

PERSPECTIVE

RESEARCHERS AT ISEAS – YUSOF ISHAK INSTITUTE ANALYSE CURRENT EVENTS

Singapore | 8 September 2021

Buttressing the Anti-NLD Project: Data on the Civilian Members of Myanmar’s State Administration Council Junta

*Htet Myet Min Tun, Moe Thuzar and Michael Montesano**



Min Aung Hlaing chairing a coordination meeting of the State Administration Council (SAC). Source: Mizzima – News in Burmese in FaceBook, <https://www.facebook.com/MizzimaDaily/photos/4698353733532828>, 24 August 2021.

**Htet Myet Min Tun is an intern in, Moe Thuzar Co-Coordinator of, and Michael Montesano Coordinator of the Myanmar Studies Programme, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In a break with precedents set following military coups in the country in 1962 and 1988, Myanmar’s State Administration Council (SAC) junta has had civilians among its members since the time of its inception. Ten of the 19 members of the SAC are civilians, and among them, only two or three are ethnic Bamar.
- Civilians’ unprecedented incorporation into the junta underlines both the nature of the SAC regime as an anti-National League for Democracy (NLD) project and the determination of Myanmar’s armed forces, or Tatmadaw, to make a success of that project.
- The party affiliations and electoral histories of most civilian members of the SAC, both Bamar and ethnic-nationality, reflect both political rivalry with — and defeat at the hands of — the NLD. Their personal backgrounds suggest in many cases a range of cordial relationships with Myanmar’s armed forces or their electoral vehicle, the Union Solidarity and Development Party.
- Civilians on the SAC include members from each of Myanmar’s eight officially designated major “national races”. Their inclusion appears to reflect a strategy of “ethnic balancing”, and the junta’s apparent approach towards collaboration with elements of Myanmar’s ethnic-nationality populations.
- Its viability unclear, this strategy for buttressing the SAC’s anti-NLD project presents considerable risks both for the Tatmadaw and for Myanmar itself.

INTRODUCTION

As it seized power on 1 February 2021, Myanmar’s military, or Tatmadaw, arrested National League for Democracy (NLD) party leader and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, her hand-picked incumbent Union President Win Myint, and senior members of her party and of the government that it led.¹ The following day saw the constitution of a junta, christened the State Administration Council (SAC), to rule the country under the chairmanship of coup leader and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.²

At the time of its formation on 2 February, the SAC comprised 11 members – eight officers from the Tatmadaw’s top echelons and three civilians. The appointment of eight additional members, seven civilians and one military officer, followed. By the end of March, the SAC’s membership totaled 19; it remains at that strength at the time of writing. That the membership of Myanmar’s new junta has included civilians from the time of its formation and that civilians now comprise more than half of its members represent sharp breaks with the precedents set by the country’s earlier military regimes.³

The present article offers preliminary data on the civilian membership of the SAC. Intended to stimulate further study of Myanmar’s new military regime, the article complements an earlier article on the SAC’s military members.⁴ It also offers tentative analysis of the logic underlying the noteworthy and precedent-breaking inclusion of such a numerous contingent of civilians on the junta that would now govern Myanmar.⁵ That analysis suggests that it is impossible to account for the inclusion of civilians on the SAC or for decisions taken on which civilians to include, without understanding Min Aung Hlaing’s and the Tatmadaw’s determination to buttress the anti-NLD project that is the SAC’s *raison d’être*.⁶

Table 1. Civilian Members of the SAC.

Romanized Name	Name in Burmese	Ethnic Nationality	Party Affiliation on 1 February 2021	Date of Installation as SAC Member
Mahn Nyein Maung	မန်းဦးမောင်	Kayin	Kayin People’s Party (KPP)	2 February 2021 ⁷
Thein Nyunt	သိန်းညွန့်	Bamar	New National Democracy (NNDP)	2 February 2021 ⁸
Khin Maung Hswe	ခင်မောင်ဆွေ	Bamar	National Democratic Force (NDF)	2 February 2021 ⁹
Aye Nu Sein	အေးနုစိန်	Rakhine	Arakan National Party (ANP)	3 February 2021 ¹⁰

Jeng Phang Naw Taung	ဂျင်ဖန်နော်တောင်	Kachin	None	3 February 2021 ¹¹
Moung Har	မောင်းဟာ	Chin	None	3 February 2021 ¹²
Sai Lone Hsaing ¹³	စိုင်းလုံးဆိုင်	Shan	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	3 February 2021 ¹⁴
Saw Daniel	စောဒန်နီယယ်	Kayah	Kayah State Democratic Party (KySDP)	3 February 2021 ¹⁵
Banyar Aung Moe	ဗညားအောင်မိုး	Mon	Mon Unity Party (MUP)	17 March 2021 ¹⁶
Shwe Kyein	ရွှေကြမ်း	apparently Ta'ang (Palaung) ¹⁷	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	30 March 2021 ¹⁸

Allegations of impropriety in the conduct of Myanmar’s November 2020 elections and the NLD government’s unwillingness to entertain those allegations served as the pretexts for the Tatmadaw’s seizure of power three months later,¹⁹ But that stand-off — and the possibility that the SAC regime might dissolve the NLD²⁰ — came in a longer historical context.²¹

Since the time of the party’s establishment during the nationwide pro-democracy protests of 1988, the NLD has presented a fundamental challenge to the Tatmadaw, calling into question the armed forces’ domination of the polity, vision of their supremacy among national actors, and privileges.²² It was against this backdrop that Min Aung Hlaing and his generals regarded the campaign for Myanmar’s most recent elections and confronted the results of those polls, with their implications for the use to which the NLD might put a renewed popular mandate. November’s polls saw the party equal or best the 2015 electoral performance that propelled the party and its leader Aung San Suu Kyi into power in Myanmar.²³ Sources in Yangon suggest that, months before those polls took place, Min Aung Hlaing had already received advice on the political dimension of seizing state power at some moment in the future. That advice included incorporating into any post-coup regime a number of the civilians now on the SAC.²⁴

CIVILIANS OF NON-BAMAR ETHNIC NATIONALITY ON THE SAC

Of the ten current civilian members of the SAC, seven or eight are of non-Bamar ethnic nationality. The junta includes members of each of the eight major “national races” specified in Myanmar’s military-drafted 2008 Constitution.²⁵ In this regard, its membership is an exercise in apparent inclusion.

The Tatmadaw’s proxy party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), was not alone in its disappointment over defeat at the hands of the NLD last November. In the months preceding the elections of that month, observers raised the possibility that consolidated ethnic-nationality parties in several of Myanmar’s states would prove formidable challengers to the NLD.²⁶ But the latter party defied those predictions in a number of ethnic-nationality states. In 2020, as in 2015, the NLD often swept up pluralities and even majorities of state- and Union-level legislative seats, defeating or unseating ethnic-nationality politicians. The results at the Union level made real the likelihood that the party would again appoint either its own members or figures with close affiliations to it as chief ministers in each ethnic-nationality state.²⁷ In tandem, these factors combined to deny a critical mass of Myanmar’s ethnic-nationality politicians a seat at the table at which political decisions would be made over the next five years.

Understanding the ethnic-nationality civilian membership of the SAC benefits from a focus on the leading ethnic-nationality political parties in Rakhine, Shan, Mon, and Kayah States, and on their 2020 electoral performance relative to the NLD juggernaut.

Table 2. The Performance of the NLD, the USDP, and the Strongest Ethnic-Nationality Party in Elections for the Rakhine, Shan, Mon, and Kayah State Parliaments in the 2020 Elections.²⁸

Rakhine State	Total Seats Contested	15
	National League for Democracy (NLD)	5
	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	1
	Arakan National Party (ANP)	7
Shan State	Total Seats Contested	105
	National League for Democracy (NLD)	33
	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	24
	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD)	26
Mon State	Total Seats Contested	23
	National League for Democracy (NLD)	17
	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	0

	Mon Unity Party (MUP)	6
Kayah State	Total Seats Contested	15
	National League for Democracy (NLD)	9
	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	3
	Kayah State Democratic Party (KySDP)	3

In November 2020, the Arakan National Party (ANP) captured more seats than the NLD in the Rakhine State *hluttaw* or assembly, as it had done five years earlier.²⁹ However, the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), the Mon Unity Party (MUP), and the Kayah State Democratic Party (KySDP) enjoyed no such success in Shan, Mon and Kayah States. The civilian members of the SAC include leading figures from the ANP and from two of those other three parties: Aye Nu Sein, vice chairman of the ANP; Banyar Aung Moe, a member of the central executive committee of the MUP; and Saw Daniel, vice chair of the KySDP. The SNLD declined the Tatmadaw’s offer to include one of its members on the junta.³⁰ The military then invited the Shan Sai Lone Hsaing — a member of its own electoral vehicle, the USDP — to join the SAC.³¹

Table 3. The Performance of the NLD, the USDP, and the Strongest Ethnic-Nationality Party in Elections for the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House of the Union Parliament) in Rakhine, Shan, Mon, and Kayah State Constituencies in the 2020 Elections.³²

Rakhine State	Total Seats Contested	8
	National League for Democracy (NLD)	2
	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	1
	Arakan National Party (ANP)	4
Shan State	Total Seats Contested	49
	National League for Democracy (NLD)	14
	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	15
	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD)	13
Mon State	Total Seats Contested	10

	National League for Democracy (NLD)	8
	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	0
	Mon Unity Party (MUP)	2
Kayah State	Total Seats Contested	7
	National League for Democracy (NLD)	4
	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	1
	Kayah State Democratic Party (KySDP)	2

Table 4. The Performance of the NLD, the USDP, and the Strongest Ethnic-Nationality Party in Elections for the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House of the Union Parliament) in Rakhine, Shan, Mon, and Kayah State Constituencies in the 2020 Elections.³³

Rakhine State	Total Seats Contested	5
	National League for Democracy (NLD)	1
	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	0
	Arakan National Party (ANP)	4
Shan State	Total Seats Contested	12
	National League for Democracy (NLD)	4
	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	3
	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD)	2
	Ta'ang (Palaung) National Party (TNP)	2
Mon State	Total Seats Contested	12
	National League for Democracy (NLD)	9

	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	0
	Mon Unity Party (MUP)	3
Kayah State	Total Seats Contested	12
	National League for Democracy (NLD)	7
	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	2
	Kayah State Democratic Party (KySDP)	3

The results of elections for seats at the Union level in Rakhine, Shan, Mon and Kayah States followed a pattern similar to the state-level polls. Among major ethnic-nationality-party challengers to the NLD, only the ANP managed to best Aung San Suu Kyi's party.

