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Remains Obdurate

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MYANMAR IN 2007

Growing Pressure for Change but the Regime Remains Obdurate

Robert H. Taylor

As Myanmar entered its twentieth year of direct military rule, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) once more spurned its critics and opponents at home and abroad. Facing in September the largest organized anti-government demonstrations in nearly two decades, ensconced in their new capital, Naypyitaw, the generals appeared outwardly unperturbed by the huge pressure generated. Perhaps anticipating minor protests in August by political activists following draconian petrol and gas price increases, the regime appeared initially unprepared for the much larger protests by Buddhist monks who took to the streets of Yangon and other cities to protest at rising food prices and the general decrepitude of the urban life, as well as continued military rule. At the conclusion of the first step, the National Convention, in the regime's lengthy seven-step road map to a new power-sharing constitutional order, many inside and outside Myanmar thought an opportunity had arisen to weaken the army's grip and open political options anew. A role was sought for the National League for Democracy (NLD) General-Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in the future political order, as well as consideration of federalist demands by some ethnic minority leaders, plus a reduction in the power of the army as foreseen in the principles agreed at the constitutional convention. However, at year's end, the closure implied by the completion of the National Convention remained unaltered and the power of the ruling generals appeared undiminished.

From January onwards, Myanmar was increasingly in the world's news. Foreign politicians and civil servants who had largely ignored two decades of

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political stasis, except for perfunctory remarks and repetitious resolutions of condemnation, sought to make the country's fate an international issue. Seeking the fame that would come to the politician given credit for freeing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and establishing a "democratic regime" in Myanmar, they, however, had little new to say or offer.¹ For those who have long followed developments centring on Southeast Asia's major "problem country", it had a sense of *déjà vu* despite claims that everything had changed and the status quo was not an option. Inside the country, very little seemed to change in 2007, despite the increasing anger of many people, for the reality of military rule under army rules remained firmly in place. No one had yet found a way to break the stasis that had made Myanmar the West's *bête noire* and its people among the poorest of Southeast Asia. The country's unalterable geography and natural resources, allied with its fractious political history, provided stability that demands in the United Nations and large-scale protests by monks on the streets of Myanmar could not move. And yet, it moved, if only in the passing of another year in the mortal lives of men and women.

Internal Affairs

The National Convention and SPDC

Myanmar's National Convention, first convened in controversy in January 1993, adjourned *sine die* in April 1996, having agreed a set of fundamental principles for a future constitution. The most controversial of these was the continuing political power and autonomy of the army in any future power-sharing arrangements with political parties and former ethnic insurgent or ceasefire groups. The convention resumed in expanded form with 1,086 largely government appointed delegates with the addition of a number of ceasefire groups in May 2004, following the announcement of a "seven-step road map to a discipline flourishing democracy" in August 2003. In all, the convention met for four additional sessions, each of several months duration, at a conference centre north of Yangon. The penultimate session concluded at the end of 2006 with an expectation that it would resume for a final session in May. However, because of an outbreak of bird flu near the convention site, it did not reconvene until 18 July. The final session ended on 3 September and a fifty-four member Commission for Drafting the State Constitution was appointed on 18 October.² A referendum on the new document would eventually follow with national elections subsequently.³

Though there was much speculation about the health of the chairman of the SPDC, Senior General Than Shwe apparently continued to perform his functions as

normal during the year. He spoke and reviewed the troops for several hours at the annual Armed Forces Day ceremonies in March and addressed the fiftieth intake graduation ceremony of the Defence Services Academy (DSA) in December.⁴ The death of a leading member of the next generation of army personnel, expected eventually to succeed the SPDC Chairman and Vice-Chairman, occurred during the year. The passing of the Prime Minister, General Soe Win, on 12 October, aged 59, led to the appointment of Secretary 1 of the SPDC, Lt General Thein Sein, as successor on 24 October and his subsequent promotion to the rank of General. Lt General Thiha Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo became Secretary 1, and other minor changes in the cabinet were made at the same time.⁵

The military took steps to reduce its bloated officer corps and remove a number of middle ranks during the year by retiring 800 officers and indicating that a younger, more highly qualified officer corps would emerge in the next three years. Many retirees received assignments in the civilian bureaucracy, often replacing military officers who held these posts previously. The civilianization of the bureaucracy,⁶ however, appeared much like what occurred under the previous socialist-cum-military regime with the least competent officers placed in the bureaucracy, thus blocking skilled and knowledgeable talent rising through the ranks. The result was an increasingly apparent return to the motto of the Myanmar's civil service prior to 1988: *ma loke, ma shote, ma pyote*.⁷ With the senior civil servants ensconced in Naypyitaw⁸ removed from the travails of Yangon life, getting government licences and permits became increasingly difficult, time consuming, and expensive for persons seeking import/export licences or other business-related decisions.

The Economy Stumbles

Denied significant investment in the sectors other than energy,⁹ or any meaningful foreign economic assistance, plus the ineptitude of the government in managing the economy after tightening regulations following the departure of former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt, Myanmar's economy continued to fail to generate jobs and improve living standards for most of the population. Foreign economic sanctions also played a role as garment exports continued to decline in the wake of the 2003 ban on sales to the United States and retailer boycotts elsewhere.¹⁰ As a result, many continued to seek employment abroad with Malaysia and Qatar becoming major destinations for Myanmar workers. Their remittances were doubtless important for the support of their families back home but as some governments took steps to try to limit such transfers, the flow was perhaps not as great as expected.¹¹ There

were a number of indicators of the economy's faltering condition from shortages of sufficient transportation equipment and fuel supplies to rapidly increasing inflation, particularly urban food prices.¹² Electricity, despite the government's increased generating capacity, remains in short supply with daily power cuts.

Until the suppression of the monk-led demonstrations in September, the fourth quarter of 2007 and the first of 2008 looked to establish new records in the tourist sector. However, after September there were nearly universal cancellations and only gradually did tourist bookings begin to return to previous low levels. The poor end of the year stood in contrast with the increased growth of the sector in 2006, which saw an increase of 7 per cent in revenue terms.¹³

Despite exhortations from international agencies such as the Asian Development Bank, the government undertook few economic reforms in 2007. Though at least 215 formerly state-owned businesses were privatized after 1995, at least 65 wholly-owned concerns and 11 joint ventures remained to be sold including a gold mine and beer, soft drinks and cosmetic factories.¹⁴ There were changes in some key members of Trade Council, including the departure of its former Chairman, Vice Senior General Maung Aye, but few signs of increasing efficiency or proclivity to allow market forces a wider role. The creaking administrative system demonstrated its inability to function effectively by its inability to increase substantially tax revenues from the private sector where tax avoidance remains rife.¹⁵

Trade continued to grow during the year with Thailand remaining Myanmar's most significant trading partner, growing by 51 per cent in 2006–2007. Massively in Myanmar's favour due to sales of natural gas to Thailand, the Union enjoyed a US\$1.9 billion trade surplus with the Kingdom. Singapore and China, however, had significant trade going the other way, recording large balances in their favour. Total trade, according to government statistics, grew by 40 per cent over the previous fiscal year, to US\$7.93 billion by the end of March 2007, with a third rare trading surplus of nearly US\$2.1 billion.¹⁶ Reserves stood at over US\$2 billion near year end, support for eight months trading.¹⁷ Though various sources speculated about the level of GDP growth, no one really knows with any degree of certainty.¹⁸

Humanitarian and Social Affairs

The faltering economy, coupled with economic sanctions and a refusal by major Western governments to recognize the government's efforts to eradicate drug production, all contributed to Myanmar's large and growing humanitarian issues.

