

- Myanmar is a melting pot of different peoples. Of its population of approximately 56 million, about two-thirds claim to be ethnically Burman. The remaining 33 percent are part of over one hundred indigenous, ethnic minorities, making the country one of the most diverse in the region. The largest of these groups include the Shan, Karen, and Rakhine
- **Already putting Myanmar at a disadvantage - no economic or military might: international interests?**
- Before the 1800s, one of the events to occur during this time was the introduction of Theravada Buddhism to the area during the eleventh century under the Pagan Empire
- Since 1962, the country has been ruled by a series of oppressive military governments, which have been committing human rights violations for decades.
- After a series of three AngloBurmese Wars that last from 1824 to 1886, Myanmar was conquered by Britain and became a province of British India.<sup>2</sup> Myanmar's connection to the vast, modern British Empire benefited the country in a number of ways, especially in terms of economic expansion. 1869 brought the opening of the Suez Canal, which slashed the cost and time required to ship goods from Asia to Europe and vice versa. This greatly facilitated the mostly agrarian Burmese society, and demand for Burmese rice skyrocketed.
- **They have not had a stable system of gov't, what's the cause of that?**
- Indigenous groups were not the only ones negatively affected by Ne Win's policies, and the deplorable state of the economy, coupled with corruption and food shortages, led to massive student protests in Yangon, also referred to as Rangoon, calling for a more democratic government.
- In 2008, the massive storm Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar. The government not only failed to provide aid to the victims of the storm, but also blocked or confiscated portions of international assistance.
- **They are far too reliant on the rice harvest**
- In 2011, state affairs finally took a positive turn when Thein Sein was chosen to be the president. He introduced a series of economic and political reforms, even relaxing the country's strict isolationist policies. He signed a ceasefire with several of the ethnic groups fighting in the civil war and gave more freedom to the press. With the lessening of tight military rule, and more credible elections, the NLD was finally able to secure a majority in both houses of parliament and elected Htin Kyaw as president in 2015.
- Although Kyaw is technically the president, influential party leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who spoke out against the junta for years but was unable to run for presidency because she is married to a foreigner, is widely considered the real leader of the country. She currently holds the position of State Counselor, a position created by Kyaw specifically for her. The office is similar to that of prime minister and holds considerable power
- **Check the legal protections that indigenous populations currently have**
- Two groups who illustrate the full extent of the harsh conditions still facing indigenous peoples are the Palaung and the Shan in the Shan State of Myanmar. For decades the two groups have face land encroachment and seizure by the Burmese military. In recent years, some Palaung and Shan individuals have combined with other ethnic minorities

have joined armed liberation movements to fight for their land and their right to self-determination

- **Thailand has a refugee problem w/ them...work w/ the refugees**
- The current persecution of the Rohingya is rooted in the past practices of the government and deep-seated prejudices of larger ethnic groups
  - currently not considered citizens of Myanmar. Under the 1982 Citizenship Law, the military junta extended to citizenship to select groups they deemed “indigenous” to Myanmar. However, they excluded the Rohingya from citizenship, claiming they neither fit the criteria of an indigenous group nor were they real citizens.<sup>14</sup> Since being stripped of their citizenship, the Rohingya have lost their right to self-determination, representation in the already undemocratic government, and any claims to indigenous lands
- Much of the hatred towards the Rohingya comes from the religion. The Rohingya are traditionally a Muslim people, while the rest of Myanmar is largely Islamophobic and the largest group in the Rakhine State is the extremist Rakhine Buddhists. The Buddhists refuse to acknowledge the heritage of the Rohingya, even going so far as to call them “Bengalis” instead of their true ethnic name
  - **Figure out the roots of the Islamophobia and address them + tolerance**
- Some 140,000 Rohingya have been forced into camps after being forced off of the land. Such camps tend to lack many necessities, like proper sanitation, water, and food. They often become breeding groups for diseases like pneumonia and tuberculosis, and some people also suffer from the effects of malnutrition.
- **Unfortunately, with little money, most refugees are forced to rely on smugglers to get them across the Bay of Bengal or other natural barriers.**
  - **Stricter law enforcement against this and sex trafficking**
    - **Most likely corrupt law enforcement**
- In 2011, the Myanmar army broke a seventeen-year cease-fire and fighting resumed in Myanmar’s northernmost region, the Kachin State, a longtime hotbed of civil war
- **Much of Aung San Suu Kyi’s efforts to create peace within the country are focused on the fighting in the Kachin state, including attempts to reform its \$31 billion jade industry. The industry, which has been prone to corruption, cronyism, and has been influenced by drug-lords will now be subject to stricter licensing and permit regulations**
  - **Drug addiction (+poverty) - look into organizations providing aid and add in drug addiction treatment**
- Democratic representation + representation at negotiations for indigenous populations
- **Perhaps the biggest challenge facing both her administration and the indigenous groups is Myanmar’s own past, which has been characterized by an oppressive government stealing from and mistreating its people for decades. This includes creating a path to citizenship for indigenous groups, allowing them to participate in the democracy (though the Rohingya are not citizens, there is still not a single Muslim legislator in the entire country), and return native lands.**
- PAST ACTIONS TO CITE:

- Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
  - drafted in 1985 by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, was finally adopted and formally accepted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007
  - contains 46 articles that detail the basic right of indigenous individuals, including children
  - native groups are covered by the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and international human rights law
  - indigenous peoples' right to education
  - freedom from discrimination
  - ability to fully participate in the workings of the state
  - protections of indigenous land from seizure by the state
  - protection of cultural traditions, and their right to self-determination and a nationality
  - **Urge to adopt and see where it can be strengthened**
  - how states should properly implement other agreements regarding the rights of indigenous groups including ILO Convention 169
- ILO Convention 169
  - This convention, headed by the International Labor Organization and ratified by more than twenty countries since 1989, corresponds directly to the content of UNDRIP
  - outlines the special rights of indigenous groups, highlighting the uniqueness of their livelihoods and tribal structures
  - state governments are responsible for “coordinating and organizing action to protect the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples and ensure that the right mechanisms and resources are available
  - **An international framework exists!!!**
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
  - Adopted November 1989
  - first human rights agreement to specifically address the rights of indigenous children
  - “as with all children, indigenous children have the general right to education, health, to be registered at birth, and to be protected from violence abuse and exploitation.”
  - given the unique situation of indigenous children, they “have the right to learn, use and practice their own language, customs and religions together with other members of their community.”
  - CRC gives the state the responsibility to provide accessible education and information to all children, as well as promote environments of tolerance and respect with regard to cultural identities, especially in state-run schools. In order to enforce implementation child rights and ensure the protection of children, The UN General Assembly appointed a Committee on the Rights of the Child, which uses both the CRC and



and promote acceptance, Myanmar culture must become more tolerant of all religions. How can the UN address this in their resolution? Should it be left to the individual country?

