

CHAPTER III

MYANMAR MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN POLITIC

The military domination did not end there, for the later period the military become the dominant actors in the government and leader in the executive branch. It proves that after the General Aung Saan, the next leader is General Ne Win. He is a general who led a coup in 1962 of Thakin Nu. Hence, at that time Ne Win became the Prime Minister of Myanmar from 1958 until 1974. Because U Nu used the strategy of the development of *Pydawitha*, he tries to keep consistent to solve those problems and to create a peaceful condition in Myanmar. However, the strategy was never successful and failed to solve the complex problems that also consist of economic, corruption and chaos among ethnic and race. Therefore, it becomes a factor of the military coup in Myanmar. Hence, Ne Win knows as the junta military leader that has a duty to create a peaceful condition in Myanmar. By seeing the unstable condition the military regimes have been seeking the way regarding the problem and willing to deal with, so being involved into the political system becomes the best way for Myanmar military or Junta to play role in politics.

In Myanmar, there had been seventeen years of the military taking control the politics since the military seized their power on September 18, 1988. In 1988, Junta military was implemented by the authoritarian government system, in which

the military controls every activity and makes a firm action toward the people who become the government opposition such as cracking down society's action and killing many students as the opposition like what happened in 18 September 1988 (Nurrahmah, 2001). On the other hands, under the junta government, Myanmar has been facing many domestic problems, like corruption inside the government, chaos among ethnic and chaos among race (Group, 2011). Military involvement into political arena is not purely based on general public interest, but the military tends to maintain a major degree of influence in political and economic affairs in order to promote its own interest. Hence, military could become the ruling party for long periods of times. Known as the dominant legal institution, Myanmar's military Tatmadaw has become the major institution and gave a strong influence in the country since the independence history.

Moreover, after the government was controlled by the civilian, Tatmadaw still wanted to involve into political arena and to be active in the economic arena as well. It is one of the processes of democratic transition for the country. In some point, basic idea of Tatmadaw came from the Myanmar's anti-colonial struggle that had the purpose to protect a country from communist and other ideology that only focused on self-interest. Indeed, military will support and focus on protecting Myanmar sovereignty from broader and external threat. Hence, it did not have a willing to surrender the government system to civilian politician easily because Tatmadaw remained distrustful to them all (Group, 2014). Furthermore, we could

see that Thailand and Myanmar were using oligarchic military from which the military and the politician are making coalition and creating the unstable political and economic issues. like violation of human right and some regulations that limit people to do business and make changes for the betterment of life. Hence, the society cannot take any further in order make some improvement. Moreover, if there is a society that tries to take an action which opposes the military, then it will be punished by the military (Rakson, 2011). There are some scholars Connors and Hewison, who stated that the best coup will not make better condition and improvement to political condition as the Thailand's governments and societies want because this action is far from the values of democracy (Rakson, 2011)

Like what happened in Thailand, the military in Myanmar also has significant role and participation in politics such as in interest group, political party, executive body and economics as well.

A. Military Role Within Interest Group(Mass Organization)

In order to create the welfare sosialist society, the government that consist of junta military elite starts to propose mass organization which focuses on the low level of society like farmers and labours. This organization will become the loyal followers of the government to support every policy and decision. Known as Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) in 1962, it becomes the mass party that is provides by Ne Win's Government. Hence, by this program the junta military produce many

mass generation of military followers that consist of farmers and workers. Then, military would easily mobilize the farmers and workers as the military followers and ally. Futhermore, by mobilizing the mass organization military will be able to control every region that is already under military rule effectively and also the increasing and wider branch such the member of party, political party and the branch of mass movement under military control (Rachmanto, 2002).

In addition, in order to create the strong member of military followers such as farmers, workers and minority people, military launch program to increase the skill and ability of its follwers. First, Military has The Commend Inservice Training Course, a program to train them about military skill. Hence, they will have the ability in order to run their duty from the government. Second, military has The Academy For Development of National Groups. This academy is the military's facility to train the members about the politic skill. Since 1965, this academy was sucessful to produce many personeels with the great political ability and almost 1.276 personeels or members of military have passed and graduated from this acedemy. From this program, military invite, convince and increases the mass participation to involve and support the program created by the military (Rachmanto. 2002).