Established ethnic-nationality-party rivals to the NLD do not figure in the electoral politics of Kachin or Chin States. Nevertheless, the Tatmadaw reportedly invited members of the Kachin State People's Party³⁴ and the Kachin National Congress Party, as well as the Chin National Party and the Chin National League for Democracy, to join the junta — only to meet with refusal in all cases.³⁵ Jeng Phang Naw Taung, a Kachin,³⁶ and Moung Har, a Chin, do count among the civilian members of the junta, but neither has a party-political affiliation.³⁷

While no ethnic-nationality party has proven a strong rival to the NLD in Kayin State, the Tatmadaw nevertheless included Mahn Nyein Maung on its new junta. A well-known Kayin revolutionist and veteran Karen National Union (KNU) leader who joined the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) after the KNU signed the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) forged under President Thein Sein,³⁸ Mahn Nyein Maung entered electoral politics in November 2020. Running on the ticket of the Kayin People's Party (KPP), a party allied with the Tatmadaw's USDP,³⁹ he contested a seat in the Pyithu Hluttaw or Lower House of the Union Parliament representing Pantanaw in Ayeyarwady Region. Mahn Nyein Maung lost to the NLD candidate in that Kayin-majority constituency.⁴⁰

The most recent civilian appointee to the SAC, Shwe Kyein, is apparently a member not of a major national race but rather of a smaller group called the Ta'ang or Palaung.⁴¹ While very limited data on Shwe Kyein are available, he is believed to have chaired a USDP committee — perhaps at the township level — in the Palaung Self-Administered Zone of Shan State until 2020.⁴²

BAMAR CIVILIANS ON THE SAC

The membership of the SAC has included two prominent Bamar civilians from the time of its formation. Each leads a political party that originated from a break with the NLD prior to Myanmar's SPDC-organized 2010 elections. Both the New National Democracy Party

(NNDP), of which junta member Thein Nyunt serves as chairman, and the National Democratic Force (NDF), in which SAC member Khin Maung Swe holds the same post,⁴³ participated in those elections, while the NLD boycotted them. These men's and their parties' break with Aung San Suu Kyi's party were extremely acrimonious.⁴⁴ While suffering diminished political stature since the NLD's rise to power in 2015,⁴⁵ Thein Nyunt and Khin Maung Swe helm parties enjoying sympathetic relations with the both the USDP and the Tatmadaw.⁴⁶ The former is even reported to have argued for a coup before the November 2020 had taken place.⁴⁷

PARTY CONSIDERATIONS, PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The two prominent Bamar civilians on the SAC lead parties whose explicit mission is to challenge NLD electoral supremacy. Neither of those parties has proved successful. But one cannot say the same of the parties in which three out of the ten ethnic-nationality members of the junta have played roles. These parties have proven strong, if not uniformly victorious, electoral rivals to the NLD in the states in which they are active. A further two civilian, ethnic-nationality members of the SAC have no political party affiliations, while one more has run for a seat representing a constituency outside Kayin State under the banner of a Kayin party whose leader is now an SAC-appointed minister.⁴⁸ Two other ethnic-nationality SAC members — if one includes Shwe Kyein — have run under that of the Bamar-dominated USDP for seats in Shan State.⁴⁹

Table 5. The Participation of Civilian Members of the SAC in Myanmar's 1990, 2010, 2015, and 2020 Elections.

Name	1990 Elections ⁵⁰		2010 Elections ⁵¹		2015 Elections		2020 Elections	
	Party	Result	Party	Result	Party	Result	Party	Result
Mahn Nyein Maung	-	(did not contest)	-	(did not contest)	-	(did not contest)	KPP	lost to NLD candidate ⁵²
Thein Nyunt	NLD	won ⁵³	Independent	won ⁵⁴	NNDP	lost to NLD candidate ⁵⁵	NNDP	lost to NLD candidate ⁵⁶
Khin Maung Swe	NLD	won ⁵⁷	NDF	(did not contest)	NDF	(did not contest)	NDF	(did not contest)
Aye Nu Sein	-	(did not contest)	RNDP ⁵⁸	(apparently did not contest)	ANP	(apparently did not contest)	ANP	(apparently did not contest)
Jeng Phang Naw Taung	-	(did not contest)	-	(did not contest)	-	(did not contest)	-	(did not contest)
Moung Har	-	(did not contest)	-	(did not contest)	-	(did not contest)	-	(did not contest)
Sai Lone Hsaing	-	(did not contest)	USDP	won ⁵⁹	USDP	won ⁶⁰	-	(did not contest)

Saw Daniel	-	(did not contest)	-	(apparently did not contest)	KNDP ⁶¹	lost to NLD candidate ⁶²	KySDP	lost to NLD candidate ⁶³
Banyar Aung Moe	-	(did not contest)	ARMDP ⁶⁴	won ⁶⁵	-	(apparently did not contest)	MUP	won ⁶⁶
Shwe Kyein	-	(did not contest)	-	(did not contest)	USDP	lost to TNP candidate ⁶⁷	USDP	lost to TNP candidate ⁶⁸

Several civilian members of the SAC have suffered electoral defeat at the hands of NLD candidates. Having resigned from the KNU to contest the 2020 elections as a KPP candidate Mahn Nyein Maung lost to his NLD opponent in his home-town constituency of Pantanaw. The case of Saw Daniel, a man whose participation in the peace process left the Tatmadaw confident in his willingness to cooperate,⁶⁹ is similar. Running first on the KNDP ticket and then on that of the KySDP, the Kayah politician lost two elections to NLD candidates — one for a seat in the Amyotha Hluttaw or Upper House of the Union parliament and one for a Kayah State *hluttaw* seat. Thein Nyunt tasted victory on the NLD's ticket in 1990 before breaking with the party two decades later when it boycotted Myanmar's 2010 elections. He won a seat in the Pyithu Hluttaw in those elections, only to meet with electoral defeat at the hands of candidates representing his former party in both 2015 and 2020. Similarly, while he himself did not run in 2015 or 2020, the NDF of Khin Maung Swe, who also won election as an NLD candidate in 1990, did not win a single seat in either of those years of tremendous electoral success for Aung San Suu Kyi's party.

Sai Lone Hsaing won the election to the Shan State *hluttaw* in both 2010 and 2015, running each time under the banner of the USDP. In the 2016-2020 period, that body included more members from both the USDP and the SNLD than from the NLD, and Sai Lone Hsaing served as its speaker.⁷⁰ In a reversal, Aung San Suu Kyi's party outpolled both the USDP and SNLD in races for the Shan State *hluttaw* in the 2020 elections, which Sai Lone Hsaing did not contest.⁷¹

Aye Nu Sein and Banyar Aung Moe received the endorsement of, respectively, the ANP and MUP for their appointments to the SAC. Even beyond historic Rakhine unease with Bamar dominance, pronounced antagonism has marked the ANP's posture toward the NLD since 2015-2016, when the government led by the latter party imposed a chief minister on Rakhine State despite the former party's plurality in the Rakhine State *hluttaw*. The decision of the Union Election Commission to cancel voting in large parts of Rakhine state in advance of the November 2020 elections only exacerbated this antagonism.⁷² Widely recognized tensions have also defined relations between the MUP and the NLD.⁷³

Both partisan and personal considerations thus provide useful background to the willingness of civilians — both Bamars and non-Bamars — to join the SAC. The NLD's electoral triumph on 8 November 2020, with all that it signaled about the party's enduring hegemony, was just one feature of that background. Nevertheless, as of 31 January 2021, that hegemony represented for the foreseeable future a challenge not only to the Tatmadaw but also to other Bamar-dominated and ethnic-nationality parties and to figures associated with them.

The willingness of members of those parties to sign on to the anti-NLD project that is the SAC regime is not without risk, as that regime's unpopularity and ongoing struggle to impose its authority on Myanmar make clear. But bearing that risk is the price of enjoying relevance that the NLD's electoral prowess has long denied those parties and their leaders. It is also perhaps the price of leverage to achieve ends important to those parties, to politicians associated with them, and to their supporters.⁷⁴ Having paid these prices, civilian members of the junta, and to some degree the parties with which they are associated, now have a stake in the survival of the SAC regime. In return, that regime must hope that these civilians can help rally support for it. How good either of these bets is will become clearer with time.

A "FEDERAL" MODEL?

The recruitment onto the SAC of obscure figures like the Kachin Jeng Phang Naw Taung and the Chin Mounng Thar suggests both the Tatmadaw's determination to see notional representatives of each of Myanmar's major "national races" on the junta and its rather *pro forma* attachment to time-worn understandings of the nature of the Union of Myanmar. The implications of this inclusiveness merits consideration.

Almost immediately after last November's elections, the Tatmadaw established a Peace Talks Committee, effectively creating a process for treating with Myanmar's numerous ethnic armed organizations separate from the process centred on the 2015 NCA.⁷⁵ Facing the prospect of the NLD's return to power, the armed forces opened the door to participation in talks to organizations that were signatories to the NCA as well as those who were not.⁷⁶

After its coup, the SAC expanded the membership of its Peace Talks Committee and established several new structures for negotiations.⁷⁷ Whether these structures are to serve as fora for further talks or as vehicles for the realization of a vision for Naypyitaw's relations with Myanmar's ethnic nationalities is the question. That question lies outside the scope of the present article. Yet the composition of the civilian membership of the SAC is not irrelevant to its answer. At least some of the Tatmadaw's ethnic-nationality collaborators clearly prioritize their own narrow objectives over the cause of Myanmar democracy.⁷⁸ Their stances may point to a rough and rather perversely "federal" model.⁷⁹ In enlisting ethnic-nationality partners, is the Tatmadaw endeavoring to draw on shared enmity toward the NLD as a resource for managing and even channeling ethnic nationalism?