- 3. How should indigenous groups be represented within the Myanmar government?
  - Currently, some indigenous groups have no representation, which opens the door for other ethnic groups to create laws that harm native groups. How can the government be more inclusive?
- 4. How can Myanmar respect the culture and sovereignty of indigenous people while still granting them access to things like healthcare and education?
  - Should native groups be forced to assimilate into modern Burmese culture? How will they retain traditional languages while still having access to public schools? How should the government address traditional means of leadership or authority while still retaining their right to rule?
- 5. What should the government do to reduce the refugee crisis?
  - Thousands of people have fled the country, but many ended up in the hands of human traffickers or in foreign refugee camps where there are not enough resources to go around. Should the Myanmar government allow these refugees to return? How should they handle the citizenship of returning refugees? Should they be forced to compensate countries who accepted refugees?
- 6. Should the government return lands that were confiscated by the past military government?
  - Thousands of indigenous and nonindigenous ethnic minorities were forced off their land by the former government, which instead set up crony commercialized factories and fish farmers. This led them to become displaced and impoverished, without the farms they needed to get food and money. Should the government just give these lands back? How can the government determine old property lines? How should they deal with indigenous lands?
- 7. What steps can the government take to ensure the problems of the past do not recur?
  - What can it do to create lasting peace in the Kachin? How will it permanently clean up the jade trade? Can the new government protect itself from another military coup? What can it do to make sure its positive progress does not relapse?
- 8. How will the UN enforce the measures it passes in its resolutions?
  - Although the government under Aung San Suu Kyi has been much more compliant with the international community than the past military government, the committee only has the power to make recommendations. It cannot force the government to do anything unless intervention is deemed appropriate by the UN Security Council. The committee must therefore keep in mind that any resolution will have to be accepted by the government before implementation.
- CFR Backgrounder Myanmar:  
<http://www.cfr.org/human-rights/understanding-myanmar/p14385>
- the National League for Democracy, Myanmar's longtime opposition party, returned to the formal political process with a landslide electoral victory in late 2015 that gave it the

majority in both chambers of parliament, though the military continues to dominate important ministries.

- During the 1988 protests, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi rose to prominence as the leader of the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD). She was detained in 1989, and spent more than fifteen years in detention (both in prison and under house arrest) until she was released for the last time in 2010. In 1990, the junta held elections in which the NLD won 392 of 485 parliamentary seats, despite Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest. The military government refused to acknowledge the results, imprisoned many NLD politicians, forced others into exile, and continued to clamp down on dissent. In 1991, Aung San Suu Kyi was [awarded the Nobel Peace Prize](#) while still under house arrest.
- Rich natural resources...

A New Era for Myanmar - Trouble Ahead for Ethnic Minorities:

[http://file.prio.no/Publication\\_files/PRIO/Nilsen,%20Tonnesson%20-%20A%20New%20Era%20for%20Myanmar,%20PRIO%20Policy%20Brief%205-2016.pdf](http://file.prio.no/Publication_files/PRIO/Nilsen,%20Tonnesson%20-%20A%20New%20Era%20for%20Myanmar,%20PRIO%20Policy%20Brief%205-2016.pdf)

- There are two main tiers in Myanmar's peace process. The first is the process of negotiations between the government and the ethnic armed groups, initiated by former President U Thein Sein and led by Minister U Aung Min, with the aim of first signing a nationwide ceasefire accord (NCA), and then starting a national political dialogue about power sharing, decentralisation and political reforms.
- The second tier is a wider process of including ethnic minorities in political decisionmaking at the Union, state and regional levels, transforming the existing political structure from within, and arriving at a situation where the ethnic minorities are treated as equals to the Bamar majority in an ethnically inclusive national Union.
- As for the first tier, after five years of negotiations and attempts to build trust between the ethnic armed groups and the Union government, a general agreement was reached on the content of a NCA. The agreement signed on 15 October 2015 was meant to be applied nationwide, and most of the country's ethnic armed groups, which number upwards of 20, took part in its negotiation. Due to disagreement between the Myanmar armed forces (Tatmadaw) and some of the ethnic armed organisations over the inclusion of additional armed groups, only eight of them decided to sign. These included the Karen National Union (KNU), which had fought the central government continuously for 63 years. The Kachin Independence Army (KIA), however, did not sign. It had played a prominent role in the negotiations, and held sway over several smaller armed groups, who also did not sign. Fighting continued in Kachin State afterwards, and intense fighting flared up in northern Shan State, partly between the Tatmadaw and local non-signatory groups, and partly between signatory and non-signatory groups.
- Ethnic armed groups might gain from signing the NCA if they can be sure that representatives of their ethnic group will be listened to in a meaningful national political dialogue, but the general weakening of the ethnic minorities in the 2015 elections has reduced the prospects of this being the case.
- The foremost is the extraordinary nature of this particular election, which most people viewed as a referendum for or against military rule. Voters saw the election first and

foremost as a chance to end fifty years of military dictatorship and provide the military's main opponent since 1988, Aung San Suu Kyi, with a mandate to generate change.