Under-spending on health and education has contributed to a huge problem for any future government. The government and foreign donors have responded to some extent but inadequately to meet the people's needs. For example, in January the European Union provided US\$20.2 million but mainly for expenditure in border areas.

Myanmar announced it seized five times as many amphetamine tablets in 2006 over 2005, while seizing 3,900 kilograms of heroin and opium and arresting 4,360 drug dealers.¹⁹ The United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in March that poppy cultivation had declined by 34 per cent to 21,500 hectares the previous year and was therefore on target to have eliminated all poppy cultivation by 2014. The United States International Narcotics Control Board confirmed the UNODC report, though noting that there was some expanded production in the southern and eastern parts of the Shan State. Some of that area remains out of government control, having been part of the empire of former drug warlord Khun Sa who died in late October.²⁰ The UNODC reported cultivation and yields were both up in 2007 to August because of a lack of action by a number of actors, including some government officials, to address the problem. As the United Wa State Army declared their area a poppy free zone in 2005, the lack of alternative incomes meant that the World Food Programme (WFP) was feeding 726,000 people as their region failed to generate inward investment from the international community that had been expected.

Fraught relations between the government and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) ended in a bitter exchange of accusations and threats. Failing to get an answer to its request to resume operations, including unescorted visits with political prisoners and operating independently in conflict zones, the ICRC announced in January a significant cut in staff at its five operational centres and Yangon headquarters. The ICRC effectively terminated its role in Myanmar when the Committee issued a strongly worded statement, contrary to its normal confidential procedures, accusing the government of "widespread and systematic human rights abuse" especially in the recruitment of porters in conflict zones. The regime replied, via the then ill Prime Minister's wife, claiming ICRC personnel had "clandestine relations with insurgent groups".²¹ However, the government and the International Labour Organization (ILO) came to an understanding during the year on how to deal with complaints about forced labour which obviated the possibility of the UN agency taking the regime to an international court.

Bird flu added to the list of diseases that continue to impact upon Myanmar's citizens. The country faced five outbreaks of the H5N1 variety during the year, ending in the first case of human infection in Myanmar. The Three Diseases Fund,

established by the European Union and five donor governments, commenced work in 2007 against tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV/AIDS. It replaced the UN Global Fund that withdrew after the United States and Mr George Soros's Open Society Foundation pressured the international organization.²² Natural disasters, including heavy rainfall and flooding, also afflicted Myanmar, leading to several deaths from storms and forcing up food prices.²³

Waning Insurgency

The declining military capacity of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the armed wing of the Karen National Union (KNU), now six decades old, was underscored in January by the announcement that the commander of the KNLA's 7th Brigade had travelled to Yangon for talks with the government. Brigadier General Htain Maung, a long-standing colleague of the late KNU leader Bo Mya, led a delegation for talks with Lt Gen Thein Sein and the head of Military Affairs Security, Major General Ye Myint. At the conclusion of the meeting, the KNU delegation, which contained both KNLA officers and KNU council members, including three Christian ministers, announced that a deal had been agreed to the effect that the Myanmar army would withdraw from certain border areas that would then be occupied by the 7th Brigade forces. This was outwardly less than the unwritten ceasefire agreements previously reached with other insurgent groups, and preserved the contention made by General Htain Maung that some Karen would never give up their arms or the intention of achieving autonomy despite the presence of Myanmar government forces and agencies operating in the same area.²⁴

The return of the 7th Brigade posed a serious problem for the KNU. Brigadier General Htain Maung founded a "Karen Peace Council" as a rival to the KNU, and was condemned by Mahn Sha, General Secretary of the KNU, at a three-day "Karen Unity Council" in February. Karen journalists were threatened for reporting this disunity as Mahn Sha claimed that sixty of the defecting 7th Brigade had returned to the KNU. On the contrary, the Karen Peace Council claimed that more 7th Brigade troops were defecting to General Htain Maung. KNU supporters also were leaving the camps in Thailand for third countries where they were being resettled, further draining manpower from the organization. Armed clashes between the KNU and the army and its ally, the Kayin Democratic Buddhist Army (DKBA), continued as in the past. Throughout the year, the government press reported casualties as a result of farmers stepping on land mines in areas of military contention as well as isolated attacks on buses and trucks.

Despite once more opening ceasefire talks with the army, the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), which had earlier entered into and then abandoned such a deal, also came under military pressure during the year as did the Shan State Army (South) (SSA[S]). The Kachin Independence Organization (KIA), though maintaining its ceasefire agreement, suffered from internal splits and government pressure as its ceasefire agreement continued to hold, though there were reports that its armed wing, the Kachin Liberation Army, was seeking new recruits in preparation for returning to battle.²⁵ The KIA and also the United Wa State Army had disagreements with the government during the year, which led to enhanced tensions in the northern border areas.²⁶ Limited fighting along Myanmar's western Rakhine State border was mainly between Rohingya forces and the Bangladesh military and police.²⁷ No total figures are available for the number of casualties as a result of armed conflict in the border areas, but in comparison with previous years, the rate would appear to have declined as the army has been increasingly able to impose the government's authority on all but the most remote areas.

Opposition Politics

Overt Politics Re-emerging?

During early 2007 mixed signals from the SPDC as both liberal and repressive tendencies were perceived, and it was initially difficult to fathom the government's political intentions. For example, it permitted the publication of an article critical of the regime's news censorship policies and tolerated, if not encouraged, three days of protests outside the United States and United Kingdom embassies. Action for corrupt behaviour was taken against a number of officials, as in the previous year, and the public was encouraged to register complaints about inefficient or duplicitous civil servants on special phone lines.

For whatever reason,²⁸ and there is no way of knowing for certain, the first seven months seemed to herald a growing political space for activists as long as they kept their activities within somewhat undefined bounds. For example, included among the 2,831 prisoners released on Independence Day, 4 January, were more than fifty political activists, including two journalists, according to the NLD.²⁹ Some had been incarcerated for a decade or more, among them key figures from the events of 1988. They formed a loose grouping known as the 88 Generation Student Group. Six days later five prominent members of the 88 Generation, detained without charges since September the previous year, were released. These were to become prominent in political events later in the year but they acted quickly in January to make a mark by launching a two-month-long letter writing

campaign among the public to express their opposition to their conditions directly to the SPDC. The passage of time was again marked by the death of one of the NLD candidates elected in the 1990 abortive elections.³⁰

The government repeatedly warned of possible terrorist attacks following major international events concerning Myanmar and the reconvening of the national convention. Their close monitoring of the activities of opposition groups in neighbouring Thailand led to a belief that exile groups were plotting to destabilize the country.³¹ The regime also repeatedly reported that the NLD had contacts and received advice and support from the United States and United Kingdom embassies, citing the number of visits received from embassy cars per month to NLD headquarters. The government press also reported frequent announcements of resignations “on their own volition” of NLD members during the year.