CONCLUSION

The data on the civilian members of Myanmar's SAC presented in this article point to three broad conclusions. First, the inclusion of civilians on the country's latest junta is impossible to understand without a clear appreciation that that this junta is above all an anti-NLD project. Second, the Tatmadaw's decision to shatter precedent through the incorporation of civilians onto the junta from the time of its establishment, along with the number and composition of civilians incorporated, underlines both how daunting an enemy it considers the electorally formidable NLD and how determined it is to extirpate it. Third, in acting on that determination, Min Aung Hlaing and his generals have opted for a strategy of what one may term as "ethnic balancing".

Practical considerations may have determined the adoption of that strategy. Seeking acceptance for its dictatorship from at least a segment of Myanmar's population and aware of the difficulty of finding that acceptance in the central regions of the country in which the NLD enjoyed strong support, the Tatmadaw turned to ethnic-nationality states in which political opposition to that party's rule was most significant. It also turned to parties, and to individuals affiliated with them, that had a record of getting along with the USDP. While figures in the USDP itself may have recommended some of these men to the Tatmadaw,⁸⁰ in fact such recommendations were hardly needed. As a general matter, the civilian members of the SAC — Bamar and non-Bamar alike — appear, in the words of one close observer, to be “a group of people who have always been on the same page”.⁸¹ Further, in considering the composition of that group, one must not discount the possibility that, the enduring electoral supremacy of the NLD notwithstanding, many of the civilians who joined the SAC simply believed that it could govern the country more capably than Aung San Suu Kyi and her party.⁸²

In forming its junta, The Tatmadaw offered elements in ethnic-nationality states a bargain: in exchange for their collaboration they would gain seats at the table that the NLD's electoral prowess had long denied them. With those seats might come a chance to pursue their goals and interests, and perhaps access to resources or even economic opportunities. The long history of civil war between the highly Burmanized Tatmadaw and ethnic armed organizations fighting on behalf of non-Bamar ethnic-nationality populations would seem to make the armed forces' quest for acceptance from those populations and their leaders a long shot.

It is not clear that shared opposition to the NLD can be the basis for trust between the soldiers and civilians on the SAC or that those civilians will bring a critical mass of the people whom they purport to represent with them to support the junta. Equally uncertain is whether the military members of that body will in fact prove willing to offer their civilian counterparts a say in decision-making or accede to those counterparts' demands in exchange for their cooperation. The data presented here suggest that, in a country already scarred by decades of ethnic warfare, the SAC's adoption of strategy of ethnic balancing to buttress its overarching anti-NLD project is a high-risk undertaking, not only for the civilian members of the SAC but also for the Tatmadaw and for Myanmar itself. Observers have in fact suggested that it is uncertain how many of the civilians who signed on to the junta in the days following Min Aung Hlaing's coup would have done so a month or two later, after the high degree of popular resistance to the return of military rule had become clear.⁸³ As of late August, however, civilian members of the junta apparently remained committed to the SAC regime and its cause, or at least eager to demonstrate to their military peers that they were.⁸⁴

¹ Jonathan Head, “Myanmar coup: Aung San Suu Kyi detained as military seizes control”, *BBC*, 1 February 2021 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55882489>, downloaded 5 August 2021).

² “Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services – Order No (9/2021)”, *The Global New Light of Myanmar*, 3 February 2021 (<https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/GNLM2021-02-03-red.pdf>, downloaded 30 June 2021).

³ On the record of military rule in the country, see David I. Steinberg, “The Military in Burma/Myanmar: On the Longevity of Tatmadaw Rule and Influence”, *Trends in Southeast Asia*, issue 6 (2021) (https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/TRS6_21.pdf, downloaded 11 July 2021). The 17-member Revolutionary Council installed by Commander-in-Chief General Ne Win at the time of his seizure of power in 1962 had an all-military membership; Nakanishi Yoshihiro, *Strong Soldiers, Failed Revolution: The State and Military in Burma, 1962–88* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2013), p. 102. The 33 Revolutionary Council members and cabinet ministers appointed between 1962 and 1971 included only three civilians. Each of the remaining individuals was an active-duty military officer; *ibid.* p. 103. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)/State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) junta that ruled Myanmar from 1988 to 2011 did not have a civilian member during the entirety of its existence; “Members of State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)”, *The Irrawaddy*, 1 November 2003, updated 12 August 2011 (https://web.archive.org/web/20110812140611/http://www.irrawaddy.org/research_show.php?art_id=454, downloaded 30 June 2021). The SLORC was rechristened the SPDC in 1997.

⁴ See Htet Myet Min Tun, Moe Thuzar and Michael Montesano, “Min Aung Hlaing and His Generals: Data on the Military Members of Myanmar’s State Administration Council Junta”, *ISEAS Perspective* 2021/97, 23 July 2021 (<https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2021-97-min-aung-hlaing-and-his-generals-data-on-the-military-members-of-myanmars-state-administration-council-junta-by-htet-myet-min-tun-moe-thuzar-and-michael-montesano/>, downloaded 27 July 2021). A third article will present data on the ministers serving the SAC regime.

⁵ The authors thank four reviewers, who must at present remain anonymous, for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.

⁶ In appointing the military members of the SAC, Min Aung Hlaing respected the Tatmadaw’s hierarchy. Leaving aside the junta’s two secretaries, the senior general and five of the officers serving with him as founding members of the junta held the six top posts in Myanmar’s armed forces on the day of the coup. In contrast, both the decision to name civilians to the junta itself and the profiles of the civilians in fact chosen were wholly discretionary matters. At the time of writing, the most recently appointed military member of the SAC is Minister for Home Affairs Lieutenant General Soe Htut, who joined the junta on 30 March 2021 — nearly two months after the 1 February coup. The authors’ forthcoming *ISEAS Perspective* article, “An Attempt to Lead Myanmar Back to the Future? Data on the State Administration Council Regime’s Ministerial Line-up”, treats Soe Htut and his appointment to the junta in more detail.

⁷ “Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services – Order No (9/2021)”, *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 3 February 2021 (<https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/GNLM2021-02-03-red.pdf>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ “Republic of the Union of Myanmar: State Administration Council Order No (14/2021)”, *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 4 February 2021 (<https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/GNLM2021-02-04-red.pdf>, downloaded 7 August 2021).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Some sources render this name “Sai Long Hseng”.

¹⁴ “Republic of the Union of Myanmar: State Administration Council Order No (14/2021)”.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Appointment of State Administration Council Member – Order No (104/2021)”, *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 18 March 2021

(<https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/GNLM2021-03-18-red.pdf>,

downloaded 7 August 2021). The MUP reportedly decided that Banyar Aung Moe would join the SAC as early as five days after the coup; Bo Bo Myint, “Elected MP from Mon Unity Party to join State Administration Council”, *Eleven*, 8 February 2021

(<https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/elected-mp-from-mon-unity-party-to-join-state-administration-council>,

downloaded 24 August 2021). The reason for the delay in his formal appointment to the junta is not clear.

¹⁷ While data on Shwe Kyein’s ethnic nationality are elusive, he appears to enjoy prominence among and strong connections to Ta’ang. He has a record of participation in Ta’ang cultural events and was the patron of the Ta’ang Literature and Culture Committee in Namhsan Township, in the Palaung Self-Administered Zone of Shan State; “Ta’ang National New Year celebrated in Namsan Tsp”, *Myanmar Digital News*, 3 December 2019

(<http://www.myanmar.digitalnewspaper.com/en/taang-national-new-year-celebrated-namsan-tsp>,

downloaded 7 August 2021).

¹⁸ “Appointment of members of the State Administration Council – Order No (106/2021)”, *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 31 March 2021

(<https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/GNLM2021-03-31-red.pdf>,

downloaded 7 August 2021).

¹⁹ After its defeat in the 2020 elections, the USDP accused the NLD of massive voting fraud. The Tatmadaw soon joined its proxy party in levelling this accusation, and it launched its own review of the election process. While the incumbent Union Election Commission (UEC) rejected allegations of NLD electoral fraud in November 2020, the Tatmadaw nevertheless invoked them as its justification for seizing power on 1 February 2021. In July 2021, a new, military-appointed UEC nullified the results of the 2020 elections, claiming that it had discovered voting fraud. See San Yamin Aung, “Updated Timeline: Tracing Military’s Interference in Myanmar Election”, *The Irrawaddy*, 20 January 2021 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/specials/timeline-tracing-militarys-interference-in-myanmar-ele.html>,

downloaded 6 August 2021), Pyae Sone Win, “Myanmar election commission rejects military’s fraud claims”, *Associated Press*, 29 January 2021

(<https://apnews.com/article/aung-san-suu-kyi-elections-myanmar-cc1b225b806c27dda748d3ab51d0e47f>,

downloaded 6 August 2021), and Joshua Lipps,

“Myanmar’s Junta Annuls 2020 Election Results, Citing Voter Fraud”, *Radio Free Asia*, 26 July

2021 (<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/annulled-07262021204753.html>,

downloaded 6 August 2021).

²⁰ “Myanmar junta’s electoral body to dissolve Suu Kyi party -media”, *Reuters*, 21 May 2021

(<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmar-electoral-body-dissolve-suu-kyi-party-myanmar-now-tweet-2021-05-21/>).

The article cites a threat from the chairman of the SAC-

appointed UEC to disband the NLD. To date, this threat remains unfulfilled, perhaps in part

because of pressure from Beijing; see “China Doesn’t Want Myanmar’s NLD Dissolved: Informed

Sources”, *The Irrawaddy*, 27 August 2021 (www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/china-doesnt-want-myanmars-nld-dissolved-informed-sources.html,

downloaded 2 September 2021).

²¹ See Andrew Selth, “Why Myanmar’s military is not planning a coup”, *Nikkei Asia*, 8 May 2017

(<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Why-Myanmar-s-military-is-not-planning-a-coup>,

downloaded 6 August 2021).

