

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

The world experienced notorious historical events during the 20<sup>th</sup> century that all began from “a flash of fire and burnt the whole building.” The situation in Burma is currently not just an internal affair but could badly affect the world society if we let it worsen any further without taking urgent, effective, and considerable action.<sup>102</sup> As noted by the former UN Secretary General in 1997, the military regime’s gross human rights violation is one of the top agendas in all of today regional and global meetings, forums, and conferences. It is the time for the world citizen to consider seriously how to prevent more prospective inhumane incidents in Burma.

The international responses to humanitarian situation in Burma have been varied considerably. The United States strongly condemned the Burmese government and stands alone the extent of the sanctions. The United States also put their efforts to bring the issue of Burma to the briefing in the UN Security Council. Yet, the efforts have failed due to the opposition of Russian and China. Two main opponents argued that the case of Burma is an internal affairs of a sovereign state and, thus, the UN Security Council has nothing to do with Burma. This is a significant reason why the military junta successfully evades from international accountability.

The international community has continuously called for the United Nations intervention in Burma. The traditional notion of intervention is a breach of state sovereignty and its related norm of non-interference, which are the prime structural components of international relations. Humanitarian intervention is expressed in the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) report as the responsibility to protect, which is a new moral awareness of the responsibility of each for the human security of all, and of all for the human security

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<sup>102</sup> “Time for UN Intervention in Burma/Myanmar: A Threat to International Peace and Security,” National Council of the Union of Burma, October 2003, p. 44.

of each. Humanitarian intervention become a component of human security where the basic needs and rights of individuals needs to be preserved and protected in the modern age. The interventions for humanitarian purposes in other states are ranging from humanitarian assistance, economic sanctions to military intervention.

Humanitarian assistance is the activities of international organizations in delivering humanitarian aid in the conflict areas. International aid organizations have done much over the last decade to promote human development in Burma and would be in a position to do much more if the current external and internal political constrains were relaxed.<sup>103</sup> The UN Security Council's decision to put Burma in its permanent agenda is believed to pave the way for humanitarian organizations to perform much better in addressing problems and protecting individual rights in Burma.

Economic sanctions represent bad public policy for a number of reasons. Not only are they generally not effective, sanctions can cause severe hardship even when they are successful in achieving their aims. The problem is not only that they usually do not work, but that great harm can come to the people of the receiving country. Examples can be seen in the sanctions imposed by the U.S. that closed the market for goods and forced thousands of people out of work. The smart sanction regime is proposed instead to target on specific actors in the military junta to avoid the impact on ordinary Burmese people.

Humanitarian military intervention seems impossible in the current multi-polar world where multiple centers of power are based on economic interdependence. The hidden veto in the Security Council makes it difficult for the use of force to remove the military junta and install another. It is also likely that an action of humanitarian intervention aimed at overthrowing the military regime will result in a power vacuum. The internal differences and conflicts between the varied ethnic groups could be stirred up by the desire to fill in this vacuum. Therefore, in this sense,

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<sup>103</sup> ICG, "Myanmar: The Politics of Humanitarian Aid," p. 29.

humanitarian intervention can only be effective if the international community has a clear plan for its follow-up.<sup>104</sup>

The argument against intervention is that peace and the transition to democracy should be sought through negotiation, backed-up by strong foreign diplomacy and activism. Snyder pointed out that countries transitioning to democracy, with weak political institutions, are more likely than other states to get into international and civil wars. In the last 15 years, wars or large-scale civil violence followed experiments with mass electoral democracy in countries including Armenia, Burundi, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Russia, and the former Yugoslavia. In part, this violence is caused by several ethnic groups' competing demands for national self-determination, often a problem in new, multiethnic democracies. The violence that is vexing the experiment with democracy in Iraq is just the latest chapter in a turbulent story that began with the French Revolution.<sup>105</sup>

Obviously, the idea of military intervention should be considered, if only to pressure the dictatorship and force it to negotiate with sincerity. Columbia University political scientist Michael W. Doyle's articles on democratic peace warned that, though democracies never fight each other, they are prone to launch messianic struggles against warlike authoritarian regimes to "make the world safe for democracy."<sup>106</sup> The belief that democracies never fight wars against each other is the core liberal thought to pull Burma from the humanitarian crisis to the democratic world. The long wait would be at an end, although great challenges, associated with building a new Burma, would be just beginning.

Pedersen argued that the West's singular pursuit of democracy does not provide an effective strategy for promoting freedom, security and welfare for the general population of Burma. First, the probability for a transition from military to genuine civilian rule in the foreseeable future is close to zero. Any transition,

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<sup>104</sup> Eysink, p. 22.

<sup>105</sup> Jack Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," *Foreign Policy* 145 (November – December 2004), p. 58.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

including important governance and economic reforms will have to be negotiated and implemented in cooperation with the military leadership. Second, democratization is a long and difficult process, not a one-off event. The establishment and maturation of genuinely inexperienced with democratic practices as Burma, required fundamental changes in attitudes and behavior at all levels of society, which take decades, if not generations to occur. Finally, the association between democratic governance and welfare is imperfect and not necessarily positive, at least in the short to medium term.<sup>107</sup>

It is suggested that, instead of pushing for regime change at this stage, the international community should work to promote three longer-term processes of change – political liberalization, peace-building, and socio-economic development – which would not only produce immediate benefits for the general population, but could also begin to lay the ground for an internally-driven and thus more meaningful and sustainable reform process. There is a need of international actors to downplay public condemnation and overt pressure in favor of more constructive efforts to foster policy dialogue and capacity-building.<sup>108</sup>

This is not the case that United Nations Security Council or the major power shall decide to make offensive and forcible intervention for democratization. It should depend on the real voices of Burmese people. It is important that the United Nations should take charge of facilitating and accelerating the process but not just impose liberal values to the unwanted people. Before a future democracy can take root and be meaningful for many people and communities, those people and communities will have to transcend the barriers created by the daily struggle for survival on the one hand, and the cultural and structural legacy of militarization of society and repressive, autocratic rule on the other.<sup>109</sup> Fundamental reconstruction of nations should be made at the grass-root level and the democracy should be homegrown.

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<sup>107</sup> Pedersen, p. 281.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 287.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p. 284.

Significantly, the future is not without prospects. The next generations of military leaders, which is likely to take over within the next few years, has quite different educational and military career backgrounds from the current leadership, and has experienced at close hand the economic progress made by their neighbors. There will be an important window of opportunity for reviewing the reform drive – at least, if the international community is prepared to offer the necessary technical and financial assistance.<sup>110</sup> The international community led by the United Nations with a broader approach would help pave the way for meaningful and sustainable political change in Burma in the long run.

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<sup>110</sup> Pedersen, 2006, p. 290