Nevertheless, the regime was relatively tolerant of various minor demonstrations and campaigns directed at rising food prices and political issues such as the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other activists. A group who went regularly from January to pray for their release was watched closely, at least once doused with water, occasionally harassed, but otherwise tolerated. In late February, a group of about twelve individuals calling themselves the Myanmar Development Committee marched from one of the main market to the Sule Pagoda. Though they were arrested, most were released within 24 hours, including three journalists who were covering the incident. Four days later, there was a similar demonstration with the same result. This relative tolerance by the authorities prompted two veteran politicians to issue an unusual statement of praise for the SPDC. That, however, did not save one of them, along with a colleague, from detention for one day following a press briefing they gave on what they described as the country’s economic and social crises.

In an effort to keep attention on the continuing detention of a number of activists and politicians, the 88 Generation group launched a “white Sunday” campaign whereby, dressed in white like prisoners, they would ostentatiously call on the families of detained individuals. Around the time of the renewal of the detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the tolerance shown to those praying for her release dissipated as the intensity of their protests grew. Forty were arrested in mid-May for allegedly using religion for political purposes. Allegations that they were detained initially by so-called “thugs” who it was claimed were not police but government-organized toughs, members of the government-sponsored Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), or *swann ar shin*, an auxiliary community force, were made in frequent public statements issued by the 88 Generation group during the year.³² These protest activities reached a

climax on the anniversary of the 1990 elections, 27 May, when alleged “thugs” confronted approximately 500 NLD supporters including the 88 Generation who were preparing to march from the Party’s headquarters to the nearby Shwedagon Pagoda to hold a prayer meeting. They were thwarted in that ambition but three days later the Party was able to organize a much more low key religious event to mark the fourth anniversary of the 2003 Dipayin confrontation.

Faced with the continued inability of those members of the Central Executive Committee of the NLD to communicate with their General Secretary, Party Chairman U Aung Shwe wrote in late June to the Cabinet in Naypyitaw requesting permission to meet her. Receiving no reply, the following month the Party asked that the regime send someone to ask Daw Aung San Suu Kyi whether she would consent to a judicial appeal on her continued detention. It looked as if this would be a year of press releases and futile gestures, such as the NLD request that the regime talk with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi about the constitutional principles being finalized at the national convention. The idea of opening the conclusions of the National Convention for reconsideration in the wake of proposed three-way talks between the SPDC, the NLD, and ethnic minority leaders was also mooted in a letter to the UN Secretary General from ninety-two persons who had been victorious in the 1990 election. Meanwhile, however, more direct action figures were drawing attention to the deteriorating economic position of the people, and trying to engage the power of the Buddhist monkhood into the process.

Or Regime Snare? — August and September

On 15 August, the government increased petrol and diesel prices by 100 per cent and compressed natural gas (CNG) prices by 500 per cent. While the increase had marginal effect on most of the country where the open market rate for petrol prevails and CNG is little used, for urbanites the government’s attempts to reign in energy subsidies had an immediate and devastating effect. As many Yangon residents and businesses rely for some of their electricity from diesel generators and as all buses and most taxis run on CNG, the impact on household incomes was significant. Overnight bus fares doubled and for many who earn about 1,000 kyat per day, 40 per cent of their daily wage went on getting to and from work. The government’s action was a gift to its political opponents, especially the 88 Generation group. As the National Convention was about to conclude, the question of the people’s poverty was connected easily with a generalized complaint about the competence as well as the intentions of the government.

On 19 August there commenced a series of protest marches in Yangon. As the pictures relayed to international media revealed, these protests were small. Groups, perhaps no more than thirty or forty persons, walked relatively short distances in areas known as being scenes of anti-government protests. Little more happened other than to mount additional demonstrations in other areas when the authorities failed to take any action. As the international media campaign grew, however, the government encouraged, if not organized, local toughs or *swan ar shin* to harass the demonstrators, thus “forcing” the authorities to arrest leaders. As arrests began, few other political activists emerged to face a similar fate.

One can speculate that even without the increase in gas and petrol prices, these demonstrations would have taken place in any event. Political as well as economic factors were at the base of the demonstrations. The NLD and the 88 Student Generation argued that the National Convention was a sham. The United States and British governments agreed, but were concerned, nonetheless, that many international actors including the United Nations and neighbouring governments might accept it as a legitimate part of a process of establishing a new power-sharing constitution between the dominant army and civilians willing to work with it. The government press, which argues that the 88 Generation demonstrators and the NLD are mere puppets of “neo-colonialists”, demonized them as traitors to be isolated and suppressed by the people who believe in the official goal of establishing a “discipline flourishing democracy”.

The failure of the demonstrations in August to involve the wider public suggested that most of the population were resigned to the army maintaining its political influence while they struggle on a day-to-day basis to make a living and attempt to ensure their children’s education. Unlike the socialist society and economy that collapsed in 1988, today’s society is much more one of self-help, individual entrepreneurship, and community support while the government has learned the lessons of 1988 and has ensured the shops relatively well stocked for those who can afford them.

As the August demonstrations in Yangon were suppressed, Buddhist monks in the central city of Pakokku staged protests, initially peaceful, against local supporters of the military regime and held some government officials hostage overnight after allegations of torture and violent beatings spread following a confrontation with security forces and an unpopular chief abbot. But the swift action by the authorities to placate the hierarchy of the monkhood while taking action against the perpetrators ensured that they did not spread to other monasteries, although it reported that monks in other central cities had threatened to take protest action. Again, perhaps because violence committed by monks is a violation of their vows

to avoid worldly action, especially the harming of life, the demonstrations failed to draw more than passing comments from those who became aware via the international media. Speculative comments in the international media that a new politically motivated *sangha* organization had been formed, the National Front of Monks, was confirmed by government media in an article on 19 September.³³

While monks did organize themselves politically in the 1920s and 1930s in association with anti-colonial nationalists, and after independence some monks were known to support the Burma Communist Party or factions of the governing Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, since 1980 when the government organized a national governing body for the *sangha*, political activity by the monkhood has become insignificant. Even following the 1988 demonstrations, when some monks refused briefly to cooperate with the post-socialist military regime, the hierarchy of the monkhood did not discourage the army from taking action against politically active monks. After nineteen years of the army lavishing resources on the monkhood, the hierarchy was unlikely to turn against them. The State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, the governing body of the monkhood composed of venerable *sayadaws* from each of the faith's sects, was effectively in alliance with the government.

These are much closer links between the army and the upper levels of monastic hierarchy than existed under the previous secular socialist ideology. In that the events in Pakokku, and in later in Chauk and Kyaukpadaung, were initially isolated, they did not seem to herald a larger threat to the political power of the government. However, the appearance of normality was soon shattered. On 17 September, monks and lay persons demonstrated in Sittwe, demanding an apology from the government for the action it had taken against the protesting monks in Pakokku. Similarly, approximately a hundred monks marched through downtown Yangon.

