve. This has become exceedingly difficult in contemporary Burma/Myanmar because of the polarization of opinion, to which select facts are marshaled in support.”

The approach of ‘no development before democracy’ is historically unprecedented, as one would be hard pressed to find a country that has followed this route. This maxim and the policies which uphold it polarize dialogue between the regime and the opposition and have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. This polarizing position of ‘we need extreme change and

nothing less' is clearly not cognizant of the country's history of isolation and fear of foreigners.

### **3.3 Economic Isolation**

A prime example of policy enacted because of highly polarized positions is economic isolation. Since the 1988 military suppression of society wide protests, economic isolation through sanctions<sup>22</sup> has been pursued by the international community. The general goals of the sanctions are "to force the SPDC into improving its human rights record and to establish a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi" (McCarthy 2000: p.258). The more extreme policy goals of the US economic isolation of the regime call on the regime to recognize the results of the 1990 election and allow the NLD to take power, which is tantamount to saying to the regime, 'only after you give up power will we talk to you' (Steinberg 2006a: p.230). Although "sanctions are useful in portraying Burma as a pariah state" (McCarthy 2000: p.258) and creating a simplistic polarization between the regime and its opposition, it is evident that they have not been effective in achieving their intended goals (Steinberg 2006a: p.230).

The US sanctions are the most restrictive in the international community, and have become increasingly so under pressure from human rights and democracy advocates. In 1997, the US imposed economic sanctions on future investment in Myanmar and on travel of senior Burmese military officials to the US. In 2003, after the SPDC organized attack on a NLD motorcade, the US strengthened sanctions including: "limiting all exports from Myanmar to the United States, stopping all US banking transactions...and even more travel restrictions on Myanmar citizens" (Steinberg 2007: p.223). The EU has also imposed sanctions on

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<sup>22</sup> Hufbauer et al. (1990: p.2) defines economic sanctions as "the deliberate, government-inspired withdrawal, or threat of withdrawal, of customary trade or financial relations."

investment in Myanmar and prohibited travel to the EU of high-ranking Burmese officials. It is difficult to assess how much this has “directly and negatively affected the military regime itself” (Steinberg 2007: p.223), although it is clear that the political goals and conditions of the sanctions have not been met by the regime.

For economic coercion to be effective, “target elites must suffer as much as target populations” (Drezner 1999: p.13), “sanctions must be comprehensive in coverage (i.e., include most trade flows between the target and the rest of the world) and opportunities for redirecting trade must be minimized” (Kaempfer and Lowenberg 1992: p.3). This is not the case in Myanmar where the regime has been able to reduce the impact of economic isolation by the West through interaction with its Asian neighbors. Economic sanctions theory shows that “the passage of time reduces the effectiveness of sanctions” (Bergeijk 1994: pp.27-8) and that sanctions are “more likely to be effective if they are multilateral” (Bergeijk 1994: p.35). Twenty years of bilateral sanctions on the Myanmar regime have been unsuccessful.

Complete economic isolation by Western countries leaves more room for investment and economic influence from countries who do not tout democratic ideals.<sup>23</sup> However, with sanctions already in place, it would be difficult to justify to the politically powerful exiled democratic opposition any type of softening of the sanctions, as their stance is not likely to waver. The US is essentially stuck, because softening of the sanctions without progress from the SPDC will be seen as legitimating and awarding the regime for bad behavior.

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<sup>23</sup> The possible role for ‘Socially Responsible Investment’ and/or ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ from Western companies in Myanmar is worth further attention.

### **3.4 Humanitarian Aid**

Given the conditions and environment in Myanmar, there is a clear necessity for international aid.<sup>24</sup> However, much of the foreign aid coming into Myanmar has ceased both because of the politicized claim that any aid will support the military junta and the SPDC's restrictions on aid workers' access and mobility.<sup>25</sup> The international organizations still in Myanmar are primarily UN agencies, along with some NGOs, providing humanitarian assistance, and they are restricted from going to conflict areas along the border where the situation is by far the worst. This section assesses the international aid situation in Myanmar, primarily the restrictions and politicization of aid from both the international community and the military regime.