- Second, the rivalry between several political parties seeking to represent the same ethnic group also contributed
- Ethnic minority parties need to realise that ethnic minority votes do not come for free. There is an urgent need for cooperation between them, within as well as across ethnic groups, and to mobilise the electorate on issues and policies of cross-ethnic concern, not just on ethnic loyalty
- With 57 percent of the votes, the NLD got 79 percent of the elected seats in the Union Parliament – which equals 57 percent of the elected and appointed seats combined. With the NLD's landslide victory, it will now be difficult to introduce a system of proportional representation or a hybrid system, like the one in Germany.
- President U Htin Kyaw's partly Mon ethnic background, Vice-President Henry Van Thio's Chin background and the appointment of Mon National Party's Naing Thet Lwin as Minister for Ethnic Affairs may be conciliatory factors. However, the Mon and the Chin are the least problematic of the large ethnic minorities from the government's point of view
- **How is Tatmadaw (military force) related to previous junta rulers?**
- **Ethnic minority members of the NLD and the USDP could advocate national reconciliation, power sharing and peace in their parties' policies, including reforms of the system of governance, minority language instruction, cultural rights, and social and economic development in ethnic minority areas.**
- **Civil society organisations may demand a place in the national political dialogue and hold the government accountable to its promises**
- **All ethnic armed organisations will need to become parties to the NCA and take part in monitoring it, so that the national political dialogue can be conducted under peaceful conditions, and all ethnic areas can benefit from a peace dividend in terms of aid to build schools, medical services and basic infrastructure.**
- **Selecting ethnic minority people with high local credibility as Chief Ministers in the seven ethnic states, and ensuring that they in turn appoint people representing all the main ethnic minorities of their state in the local governments.**
- **Promoting and financing local autonomy in the smaller ethnic minority areas, both within the Bamar-dominated regions and the seven ethnic states.**
- **Including representatives of ethnic minority parties in all committees and political decision-making bodies**
- **Engaging with the Commander-in-Chief to find a common platform for the peace negotiations that will allow the NCA to be signed by all armed groups so it can be applied nationwide.**

Minority Rights Council: <http://minorityrights.org/country/myanmarburma/>

- Myanmar, or Burma as it was known before 1989 until a coup d'état led to the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) assuming power, is the largest country in mainland South-East Asia and a meeting point for numerous population groups, being bordered by the People's Republic of China on the north-east, by Laos on the east, by

Thailand on the south-east, Bangladesh on the south-west and finally by India on the north.

- It has a very diverse environment, with snowy mountains in the north, a tropical climate in the south and major transnational river systems on its territory, such as the Mekong and Salween.



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Chin:

- Sino-Tibetan origin and inhabit a mountain chain which roughly covers western Burma through to Mizoram in north-east India (where they are related to the Mizos, Kuki and others) and small parts of Bangladesh. They are not a single group, but are in fact composed of a number of ethnic groups such as the Asho, Cho, Khumi, Kuki, Laimi, Lushai and Zomi, each with their language belonging to the Tibeto-Burman language branch. A mountain people by tradition, though this has been changing, perhaps 80 per cent of the Chin are Christians, while most of the remaining population are mainly Buddhists or animists, and according to some, a very small Jewish sect
- The Chin was one of the ethnic groups that signed the Panglong Agreement of 1947, with its promise of a federal structure in the new independent Burma. This was never fully implemented and contributed subsequently to the slide into civil war between the state and some of these groups within a decade, and particularly after the 1962 coup d'état by General Ne Win
- The authorities continue to close down Chin private schools without offering any practical alternatives for the education of minority children, for example in Hniarlawn in June 2006. Combined with the difficulty in accessing state schools and the denial of education in their own language, the Chin appear to continue to be severely disadvantaged by the military regime's educational and employment policies.

Kachin:



- The Kachin encompass a number of ethnic groups speaking almost a dozen distinct languages belonging to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family who inhabit the same region in the northern part of Burma on the border with China, mainly in Kachin State. Strictly speaking, these languages are not necessarily closely related, and the term Kachin at times is used to refer specifically to the largest of the groups (the Kachin or Jingpho/Jinghpaw) or to the whole grouping of Tibeto-Burman speaking minorities in the region, which include the Maru, Lisu, Lashu, etc.
- The exact Kachin population is unknown due to the absence of reliable census in Burma for more than 60 years. Most estimates suggest there may be in the vicinity of 1 million Kachin in the country. The Kachin, as well as the Chin, are one of Burma's largest Christian minorities: though once again difficult to assess, it is generally thought that between two-thirds and 90 per cent of Kachin are Christians, with others following animist practices of Buddhists.
- The Kachin were one of the ethnic minorities which participated in and signed the Panglong Agreement of 1947, and as such they received in-principle approval for the creation of a separate Kachin State, which eventuated in the first constitution of newly independent Burma. For a time this was sufficient, and there was no immediate insurgency against the government of Burma.
- **Employment, education, economic opportunities**
- However, over the past 13 years, unsustainable and unaccountable logging and mining activities have taken their toll on the natural environment of Kachin State, with reports in 2007 pointing the finger at Burma's military junta which, for example, has given permits for gold-mining in the Hugaung Valley Tiger Reserve in northern Kachin State leading to the displacement of thousands of local inhabitants. These and other similar activities appear to favour selected companies and individuals closely connected to the ruling regime, and at the same time have an ethnic component as ethnic Burmese are encouraged to work and settle in some of the areas where the mining and logging activities occur
- *In addition to the same type of violations of human rights experienced by many of the country's ethnic minorities, the Kachin still appear to be targeted specifically by Burmese authorities because of their Christian beliefs. There were continuing reports in 2005 and 2006 of Kachin being subjected to conversion activities and discriminatory treatment by authorities because of their religion, such as rewards if they convert to Buddhism or exemption from forced labour, lower prices for basic foodstuffs such as rice and greater educational opportunities. There were also claims in 2006 of Kachin Christian parents being offered free schooling for their children at Buddhist monasteries, and of Burmese soldiers being encouraged by authorities to marry Kachin women to convert them to Buddhism.*
  - **Address legally**

Karen:

- The term 'Karen' actually refers to a number of ethnic groups with Tibetan-Central Asian origins who speak 12 related but mutually unintelligible languages ('Karenic languages')

that are part of the Tibeto-Burman group of the Sino-Tibetan family. Around 85 per cent of Karen belong either to the S'ghaw language branch, and are mostly Christian and animist living in the hills, or the Pwo section and are mostly Buddhists. The vast majority of Karen are Buddhists (probably over two-thirds), although large numbers converted to Christianity during British rule and are thought to constitute about 30 per cent among the Karen. The group encompasses a great variety of ethnic groups, such as the Karenni, Padaung (also known by some as 'long-necks' because of the brass coils worn by women that appear to result in the elongation of their necks), Bghai, Brek, etc.

