

A Free People or a Satellite Country?

Myanmar Ruled by Myanmar Kings

Myanmar people cherish national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The first Myanmar Kingdom was established in 1044 by King Anawrahta, the second in 1551 by King Bayintnaung and the third in 1752 by King Alaung Phayar. Those Myanmar Kingdoms were built on national unity, economic strength and military prowess, commanding respect from countries in the region. From History, we learned where the borders of the ancient Myanmar Kingdoms lay with a sense of pride and admiration in our people.

Days of Servitude

British colonialists waged their first Anglo-Myanmar War in 1824 and invaded Myanmar. Rakhine, Rambre, Thantwe, Man Aung, Yay, Myeik, Dawei and Tanintharyi regions were annexed. After the second Anglo-Myanmar War of 1852, the entire Lower Myanmar was lost. The third Anglo-Myanmar War of 1885 ended with the loss of the entire country. A period of servitude lasting over 100 years followed when everything that the Myanmar people valued most came to ruin - the throne, independence, sovereignty and territory.

Independence and Sovereignty

National unity was achieved through the collaborative efforts of far-sighted national leaders and the strenuous efforts of the Tatmadaw with the participation of the people, with the result that on 12 February 1947, Pinlon Treaty was signed and Myanmar became an independent sovereign nation on 4 January 1948. However Myanmar was strong-armed into giving up some of its territory, which can be seen by a comparison of the 1752 and 1948 maps.

The Eventful Past

With the participation of the people, the Tatmadaw repelled the incursion of the Kuomintang forces into eastern Myanmar in 1949. It assumed a care-taker role in 1958 as the divisive battles among political parties endangered independence. It again assumed responsibility for the State in 1962 to prevent the impending loss of independence and national disintegration as instigated by the colonialists. Then in 1988, a quarrel at a tea shop spiralled into street protests and vandalism with the instigation of the colonialists. Concerns of national disintegration and loss of independence prompted the Tatmadaw to protect the Nation once again. Since 1988, the Tatmadaw has been working energetically for security, stability, peace, economic development, and human resources development among other endeavours. Consequently, national development achieved within the 17-year period from 1988 to 2005 was many times greater than that achieved within the 40-year period from 1948 to 1988.

National Security for the Modern Times

Our national goal is the emergence of a peaceful modern developed nation. Our national interests lie in non-disintegration of the union, non-disintegration of national unity, perpetuation of sovereignty, heightened dignity for our nation and the people, dynamic patriotic spirit, national development and the emergence of a modern developed nation. Our national security encompasses all activities to accomplish our national interests as well as all activities to prevent attempts to compromise our national interests. Many people associate security with arms and assume it has nothing to do with them. Actually, national security is not a matter solely for the armed personnel, but something that concerns everyone, and every nationality living in Myanmar. It is everybody's responsibility and we all need to lend a hand.

A Look at National Interests and National Security

While the British were setting up their colonies all over the world, accumulating vast wealth that drove their economic development, it served their national interests to "civilize" the world. While they served their national interests, we lost our independence and sovereignty for over a century.

Those were the times when the two world wars broke out. The US national interests in those days lay solely in protecting the American homeland. But this changed after the World War II. In addition to the protection of their homeland, they now look to spread or impose American values and democracy around the world as a political and moral absolute. American values are expressed through 6 basic principles:

1. the individual's right to make his or her own decisions and government through free elections
2. the individual's freedom to engage in economic and political activities according to law without infringing on other people's rights
3. transparent policy and decision making while the mandate rests with the people
4. policies and changes based on the above 3 principles for international relations and war as the last resort to implement the above 3 principles and protect their homeland
5. protection and promotion of American values; exploitation of those values and compatible ones from other countries in international relations as the best values
6. humanitarianism

In short, the US national interests lie in imposing American values, spreading them, using democracy, human rights and humanitarianism, imposing them, and in using them as a means to test the strength of each country or each group.

The US national security policy and processes are geared toward accomplishing the US interests - through military force if necessary. In its foreign policy, the US makes use of the whole range of diplomatic means including compromise and negotiation. The priorities of the US security policy are:

1. protection of the homeland and survival of the political system
2. protection and expansion of democracy systems and transparency

The plan of action in the security policy is:

1. utilizing organized military force and national resources to the full in homeland defence, as the vital interest.
2. expanding democracy systems as the critical interest
3. creating positions of strength as the serious interest, and considering any failure to create favorable conditions to be a threat to the cause of democracy

- SAM C. SARKESIAN, *US National Security - Policy Makers, Processes and Politics*

These are the mechanisms through which the US formulates and implements its national values, national interests and national security.