#### **3.4.1 Politics of Humanitarian Aid**

As discussed, the NLD and Burma's democracy movement promulgate an orthodoxy against foreign aid to Myanmar, arguing that it supports the military regime. Because of the perceived NLD mandate and the extremely polarized environment, policy makers rarely have the courage to speak out against sanctions on humanitarian aid.<sup>26</sup> International donors have largely complied with the NLD position, particularly the US government which consistently touts NLD assertions and the maxim of 'no development before democracy.' The NLD stance allows for an extremely limited amount of aid only through UN agencies and INGOs working on specific projects in Myanmar; the framework has been so closely followed that aid

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<sup>24</sup> The terms 'international aid' and 'foreign aid' signify all assistance given, including economic, development, and humanitarian. The term humanitarian aid is a narrower concept which concerns assistance given only for basic human needs, e.g. health, water sanitation, food, shelter, etc.

<sup>25</sup> "The Burmese military regime became more restrictive regarding activities of international organizations after it purged the former Prime Minister in October 2004, according to officials of international organizations now working in Burma" (GAO 2007: p.17).

<sup>26</sup> Individual members of US Congress "believe they cannot be seen to be supporting a pariah regime and thus will follow a minority strongly opposed to relaxation of present US policies" (Steinberg 1999b: p.297).

organizations have had problems finding funds “even for apolitical, people-centered programs such as safe water and sanitation” (ICG 2002: pp.5-7).

UN agencies and INGOs have struggled against this orthodoxy, and their fight has gained ground as humanitarian conditions in Myanmar have worsened and the political impasse has persisted. In 2001, the heads of eight UN agencies operating in Myanmar called for “a dramatic overhaul of budget allocations” to Myanmar and argued that “humanitarian assistance is a moral and ethical necessity...the nature and magnitude of the humanitarian situation does not permit delaying until the political situation evolves” (ICG 2002: p.7).

With this highly politicized environment, some donors have withdrawn their aid to Myanmar. Others, most notably the European Commission, have increased their levels of humanitarian assistance and appealed to the international community to do the same (Beyrer et. al 2006). The vast majority of donors are European countries, the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office, and the UN Central Emergency Response Fund, with UN agencies as the primary principle recipients (OCHA 2008). After the monks' protest in 2007, the UK pledged to double its aid to fight poverty in Myanmar from GBP9 million to GBP18 million by 2010. (M2PressWIRE 2007). Although, the UK has traditionally fallen in line with the NLD aid framework, UK policy demonstrates that both promoting democratic change and providing aid to Myanmar can be pursued simultaneously and are not necessarily in contradiction with each other. Unlike the US and NLD stance, the UK, as well as Europe as a whole, do not see the dire situation in Myanmar as a zero-sum game.

An ICG briefing in December 2006 on new threats to humanitarian aid in Myanmar details further the politics surrounding international aid in the country and the strong efforts made by

the US congress and democracy advocacy groups to “curtail foreign aid” to Myanmar (ICG 2006: p.11). The briefing asserts that the “renewed activism” from these groups since 2004 has limited the “funding and operational flexibility” of humanitarian agencies and “contributed to their strained relations” with the authorities in Myanmar (ICG 2006: p.11). The next section gives an example of how this activism and operational inflexibility has led to a reaction from the SPDC of increased restrictions on aid and the pullout of a tremendous humanitarian aid project in Myanmar.

### **3.4.2 Global Fund Pull Out**

Widespread HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria in Myanmar led the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria to provide \$98.4 million in grants over 5 years, beginning in January 2005 (Global Fund 2005). This constituted the single largest aid initiative in Myanmar in over twenty years (ICG 2006: p.12). However in August of 2005, the Global Fund made the unprecedented decision to terminate the grant agreements and the program in Myanmar (Global Fund 2005 and Parry 2005). Effective implementation was deemed impossible by the Global Fund due to increased restrictions announced by the SPDC in July, including a “new travel clearance procedure” and “additional procedures for review of procurement of medical and other supplies” (Global Fund 2005: p.1). While an unmanageable operating environment is the Global Fund’s explanation for terminating its grants, some aid workers have claimed that the extremely politicized funding process was the ultimate reason for the termination and have gone so far as to assert that the decision was due to external pressure (ICG 2006).