Initially the monks were marching in demand for an apology for the Pakokku incident. Soon, however, their protest came to include the economic plight of the people including the monkhood. The rank and file monkhood was feeling the consequences of the absence of significant growth in the Yangon economy since the imposition of the total trade ban with Myanmar by the United States in 2003. The closure of a number of textile factories and the initial loss of employment by about 80,000 mainly young women plus the tightening of rules regulating economic activities since 2003 have imposed grinding poverty on a growing underclass of young urbanites. Monasteries often become the depositories of young children who their mothers cannot feed and the burden of care on the monkhood was expanding as the ability of the laity to feed the monks declined. Similarly,

in times of economic hardship many men join the monkhood in order to relieve their family of the burden of feeding them.

Following the small march on 17 September, the marches continued unhindered by the authorities for one week. Initially they drew little public attention or support and most people just watched as they walked past in a quiet dignified manner. Some onlookers speculated as to whether they were “genuine” monks or political activists or even government soldiers posing as monks. One rumour had it that the leading purveyor of monk’s robes in Yangon sold more than 5,000 garments during the week. In any event, what apparently started at one monastery soon began to spread, in an uncoordinated manner, to others and each day more monks were marching in sometimes more than one demonstration.

Still the authorities took no action and the protests remained largely good natured though tense with angry shouts, waved fists, and claims on the international media that the monks would march until the army government fell began to give an edge previously lacking. On 22 September, a group of monks and protesters breached the security cordon around Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s home, and she came out to the gate to pay respect to the monks. The government finally acted late on Monday, 24 September, with a supplication to the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee by the Minister for Religious Affairs in which he blamed the unrest among the monks on agitation by NLD extremists, Communist Party remnants, and foreign radio stations. His appeal led to the issuing of Directive 93 and the reissue of earlier such Directives from 1984, 1990, 1991, and 1996 instructing the monkhood to avoid political and secular activities. By implication, those monks who continued to do so were considered having violated the rules of the *sangha*, and therefore not immune from action from lay authorities. That night, the army and police raided a number of monasteries in Yangon, allegedly beating and perhaps even killing some monks.

By Tuesday, even more monks were involved and varying their route, perhaps as many of 10,000 marched down the Shwedagon Pagoda Road to the Thein Gyi Zei, Yangon’s largest market and department store block. While some international media claimed that there were 100,000 people on the street, a more realistic estimate would put the number at no more than 25,000 or so. Also, approximately 700 monks and 30 nuns were joined in a march down the Sule Pagoda Road by two NLD flag bearers, a party banner, and about 500 NLD supporters. The stage was set for a major confrontation. That evening after dark the police conducted additional raids on several monasteries in northern Yangon and elsewhere in the city. A number of monks were detained. Also, that evening

the authorities imposed a 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew on Yangon and Mandalay as well as banning assemblies of more than five persons.

The following day there were demonstrations and confrontations with the police and army in several areas of Yangon. Violence remained relatively limited until Thursday, the 27th, when no monks were seen on the streets, having been confined to their monasteries by their abbots or the secular authorities. Two or three thousand lay persons, both men and women, began to taunt and harass the police and other government authorities. The relative restraint that the monks had imposed on violent action was no longer obvious and eventually the authorities in a number of locations in Yangon and Mandalay took action against the demonstrators, firing into the crowd and clearing the streets. (See Appendix I for the author's observations of events on Wednesday and Thursday, 26–27 September 2007.)

The next day, Friday, the police and army resumed their positions and began to patrol the city from mid-morning, meeting small groups of mainly young men who played a game of cat-and-mouse with them. A number were arrested. On Saturday, Yangon began to return to normal and by the end of the following week there were no unusual sign of riot police or troops remaining. The authorities announced that in total nine persons were killed on the 27th and eleven persons including one woman injured, while thirty-one members of the security forces were injured. Western diplomats claimed that the casualty rate was in multiples of those numbers. Following an investigation made in November, the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights stated that thirty-one were killed.³⁴ Further arrests followed and the authorities detained over 3,000 persons, all but ninety-one of whom were subsequently released.³⁵ The quelling of the demonstrations had a very negative impact on the population and a mixed mood of despair and anger prevailed into the final months of the year.³⁶

International Relations

Relations with Western Countries

Keeping Western attention focussed on Myanmar has been a problem for exiled and domestic political opponents of the SPDC. With more pressing strategic and political problems in the Middle East, and without the missionary guilt that Africa inspires in European politicians, Myanmar has frequently slipped to the bottom of many governments' lists of priorities. However, years of campaigning seemed to reach a significant milestone in 2007 as a result of efforts by the United States, echoed by the United Kingdom, to pass a resolution in the UN Security Council calling on the government of Myanmar to enter into substantive talks with the

NLD and unnamed ethnic minority groups. The attempt was justified in terms of Myanmar posing a threat to the peace and security of its neighbours. The fact that none of the neighbours endorsed that view, just as none endorsed Western-imposed economic sanctions, failed to dissuade the United States. The impossibility of the resolution passing was noted by Russian Ambassador to the UN who stated that Myanmar was not “a proper issue to discuss in the Security Council”.³⁷ China also made it clear that it did not support the American resolution but insisted the best method of resolving Myanmar’s issues was through the agency of the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy to Myanmar as well as through ASEAN. Indonesia, the only member of ASEAN then on the Security Council, also indicated that it would not support the resolution. When the Security Council eventually voted, the resolution was vetoed by both Russia and China, in the first double veto in more than twenty years. South Africa also voted “No”. Nine members voted in favour³⁸ and three others abstained, including Indonesia.³⁹

In the wake of the failed UN initiative and the U.S. President’s renewal of his country’s “National Emergency with Respect to Burma”, the United States took an unprecedented and previously unannounced step of meeting with three Myanmar ministers in Beijing, presumably arranged by the Chinese government. As the United States refuses to send any top officials to Myanmar unless they also meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and refuses visas to Myanmar officials, a third capital was needed. Nothing fruitful came of the meeting with both sides firmly restating their publicly declared positions. Following the events of September, both the United States and the European Union imposed new but largely redundant economic sanctions on Myanmar, and President Bush indicated that an ASEAN-U.S. summit planned for 2008 would not take place because of Myanmar’s pariah status. The European Union also appointed a leftist Italian politician as its special envoy on Myanmar with an unspecified mandate. The U.S. Secretary of State ended the year with a call for greater “vigour” in the international effort to change Myanmar.

Relations with Neighbours Remain Friendly

China

China’s growing dominance as Myanmar’s closest and firmest international partner was convincingly demonstrated during the year, even if the government in Beijing occasionally made plain its frustration at the slow pace of political and economic reform. On the economic side, China’s role in the country’s economic development was apparent. Incomplete data at the end of the year showed that

China is now officially Myanmar's sixth largest foreign investor with thirty projects at a contracted value of US\$638 million mainly in hydropower, oil and gas, manufacturing and mining. Trade from China increased by nearly 46 per cent in the first three quarters of 2007, with China exporting textiles, steel, and refined oil products to Myanmar in exchange for raw wood, sawn timber, natural rubber, and cane products. During the same nine-month period, Myanmar's exports to China increased a mere 5.2 per cent over the previous year. Total trade was heavily in China's favour, US\$1.435 billion to Myanmar's exports of US\$220 million.⁴⁰

Political contacts between China and the SPDC at the highest level occurred relatively frequently. Though Head of State Than Shwe met with few foreigners, except for routine diplomatic functions, top-level Chinese visitors were welcomed. In January, he met with Li Tieying, the Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and the following month received Chinese State Councillor Tang Jiaxuan. Following the September demonstrations, China sent as a special envoy to Myanmar, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Wang Yi. On that occasion, Mr Wang emphasized the "*paukphaw*" (cousinly) relationship that existed as well as the deepening of political, economic, cultural, and other contacts between the two countries.