²² The NLD scored a landslide win in the 1990 elections organized by SLORC. It outperformed 92 other political parties, while securing more than 80 per cent of constituencies. However, the junta declined to hand power to the party and nullified the election results; Khin Kyaw Han, “1990 Multi-party Democracy General Elections”, *Democratic Voice of Burma* (https://www.burmalibrary.org/docs4/1990_multi-party_elections.pdf?cfchljschltk=&pmd08dc481b3b1ff46894e8fad869e20734827494f6-1628185263-0-gqNtZGzNAfjcnBszQb6q, downloaded 6 August 2021), and Moe Aye, “Uphill Battle of the NLD”, *The Irrawaddy*, May 1998 (https://www2.irrawaddy.com/article.php?art_id=7558, downloaded 6 August 2021). The SPDC declared the NLD illegal after its refusal to contest the 2010 elections, held under the military-drafted 2008 Constitution. In 2011, however, President Thein Sein made possible the party’s re-entry into politics. Under Aung San Suu Kyi’s leadership. The NLD won 43 out of 44 seats contested in by-elections held the following year, and Aung San Suu Kyi herself took a seat in the Pyithu Hluttaw; Kocha Olarn, “Myanmar confirms sweeping election victory for Suu Kyi’s party”, *CNN*, 4 April 2012 (<https://edition.cnn.com/2012/04/04/world/asia/myanmar-elections/>, downloaded 6 August 2021). Following the NLD’s victory in the 2015 elections, the party installed Aung San Suu Kyi as *de facto* head of government with the newly created and extra-constitutional title “state counsellor”; Euan McKirdy, “New government role created for Myanmar’s Aung San Suu Kyi”, *CNN*, 7 April 2016 (<https://edition.cnn.com/2016/04/06/asia/aung-san-suu-kyi-state-counsellor-role-created/index.html>, downloaded 6 August 2021). It then set about working — without success — to amend the constitution and thus reduce the power and standing of the Tatmadaw.

²³ The NLD took 82 per cent of contested seats at the Union, region and state levels in the 2020 elections, 61 more seats than five years earlier. In contrast, the leading opposition party and Tatmadaw proxy, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), won but 6.4 per cent of contested seats; “Official Results Show Another Election Landslide for Myanmar’s Ruling NLD”, *The Irrawaddy*, 16 November 2020 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/elections/official-results-show-another-election-landslide-myanmars-ruling-nld.html>, downloaded 6 August 2021).

²⁴ Veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (*b*), personal communication, 19 August 2021.

²⁵ Myanmar’s eight major “national races” are the Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Bamar, Mon, Rakhine, and Shan. Among the country’s seven states and seven regions, each major national race except the Bamar has a state bearing its name while Bamar people live principally in the seven regions. See “Chapter II: State Structure”, *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar* (2008) (https://www.myanmar-law-library.org/IMG/pdf/constitution_de_2008.pdf, downloaded 6 August 2021). Under the umbrella of the eight major national races, the state officially recognizes 135 ethnic groups, in a listing used in taking the national census since 1983; Gamani, “135: Counting Races in Burma”, *Shan Herald*, 25 September 2012

(https://web.archive.org/web/20140105075611/http://www.shanland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4965:135-counting-races-in-burma&catid=115:opinions&Itemid=308, downloaded 11 July 2021), and Jane Ferguson, “Who’s Counting? Ethnicity, Belonging, and the National Census in Burma/Myanmar”, *Bijdragen Tot De Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 171, 1 (2015): 1-28 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43819166>, downloaded 6 August 2021).

²⁶ Su Mon Thant, “Party Mergers in Myanmar: A New Development”, *Trends in Southeast Asia* 8/2020 (June 2020) (https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/TRS8_20.pdf, downloaded 6 August 2021).

²⁷ The application of this policy led to particular outrage in Rakhine State, where the NLD did not enjoy a majority in the state assembly following the 2015 elections. The ANP, the leading ethnic-nationality party in Rakhine State, insisted that the chief minister of the state should be an ANP member, as it held a decisive plurality of 23 of the 47 seats in the Rakhine State *hluttaw*. However, the NLD rejected this demand and appointed an NLD member as chief minister instead. The party invoked Myanmar’s 2008 Constitution, which stipulated that the Union President directly

appointed chief ministers of states and regions and granted no role in those appointments to state or region *hluttaw*. See Moe Myint, “ANP Stages Walkout Over NLD Chief Minister for Arakan State”, *The Irrawaddy*, 28 March 2016 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/anp-stages-walkout-nld-chief-minister-arakan-state.html>, downloaded 1 July 2021), and Ei Ei Toe Lwin and Wa Lone, “NLD control over chief ministers riles ethnic parties”, *Myanmar Times*, 29 March 2016 (<https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/19694-nld-control-over-chief-ministers-riles-ethnic-parties.html>, downloaded 6 August 2021).

²⁸ Htin Aung Ling and Richard Batcheler, “2020 General Elections: State and Region Hluttaws”, *The Asia Foundation*, 18 November 2020 (https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Myanmar_2020-General-Election-State-and-Region-Hluttaws.pdf, downloaded 30 June 2021).

²⁹ In the November 2020 elections, the ANP won more seats in Rakhine State than the NLD. This outcome came despite the fact that the Union Elections Commission (UEC) decided to cancel elections in 11 out of 17 townships in the state, most of which the ANP had carried in 2015. The UEC’s stated reason for this decision was high security risks due to ongoing clashes between Myanmar’s military and the Arakan Army (AA). The decision led to controversy over whether the UEC was skewing electoral arrangements in the NLD’s favour in Rakhine State and was a source of great resentment on the part of the ANP. See Moe Thuzar, “Will the Real Union Election Commission Please Stand up?”, *ISEAS Commentary*, 20 October 2020 (<https://www.iseas.edu.sg/media/commentaries/will-the-real-union-election-commission-please-stand-up/>, downloaded 17 August 2021), and Sebastian Strangio, “Myanmar Calls Off Polling in Rakhine, Shan Conflict Zones”, *The Diplomat*, 19 October 2020 (<https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:1WaAnBf8pcJ:https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/myanmar-calls-off-polling-in-rakhine-shan-conflict-zones/+&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=sg>, downloaded 17 August 2021). Also see note 27, on the already sour relationship between the NLD and the ANP since 2015.

³⁰ “SNLD, DPNS reject offer to participate in new government”, *Eleven*, 6 February 2021 (<https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/snld-dpns-reject-offer-to-participate-in-new-government>, downloaded 30 June 2021). The NLD also seems to have better relations with the SNLD than with ethnic-nationality parties like the MUP and the ANP. When the NLD reached out to ethnic-nationality parties on building a federal union after the 2020 elections, the meeting between the NLD and the SNLD was reportedly successful. Meanwhile, the NLD and the MUP failed to meet, because of a dispute over the venue. See Thet Zin Soe, “NLD claims success in talks with Shan ethnic parties”, *Myanmar Times*, 17 January 2021 (<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/nld-claims-success-talks-shan-ethnic-parties.html>, 1 July 2021).

³¹ As a USDP member, Sai Lone Hsaing served as the speaker of the Shan State *hluttaw* for two consecutive terms from 2011 until 2021. He won a seat in Shan State *hluttaw* in both 2010 and 2015 elections in Kengtung Constituency – 1. However, in 2020, he decided not to run for election. See “ရှမ်းပြည်နယ်လွှတ်တော်ဥက္ကဋ္ဌဟောင်း အာဏာသိမ်းစစ်ကောင်စီ

အဖွဲ့ဝင်ဦးစိုင်းလုံးဆိုင်ကို အမေရိကန်က ထပ်တိုးဒဏ်ခတ်ပိတ်ဆို့အရေးယူမှုတွင် ထည့်သွင်းထား”

[Former Chair of Shan State Hluttaw U Sai Lone Hsaing Sanctioned by the US], *Tachileik News Agency*, 19 May 2021 (<https://www.tachileik.net/mm/news/26676>, downloaded 11 July 2021). A second USDP member, Shwe Kyein, joined the junta at the end of March; he is apparently an ethnic Ta’ang. Following its disastrous performance in November 2020, the USDP took the lead in decrying alleged electoral impropriety — the same charge to which Min Aung Hlaing would resort in justifying his coup; “Crisis in Myanmar after army alleges election fraud”, *Reuters*, 1 February 2021 (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-politics-explainer-idUSKBN2A113H>, downloaded 11 July 2021). In embracing complaints raised by a party understood to serve as its *de facto* electoral vehicle to justify its seizure of power, the military appears to undermine both its

claim to standing above party politics as the defender of the nation, as well as its contention that its coup was intended to resolve disputes among political parties over electoral fraud in the November elections and to restore the integrity of the political system. Several members of the USDP do serve the SAC regime as ministers; see Htet Myet Min Tun, Moe Thuzar and Michael Montesano, “An Attempt to Lead Myanmar Back to the Future? Data on the Members of State Administration Council Regime’s Ministerial Line-up”, *ISEAS Perspective*, forthcoming.

³² “ပြည်သူ့လွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းတစ်ဦးချင်းစီ၏ မဲဆန္ဒရရှိမှုအခြေအနေ (၂၀၂၀ ပြည့်နှစ် အထွေထွေ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ)” [Election Results of Each Candidate for Pyithu Hluttaw (2020 General Elections)], *Union Election Commission* (<https://uecdata.s3.ap-southeast-1.amazonaws.com/2020%20Election%20Result%20%28%20Percentage%20%29/1.%20Pyithu%20Result%20%28%20Percentage%20%29/Pyithu%20Each%20Candidate%20Result.pdf>, downloaded 30 June 2021). In the 2020 elections, the NLD won 258 out of 330 seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw or Lower House of the Union Parliament, while the USDP won only 26 seats; “Pyithu Hluttaw Election Results (2020)”, *Myanmar Information Management Unit*, 24 November 2020 (https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Map_Pyithu_Hluttaw_Election_Results_2020_IFES_MIMU1707v02_24Nov2020_A3.pdf, downloaded 11 July 2021).