Well before the SPDC announced its new restrictions, immediately following the Global Fund’s initial grant agreement for Myanmar in August 2004, the US Congress criticized the

Fund and UNDP (the Principle Recipient) for “failing to recognize that the SPDC is solely responsible for creating the myriad humanitarian crises faced by Burma today” and requested that the Fund “withhold the disbursement of additional funds to Burma” (ICG 2006: p.12). After the Global Fund’s refusal, the US Congress targeted UNDP’s funding through the 2006-2007 Foreign Appropriations Bill by threatening to withdraw approximately half of US funding for the agency, amounting to \$50 million, if it could not guarantee that all of its programs in Myanmar provided “no financial, political, or military benefit, including the provision of goods, services, or per diems, to the SPDC or any agency or entity of, or affiliated with, the SPDC” (ICG 2006: p.12). Additional pressure came from US-based advocacy groups led by the Open Society Institute to establish tighter restrictions on its Myanmar programs (ICG 2006: p.12).

In response to these concerns the Global Fund introduced additional safeguards<sup>27</sup> on the use of its grants in Myanmar “to a point that compromised program effectiveness and seemed in breach of its own regulations” (ICG 2006: p.12). Some aid officials claim that these new safeguards actually contributed to the SPDC imposing its restrictions.

Aid officials believe the political pressure exercised on the Fund was itself a contributing factor to that deteriorating environment, which resulted in the new restrictions that became the catalyst for the decision to withdraw. Specifically, they argue, members of the government who had gone out of their way to accommodate increasingly restrictive regulations imposed by the Fund experienced a backlash from the top generals, who saw the additional safeguards as politically motivated and an affront to sovereignty (ICG 2006: p.13).

Many UN representatives assert that the failure of the Global Fund grants to Myanmar was due to the lack of Global Fund flexibility. The combination of extremely stringent safeguards and time-constrained, results-based implementation made it impossible to achieve their goals in Myanmar. Although it is essential that funds are not misused, it seems as if the Global

Fund could have allowed for more flexibility<sup>28</sup> in such an environment, and more time, which was needed because of the hurdles presented by the safeguards (Parry 2005 and ICG 2006). UN representatives on the ground in Myanmar asserted that the Fund's lack of flexibility and withdrawal would have dire humanitarian consequences for the Burmese people<sup>29</sup> (ICG 2006: p.13).

The safeguards in the Global Fund and more stringent restrictions by the Burmese military clearly contributed to inevitable failure of the program. However, even if the restrictions and safeguards are given as invariable, logic (and compassion for humanity) would indicate a need to change the other variables in the equation, that is the time and performance criteria of the program, as opposed to simply cutting it off.<sup>30</sup> Whether or not the Global Fund withdrawal was due to external pressure, it is certain that international aid to Myanmar, including aid strictly humanitarian in nature, is extremely politicized by the international community. The regime is suspicious and fearful of foreigners, thus pressure from the US and advocacy groups to increase the safeguards to an unreasonably strict level was perceived as a threat to the country's sovereignty. The restrictions announced by the military regime were a response to this perceived threat and a direct consequence of international actions.

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendix C: Global Fund Safeguards

<sup>28</sup> Regarding this need for flexibility one UN official said, "Many of the countries worst affected by HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are countries which, like Myanmar, suffer from weak governance. As the pre-eminent source of global funding for these diseases, it should, therefore, be the responsibility of the Fund to find a way to operate in such countries by exercising the necessary flexibility to work around local constraints. In the case of Myanmar, that flexibility was clearly lacking" (ICG 2006: p.13).

<sup>29</sup> Regarding the consequences of this lack of flexibility, UNAIDS Resident Representative Brian Williams compared the Fund withdrawal to ceasing to feed people in a refugee camp. The UN resident coordinator, Charles Petrie, said, "The Global Fund was never given a chance to function. Without exaggeration, people are going to die because of this decision" (ICG 2006: p.13).

<sup>30</sup> The decision to pull out was only a few weeks after the SPDC's announcement of increased restrictions and before they had been actually implemented. With no effort to resolve the situation, their hasty pull out is another indication that they truly were under external pressure. At the very least the Global Fund could have suspended the program pending negotiations with the SPDC (ICG 2006: p.13).