- While accounts differ as to what exactly occurred after independence in January 1948, it is thought that Karen and other non-Burman units in the former colonial army remained largely loyal to newly elected Prime Minister U Nu, who faced a Communist rebellion. However, mistrust on both the Karen and Burman sides apparently led Prime Minister U Nu to use elements from the BIA to raise a more ethnically Burmese army which, some claim, turned against the Karen.
- 1994, the KNA saw its main headquarters in Manerplaw, near the Thai border, fall to the tatmadaw. It was also in that year that a group of Buddhist soldiers in the KNLA (now known as the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, or DKBA) went over to the side of the Burmese regime, alleging among other things Christian domination and anti-Buddhist discrimination in the KNU. Since then, while the KNU and KNLA are still involved in armed resistance against the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC, the successor to SLORC), *they have mainly conducted low-level guerrilla activities from temporary jungle camps on the Thai–Burma border. It appears clear, however, that since 1988 the KNU has lost control of its once extensive 'liberated zones' in Burma.*
- Increased Burmese army troop deployment in offensives against the Karen in 2006 led to the continued use of forced labour by thousands of Karen civilians in 2006, as well as by thousands of prisoners used for portering and – according to some reports – subsequently executed by the army.
- **Numerous reports continue to point out that government jobs in Karen areas appear to be increasingly the reserved domain of ethnic Burman.**

Karenni:

- Like many ethnic classifications in Burma, 'Karenni' is a collective term constructed during the colonial era that does not represent a single ethnic group. Karenni, sometimes also known as the Red Karen (so-called because it was a favoured colour in traditional clothing) or Kayah, actually refers to a Karen grouping which includes a number of ethnic groups that speak related Tibeto-Burman languages such as Kekhu, Bre, Kayah, Yangtalai, Geba, Zayein and Paku.
- **Rebuilding mechanism**
- In addition to the destruction of property, violence and other human rights violations committed by the military on Karenni and Karen, it appears that there may also be a State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) strategy to control some of the region's valuable natural resources – not least linked to the construction of dams on the Salween.

Mon:

- While some Mon groups contend that there are between 4 million and 8 million in Burma, 2007 estimates from sources such as the US State Department are much lower, being in the vicinity of 2 per cent of the country's total population, or just below 1 million. The latter estimates appear much too low though, perhaps because they may refer to speakers of Mon, whereas higher estimates may be of those who have Mon ancestry. Most ethnic Mon live in or near Mon State, wedged between Thailand to its east and the Andaman Sea coastline to its west.
- Mon is a Monic language from the Mon-Khmer group of Austro-Asiatic languages, though many also use the Burmese language and are literate only in Burmese. The vast majority of Mon are Theravada Buddhists, with some elements of animist practices.
- The Burmese army has continued to conduct occasional raids in those Mon areas where the ceasefire has not held. Severe human rights violations have been registered, including enforced labour, displacement, rape and murder, and widespread land confiscation. As a result, there has been a mass exodus of Mon to Thailand. Indeed, the SPDC's military presence has increased dramatically since 2000: the number of army regiments in Ye Township increased from two to ten by 2007. This has also continued to hamper efforts to redress the number of internally displaced persons in Mon State, which after the 1995 ceasefire rose to 20,000.
- Due to increasing government restrictions, Médecins Sans Frontières pulled out after four years of work in parts of Mon State. As a result, Mon resettlement sites appear to have run out of basic medical supplies by mid-2007 and had to seek other sources. Other UN and international agencies based in Yangon (Rangoon) continue to have very limited access to the Mon ceasefire areas.
- The Mon continue to be vastly under-represented in most state institutions, which seems to be partially due to discriminatory government policies and practices in hiring and promotion processes which favour ethnic Burman.

#### Muslims and Rohingya

- Muslims in Burma, most of whom are Sunni, constitute at least 4 per cent of the country's entire population (CIA World Factbook, 2006), with the largest concentration in the north of Rakhine State (also known as Arakan), especially around Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Rathedaung, Akyab and Kyauktaw.
- There are a number of distinct Muslim communities in Burma, not all of which share the same cultural or ethnic background. While the country's largest Muslim population resides in Rakhine State (also known as Arakan), it is actually made up of two distinct groups: those whose ancestors appear to be long established, going back hundreds and hundreds of years, and others whose ancestors arrived more recently during the British colonial period (from 1824 until 1948).
- The majority of Muslims in Rakhine State refer to themselves as 'Rohingya': their language (Rohingya) is derived from the Bengali language and is similar to the Chittagonian dialect spoken in nearby Chittagong, in Bangladesh.
- Their status was subsequently downgraded under the 1974 Constitution, which does not recognize them as indigenous, and the Citizenship Act of 1982, which states that citizens must belong to one of 135 'national races' as recognized under the constitution, or

whose ancestors settled in the country before 1823. Given the lack of documentation to satisfy the latter requirement, the result has been a hugely discriminatory denial of citizenship for most Rohingya and many other Muslims, effectively rendering them stateless. As a result, they have faced numerous discriminatory obstacles in access to education, health, travel, many areas of employment and even in terms of receiving permits allowing them to get married.