B. Military Role Within Political Party

In Myanmar, military is directly involved into the political arena and has influential role in the national politics around five decades, and the main reason of such involvement is about the national security. They believe that by using military, they can protect the nation and it was started from 1962. The real action of the military is by creating Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) in 1974. Indeed, military was active to join in the political practice and create such kind party. Then, in 1989 BSPP was changed into State Law and Restoration Council (SLORC). SLORC is the other military idea to be directly involved in politics. Then, military create a new rule and constitution in order to create its own political order by electing the new president from the military side, which is U Thein Sein (YI, 2014).

In the recent era, SLORC was creating the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) in 1994 and Unity Solidarity Development Party (USDP) on 29 March 2010. This party comes as the real action from the military junta to take a role in politics and to be involved in politics. The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) was led by the military elite like Prime Minister Thein Sein and other military elite as the former of military General. Therefore, USDP, SLORC and the government has the same idea and objectives. USDP created as the real action of military to involve in political arena (Departement, 2010). Moreover, the existence of USDP is to prevent the Aung San Suu Kyi and National League for Democracy (NLD) to win the election (Zaw,

2013). From the history, the NLD formed by Aung San Suu Kyi was defeating the National Unity Party (NUP) formed by military side in 1990 election (Baker, 1997).

At that time, NLD gained the majority point by 85 % votes and captured significant seats in the parliament. Meanwhile, NUP only gained 2 % of votes, therefore it is surprising for the military side. Hence, to respond that phenomenon, the military reject the result of election and created the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) in 1994. Meanwhile, in the election of 11 August 2010, it the first election after 20 years without elections happened. At that time, NUP competed with another party and gained approximately 999 seats in the parliament from nationwide (Pulpika, 2010). In contrast, NLD which was led by Aung San Suu Kyi did not register to the election because her prisoner period has not ended yet (Pulpika, 2010). In addition, on March 9, 2010 military junta created five policies that become a guidance of the 2010 election and as the reason for NLD and two others major parties to join the election. The policies are :

1. A law to establish the union election commission
2. The law regarding the requirements for political parties to be able to follow the electoral process
3. The law governing the Pyithu Hluttaw membership
4. The law governing the Amyotha Hluttaw membership
5. And the law governing membership at regional level or states.

The rules especially regarding the establishment for political parties become a barrier to free and justice the electoral system. The rules issued by the military junta to run the 2010 election cannot be separated from the legal basis stated in the constitution of 2008. The 2008 Constitution of Myanmar set of preconditions that must be met by each candidate before taking a particular position in the third branch government. It includes regulations on age, citizenship, and a minimum stay in Myanmar. This law also does not allow a person who has a dual citizenship or has a close relationship with a foreigner to serve as a public official - the law seems aimed at Suu Kyi married Michael Aris, a British citizen. In the 2010 election-related rules on Hluttaw even argued about prerequisites where both parents' candidates must of Myanmar - another obvious thing alone would be prohibitive for the descendants of Suu Kyi - his two sons - to become members of the legislature (Sampelling, 2014).

Some of the other rules that are considered to be a barrier to the creation of free and fair elections are for example: a member of a religious organization is not allowed to be a member of the party; UEC members are elected by the SPDC - UEC has the authority to bring together the results of voting lists, to inaugurate the election results, and to establish a judicial body whose function is to resolve disagreements related to the election; UEC's is decision is final and cannot be brought to justice; and, among all public services, only military personnels are allowed to become members of the party. Various regulations are considered bias

because some big parties like NLD, ALD, and MDF decide not to participate in the electoral process. Indeed, the majority of elections is won by the USDP. Here is the data on the number of seats of each political party in both chambers.