### 3.4.3 SPDC Restrictions

While the SPDC only imposed some of the previously announced restrictions, these restrictions<sup>31</sup> led to a decrease in the level of international aid in Myanmar. However, in spite of these restrictions and what has been called “a difficult and complex environment,” several international organization officials, including the UN Country team, have said that “they are still able to achieve meaningful results in their efforts to mitigate some of Burma’s humanitarian, health, and development problems” (GAO 2007: pp.3-4).

The restrictions left the conflict areas along the Thai border, where the health and humanitarian crises are the worst, completely inaccessible to international aid organizations. The limited humanitarian assistance these areas do receive comes from a few local NGOs and community-based organizations which have inadequate resources and work across the Thai-Myanmar border (Beyrer et. al 2006, HRDU 2007: pp.495,620, and HRW 2008). Despite the fact that this area could possibly be accessed by international organizations in a similar fashion, they have been unwilling to “work cross-border in areas controlled by resistance groups on grounds that this will affect their ‘political neutrality’” (HRDU 2007: p.495). This respect for ‘political neutrality’ avoids exacerbating the regime’s fears and suspicions of the international organizations intentions.

### 3.4.4 2008 Cyclone Relief Efforts

Cyclone Nargis hit the delta region of Myanmar on 2-3 May 2008. The first priority of the international community should have been gaining access to those people affected by the

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<sup>31</sup> SPDC restrictions on health and/or humanitarian activity included: travel restrictions requiring a two week prior notification to the SPDC for its approval; SPDC approved ‘mindings’ on all site visits, which now had time limits; increased surveillance of international aid personnel; and a ban on data collection/surveys on health and food needs (Beyrer et. al 2006, GAO 2007, and HRDU 2007: p.619).

cyclone, but instead the US First Lady<sup>32</sup> and President,<sup>33</sup> along with other Western leaders, used the opportunity to condemn the SPDC for its political inequities. This response ignored the past reactions of the regime to external criticism and probably exacerbated the intransigence of the SPDC in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone, when access to the international aid community was severely restricted. Thus ensued the quasi-standoff between the SPDC and the international community which pressured the regime to accept international assistance, more specifically to allow shipments of aid to come in and approve visas for foreign aid workers.

In response to the regime's stubbornness, only five days after the cyclone hit, the French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner argued for coercive humanitarian intervention in Myanmar through the UNSC, invoking the UN principle 'responsibility to protect.'<sup>34</sup> Although the R2P was not intended for use in times of natural catastrophes, the rationale for invoking it in this situation was that "denying relief to hundreds of thousands of people at real and immediate risk of death" constitutes a 'crime against humanity' (Evans 2008). His proposal was "met with immediate rejection not only from China and Russia," but also many others in the international community, including UN officials, who were concerned "that such an 'incendiary' approach would be wholly counterproductive in winning any still-possible cooperation from the generals" (Evans 2008).

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<sup>32</sup> Only two days after the cyclone hit Myanmar, the US First Lady, Laura Bush, gave a short speech regarding Myanmar. The first one-third of her speech discussed the impact of the cyclone and the willingness of the US to help. However, in the last two-thirds, she lambasted the government for its illegitimacy, sham referendum, political prisoners, and restrictions on political rights. She also discussed the sanctions imposed "in response to the regime's continued repression," thanking the EU, Canada and Australia for imposing similar restrictions and appealing to China, India, and ASEAN members "to use their influence to encourage a democratic transition" (Bush 2008).

<sup>33</sup> Four days after the cyclone, US President George Bush pressed the SPDC to allow greater access to the international aid community, giving a mixed message of offering American help while renewing criticism of the regime as "one of the world's most repressive" governments (Cooper and Mydans 2008).

<sup>34</sup> This doctrine was "unanimously endorsed by 150 heads of state and government at the 2005 UN World Summit" to be used to protect vulnerable people from "genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" (Evans 2008).