³³ “အမျိုးသားလွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းတစ်ဦးချင်းစီ၏ မဲဆန္ဒရရှိမှုအခြေအနေ (၂၀၂၀ ပြည့်နှစ် အထွေထွေ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ)” [Election Results of Each Candidate for Amyotha Hluttaw (2020 General Elections)], *Union Election Commission* (<https://uecdata.s3.ap-southeast-1.amazonaws.com/2020%20Election%20Result%20%28%20Percentage%20%29/2.%20Amyotha%20Result%20%28%20Percentage%20%29/Amyotha%20Each%20Candidate%20Result.pdf>, downloaded 11 July 2021). In the 2020 elections, the NLD won 138 out of 168 seats in the Amyotha Hluttaw or Upper House of the Union Parliament, while the USDP won only 7 seats; “Amyotha Hluttaw Election Results (2020)”, *Myanmar Information Management Unit*, 24 November 2020 (https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Map_Amyotha_Hluttaw_Election_Results_2020_IFES_MIMU1707v02_24Nov2020_A3.pdf, downloaded 11 July 2021).

³⁴ The Tatmadaw’s first choice for a Kachin civilian member of the junta was apparently Dr Manam Tu Ja, the chairman of the Kachin State People’s Party (KSPP); veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (b), personal communication, 19 August 2021. A former vice chairman of the powerful Kachin Independence Organization, Manam Tu Ja won a seat in the Kachin State *hluttaw* in the November 2020 elections on the ticket of the KSPP — a party founded in 2018 through the merger of three Kachin political parties. See Ei Ei Toe Lwin, “Dr Tu Ja tests political waters”, 9 September 2013 (<https://www.mmmtimes.com/national-news/8117-dr-tu-ja-tests-political-waters.html>, downloaded 24 August 2021); Htet Nain Zaw, “Kachin Leaders Demand Charter Reform to Establish Peace”, *The Irrawaddy*, 7 February 2020 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/analysis/kachin-leaders-demand-charter-reform-establish-peace.html>, downloaded 24 August 2021); “Kachin party leader wins state parliament seat”, *Myanmar Times*, 9 November 2021 (<https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/kachin-party-leader-wins-state-parliament-seat.html>, downloaded 24 August 2021); and Su Mon Thant, “Party Mergers in Myanmar: A New Development”.

³⁵ Helen Kyed, “Hopes for a New Democracy in Myanmar: Multiethnic Unity against Military Power”, *Tea Circle*, 19 March 2021 (<https://teacircleoxford.com/2021/03/19/hopes-for-a-new-democracy-in-myanmar-multiethnic-unity-against-military-power/>, downloaded 24 August 2021), and also Roseanne Gerin, “Myanmar Junta Bid to Draw in Ethnic Parties Met with Chilly Response”, *Radio Free Asia*, 8 February 2021

(<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/ethnic-parties-02082021172229.html>, downloaded 30 June 2021).

³⁶ Veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (b), personal communication, 19 August 2021.

³⁷ Jeng Phang Naw Taung apparently once served as a police officer in Kachin State; veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (a), personal communication, 18 August 2021. It is also known that Moungh Har’s father was a Chin nationalist figure. Otherwise, there are very limited available data — whether personal or political — on these two individuals. The only publicly available information concerning Moungh Har is that he worked as a manager in the Myanmar Economics Bank, from which he retired in 2012. Although he does not seem to have been politically active prior to joining the SAC, his father U Wamma Thu Maung was a renowned Chin revolutionary leader during the colonial era who became the first minister for Chin affairs in the Chin Hills Special Division after independence in 1948. See Salai Benezet,

“အာဏာသိမ်းတပ်ကဖွဲ့စည်းလိုက်သည့်နိုင်ငံတော်စီမံအုပ်ချုပ်ရေးကောင်စီတွင်ချင်းတော်လှန်ရေးခေါင်းဆောင်ဦးဝမ္မသူမောင်း၏သားဦးမောင်းဟာပါဝင်” [U Moungh Har, the son of Chin

revolutionary leader U Wamma Thu Maung, included in the State Administration Council formed by the military], *Myanmar Peace Monitor*, 4 February 2021

(<https://www.bnionline.net/mm/news-78503>, downloaded 30 June 2021).

³⁸ “UPDJC ကော်မတီဝင်များ” [Committee members of UPDJC], *Institute for Strategy and*

Policy – Myanmar, 28 June 2016 (<https://ispmyanmarpeacedesk.com/function/updjc-%E1%80%80%E1%80%B1%E1%80%AC%E1%80%BA%E1%80%99%E1%80%90%E1%80%AE%E1%80%9D%E1%80%84%E1%80%BA%E1%80%99%E1%80%BB%E1%80%AC%E1%80%B8/>, downloaded 17 August 2021). Mahn Nyein Maung is a life-long Kayin revolutionist. He joined the KNU, a Kayin ethnic armed organization, in the early 1970s, and later rose to the senior ranks of the organization. He was arrested in Kunming, China, in 2011 and imprisoned in Myanmar, but, in response to demands from the KNU during peace dialogue, President Thein Sein pardoned him in 2012. Mahn Nyein Maung was later actively involved in peace dialogue with the Naypyitaw government as a member of the KNU central executive member, which signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) with the government in 2015. Observers of the peace process regarded him as a “Tatmadaw-friendly” representative of the KNU. One source suggests that Mahn Nyein Maung may also have a record of association with Buddhist chauvinist elements; veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (a), personal communication, 18 August 2021. At the same time, in the period soon after the formation of the SAC, rumours suggested that he may have joined the junta under pressure; veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (a), personal communication, 18 August 2021. In 2020, Mahn Nyein Maung resigned from the KNU to contest that year’s elections. See Chit Min Thu, “Pado Mahn Nyein Maung will contest in the Myanmar general elections”, *Mizzima*, 25 July 2020 (<https://www.mizzima.com/article/pado-mahn-nye-in-maung-will-contest-myanmar-general-elections>, downloaded 11 July 2021).

³⁹ Observer of ethnic-nationality parties, personal communication, 18 August 2021.

⁴⁰ “ပြည်သူ့လွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းတစ်ဦးချင်းစီ၏ မဲဆန္ဒရရှိမှုအခြေအနေ (၂၀၂၀ ပြည့်နှစ် အထွေထွေ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ)”, p. 81, and “KNU heavyweight prepares for election battle”, *Frontier*

Myanmar, 12 August 2020 (<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/i-would-not-fight-in-a-war->

[unless-i-was-sure-of-victory-knu-heavyweight-prepares-for-election-battle/](#) , downloaded 1 July 2021). Pantanaw was the birthplace of U Thant.

⁴¹ The Ta'ang or Palaung are a Myanmar ethnic group living largely in Shan State. That state's Palaung Self-Administered Zone is one of six self-administered territories in Myanmar identified with ethnic groups smaller than the major "national races". Five of these territories lie within the sprawling Shan State, while the sixth is located within the boundaries of Sagaing Region.

⁴² Datum provided by veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (a), personal communication, 6 August 2021.

⁴³ Both Thein Nyunt and Khin Maung Swe were former central executive members of the NLD. In 2010, when the NLD decided to boycott the elections, they disagreed with the party's decision and left the party. With Dr Than Nyein, they then founded the National Democratic Force (NDF) party. Thein Nyunt soon broke off from the NDF and founded the New National Democracy Party (NNDP). See Saw Pho Khwar, “မန်းငြိမ်းမောင် ဦးသိန်းညွန့်နဲ့ ဦးခင်မောင်ဆွေတို့ကို

တပ်မတော်နေရာပေး” [Tatmadaw gives appointments to Mahn Nyein Maung, U Thein Nyunt and

U Khin Maung Swe], *Radio Free Asia*, 2 February 2021

(<https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/military-coup-myanmar-new-government-02022021114403.html>, downloaded 30 June 2021), and “Myanmar Junta Member's House Bombed in Yangon”, *The Irrawaddy*, 22 April 2021

(<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-members-house-bombed-yangon.html>, downloaded 30 June 2021).

⁴⁴ “Bitter divide in Burma's opposition”, *BBC*, 7 October 2010 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11405125>, downloaded 7 August 2021), and “The underdogs of the National Democratic Force”, *Frontier Myanmar*, 25 August 2015 (<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/the-underdogs-of-the-national-democratic-force/>, downloaded 7 August 2015).

⁴⁵ The NDF won eight seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw and the Amyotha Hluttaw in the 2010 elections, but failed to win a single seat in either 2015 or 2020. Likewise, the NNDP did not win a single seat in either of Myanmar's most recent elections; “Election aftermath: The big losers”, *Frontier Myanmar*, 12 November 2015 (<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/election-aftermath-the-big-losers/>, downloaded 7 August 2021).