Myanmar sent two high-level delegations to China. In February, General Thura Shwe Mann, Chief of the General Staff of the Myanmar army, and third-ranking member of the SPDC, visited Beijing. State Councillor and Chief of the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army Cao Gang-chuan said that "a profound friendship between the two countries and the two armed forces is not only in the fundamental interests of the two peoples, but also conducive to regional and world peace and stability".⁴¹ Acting Prime Minister Thein Sein made a five-day visit to Beijing and Yunnan, accompanied by four other ministers. During this visit, a deal to sell natural gas to Yunnan was confirmed. In the midst of the August–September disturbances in Myanmar, Foreign Minister Nyan Win was despatched as special envoy of the Senior General to explain developments. At that time, State Councillor Tang Jiaxuan emphasized China's desire that internal stability be restored and that Myanmar "push forward a democracy that is appropriate for the country" as soon as possible.⁴²

Chinese spokespersons were asked frequently to explain their government's position on Myanmar. Throughout the year, the same response was forthcoming, although occasionally nuanced with some implied criticism. As the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said in Singapore at the ASEAN+3 summit in November, China sought peace, stability and development in Myanmar through national

reconciliation by the efforts of the people of Myanmar with the good offices of the United Nations to assist the process. It was clear, however, that China was encouraging the regime to implement more rapidly its seven-step road map while refusing to intervene or comment on matters such as the detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. As Assistant Foreign Minister He Yafei said, “We cannot permit Myanmar to fall into chaos, we cannot permit Myanmar to become another Iraq. No matter what ideas other countries have, China’s stance on this is staunch.”⁴³

India

Cooperation between India and Myanmar continued to grow and develop despite political pressure within India to limit support for the SPDC. Myanmar demonstrated its utility to India in a number of ways, including in late December 2006 and early January 2007, undertaking extensive military operations in northern Sagaing Division against anti-Indian guerrilla forces of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland that sought refuge there. The fighting continued into February during which the Indian Home Secretary paid an official visit to Naypyitaw to discuss security, border management, and drug smuggling. Military cooperation between the two sides was further discussed in a visit by the head of the Myanmar navy to India. The desire to see an improvement in the economic position of India’s impoverished northeast led to a doubling of its financial assistance to Myanmar in order to enhance highway and rail links in border areas, opening trade routes via Sittwe and central Myanmar to India. It was believed that as many as 20,000 anti-Indian insurgents were operating in northwest Myanmar from about thirty different groups in addition to the Naga. During the year, India agreed to sell Myanmar maritime surveillance aircraft and helicopters.

The public demonstrations in August and September did nothing to dampen India’s desire to maintain cordial relations. In the midst of the demonstrations, the Indian Petroleum Minister arrived to witness the signing of an additional production sharing agreement. The Indian government viewed the suppression of the demonstrations an “internal matter”, according to the head of the Indian army, stressing Myanmar’s importance as a strategic partner in the ending of insurgency in India.⁴⁴ However, India’s Prime Minister did encourage Prime Minister Thein Sein when they met in Singapore in November to include Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and various ethnic leaders in a “broad-based” reform process of the kind advanced by the United Nations.⁴⁵

The ASEAN Member States

The member states of ASEAN take divergent views on the question of Myanmar's political future and how best to move the country from military to civilian constitutional rule. Those most closely allied militarily and economically with the United States, such as the Philippines, use every opportunity to be seen putting pressure on the SPDC to engage with the NLD and hasten constitutional rule, including the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Others, such as Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen, make it clear that Myanmar's affairs are its own and the United Nations and Western governments should desist with their frequent resolutions and expressions of condemnation. In the year when ASEAN revealed its new charter, such differing views on Myanmar created tensions within the organization that were revealed at the ASEAN heads of state summit. Due to these differing views, it was earlier agreed at the ASEAN foreign ministers annual meeting in January that the organization and its members would no longer defend Myanmar in international fora.

Meetings between ASEAN government leaders and their counterparts in Myanmar were frequent during 2007. In addition to multilateral meetings, there were a number of visits by officials to Naypyitaw as well as in the other direction. Myanmar's new Prime Minister pointedly made his first official "get to know you" visits to Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia, symbolically expressing the regime's discomfort with its more pro-American ASEAN critics. Despite expressions of criticism, when the organization's members were forced to demonstrate their adherence to the ASEAN principle of non-interference, they largely voted in support of Myanmar. At the ASEAN summit in November, when Singapore invited UN Special Envoy to Myanmar Ibrahim Gambari to address a working dinner on Myanmar, the meeting acceded to Myanmar's objection and Gambari was consequently told to stay away. Similarly, in the annual vote to condemn Myanmar in the UN's Third Committee, the Humanitarian and Culture Committee, no ASEAN member voted for the motion, and Laos, Vietnam, and Malaysia voted against as did China and India. The proposed ASEAN Charter was held hostage to developments in Myanmar, moreover, as its ratification apparently depends on developments in its most troublesome member.⁴⁶

Active Diplomacy Including Fellow Pariahs

Myanmar has normally been noted for its quiet and often inactive diplomacy but following the UN Security Council vote in January, the Foreign Minister and his two deputies were busy flying around the globe thanking their supporters and

improving relations with other states including a few of their fellow pariahs in the eyes of the West. Not only did Myanmar and Iran agree to cooperate in agriculture and trade, but North Korea re-established diplomatic relations broken since a North Korean organized bomb attack on the South Korean Premier in Yangon in 1983. Diplomatic, as well as business links, with Russia were underscored by the third Moscow-Naypyitaw consultation in June. The announcement that Russia was going to build a nuclear research reactor under International Atomic Energy Agency supervision, coming in the same year as relations were restored with North Korea, led to intense speculation but little news. Myanmar also established a high-level commission with Venezuela and announced the opening of an embassy in Riyadh, its thirty-fifth diplomatic mission.