- State Peace and Development Council/State Law and Order Restoration Council (SPDC/SLORC) policies since the 1990s appear to be aimed at reducing the presence of Muslims in Rakhine State through a series of discriminatory policies: large areas of arable land are expropriated, usually without any or with inadequate compensation. These areas are either left to go back to jungle or used for military and police camps, plantations, shrimp farms and other economic projects controlled by military interests, or they are handed over as part of a massive colonization project to settle Buddhists in 'model villages' on lands confiscated from the Rohingya in the northern part of Rakhine State. Since this colonization project is part of official government policy, the (mainly) Buddhist families in these model villages not only benefit from 'free' land (about 4 acres), they also receive a pair of oxen and a house – the latter sometimes constructed by Rohingya of neighbouring villages through forced, unpaid, labour.
- Lack of citizenship has meant that for the last couple of decades most Rohingya and many other Muslims are excluded from a large number of employment categories: public school teachers, university lecturers, government doctors and health personnel, and most other government employment opportunities are restricted to citizens; thus in practice the Rohingya are banned from all of these jobs because of the discriminatory nature of the citizenship requirements.
- As the capital, Sittwe, has the only university in Rakhine State, Rohingya students living outside the capital are effectively unable to join university on a full-time basis because of the travel restrictions and can only study through distance education: even if, in theory, they could obtain a pass to sit their examinations in the capital, in practice they face serious difficulties in obtaining such passes.
- **Opening universities should be simple enough**

#### Shan

- Most ethnic Shan live in the Shan State, though there are also pockets in other parts of Burma such as in Kachin State. Most of them are Theravada Buddhists, with some elements of animist practices, and speak a language which is part of the Tai-Kadai language family, and closely related to Thai and Lao.
- Largest minority
- Reports continue to emerge of the military confiscating large tracts of land farmed by Shan, and then 'renting' the land back to them for an annual fee. This and other obstacles and regulations imposed by government authorities, such as forbidding the trade of rice and other foodstuffs outside of local areas, has effectively led to a decrease in overall goods productivity in some Shan areas, contrary to government reports.

- A new development with harmful consequences for members of the ethnic Shan minority is the proposed Tasang Dam in Shan State which, if completed, would be the tallest hydroelectric dam in South-East Asia. The SPDC signed an agreement with a Thai company in April 2006 for the construction of the dam, which is expected to have a flood plain covering hundreds of square kilometres: a Shan environmental group has reported that 60,000 people – mainly ethnic Shan – have already been forcibly relocated from the flood zone, while the Burmese army has tripled the number of its battalions in the area, accompanied by an increase in forced labour and other human rights abuses.

#### Myanmar/Burma

- Main languages: Burmese (official language), Shan, Karen, Rakhine, Chin, Kachin, Mon, Chinese, etc.
- Main religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Animism
- Main minority groups: Shan 9%, Karen 7%, Rakhine 4%, Chinese 3%, Indian 2%, Mon 2%, others 5% (2007 estimate from CIA World Factbook; no reliable census available since the Second World War)

#### Economy: Myanmar's moment:

<http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/asia-pacific/myanmars-moment>

- Among Myanmar's intrinsic strengths are its rich endowments of natural gas, oil, and precious and semi-precious stones—though the experience of other countries shows that resources can be a mixed blessing.. Myanmar accounts for 90 percent of the world's jade production and is among the top producers of rubies and sapphires. Myanmar also has the 25th-largest endowment of arable land and ten times the per capita water endowment of China and India. Myanmar is blessed with a large working-age population (aged 15 to 64) estimated at 46 million out of an estimated population of 60 million, and an estimated three million to five million migrants working abroad whose experience would benefit the country if they were to return home
- Myanmar is also fortunate in its location at the crossroads between Bangladesh, China, India, Laos, and Thailand, countries that are home to more than 40 percent of the world's population and are huge potential markets. Overall, Myanmar is close to a market of more than half a billion people.<sup>2</sup> And by 2025 over half of the world's consuming class, that is, those with income of more than \$10 a day, will live within a five-hour flight of Myanmar. Not only are such Asian economies growing rapidly but economic integration in the region is gathering momentum, and Myanmar is part of that process. It chairs the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2014. In addition, Myanmar is garnering considerable support from multilateral institutions and donors. Sanctions are being lifted, and foreign governments have opened embassies after many years of absence. Dozens of trade delegations have visited Myanmar in the past year alone, an indication of interest from potential investors.
- If current productivity and demographic trends hold, Myanmar's economy may grow by less than 4 percent a year. But that could increase to 8 percent if the country diversified its economy and more than doubled its labor-productivity growth—a difficult but not unprecedented feat

- And the country's early stage of economic development gives it a "greenfield" advantage: an opportunity to build a "fit for purpose" economy to suit the modern world.
- Managed well, Myanmar could conceivably quadruple the size of its economy, from \$45 billion in 2010 to more than \$200 billion in 2030—creating upward of ten million nonagricultural jobs in the process. Myanmar's moment: Unique opportunities, major challenges, a new report from the McKinsey Global Institute, discusses the challenges of meeting this ambitious goal and points to several areas that could help unlock high growth.
- The report finds that if current demographic and labor-productivity trends continue, Myanmar could grow by less than 4 percent a year. But it has the potential to grow by 8 percent a year if it accelerates the rate of annual labor-productivity growth, to 7 percent, from 2.7 percent—a difficult but not unprecedented feat (exhibit).
- Only a diversified economy can double its labor productivity; relying exclusively on energy and mining would not suffice. All the fundamentals—political and macroeconomic stability, the rule of law, enablers such as skills and infrastructure—must be in place. The report also finds that four areas, which have thus far received little attention, could underpin growth and productivity.
  - 1. Harnessing digital technology. Myanmar is beginning its economic-development journey in the digital age, when mobile and Internet technology are increasingly affordable. Harnessing these tools to the fullest could help the country leapfrog to a more advanced stage of development, but that would call for an aggressive telecommunications-infrastructure plan.
  - 2. Supporting a structural shift toward manufacturing. While other emerging economies have experienced a structural shift away from agriculture toward manufacturing, Myanmar's reliance on agriculture has increased. Today, the country's manufacturing sector is small in absolute terms—less than half the size of Vietnam's—but it has the potential to be Myanmar's largest by 2030.
  - 3. Preparing for urbanization. The vast majority of Myanmar's citizens live in rural areas, but this is likely to change rapidly. The share of the population in large cities could double, from just 13 percent today to around 25 percent in 2030—an additional ten million people, or two cities the size of Yangon. Myanmar would benefit from preparing for this change through investment, planning, and a shift to local governance.
  - 4. Connecting to the world. Myanmar must consider the best way of reconnecting to the global economy through investment, trade, and flows of people. The nation potentially needs more than \$170 billion of foreign capital to meet its overall investment requirement of \$650 billion and should develop a targeted strategy to attract it. Trade volumes are not only low but also undiversified, and Myanmar could expand its trade opportunities and increase population flows to encourage knowledge transfers, the building of skills, and expanded tourism.
- To implement that agenda, Myanmar's government is likely to require more capacity and may consider setting up a delivery unit dedicated to solving problems and driving the implementation of change. The nation's businesses could consider their opportunities in different markets, quickly reach international quality standards, and explore foreign

partnerships. International companies must move fast, be prepared to commit to Myanmar for the long term, and consider partnerships with local firms.