Based on the available data, it can be seen that the USDP gained a majority of seats for each room. For comparison, the total number of seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw is 440 seats and 224 seats for the Amyotha Hluttaw. If it is based on that number, then the number of seats the USDP get for each room is approximately 59% for the Pyithu Hluttaw and approximately 58% for the Amyotha Hluttaw. Coupled with the remaining 25% of MPs are elected by the military, then the total amount of seats that may be acquired by the USDP in each room is more than 75%. For the record, it takes a turnout of more than 75% to amend the constitution - which means that it can be done by the USDP as a party controlled by the military; and of course this cannot be done by the opposition (Sampelling, 2014).

Table 2. Result of 2010 Election

No	Political party	Seats	Percentage
1	Union Solidarity and Development Party	259	79.69%
2	Shan National Democratic Party	18	5.54%
3	National Unity Party	12	3.69%
4	Rakhine Nationals Progressive Party	9	2.77%

5	National Democratic Force	8	2.46%
6	All Mon Region Democratic Party	3	0.92%
7	Pao National Organization	3	0.92%
8	Chin National Party	2	0.62
9	Chin Progressive	2	0.62%
10	Phalon-Sawaw Democracy Party	2	0.62%
11	Democratic Party	2	0.62%

From the explanation, we can conclude that the military junta was active in the political arena by being directly involved into the politic practice and controlling over political party.

There are several major political parties that exist in Myanmar such as:

1) *USDP(Union Solidarity and Development Party)*

At the first time, USDP (Union Solidarity and Development Party) is the evolution from USDA (Union Solidarity and Development Association). USDA is the social organisation that is strongly supported by the military regime in 1993 and has the slogan “people first”. The slogan is a means of USDP to convince the people in Burma/Myanmar.

This transition occurs in the upcoming election in Burma/Myanmar and expected to become the dominant party in the new parliament. USDP was born from Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), and become the political party that ready to compete in the election and supported by the military regime as well. Hence, by the existence of USDP to consolidate the and legalize military rule through the election, and would simply be a transfer of power from current military regime to a political party and led by the military elites. In order to become the major party, the prime minister Thein Shein and other former military generals led this USDP to become a dominant party in Burma/Myanmar. It proves that, in 2010 election USDP gained the majority vote by 259 seats in the parliament and 79,69 percentages (NDD, 2010).

2) *National Unity Party*

National Unity Party or NUP, is the Burma's Political party that is formed under military junta power. In 1990, This party was known as the member of Burmas Socialist Programme party (BSPP) and took a part in general election. Unfortunately, in the election 1990 NUP was efeated by National League for Democracy (NLD). NUP's is led by two military elites: the deputy commander of the armed forces Tun Yi and general secretary U Than Tin.

Indeed, the existence of military officer within NUP makes the ideology and purpose is to promote the military interest through this party. Hence, military woud

simply use NUP as a means to get what military intends to, like what happened with BSPP. Moreover, Ne Win and big business interest also take a place within this party. It makes this party is strongly pro-junta military regime. Meanwhile, in 2010 election, NUP gained a little number of parliaments which are 12 seats and 3,69 for precentage, although it is categorized as the political party that is controlled by military junta that exist in Burma/Myanmar political arena. Hence, this is one of the proofs that military has been directly involved into political matter by using the political as a means (Mizzima, 2015).

Hence, we could see that the role of military in politics and in democratic process is very strong. The existence of major parties in Thailand, proves that party is one of the best ways for the military to take part into democratic process.

C. Military Role Within Executive Body

In Myanmar, the condition of military remain the same with Thailand, which is directly involved into the political arena and has an influential role in the national politics in around five decades, and the main reason of such involvement is about the national security. They believe that by using military, they can protect the nation and it was beginning from 1962 (YI, 2014). The real action of the military is by creating Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) in 1974 and becoming the executive body. Indeed, military was active to join in the political practice and create such kind party (YI, 2014). Then, in 1989 BSPP was changed into State Law

and Restoration Council (SLORC). SLORC is the other military's idea to be directly involved in politics. Then, military created a new rule and constitution in order to create their own political order by electing the new president from the military side, which is U Thein Sein (YI, 2014).