⁴⁶ On the NNDP's and NDF's alignment with the USDP in its nationalist, anti-NLD stance, veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (a), personal communication, 18 August 2021. Thein Nyunt and Khin Maung Swe also numbered among the 35 leaders from 34 political parties who met with Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in August 2020, some three months before the elections, in a session devoted rather ominously to discussing the security and fairness of the approaching polls; Nyein Nyein, “Dozens of Myanmar Political Parties Seek Assurances from Military Chief over Election Concerns”, *The Irrawaddy*, 15 August 2020 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/elections/dozens-myanmar-political-parties-see-assurances-military-chief-election-concerns.html>, downloaded 30 June 2021). People's Pioneer Party chair (and current Tatmadaw-appointed minister of social welfare, relief, and resettlement) Thet Thet Khine was also present at the meeting, as were the chairpersons of the USDP and the KySDP. Thein Nyunt's NNDP formed an electoral alliance with the Tatmadaw's USDP proxy party in 2020 and is even reported to have encouraged Min Aung Hlaing to seize power after that party and its allies suffered a resounding defeat in the November polls; Phyo Thiha Cho, “Son of pro-military politician tries to have father's party evicted from its headquarters”, *Myanmar Now*, 22 September 2020 (<https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/son-of-pro-military-politician-tries-to-have-fathers-party-evicted-from-its-headquarters>, downloaded 7 August 2021), and “Myanmar Junta Member's House Bombed in Yangon”. The sympathetic relationships

between the Tatmadaw on the one side and the NDF, the NNDP and their leaders on the other are thus inextricably bound up with the two parties' aspirations to rival the NLD for electoral support, and even with their frustrations in realizing those aspirations. In opting to name Thein Nyunt and Khin Maung Swe to the junta, the Tatmadaw in essence passed over a number of more significant or prominent figures on Myanmar's political scene, as well as leading members of the USDP. Two examples of the former are Ko Ko Gyi of the People's Party and Thet Thet Khine of the People's Pioneer Party, whose decisions to contest against the NLD made them controversial figures in the campaign for the November 2020 elections. Ko Ko Gyi's interactions with the SAC's newly appointed UEC in the aftermath of the coup have cost him several members of his party's central executive committee, but he has himself assumed no position in the regime; "People's Party sees mass resignations over decision to attend UEC meeting", *Myanmar Now*, 21 May 2021, (<https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/peoples-party-sees-mass-resignations-over-decision-to-attend-uec-meeting?page=89>, downloaded 6 July 2021). Ko Ko Gyi first rose to prominence as a student leader during the 1988 uprisings in Burma. He was later arrested, and when released in 2012, had spent a total of 17 years in prison. After his release, he worked with the NLD and sought to contest Myanmar's 2015 elections as an NLD candidate, only to find himself spurned by the party. Having founded the People's Party in 2018, he has been a critic of the NLD government in recent years. He contested for a seat in the Pyithu Hluttaw in the 2020 elections but lost to the NLD candidate for the seat. Prior to the elections, Ko Ko Gyi said that he agreed that the role of the military in Myanmar's politics should be reduced "gradually", but that the government "should work with the military"; Kyaw Soe Htet, John Liu, and Thompson Chau, "Ko Ko Gyi sees risk of post-election unrest if economy worsens", *The Myanmar Times*, 29 October 2020 (<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/ko-ko-gyi-sees-risk-post-election-unrest-if-economy-worsens.html>, downloaded 30 June 2021). As noted above, Thet Thet Khine accepted the ministerial portfolio for social welfare from the SAC; the authors' forthcoming "An Attempt to Lead Myanmar Back to the Future? Data on the Members of State Administration Council Regime's Ministerial Line-up" treats her background and the circumstances and implications of her appointment.

⁴⁷ Veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (*b*), personal communication, 19 August 2021. Thein Nyunt and Khin Maung Swe also have records of public association with Buddhist chauvinism and virulent anti-Rohingya sentiments; Moe Aung Lin Naing, "ပြည်သူ့ လွှတ်တော် ကိုယ်စားလှယ်ဟောင်း ဦးသိန်းညွန့်နှင့် တွေ့ဆုံခြင်း" [Interview with former MP Thein Nyunt on Myanmar politics], *Maha Wira Magazine*, 16 October 2016 (http://wirathumyanmar.blogspot.com/2016/09/blog-post_33.html, downloaded 25 August 2021); Thant Zin Oo, Thinn Thiri and Khin Khin Ei, "Myanmar Political Parties Oppose Easing Travel Restrictions on Rohingya", *Radio Free Asia*, 24 April 2018 (<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmar-political-parties-oppose-easing-travel-restrictions-on-rohingya-04242018165939.html>, downloaded 25 August 2021); "တိုင်းမ်မဂ္ဂဇင်းပါ ဘာသာရေး အကြမ်းဖက်မှုဆောင်းပါး အစိုးရ ကန့်ကွက်" [Government condemns Time Magazine article on religious terrorism], *Radio Free Asia*, 24 June 2013 (<https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/myanmar-gov-slams-time-magazine-cover-06242013103721.html>, downloaded 25 August 2021). Note that *Maha Wira Magazine* was a publication of the notorious, now disbanded, Buddhist chauvinist organization "Ma Ba Tha".

⁴⁸ See Htet Myet Min Tun, Moe Thuzar and Michael Montesano, “An Attempt to Lead Myanmar Back to the Future? Data on the Members of State Administration Council Regime’s Ministerial Line-up”, *ISEAS Perspective*, forthcoming.

⁴⁹ Notwithstanding the apparent significance of most of these men’s party affiliations in aiding understanding of their recruitment as collaborators in the SAC’s anti-NLD project, it is not clear whether the Tatmadaw offered seats on the junta to individuals or to parties. The former possibility seems in at least some cases likely, in light of the responses of some junta members’ parties to their appointments. The KySP expelled Saw Daniel soon after his appointment to the junta, while the KNU also distanced itself from Mahn Nyein Maung following the appearance of his name in the SAC line-up; Nyein Nyein, “Anti-NLD Ethnic Politicians Picked by Military Regime for Governing Council”, *The Irrawaddy*, 5 February 2021 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/anti-nld-ethnic-politicians-picked-military-regime-governing-council.html>, downloaded 30 June 2021), and Min Naing Soe, “Phado Mahn Nyein Maung not part of KNU”, *Eleven Media*, 5 February 2021 (<https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/phado-mahn-nye-in-maung-not-part-of-knu>, downloaded 7 July 2021). In contrast, the ANP and the MUP signaled explicit approval of their members’ appointments; Lawi Weng, “Junta scrambles to form ethnic alliances amid nationwide dissent”, *Frontier Myanmar*, 23 February 2021 (<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/junta-scrambles-to-form-ethnic-alliances-amid-nationwide-dissent/>, downloaded 30 June 2021). As time passed, however, the MUP’s decision to cooperate with the SAC led to a number of resignations from the party in protest against the party’s decision — including those of members of its central executive committee; see “More and more Mon Party (MUP) resign in protest over cooperation with military regime’s SAC”, *Hintha Media*, 29 March 2021 (<https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/more-and-more-mon-party-mup-resign-protest-over-cooperation-military-regimes-sac>, downloaded 17 August 2021).

This pattern of variation — and of evident divisions within some parties over their posture toward the SAC regime — recommends scrutiny of the degree to which narrowly personal as well as more broadly party-political factors may account for the willingness of these civilians to throw their lot in with the Tatmadaw, and thus to buttress its anti-NLD project.

⁵⁰ The NLD won a landslide victory in the 1990 elections. However, the junta nullified the results and, first as the SLORC and then as the SPDC, ruled the country until 2011, having held elections in 2010. See Lun Min Maung, “Nullified 1990 election to be commemorated”, *The Myanmar Times*, 26 May 2015 (<https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/14665-nullified-1990-election-to-be-commemorated.html>, downloaded 11 July 2021).

⁵¹ The NLD boycotted the 2010 elections, claiming that the party did not have confidence in the elections held under the military-drafted 2008 constitution. The USDP – the military’s proxy party – won the elections. See Thomas Fuller, “Main Opposition to Boycott Myanmar Election”, *New York Times*, 29 March 2010 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/30/world/asia/30myanmar.html>, downloaded 11 July 2021).

⁵² In the election for the seat in the Pyithu Hluttaw that Mahn Nyein Maung contested in Pantanaw Township, Ayeyarwady Region, as a KPP candidate, he secured 8.83 per cent of the vote, while the victorious NLD candidate took 58.01 per cent;

“ပြည်သူ့လွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းတစ်ဦးချင်းစီ၏ မဲဆန္ဒရရှိမှုအခြေအနေ (၂၀၂၀ ပြည့်နှစ် အထွေထွေ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ)”.

⁵³ Thein Nyunt won a seat in the Pyithu Hluttaw as an NLD candidate in Thingangyun Township, Yangon, but election results were nullified by the military; Nyan Lynn Htun,

“အမျိုးသားဒီမိုကရေစီပါတီသစ်ပါတီဥက္ကဋ္ဌ ဦးသိန်းညွန့် သင်္သန်းကျွန်းမြို့နယ်

ပြည်သူ့လွှတ်တော်မဲဆန္ဒနယ်၌ အထွေထွေရွေးကောက်ပွဲ ယှဉ်ပြိုင်မည်” [Chair of New National

Democracy Party U Thein Nyunt contested for a seat in the Pyithu Hluttaw from Thingangyun Township], *Eleven*, 31 July 2020 (<https://news-eleven.com/article/185205>, downloaded 11 July 2021).

⁵⁴ Thein Nyunt first filed for the 2010 elections as an NDF candidate but later ran as an independent after resigning from the NDF. He won a seat in the Pyithu Hluttaw for Thingangyun Township, Yangon; Saw Pho Khwar, “မန်းငြိမ်းမောင်၊ ဦးသိန်းညွန့် ဦးခင်မောင်ဆွေတို့ကို တပ်မတော်နေရာပေး”.

⁵⁵ Thein Nyunt contested for a seat in the Pyithu Hluttaw in Thingangyun Township, Yangon Region, representing the New National Democracy Party (NNDP) but lost to an NLD candidate; Nyan Lynn Htun, “အမျိုးသားဒီမိုကရေစီပါတီသစ်ပါတီဥက္ကဋ္ဌ ဦးသိန်းညွန့် သင်္ဘန်းကျွန်းမြို့နယ် ပြည်သူ့လွှတ်တော်မဲဆန္ဒနယ်၌ အထွေထွေရွေးကောက်ပွဲ ယှဉ်ပြိုင်မည်”.

⁵⁶ Thein Nyunt contested for a seat in the Pyithu Hluttaw in Thingangyun Township, Yangon Region, representing the New National Democracy Party (NNDP), but again lost to an NLD candidate. He secured 4.57 per cent of total votes while the NLD candidate won 88.99 per cent; “ပြည်သူ့လွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းတစ်ဦးချင်းစီ၏ မဲဆန္ဒရရှိမှုအခြေအနေ (၂၀၂၀ ပြည့်နှစ် အထွေထွေ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ)”.

⁵⁷ Khin Maung Swe won a seat in the Pyithu Hluttaw as an NLD candidate in Sanchaung Township, Yangon, but the election results were nullified by the military; Saw Yan Naing, “NLD Reorganizes Information Committee”, *The Irrawaddy*, 15 July 2009 (https://www2.irrawaddy.com/article.php?art_id=16331, downloaded 11 July 2021).

