

CHAPTER III

TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY NETWORKS AND ITS DISCURSIVE POSITION IN MYANMAR

Transnational Advocacy Network in Myanmar is formed as the networks that connect each other in order to share about information, norms, and values about the idea of releasing Aung San Suu Kyi and achieving freedom for people in Myanmar. Instead of being guided by the material things, they are merely guided by the value and (or) norms. Norms have the much bigger influence towards the changing of the Military Junta power because it consists of the sharing understanding of the people who are bound tightly into this network.

A. Political Obstacles from Government Aimed to Stop the Movements

Transnational Advocacy Networks are now working alone in aggregating their powers to push the Military Junta to release Aung San Suu Kyi. Yet, there are still some obstacles that they face due to the dictatorship of Military Junta. It has been noticed that there are some actions conducted by Military Junta in order to stop the movement of Transnational Advocacy Networks in aggregating their powers. those are:

a.) The Unstopped Terror towards The Supporters of Aung San Suu Kyi

This is seen from the numerous brutal violations which are addressed to Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters. During her detention time, Military Junta always tried to stop the demonstration and every single thing which is supporting the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. In May 2003, Military Junta aimed at doing brutal assassination towards those who are doing public rally to support Aung San Suu Kyi. An extensive report prepared by independent investigator Guy Horton, co-funded by the Netherlands Ministry for Development Co-Operation, found that the Military Junta had likely violated the Conventions' prohibitions on "violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture, and outrages upon personal dignity in particular humiliating and degrading treatment."⁴⁵

In October 2004, there are a group of monks who organized movements in Mandalay. They are trying to collect the support of people to fasten the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. This demonstration contains the demand for Military Junta to soon release Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest. Indeed, the Military Junta did violation in this case by kidnapped some of the activists and put it in the jail. The other fact comes in 1993 when a group of people from the Nobel Laureate committee are rejected to enter Myanmar area. They would

⁴⁵ U.N. Office of the High Comm'r for Human Rights, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar*, 15, UN Doc. A/HRC/10/19 (Mar. 11, 2009), <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.19.pdf> [hereinafter Report of the Special Rapporteur, 2009].

like to enhance cooperation with people and some organizations in it in order to aggregate support for releasing Aung San Suu Kyi.

Besides, Military Junta also did not allow any international organization who would like to visit Myanmar. They actually want to make a report on the human right violation happened in Myanmar and sending it into international layer. Yet, this action is strictly prohibited by Military Junta because they do not want to allow any international organization to know about the real situation in Myanmar. The examples of the organization who are rejected to enter Myanmar is Amnesty International who are not allowed to make investigation in Myanmar in 2004. ⁴⁶ Many people who are bound into this network are captured and also being detained without any trial during Military Junta power.

b.) Abolishing the Right of NLD to Get Involved in Political Stage

Military indeed controls the whole areas of Myanmar. It means that even the political stage is strongly promulgated by the power of them. National League for Democracy as the democratic parties established by Aung San Suu Kyi actually got many supports from the people and also international area. Yet, due to the dictatorship of Military Junta, they are under controlled by Military Junta itself. It is seen from the result of 1990 General Election where National League for Democracy won. They should have got the majority seats

in the parliament yet it is rejected by Military Junta constitution which said that only military allowed to get involved in political stage.

Before 2000, the military and USDP combined control around 80% of the seats while the opposition got the small number of position in parliament. National League for Democracy control only 7% of the total area. The further impact is that National League for Democracy boycott towards the 2010 elections. Military Junta still remains in power because no one can beat them and changing their decisions in the parliamentary level as well. It indeed breaks the freedom of people to send their demand because Military Junta also tried to remove the base of National League of Democracy in Yangon because they feel that this movement can be such a tackle or opposition power towards the Military Junta who still remains in power.

B. Value Promoted by Transnational Advocacy Networks

Transnational Advocacy Networks are considered as the communicative structures whose members are primarily motivated by the shared principled ideas or values which is engaging in the voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal exchange of the information and also services.⁴⁷ It has been noted that domestic and also international NGO play an important role in all Transnational Advocacy Networks which may also include the local social movements, media, intellectuals, and also part of regional and international organizations.

Transnational Advocacy Networks carries some steps in promoting their values into changing the regime of authoritarian in Myanmar. They carry and reframe the ideas, then insert them in the policy debates, then pressuring regime formation, and also enforcing the existing international norms and rules.⁴⁸ In the same circumstance, they also try to influence the particular domestic issue. The value promoted is about the human right value that accomplishes the norms and also ideas about freedom. In the case of Myanmar democratic transition, people have suffered during years from under Military Junta dictatorship.