Turbulent Year for the UN as It Attempts to Find a Role in Myanmar

The failure of the various international organizations and foreign governments to find a formula to entice or punish the SPDC sufficiently to make it change course and include opposition figures in an enlarged political process resulted in the United Nations becoming the last point of action. From the perspective of the regime, however, the United Nations was perhaps just another tool for destabilizing the country and the SPDC's hold on power. Relations between the government and a number of UN agencies and commissions were often strained, although, as noted above, an agreement was reached with the ILO on a *modus vivendi* for the investigations of claims of forced labour and UNICEF reported a positive position on the issue of alleged child soldiers. The work of UN Development Programme, and its head, the UN Country Team leader, Charles Petrie, came in for criticism from all sides. The UNDP was accused of propping up the government,⁴⁷ and the UN Food Programme of being a government spy. The government chided UN agencies for facilitating media coverage of the September events, and accused Petrie of violating his diplomatic status. His role in Myanmar was terminated in November following a statement critical of the government and tacitly supporting the opposition's rationale for September demonstrations issued by the UN Country Team to mark UN Day. Petrie's departure was announced on the eve of the second visit in the year by Professor Ibrahim Gambari in his role as the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to Myanmar.⁴⁸ Professor Gambari's terms might best be defined by what the French call a *raisonneur*, appointed to bring the various political factions and interests together to reason out their differences.⁴⁹

Even before the September protests, Professor Gambari was quoted as expressing views that were held to be inimical in Naypyitaw. Referring to the arrest of the 88 Generation leaders in August, he indicated that they “called into question the Government’s commitment to democratization”.⁵⁰ As the protests came at the time when the world’s attention was focussed on the United Nations as heads of government appeared daily to make their annual addresses to the General Assembly, pressure was high for a UN response. Myanmar’s affairs were again more discussed in the Security Council in September and the government felt pressured to agree to a visit from the UN envoy.⁵¹ Professor Gambari arrived on 29 September and the next day met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi following initial meetings in Naypyitaw with the acting Prime Minister and the Information and Culture Ministers. On the third day, he met the top leadership of the government for an hour, and on his return to Yangon he had a second brief meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Via the Information Minister, the government stated its position on the events of August and September to the UN envoy. Brigadier General Kyaw Hsan stated that a small minority of the monkhood were being manipulated by political elements from the 1988 uprising, backed by Western governments and encouraged by misleading international media reports. He further stated that:

Those who staged these protests ... were released in order to participate in the democratic activities. Many discussions have been conducted to convince them not to attempt creating unrest. However, it is found that today’s protests and violences [*sic*] are created and manipulated by them. Actually, they have been provided with cash and kind and directed by an intelligence organisation of a big power.⁵²

Though dissidents were then under detention, they would eventually be able to participate in the political process, he contended. After the constitution was ratified, the government wished

... that all antigovernment groups form political parties and enter the elections. Our good hearted efforts deserve no such antagonism and violence. Today’s protests are not caused by the Government but by the conspiracies against the Government. As it is our duty to safeguard the people from dangers, we have to investigate some persons. Such investigations are aimed at preventing bloodshed incidents, minimizing the intensity of unrest; and ensuring non-disintegration of the Union. Yet, I would like to reiterate that we wish those opposing groups to participate in the democratic reform.⁵³

In the wake of Professor Gambari's October visit, the government announced that the Senior General would hold talks with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi if she agreed to renounce her policy of resisting all authority, supporting utter devastation, and requesting that Western governments impose economic sanctions. Also, a Liaison Minister, then Deputy Labour Minister Major General (retd) Aung Kyi, held the first of three meetings with her.

Professor Gambari made his second visit to Myanmar in just over a month arriving on 3 November. The issuance on the eve of the Professor's arrival of the letter to the UN Country Representative stating that he had acted "beyond his capacity" and was no longer welcome in Myanmar added another item to the agenda that Professor Gambari wished to discuss with the SPDC. After briefly meeting with Mr Petrie in Yangon, the Professor departed for Naypyitaw where he had meetings with the Foreign and Liaison Ministers on the first full day of his visit, and the Myanmar Red Cross and ethnic leaders on the second. In the midst of his meetings, it was announced that UN Human Rights *rapporteur*, Professor Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, would be permitted to visit Myanmar after four years of exclusion. On the third day in Naypyitaw, Professor Gambari proposed that he personally involve himself in three-sided talks among the SPDC, the NLD and ethnic minority leaders. This gambit was rejected immediately.

In a spirited expression of the regime's position, the Information Minister stated that Myanmar would not be bullied by big nations and that the conditions set earlier for talks with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi had yet to be met.⁵⁴ At that point, the Professor might have recalled the words he quoted from Alfred Lord Tennyson when, as Nigeria's Foreign Minister twenty-two years earlier, he wrote to his head of state, General Buhari:

Though we are not now that strength
Which (in old times) moved heaven and earth
What we are, we are
One equal measure of heroic heart
Made weak by time and fate
But strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.⁵⁵

Before leaving, Professor Gambari also met with the Prime Minister and others as well as three NLD leaders and others from the National Unity Party. Read as a significant rebuff to the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy was the absence of any meeting with the top three men in the regime.

Immediately prior to his departure, Professor Gambari had brief meeting with NLD General Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Prior to his arrival, she had had the first of three meetings with Liaison Minister U Aung Kyi. Subsequently she was allowed to meet for two and a half hours with four other NLD leaders in a government guest house and very briefly with some political activists. After her meeting with her NLD colleagues, she was said to be in good health and optimistic about the prospects of talks with the government but resigned to remaining under house arrest. Overshadowing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's meeting with her NLD colleagues was the release by Professor Gambari on arrival in Singapore of a statement in her name. Notification of the release of this statement was not formally made to the government, and it consequently became a point of unspoken dispute as to the *raisonneur's* role.

Ignoring the SPDC's previously announced conditions for entering into talks with her, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, seemingly addressing the international community as much as the government of Myanmar, welcomed the appointment of U Aung Kyi and indicated she was looking forward to additional meetings. Furthermore, she expected "that this phase of preliminary consultations will conclude soon so that a meaningful and timebound dialogue with the SPDC leadership can start as early as possible". Her laying down conditions in advance of the dialogue with her insistence that they be "timebound" doubtless rankled in Naypyitaw. Her invitation to "the government and all relevant parties to join" her in a "constructive dialogue" might also have been seen as a bit imperious to her critics.⁵⁶ Soon after the statement's release, the government published more than fifty counter-statements critical of her, and by implication, Professor Gambari, for presuming to speak for them. The statements varied in content with the expression of stronger or weaker views. Notably absent from those ceasefire groups issuing statements was the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the United Wa State Army.

Following his second visit, Professor Gambari informally briefed the UN Security Council, which then had a four-hour discussion that failed to reach a sufficiency coherent and agreed conclusion to allow for the issuance of a UN Presidential Statement as was done previously. At the end of the year, the Secretary General announced the formation of a fourteen-nation grouping to facilitate the work of Ambassador Gambari. Given the differing views of the fourteen on how to resolve Myanmar's issues, it seemed unlikely to be more than just another meeting place but perhaps its existence would lessen pressure to place Myanmar on the Security Council's agenda.⁵⁷

Conclusion

The passing of another year, full of many tragic and unexpected events, might lead one to expect that things in Myanmar would have significantly changed as a result. Still, the SPDC ruled as before and its most vocal critics and opponents within the country remained under detention. The member states of the international community had once more failed to find a common approach to Myanmar and its myriad issues. Life went on. But then, all were one year older, and time was on no one's side. Things did move, but unseen and unknown. Cumulatively pressures mount, but how will they be resolved? Can they be resolved? Neither the astrologers of Myanmar nor the strategizers in the United Nations seemed to know. Only the SPDC had a road map, but the rest of us were perhaps the victims of a blinded alley.⁵⁸

Appendix I

On Wednesday, 26 September, the number of monks seen on the streets was initially greatly reduced. However, a crowd of several thousand persons gathered at the corner of Sule Pagoda Road and Anawrahta Road, one block north of the Sule Pagoda after the police put up barricades across the footpaths and parking areas on either side of the six lane road. Soon there were two groups of riot police with shields and batons across the footpaths behind the barricades and a group of about ten armed soldiers behind them. At one point shots were fired overhead and the crowd retreated. Traffic continued to proceed as normal and residents were allowed to pass the barricade to return home or collect vehicles. Then fourteen monks approached and sat down in the middle of the intersection with a crowd of about 2,000 standing behind and beside them.