Ten days after the cyclone hit, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was unusually blunt when he expressed “deep concern and immense frustration” with what he called “the unacceptably slow response to this grave humanitarian crisis.” Stressing the urgency of the situation he said, “This is not about politics; it is about saving people's lives. There is absolutely no more time to lose” (Hoge and Mydans 2008). If aid did not reach those in need soon, many in the international community were very vocally concerned about the possibility of an epidemic and second wave of deaths, due to the lack of sanitation and clean water. Around this time, the SPDC gradually and selectively began to allow the delivery of relief supplies, although still posing a insurmountable hindrance to the aid effort. “Relieved to have even one toe in the door,” aid groups became cautious with their criticism “clearly worried that harsh words might slam it shut” (Hoge and Mydans 2008). This cautious tone was cognizant of the regime’s fear of foreigners, however this tone was not adopted by all.<sup>35</sup>

The fear of international aid workers and some foreign leaders “that political pressure could make it more difficult to deliver aid quickly” was well founded (Cooper and Mydans 2008). The SPDC refused to accept US, British, and French Navy ships full of relief supplies, stating that this assistance could not be trusted. State media also said that assistance from countries who impose economic sanctions on Myanmar and push for UNSC intervention “comes with strings attached” (AP 2008).

After three weeks of the SPDC restricting the majority of international assistance to cyclone victims, Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon announced on 23 May the promise of the military to

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<sup>35</sup> Two weeks after the cyclone, Britain’s Prime Minister Gordon Brown asserted that the natural disaster “is being made into a man-made catastrophe by the negligence, the neglect and the inhuman treatment of the Burmese people by a regime that is failing to act and to allow the international community to do what it wants to

allow “all aid workers” of any nationality into the country (Mydans 2008). The following day, a tripartite core group (TCG), involving ASEAN, the Myanmar government, and the UN, was formed at an ASEAN-UN international pledging conference in Yangon, “as an ASEAN-led mechanism to facilitate trust, confidence and cooperation between Myanmar and the international community in the urgent humanitarian relief and recovery work after Cyclone Nargis” (ASEAN 2008a).

Since then, they have been coordinating, facilitating, and monitoring the flow of international assistance into Myanmar's cyclone-hit areas. The TCG is working together with “unimpeded access” on a scientific report of the ‘Post-Nargis Joint Assessment,’ assessing the current humanitarian situation in the cyclone-affected areas. At an ASEAN Roundtable, in Yangon on 24 June 2008, post-disaster response and recovery expert Heru Prasetyo of 2004 Tsunami Rehabilitation and Reconstruction for Aceh and Nias, Indonesia was optimistic about the progress made in eight weeks. “TCG efforts in managing response and preparing the recovery has placed Myanmar Nargis in much more advanced stage compared to Aceh Tsunami then. No doubt, the journey to recovery will be uphill and arduous,” he said (ASEAN 2008b). “Earlier fears of a second wave of deaths due to poor access to food or disease outbreaks have proved unfounded” (IRIN 2008). The TCG had helped prevent the feared epidemic after the cyclone. The TCG supported the humanitarian community in its expansion of assistance to the cyclone victims, one example being the authorization and extension of visas to 294 people assisting in the relief effort (ASEAN 2008b). The UN's humanitarian coordinator for Myanmar, Dan Bake concurs that “the level of cooperation has definitely improved” (IRIN 2008).

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do.” French ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert claimed that the SPDC’s rejection of international aid “could lead

### **3.5 Engagement with the Regime**

The US approach of treating the military regime as a ‘pariah’ with diplomatic disengagement and punitive economic isolation has clearly not been effective in inducing substantive change in the SLORC/SPDC actions. Opposed to this, the UN has taken an approach of non-isolation through its special envoys and diplomatic engagement, and neighbors of Myanmar, including ASEAN, have pursued a policy of ‘constructive engagement’ with the regime. The ‘constructive engagement’ approach has been widely criticized as ineffective and as legitimizing and supporting a repressive military regime. However, as seen in the aftermath of the cyclone, the regime is clearly more receptive to countries and organizations which have approached them in this manner. Those who have imposed sanctions were rebuffed and essentially ignored, and in times of crises having an open ear from the regime is essential.

The policy of constructive engagement was first initiated by Thai Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun in 1991 as Thailand’s foreign policy concerning Myanmar and was later “regionalized” as ASEAN’s approach towards Myanmar. The rationale behind this policy was based “upon both realities and aspirations” (Paribatra 1998). The realities are that Myanmar is a permanent neighbor to Thailand, sharing a 2,400 kilometer-long border, and many issues in Myanmar, notably ethnic conflict, directly effect Thailand. Thus it is in Thailand’s interest to have a good working relationship with Myanmar’s government in order to quickly address shared problems. Aspirations included extending ASEAN’s membership to all ten countries in Southeast Asia “to further the cause of regional cooperation” and encourage Myanmar through “quiet diplomacy and confidence-building measures” to realize the benefits of integration and becoming part of an international community (Paribatra 1998).