- Humanitarian Law:

[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/burma0312ForUpload\\_1.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/burma0312ForUpload_1.pdf)

- The fundamental tenets of this law are “civilian immunity” and “distinction.”<sup>180</sup> These tenets impose a duty at all times during the conflict to distinguish between combatants and civilians, and to target only combatants.<sup>181</sup> Also protected are civilian objects, which are defined as anything not considered a military objective.
- Prohibited are direct attacks against civilian objects, such as homes, places of worship, hospitals, and schools, unless they are being used for military purposes.
- Humanitarian law also requires the humane treatment of civilians and captured combatants. It prohibits violence to life and person, particularly murder, mutilation, cruel treatment, and torture. It is also unlawful to commit rape and other sexual violence; targeted killings of civilians who are not directly participating in the armed conflict; or engage in pillaging and looting
- International law prohibits torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. Torture is defined under international law as any act intentionally inflicting “severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental” on a person for such purposes as obtaining “information or a confession,” as punishment, or in order to intimidate or coerce.<sup>192</sup> Torture and other ill-treatment are prohibited as violations of both international humanitarian law<sup>193</sup> and international human rights law.<sup>194</sup> It is also considered a violation of customary international law,<sup>195</sup> which as a crime of universal jurisdiction that can be prosecuted anywhere in the world.<sup>196</sup> Sexual violence, including rape, is a human rights violation defined as any non-consensual or coercive sexual act by a state actor, including “all forms of sexual threat, assault, interference and exploitation.”<sup>197</sup> Sexual violence is prohibited under customary international law and international human rights law, including by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Burma is a state party.<sup>198</sup> Sexual violence is also prohibited under international humanitarian law
- The Burmese army’s use of forced labor in conflict zones violates international humanitarian and human rights law, as well as Burma’s domestic law. Common Article 3 to the 1949 Geneva Conventions provides for the humane treatment of persons under the control of an armed force.<sup>200</sup> The laws of war prohibit the use of uncompensated or abusive forced labor, including work directly related to the conduct of military operations or that would oblige them to take part in military operations.<sup>201</sup> As a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Burma is obligation to uphold the ILO core conventions, which prohibit the use of forced labor.<sup>202</sup> Burma’s domestic law likewise prohibits forced labor and criminalizes its procurement.
- International humanitarian law and human rights law applicable in Burma prohibit the recruitment and use of children as soldiers. Customary international

humanitarian law prohibits all parties to a conflict from recruiting and using all children below the age of 15.<sup>204</sup> This standard is also reflected in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>205</sup> Burma's relevant national law, the Regulation for the Persons Subject to the Defense Services Act, prohibits the recruitment of children under the age of 18 to be soldiers. Furthermore, the KIA's internal regulations prohibit the recruitment and use of child under the age of 18

- Individuals who deliberately or recklessly commit serious violations of international humanitarian law are responsible for war crimes
- The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement provide authoritative standards for the obligations of governments to internally displaced persons. Under the principles, the authorities are to provide displaced people "at a minimum" with safe access to essential food and potable water, basic shelter and housing, appropriate clothing, and essential medical services and sanitation
- Recommendations:
  - **To International Humanitarian Agencies and Donor Community**
    - **Expand support and cooperation with local community-based organizations, particularly those with direct access to ethnic conflict areas.**
    - **Continue to seek increased humanitarian access from the Burmese government and ethnic opposition groups to all areas of ethnic conflict.**
    - **Press the Burmese government and KIO to act in accordance with their international legal obligations, particularly with respect to the laws of war and humanitarian access.**
    - **Provide reproductive and sexual health services for survivors of sexual assault, particularly in Burma's ethnic conflict areas.**
    - **Support the initiation of humanitarian mine-clearance programs and provide expanded assistance to landmine survivors.**
  - **To International Labor Organization (ILO)**
    - **Strengthen the ILO operation in Burma to ensure both the effective application of the Supplementary Understanding Forced Labour Complaints Mechanism (2007), which includes access to legal redress for complainants, and enhanced monitoring and reporting mechanisms on the different categories of forced labor.**
  - **To Governments**
    - **Publicly and privately call on the Burmese government and ethnic armed groups to end violations of international human rights and humanitarian law during military operations.**
    - **Support an independent international mechanism to investigate alleged violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by all parties to the conflicts in Burma.**
    - **Support the establishment of a United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights office in Burma with a standard protection, promotion, and technical assistance mandate.**



- **Press the Burmese government to establish a domestic mechanism to provide prompt and adequate compensation for victims of abuses by its security forces.**
- **Publicly call on all parties to the conflict to facilitate access by domestic and international humanitarian agencies to both government- and KIA-controlled areas of Kachin State and northern Shan State, and other areas in the country where populations are at risk.**
- **Provide needed support to local and international humanitarian agencies impartially providing assistance in ethnic conflict areas and those administering cross-border aid. Press the Burmese government and KIO to allow them full access to populations in need.**
- **To Myanmar**
  - **Ensure that returns of displaced persons and refugees take place in accordance with international standards, on a voluntary basis with attention to the safety and dignity of the returning population. Particular attention should be given to the issues of antipersonnel mine action, including mine-risk education; demarcation of mine contaminated areas; and prompt humanitarian demining. Sustainable solutions for return and reintegration should be sought in consultation with displaced communities, and should provide for options to settle in areas other than their original villages.**
- **To Myanmar's Parliament**
  - **Commission a transparent, independent, and public audit of the budget and spending of the armed forces.**