Tension rose and it looked as if violence could erupt at any time. However, after less than 30 minutes during which three monks came and spoke with the fourteen protesters and retreated back through the crowd, about 10,000 monks and lay persons marched down Pansodan, the next major street east of Sule Pagoda Road. The fourteen monks with their flag bearers rose and walked off to join them. Later additional troops arrived, prompting the army to fire over people's heads to clear the road for the advancing trucks. The crowd dissipated but the police and army remained in position until darkness fell and the city became quiet as the curfew approached.

The next afternoon there was no march down Sule Pagoda Road by monks. Rather, at about 11.30 a.m. the police and army resumed positions and a nervous wait began. The streets were quiet though some shops and restaurants remained open. By about 1.30 p.m. a large crowd, estimated at about one to two thousand people gathered at the scene of the previous day's events and began taunting the police. However, they kept their distance. Additional riot police closed off the centre of the road and a light truck with a loudspeaker drew up behind the police and troops. Similar trucks had been driving

around the city all morning reminding people of the order that assemblies of five or more persons were illegal.

Soon an announcement was made that if the street was not cleared in ten minutes, the army would fire at the demonstrators. The riot police advanced about 10 yards and the crowd drew back. After five minutes the announcement was repeated. The riot police then parted to allow about eight to ten armed soldiers to enter the intersection and face the demonstrators. It was announced after three minutes that shooting would commence in two minutes. At the end of that period, automatic fire was released into the air and shots were made into the direction of the crowd as well as tear gas being fired. The crowd began to run but one man in the front of the crowd fell to the ground. He was a Japanese photojournalist on contract to Agence France Presse. Relations with Japan were badly affected by his shooting, and the Japanese-funded Human Resources Development Centre at the Yangon Institute of Economics lost its funding.

The police and army then proceeded to advance slowly, moving the crowd back. At one point a truck load of bricks appeared and was promptly unloaded as ammunition for the dwindling crowd of demonstrators. Plain-clothes police pursued protestors down small side streets and brought them out handcuffed. They were placed in a police van until about 6.00 p.m. when they were transferred to an army truck and driven out of the city centre, presumably to a holding centre or gaol.

Notes

- ¹ See, for example, Gordon Brown and Nicholas Sarkozy, "Time for Serious Dialogue", David Milliband and Bernard Kouchner, *International Herald Tribune*, 30 November 2007, preceded by their Foreign Ministers' joint article "Keeping the Momentum on Burma", *International Herald Tribune*, 15 October 2007. In the midst of the September events, one European Prime Minister offered to fly to Myanmar immediately to affect the situation. Former United States President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Jimmy Carter also offered himself to resolve Myanmar's issues. *Guardian Unlimited*, 25 October 2007. Even the wife of the President of the United States joined in the list of concerned international figures. Office of the First Lady, The White House, Washington, D.C., 31 August 2007; *Wall Street Journal*, 10 October 2007; *Irrawaddy* and Associated Press, 11 December 2007, Agence France Presse, 19 December 2007. The news agency reports cited in these notes can be found in Burma Net News online at <burmanet.org> as well as other websites such as <Rebound88.net>.
- ² Despite efforts by some Western powers and the United Nations to use the Subsequent Drafting Commission as a vehicle to open the constitutional process to opposition and ethnic critics, the government appointed a commission composed of academics, lawyers, and judges, many of whom had attended the National Convention. It convened in Naypyitaw for its first full session on 3 December 2007. *New Light of Myanmar*, 4 December 2007.

- ³ The appointment of the Drafting Commission is the third step in the seven-step road map. Little has been written or said about the second step: “Step by step implementation of the process necessary for the emergence of a genuine and disciplined democratic system.”
- ⁴ The Senior General had flown to Singapore on 31 December and remained there for a medical check-up for ten days. Consequently, he missed the annual Independence Day ceremonies at which Vice Senior General Maung Aye presided. Associated Press, 5 January 2007. In December, there were rumours in Yangon that the Senior General was suffering from psychological problems and was departing again for Singapore. As if to scotch such rumours, he was pictured in the *New Light of Myanmar* on 8 December and on television the previous day. Pictures of the Senior General, attending meetings and speaking at the DSA, viewing developments in Magwe, Mandalay and Yangon divisions and worshipping in Bagan, Nyaung-U, and Mandalay, were published every day from 14 to 22 December 2007 and 29 December 2007, *New Light of Myanmar*.
- ⁵ Reuters, 24 October 2007. U Aung Kyi was appointed Labour Minister in succession to Minister for Science and Technology U Thaung. U Aung Kyi had been Deputy Minister for Labour; he had earlier been appointed Liaison Minister with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. See below.
- ⁶ Part of the second, rarely mentioned, step in the SPDC’s seven-step map.
- ⁷ Don’t do any work; don’t make any decisions; don’t get fired.
- ⁸ The permanency of the move to Naypyitaw was confirmed by the announcement in June that the government was going to auction off its buildings and staff flats in Yangon. Xinhua, 5 June 2007. Rumours circulated that some government departments might move again to Yandanabon near Mandalay where a Teleport and high technology business park was recently constructed because Naypyitaw was built on an earthquake fault line. *New Light of Myanmar*, 13 December 2007.
- ⁹ Total contracted investment in 2005–2006 was US\$6.065 billion of which US\$6.03 billion was in one project, a dam on the Thanlwin River (Salween) being built by Thailand. Xinhua, 11 April 2007. In other investments, oil and gas was the largest sector, 53 per cent, followed by manufacturing, 20 per cent, real estate, 13.7 per cent, and hotels and tourism, 13.3 per cent. Russian firms invested US\$33 million in the oil and gas sector. Xinhua, 6 April 2007 and 8 May 2007.
- ¹⁰ Garment exports continued to decline in 2006–2007 by 12 per cent to US\$280 million, a quarter of what they were in 2002. Agence France Press, 24 June 2007.
- ¹¹ The Japanese authorities closed down a number of informal money exchanges operations in the fourth quarter of the year and the United States prosecuted one citizen of Myanmar descent for illegally sending funds to Myanmar via third countries. *North Jersey News*, 11 December 2007.
- ¹² The prices of basic items increased by 60 per cent in the year to April. Agence France Presse, 24 April 2007. The price of a lunch in a good quality but far from

salubrious restaurant in central Yangon frequented by local business and professional people increased from 1,300 kyat to 1,850 kyat in 2007.