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to a true crime against humanity,” clearly referencing the R2P principle (Sengupta 2008).

Despite international pressure and condemnation, Myanmar became a member of ASEAN in 1997. Beyond the idealistic rationale put forth by Thailand, there were more complex and pragmatic rationales influencing ASEAN's policy towards Myanmar. Burma/Myanmar's isolationist history led to fears that isolating Myanmar would only exacerbate domestic insecurity and that more effective results could be achieved through "the wielding of 'economic carrots' that can materially benefit all Burmese" (Bunyanunda 2002: p.123). Geopolitical concerns are also a major factor in Myanmar's admittance to ASEAN and its policy of constructive engagement, namely to "counteract China's use of Burma to extend its military and political reach into Southeast Asia" (McCarthy 2000: p.251).

As the centerpiece of ASEAN's Myanmar policy, constructive engagement stressed "decision-making by consensus and non-interference" (Bunyanunda 2002: p.123). To critics the term 'constructive' essentially was a "tacit consent" to the regime's rule in Myanmar, and the term 'engagement' was simply a justification to seek economic benefits through foreign investment and the exploitation of Burmese natural resources (Paribatra 1998). The policy has a "perceived role in sustaining the ruling regime and helping to prolong political impasse within Myanmar at the expense of the aspirations of the people of Myanmar" (Paribatra 1998). Since Myanmar became a member of ASEAN in 1997, Myanmar has tarnished the reputation of ASEAN, and over the years ASEAN's approach towards Myanmar has gradually changed and begun to address international criticisms. ASEAN has shifted away from strict adherence to its once core principle of non-interference and has redefined its mandate allowing room for criticism and pressure for change in the internal affairs of member states (Green and Mitchell 2007).

The UN has also pursued an approach of engagement with the regime. Since 1995, UN Secretary Generals' special envoys have visited Myanmar around two dozen times, in addition to visits by the special rapporteur on human rights and other UN representatives (ICG 2008: p.6). The dialogue between Aung San Suu Kyi and the military regime facilitated by special envoy Razali Ismail in 2001 was a rare diplomatic success of the UN in Myanmar. This has become an exception to numerous failed UN efforts to engage with the regime to initiate change.

Both the efforts of the UN and ASEAN to induce change in the regime's action have not been extremely fruitful, however these efforts cannot be solely judged by the results they have or have not produced. Contrary to the isolationist approach pursued by the US, which has only elicited a nationalist and defiant response from the regime, the non-punitive approach of the UN and ASEAN has helped build a minimum level of rapport with the regime. This rapport enabled the UN, ASEAN, and the SPDC to come together and form the TCG in order to manage and respond to the humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of the cyclone.

### **3.6 Primary Actors**

Table 1 summarizes the different international actor(s) with a potential for influence within Myanmar. It shows their interests in Myanmar, policies pursued in the country or towards the regime, and the SPDC's relationship with the actor(s). Based on this summary and the analysis throughout the thesis, recommendations are put forth in the conclusion on which actors are in the best position to achieve results in alleviating the humanitarian crises in Myanmar.

**Table 1: Breakdown of Primary International Actors**

<b>INTERNATIONAL ACTOR(S)</b>	<b>INTERESTS IN MYANMAR</b>	<b>POLICIES PURSUED</b>	<b>SPDC RELATIONSHIP W/ ACTOR(S)</b>
<b>ASEAN and its Member States</b>	Regionalization; Reputation; Counter China's influence in region; Cross border spread of disease/drugs	'Constructive engagement'; Historical non-interference shifting to quiet urging	Provides legitimacy; Helps SPDC in its desire to avoid undue influence of China
<b>UN</b>	Its Mandate	Humanitarian aid; Diplomatic engagement	Depends on specific UN representatives and how they personally relate with regime members
<b>Japan</b>	Counter China's influence in region; Threat to region stability	Large amounts of economic assistance (prior to 2007 protests)	Historically positive relationship
<b>China</b>	Cheap energy; Geopolitically strategic; Cross border spread of disease/drugs	Political, economic, and military support	SPDC's lifeline in maintaining hold on power and eschewing international intervention through UNSC
<b>India</b>	Counter China's influence in region; Cheap energy; Cross border spread of disease/drugs	Economic and military support (in last decade)	SPDC 2 <sup>nd</sup> lifeline; Helps SPDC in its desire to avoid undue influence of China
<b>US</b>	Moral cause of democracy and freedom promotion	Punitive economic isolation—sanctions and withdrawal of aid	Strong opposition of US to SPDC and strong suspicion by SPDC of US intentions
<b>EU</b>	Democracy promotion	Combination of sanctions and humanitarian aid	Varies based on the individual country's policies
<b>Multilateral Institutions</b> (World Bank, ADB, & IMF)	Its Mandate	Large amounts of assistance prior to 1988 stopped due to US policy.	Non-existent relationship, but could be viewed as less threatening than a single foreign government