⁵⁸ From 2012, Aye Nu Sein served as a member of the central executive committee of the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNNDP) and as the party’s spokesperson. The RNNDP and the Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) merged to form the Arakan National Party (ANP) in preparation for the 2015 elections. However, in 2016, the ALD left the ANP, claiming that former RNNDP members largely dominated the ANP; Hanna Hindstorm, “Burma: Arakanese Party Warned Over Inflammatory Pictures”, *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 26 December 2012 (<https://www.eurasiareview.com/26122012-burma-arakanese-party-warned-over-inflammatory-pictures/>, downloaded 7 August 2021), Nyein Nyein, “Arakanese Political Parties Merge to Form ANP”, *The Irrawaddy*, 14 January 2014 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/arakanese-political-parties-merge-form-anp.html>, downloaded 7 August 2021), and Nyan Lynn Aung, “Arakan National Party prepares to split”, *Myanmar Times*, 13 September 2016 (<https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/22482-arakan-national-party-prepares-to-split.html>, downloaded 7 August 2021).

⁵⁹ Sai Lone Hsaing won a seat in the Shan State *hluttaw* for the first time as a USDP candidate in Kengtung Constituency – 1, Shan State; “တိုင်းဒေသကြီး သို့မဟုတ် ပြည်နယ်လွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းတစ်ဦးချင်းစီ၏ မဲဆန္ဒရရှိမှုအခြေအနေ (၇-၁၁-၂၀၁၀)” [Election Results of Each Candidate for State and Region *Hluttaw* (7.11.2010)], *Union Election Commission*, p. 104

(https://www.uec.gov.mm/show_data_content.php?name=142.pdf&type=law&code=x&sno=5415&token=80e461933dc70bc9b66bf4788314a3ff9bfeb7c51d593c03f1c196037a213ed2bcbb538e30ab037b5432e7cbd3e4f3f16485d1399bd5fa045e1fe8b45e33f141, downloaded 11 July 2021).

⁶⁰ Sai Lone Hsaing won a seat in the Shan State *hluttaw* for the second time as a USDP candidate in Kengtung Constituency – 1, Shan State; “တိုင်းဒေသကြီး သို့မဟုတ် ပြည်နယ်လွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းတစ်ဦးချင်းစီ၏ မဲဆန္ဒရရှိမှုအခြေအနေ (၂၀၁၅ ခုနှစ်

အထွေထွေ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ)” [Election Results of Each Candidate for State and Region *Hluttaw* (2015 General Elections)], *Union Election Commission*, p. 133 (https://www.uec.gov.mm/show_data_content.php?name=03S_D.pdf&type=page_multiple_photo&code=17&sno=5789&token=2a840d7fdcf49becf13ac7636e5a61b04ae3a7e87747ed76b8a4fd5c8a03777981c19159c7dfb39e409533df0604dd7e692b4b7221b4e6eeb98475b8e623d134, downloaded 11 July 2021).

⁶¹ That is, the Kayah Nationalities Democracy Party.

⁶² Saw Daniel contested for a seat in the Amyotha Hluttaw in Kayah State’s Constituency 4, representing the KNDP, but lost to an NLD candidate;

“အမျိုးသားလွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းတစ်ဦးချင်းစီ၏ မဲဆန္ဒရရှိမှုအခြေအနေ (၂၀၁၅ ခုနှစ်

အထွေထွေ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ)” [Election Results of Each Candidate for the Amyotha Hluttaw (2015 General Elections)], *Union Election Commission*, p. 5

(https://www.uec.gov.mm/show_data_content.php?name=02AmyotharHluttaw.pdf&type=page_multiple_photo&code=17&sno=9583&token=fd383d60132223462ab1397e79d03be04d694929d77d8f3f9eeb64b4bf5359e1f447b641c72e24a18d2b4e100896c87e384f28654c657876eab0a64cfd3fd9, downloaded 11 July 2021).

⁶³ Saw Daniel contested for the Hpasawng Township – 2 seat in the Kayah State *hluttaw*, representing the Kayah State Democratic Party (KySDP), but again lost to an NLD candidate. He secured only 17.43 per cent of total votes, while the NLD candidate won 60.09 per cent;

“တိုင်းဒေသကြီး သို့မဟုတ် ပြည်နယ်လွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းတစ်ဦးချင်းစီ၏ မဲဆန္ဒရရှိမှုအ

ခြေအနေ (၂၀၂၀ ပြည့်နှစ် အထွေထွေ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ)” [Election Results of Each Candidate for State and Region *Hluttaw* (2020 General Elections)], *Union Election Commission*, p. 12

(<https://uecdata.s3.ap-southeast-1.amazonaws.com/2020%20Election%20Result%20%28%20Percentage%20%29/3.%20S%20%26%20R%20Result%20%28%20Percentage%20%29/S%26R%20Each%20Candidate%20Result.pdf>, downloaded 11 July 2021).

⁶⁴ That is, the All Region Mon Democracy Party.

⁶⁵ Banyar Aung Moe won a seat in the Amyotha Hluttaw as a candidate for the ARMDP in Mon State’s Constituency 7; “အမျိုးသားလွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းတစ်ဦးချင်းစီ၏

မဲဆန္ဒရရှိမှုအခြေအနေ (၇-၁၁-၂၀၁၀)” [Election Results of Each Candidate for the Amyotha

Hluttaw (7.11.2010)], *Union Election Commission*, p. 21

(https://www.uec.gov.mm/show_data_content.php?name=141.pdf&type=law&code=x&sno=954&token=28fc445711eb47f5c258bcbcedbaa6c80d31f353db551ff9db671ff614527f0d9a357bd0d7e2871b166c2f51f19565d7fbbf892c26a5b62a3fdcf2be2887f6, downloaded 11 July 2021).

⁶⁶ Banyar Aung Moe again won a seat in the Pyithu Hluttaw, representing the MUP, in Yay Township, Mon State. He won 51.55 per cent of total votes, while the losing NLD took 39.64 per cent; “ပြည်သူ့လွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းတစ်ဦးချင်းစီ၏ မဲဆန္ဒရရှိမှုအခြေအနေ (၂၀၂၀ ပြည့်နှစ် အထွေထွေ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ)”.

⁶⁷ In 2015, Shwe Kyein contested the Namhsan Township – 2 seat in the Shan State *hluttaw* as a USDP candidate. He lost to a Ta-Arng (Palaung) National Party (TNP) candidate; “တိုင်းဒေသကြီး သို့မဟုတ် ပြည်နယ်လွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းတစ်ဦးချင်းစီ၏ မဲဆန္ဒရရှိမှုအခြေအနေ (၂၀၁၅ ခုနှစ် အထွေထွေ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ)”, p. 130. Namhsan is the administrative center of the Palaung Self-Administered Zone.

⁶⁸ In 2020, Shwe Kyein contested the Namhsan Township – 1 seat in the Shan State *hluttaw*, again as a USDP candidate, and he once again lost to a TNP candidate. He secured 17.28 per cent of the vote, while the TNP candidate took 49.78 per cent and the NLD candidate 27.35 per cent; “တိုင်းဒေသကြီး သို့မဟုတ် ပြည်နယ်လွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းတစ်ဦးချင်းစီ၏ မဲဆန္ဒရရှိမှုအခြေအနေ (၂၀၂၀ ပြည့်နှစ် အထွေထွေ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ)”, p. 127.

⁶⁹ Veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (*b*), personal communication, 19 August 2021. Saw Daniel is also reported to have had ties to the infamous “Nasaka” border guard force, abolished during the Thein Sein administration in 2013; veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (*a*), personal communication, 18 August 2021.

⁷⁰ The SAC’s Shan member has a clear history of his own in resisting NLD dominance. As speaker of the Shan State *hluttaw*, he presided over the decisive 2019 rejection of NLD-appointed President Win Myint’s proposal to establish state- and region-level ministries of immigration and population. During 2016-2020, the military directly held 36 seats in the Shan State *hluttaw*, the USDP 31, the SNLD 28, the NLD 24, and other parties 22; both the USDP and the SNLD opposed the proposal. See “Shan rejects formation of new ministry”, *Myanmar Times*, 9 July 2019 (<https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/shan-rejects-formation-new-ministry.html>, downloaded 29 July 2021).

⁷¹ The paucity of data on the SAC’s Kachin and Chin members Jeng Phang Naw Taung and Moungh Har, along with their lack of party affiliation, means that the background to their decisions to join the junta is less clear. In fact, Moungh Har even remarked that, when the Tatmadaw offered him a position on the SAC junta, he was not sure whether the offer concerned a state-level or Union-level role; Salai Benezet, “အာဏာသိမ်းတပ်ကဖွဲ့စည်းလိုက်သည့်နိုင်ငံတော်စီမံအုပ်ချုပ်ရေးကောင်စီတွင်ချင်းတော်လှန်ရေးခေါင်းဆောင်ဦးဝမ္မသုမောင်း၏သားဦးမောင်းဟာပါဝင်”.

⁷² On ANP-NLD tensions related to the factors noted in this paragraph, see notes 27 and 29 above. A further factor in the ANP’s antagonistic relations with the NLD are the former party’s close links to the Rakhine nationalist Arakan Army (AA). The ANP is believed to be supportive of the AA, which aspires to establish Rakhine State as a confederate state with self-determination. The speaker of the Rakhine State Htuttaw during 2016-2021 and ANP member U San Kyaw Hla is in fact the father-in-law of Tun Myat Naing, the chief of the AA; Sithu Aung Myint, “Rakhine nationalism and the rise of the Arakan Army”, *Frontier Myanmar*, 7 February 2019 (<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/rakhine-nationalism-and-the-rise-of-the-arakan-army/>, downloaded 1 July 2021), and “Arakan Army chief’s father-in-law appointed Rakhine parliament speaker”, *Frontier Myanmar*, 8 February 2016 (<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/arakan-army-chiefs-father-in-law-appointed-rakhine-parliament-speaker/>, downloaded 1 July 2021).