Myanmar's Rights Record 2014:

[http://blogs.cfr.org/asia/2015/02/27/myanmars-rights-record-deteriorates-in-2014/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed:+AsiaUnbound/JKurlantzick+\(Asia+Unbound+](http://blogs.cfr.org/asia/2015/02/27/myanmars-rights-record-deteriorates-in-2014/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:+AsiaUnbound/JKurlantzick+(Asia+Unbound+)

- Program toward improvement in political and civil rights in Myanmar “stalled” and went into reverse in 2014
- government prevented humanitarian aid from reaching refugees in areas where the army is still battling ethnic insurgencies
- There have been numerous reports of rights violations by both ethnic Kokang insurgents and by the military in the northeast conflict during the past two months. Aid workers trying to evacuate displaced people in the northeast have had their convoys, which were flying the symbol of the Red Cross, fired upon.
- **the Myanmar military still operates without sufficient civilian control, fostering a culture of impunity for officers and generals that only abets rights abuses**
- **The ethnic insurgencies in the north and northeast still fester due to a lack of trust-building between Naypyidaw and many of the ethnic militias.**
- **In addition, although the media environment and the environment for public expression is far freer than it was under military rule, Myanmar's leaders still seem**

**unwilling to create the foundations of a truly free press, allowing for journalists to be routinely harassed by authorities and jailed for their reporting.**

Turmoil in Burma: Contested Legitimacies:

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/2007-01-01/turmoil-burma-contested-legitimacies-myanmar>

- It is conventional to randomly alternate the order in which the two names are used -- as Steinberg does -- to show that one is striving to be nonpartisan. That highlights the problem of legitimacy, with the junta, which came to power through a coup, insisting on Myanmar, while the leader of the democratic opposition, Aung San Suu Kyi, holds that the name should be Burma

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/southeast-asia/2015-03-18/development-democracy>

- *in early 2014, after the World Bank published a damning report on Myanmar's negative economic reality, U.S. President Barack Obama extended the executive orders that prohibit U.S. businesses and individuals from investing in Myanmar.*
  - Check if this is still valid
- members of ASEAN accrued significant financial benefits during the 20 years of sanctions on Myanmar, and they may not be eager to give them up. Myanmar's regional partners enjoy uniquely protected positions in its resource-rich economy; true economic and political reforms may jeopardize these advantages if they lead to an increase in market competitors. As the United States tightened sanctions over 20 years, China, Germany, India, Japan, Malaysia, and Thailand became [Myanmar's main trading partners](#), accounting for over 90 percent of the nation's trade by volume.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/burma-myanmar/2015-10-01/out-darkness>

- Power sector
- It is believed that the national power grid currently [connects less than a third of Myanmar's 51 million people](#). More than half the wiring in the country, which is roughly the size of Texas, is estimated to be at least 70 years old. Without adequate power, Myanmar will never see a [transition toward a brighter future](#); without power, advances in education, health care, industry, and regional development, it is simply not possible
- Revamping the nation's electrification system, however, will not be easy. [Myanmar's installed electric capacity](#)—approximately 4,500 megawatts (MW), according to government figures—is a fraction of what it should be for a country of its size. Thailand, by comparison, has a comparable land mass and population, but its installed capacity is roughly [ten times larger than that of Myanmar](#). Adding to the problem, about 27 percent of electricity generated in Myanmar is lost in transmission due to the system's antiquated nature. [Seasonal fluctuations in hydropower](#)—Myanmar's largest source of electricity—

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/burma-myanmar/2016-03-30/myanmars-shaky-transition>

- Corruption is widespread
- ethnic violence remains entrenched, economic reform is sorely needed
- crucially, the military, or Tatmadaw, is still the most powerful political force in the country
- Constitution:
  - it assigns the Tatmadaw 25 percent of all seats in both houses of the legislature.

- Second, it requires a majority of more than 75 percent to approve any constitutional amendment.
- Third, it prohibits anyone with a foreign spouse or child from becoming president, a provision likely written with the president of the NLD and long-time opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi in mind: Her children are British citizens.

#### AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT 2014/15 THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S HUMAN RIGHTS

- the military still held a veto power on any future constitutional changes.
- On 30 March, (2014??) one day before the start of the first national census in Myanmar since 1983, the Ministry of Information announced that Rohingya would have to register as “Bengalis” – a term used to deny recognition to the Rohingya and to imply that they are all migrants from Bangladesh. In October, the government announced a new Rakhine State Action Plan which if implemented would further entrench discrimination and segregation of Rohingya. The announcement of the plan appeared to trigger a new wave of people fleeing the country in boats, adding to the more than 87,000 who, according to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, had already fled by sea since the violence started in 2012
- The government and ethnic armed groups failed to agree to a nationwide ceasefire, despite the signing in 2012 of preliminary ceasefire agreements. The armed conflict in Kachin and Northern Shan states continued into its fourth year
- The conflict started in June 2011 after the Myanmar Army broke its ceasefire with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA)
- The Myanmar Army was reported to have discharged 376 children and young adults from its forces as part of ongoing efforts to end the use of child soldiers and underage military recruitment
- The President failed to keep his promise to release all prisoners of conscience by the end of 2013, despite a far-reaching Presidential Pardon announced on 30 December 2013. Muslim leader Dr Tun Aung was among those not released under the pardon
  - **Prisoners of Conscience - a person who has been imprisoned for holding political or religious views that are not tolerated by their own government.**
- failures to resolve or respond to land disputes led farmers and other affected people increasingly to resort to so-called “plough protests”, with farmers ploughing the disputed land
- **citing lack of evidence. The MNHRC remained largely ineffective in responding to complaints of human rights violations. In March, the law establishing the MNHRC was adopted by the national Parliament and a new Commission was formed in September. Most members were government-affiliated and the selection and appointment process lacked transparency, casting further doubts on the independence and effectiveness of the Commission**

CFR: Rohingya Migrant Crisis:

<http://www.cfr.org/burmamyanmar/rohingya-migrant-crisis/p36651>

- Rohingya
  - **Myanmar's western Rakhine state;**

- **Look at the diff states in Myanmar**

- they practice a Sufi-inflected variation of Sunni Islam.
- The estimated one million Rohingya in Myanmar account for nearly a third of Rakhine's population
- Rakhine state's dominant ethnic Buddhist group, known as the Rakhine
- Fleeing repression and extreme poverty, more than eighty-eight thousand migrants [took to sea](#) from the Bay of Bengal between January 2014 and May 2015, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- A series of [attacks](#) on security posts along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border in October 2016 revived ethnic violence in Rakhine state
- Later that month, Nov 2016, John McKissick, head of the UN refugee agency, said the Myanmar government was carrying out "[ethnic cleansing](#)" of the Rohingya people. Malaysia's foreign minister [described](#) the Myanmar government's actions as ethnic cleansing and called on stopping the practice. Separately, protestors [gathered](#) in cities in Thailand, Indonesia, and Bangladesh to condemn the killing and persecution of Rohingya.
- Where are they migrating:
  - Bangladesh
    - [hosts \(PDF\)](#) more than thirty-two thousand registered refugees; more than two hundred thousand additional unregistered Rohingya refugees are believed to live in the country, according to UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates. However, conditions in most of the country's refugee camps are [dire](#)
  - Malaysia
    - As of June 2016, more than [90 percent](#) of Malaysia's 150,700 registered refugees are from Myanmar, including tens of thousands of Rohingya, according the UN. Rohingya who have arrived safely in Malaysia have [no legal status](#) and are [unable to work](#)
    - **Not only better camps and legalization process but also education for kids and healthcare**
  - Thailand
    - Thailand is a hub for regional human smuggling and trafficking activities and serves as a common transit point for Rohingya. Migrants often arrive by boat from Bangladesh or Myanmar before moving on foot to Malaysia or continuing by boat to Indonesia or Malaysia. A 2013 Reuters report [found](#) that some Thai authorities were colluding with smuggling and trafficking networks in the exploitation of detained Rohingya
  - Indonesia
    - The Rohingya have also sought refuge in Indonesia, although the number of refugees there remains relatively modest. During the spring 2015 migration surge, Indonesia's military chief expressed concerns that easing immigration restrictions would [spark an influx](#) of people

- Aung San Suu Kyi, who has vowed to push for national peace and reconciliation, established a [nine-person commission](#) in August 2016, led by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to discuss options for resolving ethnic strife in Rakhine state. The advisory committee, whose final report is expected by the end of August 2017, is intended to make recommendations to reduce communal tension and support much-needed development efforts in the impoverished state
- States in Southeast Asia [lack established legal frameworks](#) to provide for the protection of rights for refugees
- **Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand—all ASEAN members—have yet to ratify the UN Refugee Convention and its Protocol**

Religion: A Tool of Dictators to Cleanse Ethnic Minority in Myanmar?

<http://iafor.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Article-2-iafor-ethics-journal-volume1-issue1-2.pdf>

- Today, the Theravada Buddhism is practiced by the Burman, Mon, Shan, Rakhine, and some Karens, peoples. In 1962, General Ne Win, who ruled the country from 1962 to 1988, promised that the government would not involve itself in mixing religion and politics. Against his promise, his government had clamped down on all forms of organization, including many Buddhist organizations
- During the time of preparation for independence from Britain, General Aung San had tried hard negotiating with the ethnic minority groups to join the new union promising that after a decade they would consider their independence. With this promise, the Chin, Kachin and Shan leaders signed the Panglong Agreement on February 12, 1947. This date was called as the “Union Day.”
- Since the formation of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) and the Military Revolution Council in 1962, Myanmar was administered by the military in which there were no ethnic leaders in government administration
- Since the formation of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) and the Military Revolution Council in 1962, Myanmar was administered by the military in which there were no ethnic leaders in government administration
- Publishing the Chin Bible is prohibited and it is considered illegal. According to Asia News, in 2000 alone, about 16,000 copies were seized and burnt.
- The ethnic minority languages and literatures were taught for five years in the primary schools before 1964. During the socialist period, they were taught for three years. But they were finally banned in public schools about the end of Ne Win’s regime (Lynn). The promotion of ethnic languages and literatures plays an essential part in respecting ethnic cultural identity. But today, many young ethnic minorities cannot speak nor write in their own languages
- Adherence or conversion to Buddhism is generally a prerequisite for promotion to senior government and military ranks.
- **Religion has been used as a tool for legitimizing their power. The dictators clearly understand that more than two thirds of the population are Buddhist. In every state activity the military leaders are on the side of Buddhists**

- In short, we can summarize that the military government has used Buddhism as a state religion and it fully supports that religion in order to legitimize its power to control the country where two thirds of the population is Buddhist.
- The Government has continued to show a preference for Theravada Buddhism while controlling the other organizations and restricting the activities and expressions of the Buddhist clergy (Sangha). Any organization that does not support the government is denounced as an illegal organization. Based on the 1990 Sangha Organization Law, the Government banned any organization of Buddhist monks other than the nine state-recognized monastic orders. Authorities frequently refused to approve requests for gatherings to celebrate traditional Christian and Islamic holidays and restricted the number of Muslims that could gather in one place. For instance, in late 2006 a prominent Muslim religious organization planned to hold a golden jubilee in Mawlamyine, Mon State, to celebrate the founding of their organization. After they requested permission to hold the event, the local Division Commander, Brigadier General Thet Naing Win, called representatives of all nonBuddhist religious organizations in the area to a meeting. He informed them that permission would not be granted to hold any religious functions or ceremonies due to security reasons. None of the Buddhists ever faced such restrictions and difficulties in holding their religious events and feast.
- there are some elements that mention the government campaign for “Burmanization.” For instance, the NaTaLa, the Buddhist movement in the Chin States, focuses on converting poor Christians to Buddhism with the aim of assimilating them to the Burma group
- The 2008 Constitution of the Union of Myanmar forbids discrimination on ethnic or religious grounds. But it also states that misusing religions for political purpose is forbidden. Some argue that this paragraph paves the way for persecuting religious minorities, as any public activity can easily be construed as being for political purposes (Lehman)
- POP QUIZ IN CHEM ENG