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Foreigners have played a significant role in aggravating and perpetuating the crises in Burma/Myanmar. The lasting colonial legacies of ethnic fractionalization and conflict and extreme suspicion towards foreigners; the Cold War superpower funding and strengthening of the military; and contradictory policies since 1962 have all contributed to the extremely contentious space for international influence within Myanmar today. Moreover, the international community, in its effort to help, has actually aggravated the situation, most notably the NLD and US approach of ‘extreme change and nothing else.’ This isolationist policy has created a simplistic and nonproductive polarization between the regime and its opposition, with very little room for dialogue between the two parties.

Given these findings, it is recommended that the international community proceed in the following manner to facilitate the alleviation of the various humanitarian crises within Myanmar.

### **1) Humanitarian aid should take precedence over political reform.**

*Rationale:* International actors should recognize the urgency in meeting the Burmese people’s basic needs first and foremost. As put by high level UN officials within Myanmar, “the nature and magnitude of the humanitarian situation does not permit delaying until the political situation evolves” (ICG 2002: p.7). Political reform cannot simply be imposed by the international community prior to an improvement of the domestic humanitarian situation. Even if the military regime were to fall from power, with the pervasive ethnic conflict and

lack of development in Myanmar, it is highly likely that the Burmese society would fall into anarchy.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the cross-border spread of disease is of urgent regional concern.

**2) ASEAN and the UN should be at the forefront of humanitarian actions in Myanmar.**

*Rationale:* ASEAN and the UN, both part of the TCG, are already established within Myanmar because of the current work they are doing to deliver aid in the cyclone aftermath. Both organizations have a clear interest, both political and economic, in improving the livelihoods of the Burmese people. Beyond this, two main factors put both of these international organizations in the position to become the key actors in a long term effort to alleviate the humanitarian crises throughout the country. The first factor is access, not only to affected areas, but also to the regime. The TCG provides a working framework for interaction with the SPDC on humanitarian issues. This framework should be used to extend international assistance efforts to humanitarian crises not related to the cyclone aftermath.

The second factor is material and political capacity to address the crises. The UN and its various agencies have the capacity and experience necessary to fund, coordinate, and implement humanitarian projects. Both the UN and ASEAN have a history of avoiding extreme and threatening behavior towards the regime, and, therefore, have the political capacity to address the humanitarian crises within Myanmar on a long term basis. It is evident that extreme or punitive action is not productive in the case of Myanmar; it generates a nationalist response from the regime, exacerbating its fear and suspicion of foreign interference, which, in turn, causes problems for other international actors approaching the

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<sup>36</sup> “The abolition or collapse of Burma’s military forces would certainly lead to chaos and anarchy, ceding power to a variety of militias and organized banditry” (Clapp 2007: p.5).

regime in a non-threatening manner. ASEAN and the UN are best situated to approach the regime in the non-threatening manner essential to guaranteeing its cooperation.

**3) Efforts to extend the TCG's operations to other crises in Myanmar should be, and remain, completely apolitical.**

*Rationale:* The humanitarian crises and the political situation are conspicuously intertwined. However, past pressure for political reform has been ineffective and has only led to extreme polarization of the international environment, to the detriment of the Burmese people. With this realization, the international community should focus on the non-political aspects of the humanitarian crises and avoid pressuring the regime for extreme reform and thus avoid its guaranteed extreme response. A completely apolitical international effort is necessary for ASEAN and the UN to maintain its access to both the regime and the country.