⁷³ Veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (*b*), personal communication, 19 August 2021. In January 2021, just a few weeks before the coup, representatives of the two parties failed to meet to discuss issues concerning federalism because of disagreements over proposed venues for the talks. The NLD had reached out to 48 ethnic-nationality parties to discuss issues over building a democratic federal union and joining its “national unity government” just a few days after winning the 2020 elections; Nyein Nyein, “NLD Reaches Out to Myanmar’s Ethnic Parties Seeking Federal Union and an End to Civil War”, *The Irrawaddy*, 13 November 2021 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/elections/nld-reaches-myanmars-ethnic-parties-seeking-federal-union-end-civil-war.html>, downloaded 1 July 2021), and Thet Zin Soe and Myat Thura, “NLD, Mon parties talk aborted over venue dispute”, *Myanmar Times*, 5 January 2021 (<https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/nld-mon-parties-talk-aborted-over-venue-dispute.html>, downloaded 30 June 2021).

⁷⁴ In the months following the coup, the SAC announced measures that perhaps reflected concessions to its ANP and MUP collaborators. These measures included lifting the Internet ban in Rakhine State immediately after the coup, releasing of the influential ANP leader Dr Aye Maung and other Rakhine political detainees, and removing the AA from Naypyitaw’s list of terrorist organizations. The founder and former chairman of the ANP, Aye Maung had been sentenced to 20 years’ imprisonment for high treason in 2019 for speaking in support of armed struggle to reestablish Rakhine sovereignty. The Tatmadaw released him some two weeks after the coup, in a move likely to have been in response to a demand from the ANP; Thaw Zin Myo, “Imprisoned Rakhine politician Aye Maung stripped of lawmaker status”, *Myanmar Now*, 20 May 2020 (<https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/imprisoned-rakhine-politician-aye-maung-stripped-of-lawmaker-status>, downloaded 1 July 2021), and “High-Profile Ethnic Rakhine Political Prisoners Among Those Freed to Mark Myanmar Union Day”, *The Irrawaddy*, 12 February (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/high-profile-ethnic-rakhine-political-prisoners-among-freed-mark-myanmar-union-day.html>, downloaded 1 July 2021). After its attacks on police posts and military units, the AA was listed as a terrorist organization in 2020. However, the SAC removed that designation a month after the 1 February coup; “Myanmar Military Regime Removes Arakan Army from List of Terrorist Groups”, *The Irrawaddy*, 11 March 2021 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-military-regime-removes-arakan-army-list-terrorist-groups.html>, downloaded 1 July 2021). In Mon State, the SAC regime renamed a bridge whose christening as the Bogyoke Aung San Bridge under the NLD government had created much controversy and in fact cost the NLD votes in Mon State in by-elections held in 2017. It will now be called by the restored name of Thanlwin Bridge (Chaungzon). The NLD’s decision to name the span after the national independence leader General Aung San despite protests by local residents that the bridge’s name should be one related to “Mon history and culture” fed the belief that the party was not listening to those residents’ voices; Lun Min Maung, “Thousands protest over bridge name in Mon State”, *The Myanmar Times*, 20 March 2017 (<https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/25383-thousands-protest-over-bridge-name-in-mon-state.html>, downloaded 1 July 2021). Min Aung Hlaing himself was present at the renaming ceremony; “Myanmar Coup Leader Renames Controversial Mon State Bridge”, *The Irrawaddy*, 1 June 2021 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-coup-leader-renames-controversial-mon-state-bridge.html>, downloaded 7 August 2021). None of this is to say that the Tatmadaw has an unlimited willingness to meet every demand made by ethnic-nationality parties in order to win support from non-Bamar populations. It did not accede to the ANP’s insistence that the top position in the Rakhine State Administration Council be assumed by a member of the party; “After Working With Myanmar’s Regime, Rakhine’s Major Party Remains Divided”, *The Irrawaddy*, 7 May 2021 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/after-working-with-myanmars-regime-rakhines-major-party-remains-divided.html>, 30 June 2021).

⁷⁵ The NLD government’s pursuit of that latter process had occasioned growing tensions with Min Aung Hlaing; Cape Diamond, “Myanmar’s latest peace talks expose Suu Kyi rift with military”, *Nikkei Asia*, 21 August 2020 (<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Myanmar-s-latest-peace-talks-expose-Suu-Kyi-rift-with-military>, downloaded 3 August 2021).

⁷⁶ Nyein Nyein, “Military Sets up New Committee for Peace Talks”, *The Irrawaddy*, 10 November 2020 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-military-sets-new-committee-peace-talks.html>, downloaded 3 August 2021).

⁷⁷ Joe Kumbun, “Do the Myanmar Junta’s New ‘Peace-Making Committees’ Stand Any Chance of Success?”, *The Diplomat*, 4 March 2021 (<https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/do-the-myanmar-juntas-new-peace-making-committees-stand-any-chance-of-success/>, downloaded 9 August 2021), and Htet Myet Min Tun, Moe Thuzar and Michael Montesano “Min Aung Hlaing and His Generals: Data on the Military Members of Myanmar’s State Administration Council Junta”. Min Aung Hlaing himself chairs the National Solidarity and Peace-making Central Committee (NSPCC), on which junta Vice Chairman Soe Win also sits. Among other military members of the SAC, General Mya Htun Oo, Admiral Tin Aung San, General Maung Maung Kyaw, Lieutenant General Moe Myint Tun, and Lieutenant General Aung Lin Dwe are members of the committee, as are civilian SAC members Mahn Nyein Maung, Aye Nu Sein, Jeng Phang Naw Taung, Sai Lone Hsaing, Saw Daniel, and Banyar Aung Moe. The NSPCC’s roster does not include Bamar civilian SAC members Thein Nyunt and Khin Maung Swe or the Chin civilian member Moungh Har. Soe Win also chairs the National Solidarity and Peace-making Working Committee. Further, a lower-level National Unity and Peace Restoration Coordination Committee operates under the chairmanship of Lieutenant General Yar Pyae, who chaired the Union Peace Conference’s Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee and led a military negotiating team set up in 2018. This third new committee thus represents the only suggestion of continuity with the peace process of the past five years. Veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (a), who must remain unnamed, shared these data on the membership of the new committees with the authors through personal communication, 6 August 2021.

⁷⁸ February saw the ANP state that it “would cooperate with the military regime as necessary ‘for Rakhine’s national interest’”; Nyein Nyein, “Anti-NLD Ethnic Politicians Picked by Military Regime for Governing Council”. Three months later, the ANP appeared to be reconsidering its position; “ANP chair says party may end its association with junta”, *Myanmar Now*, 5 May 2021 (<https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/anp-chair-says-party-may-end-its-association-with-junta>, downloaded 30 June 2021). Sources in Yangon now suggest that the ANP is “lying low”, rather than closely identifying itself with the post-coup regime. Its leadership is, that is, convinced that Rakhine State can remain a place apart, relatively unaffected by the patterns of conflict that have engulfed the rest of Myanmar in the wake of the coup; veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (b), personal communication, 19 August 2021. This posture reflects, of course, a long-held perspective among Rakhine nationalists. The MUP also affirmed that it had decided to cooperate with the military because such collaboration “offers a way to get [Mon people’s] rights”; Umair Jamal, “Myanmar military reaches out to ethnic minorities with little success”, *ASEAN Today*, 20 March 2021 (<https://www.aseantoday.com/2021/03/myanmar-military-reaches-out-to-ethnic-minorities-with-little-success/>, downloaded 30 June 2021). It should be noted that the MUP’s decision to cooperate with the SAC led to a number of resignations from the party in protest against the party’s decision — including those of members of its central executive committee; see “More and more Mon Party (MUP) resign in protest over cooperation with military regime’s SAC”, *Hintha Media*, 29 March 2021 (<https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/more-and-more-mon-party-mup-resign-protest-over-cooperation-military-regimes-sac>, downloaded 17 August 2021). The ANP and the MUP parties appeared to believe that the Tatmadaw would fulfill their demands for more ethnic-nationality roles in decision-making in their states, which they failed to secure from the NLD in the past five years.

⁷⁹ On a related point, sources report that Min Aung Hlaing has increasingly and deliberately sought to associate the Tatmadaw with the idea of a multi-ethnic Myanmar

and thus to suggest that the armed forces are part of any vision for federalism; veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (a), personal communication, 18 August 2021.

⁸⁰ We are grateful for these observations concerning the USDP to veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (b), personal communication, 19 August 2021.

⁸¹ Veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (a), personal communication, 18 August 2021.

⁸² Veteran specialist on the Myanmar peace process (b), personal communication, 19 August 2021.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ A summary of the meeting of the SAC held on 23 August indicates that the junta’s civilian members raised taking action against supporters of the CRPH and NUG, including ethnic armed organisations providing arms and training to “terrorist organisations”, as well as recommendations on rewarding “those giving information” and “civil servants performing their duties conscientiously”. See Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, Myanmar, “Chairman of State Administration Council Prime Minister of Provisional Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivers address at meeting 14/2021 of State Administration Council”, 23 August 2021 (<https://cincds.gov.mm/node/14155?d=1>, downloaded 3 September 2021).

<p><i>ISEAS Perspective</i> is published electronically by: ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute</p> <p>30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace Singapore 119614 Main Tel: (65) 6778 0955 Main Fax: (65) 6778 1735</p> <p>Get Involved with ISEAS. Please click here: https://www.iseas.edu.sg/support</p>	<p>ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute accepts no responsibility for facts presented and views expressed.</p> <p>Responsibility rests exclusively with the individual author or authors. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without permission.</p> <p>© Copyright is held by the author or authors of each article.</p>	<p>Editorial Chairman: Choi Shing Kwok</p> <p>Editorial Advisor: Tan Chin Tiong</p> <p>Managing Editor: Ooi Kee Beng</p> <p>Editors: William Choong, Lee Poh Onn, Lee Sue-Ann, and Ng Kah Meng</p> <p>Comments are welcome and may be sent to the author(s).</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------