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Basically, Myanmar is led by the military actor since 1936, when general Aung San was together with Thakin Nu in the era of colonialism. In 1945, General Aung San and his army fight for independent of Burma by joining the British side. In the same time Anti-Fascist People Freedom League (AFPFL) was created by General Aung San and his ally. Since then, Burmese is under control of the military

actors. After General Aung San was killed by gunmen in July 1947, the other general that comes from military side continues the military power in Burmese political system and AFPFL. In 1948, Myanmar/Burma gained the legal sovereignty as an independent country (Kelly, 2005). There are many military members that have become the executive body and the Prime Minister of Myanmar. Take a look into the table below.

Table 3. List of Prime Minister Myanmar 2011

No	Prime Minister	Took Office	Left Office	Party	Note
1	U Nu	4-01-1948	12-06-1956	AFPFL	Civil
2	Ba Swe	12-06-1956	01-03-1957	AFPFL	Civil
3	U Nu	29-03-1957	29-10-1958	AFPFL	Civil
4	Ne Win	29-10-1958	04-04-1960	Military	Military
5	Ne Win	04-07-1962	04-03-1974	Military/BSPP	Military
6	Sein Win	04-03-1974	29-03-1977	Military/BSPP	Military
7	Maung Maung Kha	29-03-1977	26-07-1988	Military/BSPP	Military
8	Tun Tin	26-07-1988	18-09-1988	Military/BSPP	Military
9	Saw Maung	21-09-1988	23-04-1992	Military	Military
10	Than Swe	23-04-1992	25-08-2003	Military	Military
11	Khin Nyunt	25-08-2003	18-10-2004	Military	Military
12	Soe Win	19-10-2004	12-10-2007	Military	Military
13	Thein Sein	12-10-2007	29-04-2007	Military	Military
14	Thein Sein	29-04-2010	02-06-2010	Independent	Military
15	Thein Sein	02-06-2010	30-03-2011	USDP	Military

D. Military Role Within Business Sector

According to the scholar of politics “Robert Gilcin”, Politics and Economy cannot be separated like the coin. It means that, politic is always side by side with economy (Gilpin, 2001). Related with that statement, in Myanmar, military force “Tatmadaw” does not only control the political sphere but also in the field of economic and business filed. The military directly control over economic management, so the military group dominates the field of economic institution and economic activities. The military have come to recognize its expansion related to the economy such as rice and cooking oil especially in Ranggon. It also developed a huge economic known as the Union of Myanmar Economic Holding Limited (UMHEL) and the Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC).

Both are the companies controlled by the military junta to support military existence. The UMHEL was headed by the junta general and set up to generate profits from industry and trading commercial good. This UMHEL performed several functions. First, they give budget support for the military junta. Second, from this companies military junta ganied an income stream for retired officers who could purchase shares in UMHEL. Moreover, this companies also made special profits in some sector like major foreign investment had to join them (International, 2012). Besides, they also long dominated the rice trade, cigarette and alcohol production and distribution.

This is so interesting, because UMHEL also expand their authority to monopolised many markets like virtual monopoly car imports and have a power to become the decision-makers. Military as the major actor within the politic and economic issue, have the policy regarding the flow of goods exchange. They never give permission to other businesses to perform transactions over the limit exchange rate that has been specified. However, they are free to do so, because they have special rights in exports and imports and they were also exempt from corporate and import taxes(International, 2012).

In addition, in the era of General Ne Win, military “Tatmadaw” created the nationalization program named Defence Service Institution (DSI). This is an institution of military business, since then to this institution foreign companies and workshops are at nationalization in selecting managers. This incident happens not because there is no pro-democracy movement which became a powerful military, but because the military is so strong that a pseudo opposition from the community is helpless. Tan Shwe military era inherited the character of Ne Win. Thus, the situation is relatively the same as in the days of Ne Win power which is very strong and has solid military (Firmas, 2015). Hence, from explanations above prove that the military also has power over the economy in Myanmar.