As the dynamics of foreign involvement in Myanmar are constantly changing, the analysis of this thesis should be continued in assessing the possibilities of bringing other international actors into this approach in the future. A benefit of this approach is that the participation of individual countries can be integrated slowly while ASEAN and the UN begin quickly working on the humanitarian crises beyond the cyclone aftermath. At this point bringing together individual countries, with contradictory interests in Myanmar, to create an integrated approach for addressing the humanitarian crises would be time consuming and overly politicized. The TCG framework, already in place, can be utilized more quickly and more efficiently. Furthermore, as international organizations, ASEAN and the UN are both representative of the international community and can pursue an apolitical humanitarian effort within Myanmar.

## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Determining Factors Resulting in UNSC Intervention**

#### Assessment of Determining Factors Resulting in UN Security Council Intervention

	Resolution	Overthrow of Democratic Government	Conflict Among Factions	Human. / Human Rights Violations	Refugee Outflows	Other (Drug Trafficking)	Other (HIV/AIDS)
Sierra Leone	S.C. 1132 (1997)	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Afghanistan	S.C. 1076 (1996)		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Yemen	S.C. 924 (1994)		✓	✓			
Haiti	S.C. 841 (1993)	✓		✓	✓		
Rwanda	S.C. 812 (1993)		✓	✓	✓		
Liberia	S.C. 788 (1992)		✓	✓			
Cambodia	S.C. 668 (1990)		✓				
<b>Burma</b>	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

(DLA 2005)

## **Appendix B: Excerpt from ICG Report on Differences Between South Africa and Myanmar**

“In South Africa, there was a highly internationalised business sector that was responsive to economic and financial pressures of financial sanctions. Sections of this business sector were also more liberal than, and indeed opposed to the apartheid government. Moreover, even though the electoral system was skewed overwhelmingly in favour of the minority, apartheid South Africa was organised according to principles of electoral democracy, and this allowed for an easy and obvious transition mechanism. The front-line states bordering South Africa also had a unified position on an end to the apartheid regime, and South Africa eventually had no great power allies on which it could rely to divide the international consensus. By contrast, Myanmar has no internationalised, liberal business sector. It is not organised on the principle of electoral democracy. It has compliant front-line states, and it has two great powers (China and Japan) which counteract in different ways the consensus of the Western countries. In South Africa, the ANC used violence to terrorise and intimidate its political opponents, which the NLD has eschewed violence... There is another essential difference in Myanmar. The NLD is not the representative of the majority of anti-government forces, as the ANC was. The NLD does not command the support of the main ethnic opposition groups in a way that constitutes significant pressure on the SPDC. While the independent ethnic political groups pay respect to the NLD, they do not work with it to coordinate a political strategy for the overthrow of the SPDC. Aung San Suu Kyii opened the current [2001] confidence building talks with the SPDC without consulting the main ethnic groups. The NLD has shown no signs of seeking to build on the military capacities of the ethnic groups to use armed force to overthrow the regime” (ICG 2001: pp.25-6).

### **Appendix C: Global Fund Safeguards**

- Close monitoring by UNDP to ensure that the Government of Myanmar did not benefit from, or take credit for, actions conducted with Global Fund funding, and that the program could be implemented effectively. The government provided written assurance that staff from UNDP, KPMG, and the Global Fund would have unhindered access to program sites;
- An expanded role for the Local Fund Agent, which was fully authorized to monitor all programs and budgets in addition to undertaking its regular contractual auditing and oversight responsibilities;
- A “zero cash policy,” which means that no national entities were to receive any funds from the grant. UNDP directly undertook all procurement of assets, payment of incidental expenses for food and transport, and ensured that services were provided;
- Stringent monitoring of project implementation by the PR: Payment for incidental expenses to individuals (health/technical/community workers) were to be made directly by UNDP staff only after careful scrutiny, as well as verification that they were not on the US/EU visa ban list; all personnel recruited for implementation of the Grants were to be contracted by UNDP, not by national entities; inputs were to be provided and monitored along the supply-chain, all the way to the end-users; and, at the end of the project, all assets remain the property of the PR; and
- Consideration of additional international monitoring personnel, including possible deployment in the field of up to 20 UN Volunteers to assist in monitoring Global Fund implementation.

(Global Fund 2005)

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