- ¹³ Total number of tourists arriving was actually down by 5 per cent but those who came spent more. Thailand was the largest source of tourists (30,400) followed by China (24,893), Japan (18,945), South Korea (18,265). Germany (18,003) was the largest source of Europeans with France (15,498) next. Eighteen thousand and fifty-two Americans visited in 2006–2007 contributing to a total of 630,000. Agence France Press, 8 February 2007. Fiscal year end figures (to 31 March) showed that there were 654,000 total arrivals spending on average US\$114 per day. More than half arrived at border checkpoints rather than by air. Xinhua, 26 June 2007.
- ¹⁴ Xinhua, 4 April 2007.
- ¹⁵ Xinhua, 17 July 2007.
- ¹⁶ *Myanmar Times* via Associated Press, 21 May 2007. The United States and the European Union accounted for 1.5 per cent and 4.8 per cent respectively of total trade in 2006–2007 while Asian nations accounted for 90 per cent. Xinhua, 28 May 2007.
- ¹⁷ *Financial Times*, 7 December 2007.
- ¹⁸ Figures range from 3 to 11 per cent with most analysts at the bottom end of the range and the government at the top; growth rates would seem to vary with some agricultural districts apparently doing well and others very depressed.
- ¹⁹ Agence France Press, 23 January 2007.
- ²⁰ Associated Press, 30 October 2007. The Shan State Army (South), a splinter group of Khun Sa's narco-army that surrendered in January 1996 operates in two areas of Eastern Shan State, one near the Thai border and a second further north.
- ²¹ Reuters, 5 July 2007.
- ²² *Irrawaddy*, 26 January 2007.
- ²³ *Irrawaddy*, 29 June 2007; Agence France Press, 9 July 2007. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Information Bulletin* No. 1, 29 August 2007, FL-2007-000145MMR, "Myanmar: Floods". Floods continued into late September and early October in the central and northern regions of the Ayeyarwady Valley.
- ²⁴ This was confirmed in a meeting with Brigadier General Htain Maung the author attended in early March 2007.
- ²⁵ Author's interview, July 2007.
- ²⁶ See below.
- ²⁷ *Narinjara News*, 31 May 2007; Reuters, 12 July 2007. Earlier in the year, the border with Rakhine State was closed by the Bangladesh government to prevent approximately 1,000 Rohingya from entering. Xinhua, 15 January 2007.
- ²⁸ One school of thought advances the argument that the regime was allowing for a greater degree of political activity and relaxed censorship as part of a process of eventually concluding with a power-sharing arrangement through the constitutional process. Critics of this tutelary theory of political action suggest that the army relaxed

its grip in order to draw its opponents out so as to suppress them in an effort to ensure that their own constitutional plans went forward unopposed.

- ²⁹ Agence France Presse, 3 January 2007. Irrawaddy, citing an NLD spokesperson, reported that 43 were released, including 17 NLD members. Also Associated Press, both 4 January 2007.
- ³⁰ U Tun Win, who was to have represented Mindon Township in Magwe Division. Democratic Voice of Burma, 2 January 2007.
- ³¹ Xinhua, 2 February 2007; Agence France Press, 15 May 2007; Associated Press, 4 July 2007. Some members of the Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors, the Democratic Party for a New Society, and the All Burma Students' Democratic Front allegedly met near Maesot, Thailand, on the weekend of 27–28 January. Other exiled political leaders with no records of involvement in violent activities met in the Myanmar border area a month later. The Sixth Strategic Consultation Meeting, Revolutionary Forces's Sixth Strategic Consultation Meeting Statement, 23 February 2007, <Burmanet.org>, 24 February 2007.
- ³² See, for example, "An Announcement of the 88 Generation Students, Regarding Disturbances and Arrests of Peaceful Worshipers, Who Are Praying for the Release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and All Political Prisoners in Burma", 17 May 2007.
- ³³ Or Alliance of All Burmese Buddhist Monks or All Myanmar Sangha Sammaggi or Young Monks Samagga. *New Light of Myanmar*, 19 September 2007.
- ³⁴ Having previously suggested that as many as 110 had died. Bloomberg, 25 October 2007. Democratic Voice of Burma suggested that 138 had been killed. Associated Press, 1 October 2007. The London *Daily Mail* reported thousands had died and hundreds of bodies were dumped "in the jungle", 1 October 2007.
- ³⁵ For Professor Pinheiro's Report, See Human Rights Commission report A/HRC/6/14. Also, Associated Press, 7 December 2007 and Government Press Conference 2/2007, reported in *New Light of Myanmar*, 4 December 2007.
- ³⁶ In the aftermath of the protests, divisions arose among internal and external opponents of the regime as exiled leaders such as Maung Maung of the Free Trade Union (Burma) movement claimed responsibility for the protests, apparently confirming the government's version of events, and monks and other leaders described the protests as a spontaneous expression of public distress. *Irrawaddy*, 13 December 2007.
- ³⁷ Agence France Presse, 10 January 2007.
- ³⁸ Belgium, France, Italy, Ghana, Panama, Peru, Slovakia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- ³⁹ Also Qatar and Republic of the Congo.
- ⁴⁰ Xinhua, 9 December 2007.
- ⁴¹ Xinhua, 2 February 2007.
- ⁴² Xinhua, 13 September 2007.
- ⁴³ Reuters, 20 November 2007.
- ⁴⁴ Agence France Press, 1 October 2007.

- ⁴⁵ Associated Press, 20 November 2007.
- ⁴⁶ Philippines lawmakers reiterated it would not ratify the treaty unless Myanmar was a democracy. *Manila Times*, 20 December 2007.
- ⁴⁷ The Karen Human Rights Group published a report to that effect in April. *Irrawaddy* and *Mizzima*, both 26 April 2007. See <www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cumintdev/645/645ii.pdf> for oral evidence before the House of Commons International Development Committee on 7 June 2007 from spokespersons for Christian Solidarity Worldwide and the Burma Campaign (UK) that were critical of Mr Petrie.
- ⁴⁸ Professor Gambari, a Nigerian, served as his country's foreign minister for eighteen months following a military coup in the mid-1980s. See his *Theory and Reality in Foreign Policy Making* (Atlantic Heights, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992).
- ⁴⁹ Perhaps best discussed in P. G. Wodehouse, *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* (London: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 31 in the following exchange between Bertram Wooster and his Aunt Dahlia when discussing the matrimonial affairs of one of his associates:
 'What can you do?'
 'My role, as I see it, will be that of what the French call the *raisonneur*.'
 'What does that mean?'
 'Ah, there you have me, but that's what Jeeves says I'll be.'
- ⁵⁰ United Nations News Centre, 5 September 2007.
- ⁵¹ Reuters, 27 September 2007; Deutsche Presse Agentur, 28 September 2007.
- ⁵² Text of Information Minister's Briefing for the United Nations Special Envoy, 1 October 2007, p. 19.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- ⁵⁴ Associated Press, 7 November 2007. The Minister's explanation to Professor Gambari was published in the *New Light of Myanmar*, 7 November 2007. Among other points, it was suggested that Professor Gambari had an incomplete understanding of Myanmar's history and myriad problems, and that the actions of many countries since the events of September had had a negative impact upon his potential effectiveness.
- ⁵⁵ Gambari, *Theory and Reality in Foreign Policy Making*, p. 92.
- ⁵⁶ Associated Press, 9 November 2007.
- ⁵⁷ The fourteen were Australia, Indonesia, Russia, the United States, China, Japan, Singapore, Vietnam, France, Norway, Thailand, India, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. UN News Centre, 19 December 2007.
- ⁵⁸ With thanks to Tom Traubert via Tom Waits.