The US and its allies occupied Afghanistan and Iraq, which were supposed to constitute threats to the US security under this national security policy, with the stated purpose of bringing democracy to those countries. Afghanistan and Iraq are now declared democratic with governments freely elected by the people. However, fires of war rage on in both countries with daily attacks and bombings claiming tens of thousands of lives.

Myanmar's geopolitical significance and strategic location have attracted a whole range of attempts to bring chaos into the country. A whole gamut of accusations, charges and allegations have been brought to bear against Myanmar, individually and in combination, with exiled terrorist groups and the so-called politicians within the country working in tandem with all kinds of mass media: human rights, forced labour, child soldiers, child rights, forced relocations, refugees, migrant workers, trafficking in persons, rape, women's rights, summary justice, torture and beatings, nationalities' rights, food shortages, access to education and health care, religious freedom, free speech, the right to free association, land mines, narcotics, political reform, national convention. All those boil down to an attempt to shape public opinion and impose their so-called values, democracy and transparency. While their humanitarianism is not forthcoming, the above-mentioned accusations in different forms will follow one another from different angles and directions. New topics may also be found. Whatever the topic is, the theme is to serve the interests of their country, not ours. Myanmar people should consider what they can do in the interests of our country, encourage them or do what we should do anyway?

Analysing the US National Security Strategy of March 2006

This year's US national security strategy calls for achieving greater freedom in the world through international leadership, earning respect for American values and protecting their homeland. This process is to be implemented through such strategies as ending tyranny (read bringing down governments they don't happen to like) and effective promotion of democracy.

Under the pretext of ending tyranny, people in North Korea, Iran, Syria, Cuba, Belarus, Myanmar and Zimbabwe are to be made aware of the atrocities, poverty, instability, corruption and dictatorships that they are supposed to be living under. With the forced logic that tyranny may lead to terrorism and affect the interests of the world and the US, American democracy and values deserve greater conviction than the cherished cultures and traditions of the world's other continents and nations.

In implementing the effective promotion of democracy, people in targetted countries are to be made to take an interest in human rights, religious freedom, freedom of information, free speech, freedom to associate, press freedom, impartial justice, accountability, government restrictions on NGOs and other organizations, organize protests and effect a change of government.

In implementing those two strategies, the US employs any or all of the following political, economic, diplomatic and other means:

1. create opposition by claiming poor human rights
2. encourage pro-democracy reformers, arrange them to meet senior officials at the White House, government offices and embassies
3. provide foreign aid for free elections, rule of law, civil society organizations, human rights, women's rights, freedom of information and religious freedom.
4. provide military aid, support, training and command support for the human rights of those in democracy circles
5. impose sanctions against targetted countries
6. stop aid to targetted countries from other nations
7. call upon friendly governments of democratic nations to pressure targetted countries on freedom, democracy and human rights issues
8. provide democracy funds to emerging democracies in the Middle East and North Africa
9. initiate friendly relations with NGOs and civil society organizations and support their activities
10. work together with international organizations such as the United Nations and regional organizations such as the African Union to promote democracy
11. condemn blatant violators of human rights and democracy practices
12. encourage or arrange foreign investment and foreign aid in countries that have committed themselves to rule of law, anti-corruption efforts and democracy
13. encourage or arrange Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with such countries

The US Security Strategy clearly and openly sets forth the above-mentioned practices against Myanmar and other countries to serve their own interests.

Those of us who wish to see Myanmar as a developed democratic nation need to work for and defend our own interests. Our citizens and the indigenous people have to build a democratic nation through strength born of unity. Those with a history of ill treatment toward others cannot be expected to change heart now, whether we happen to be in their good books or in their bad books.

Our national peoples have built Myanmar for thousands of years. We belong to a nation that possesses independence, sovereignty, national territory, its own culture and traditions. Our people are intrepid, alert and resolute with a high level of intellectual attainment. We are rich in natural resources. We only need to work hard with unity. We ourselves have to defend our national interests, accomplish them and preserve Myanmar values all our lives.

Are we a free people or a satellite country? No need to ask. We are a free people.

By Zaw Bo