Transnational Advocacy Networks is motivated by values rather than the material concerns or the professional norms. Norm is considered as the collectively shared understanding of appropriate behavior and their effects can be empirically studied (Barkun 1964). Human right value is the basic value which is going to be promoted by the Transnational Advocacy Networks in Myanmar. The transnational actors reach beyond policy change to advocate and instigate the changes in the institutional and principled basis of the international interactions.

Norms describe the collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity. In the case in Myanmar, we can see that Aung San Suu Kyi is released due to the demand of the both domestic and international community to create the democratic condition which is based on the human

⁴⁸ Utnes, Peter, 'Non-State Actors in World Politics', Master Degree Program for Humaniora, Universitetet i Tromsø Varen, 2010, retrieved 19th October 2012

right value. It is then considered as the collective expectations from people to have the proper condition of state which is in line with an international community expectation.

It is then strengthened by Wendt's who argued that the way international relations are played out is not given but socially constructed.⁴⁹ It is clearly shown in the release of Aung San Suu Kyi under the Military Junta that it is derived from the social construction who wants to make a much more democratic system on the government which used to have the very dictator power. People gathered into the Transnational Advocacy Networks which consists of so many different backgrounds of society who demand on the implementation of human right value by which Aung San Suu Kyi should be free from any forms of detainment.

The segmentation of the value driven of human right for instance is done by having the norm implementation through pressuring the target actors⁵⁰ in order to adopt the new policy which is the release of Aung San Suu Kyi itself. In doing that activity, the Transnational Advocacy Networks gave contribution to change the perception that both state and societal actors might have of their identities, interests, and preferences in order to transform their discursive positions to later on change the procedure. The change is seen from the decision taken by Junta regime to release Aung San Suu Kyi.

⁴⁹ Zehfuss, Maja, *Constructivism in International Relations the politics of reality*, University of Warwick, Cambridge University Press, 2002

⁵⁰ Mundy, Karen and Lynn Murphy, *Transnational Advocacy : Global Civil Society? Emerging Evidence from the Field of Education*, Stanford University, 2010, p 23-27

In term of human right value which is promoted by Transnational Advocacy Networks in Myanmar, emphasize that government is actually considered as the “guarantors” of the right, but also among their primary violators.⁵¹ When a government violates or even refuses to recognize the right or even individual right, then domestic groups often have no recourse within domestic political or judicial arena. The linkage is intended to affect the behavior of states. It is viewed from the big number of people movement who asked for the reformation in the government system of Military Junta Myanmar.

Accosta emphasizes that Transnational Advocacy Networks is eventually addressing the local issue such as the human right issue.⁵² The coalition among people who are bound into Transnational Advocacy Networks in Myanmar is making the change towards the existing system from the authoritarian into the democratic one. People who decided to be the part of the Transnational Advocacy Networks in Myanmar usually think about the value given to the public good, the resources at one’s disposal, and the benefits of joining with the networks.

Keck and Sikkink described clearly that the sources and power of the transnational activism driven by shared principles on how this principle is

⁵¹ Schmitz, Hans Peter, ‘Transnational Advocacy Networks : Significance and Challenges’, Journal of Political Science, Syracuse University, New York, 2010

⁵² Kiel, Christina, ‘How Transnational Advocacy Networks Mobilize : Applying the Literature on Interest Groups to International Action’ Magister Program on Political Science of University of

commonly understood as their common goals which is freedom from the long period of human right violation.⁵³ They actually try to challenge the liberal version of the transnationalist research, which explained the influence of transnational networks primarily based on variation in the preexisting domestic context of the target society (Risse-Kappen 1995).

By focusing on rights-based activism, Keck and Sikkink show how advocacy networks can break into closed societies and have the power to entirely alter domestic politics. In their view, the success of transnational activism is not just determined by target characteristics, but also by the character of the issue and by properties unique to the networks or “sender” of a campaign.⁵⁴ With regard to issue characteristics, Keck and Sikkink claim that transnational networks and activists are central in creating a common ideational framework that overcomes the international–domestic divide and creates moral interdependence across societies. Most chances for success had campaigns focusing on “issues involving bodily harm to vulnerable individuals, and legal equality of opportunity” (1998:204).

The scholars of Constructivist are arguing that social reality is constructed through the interactions of individuals and collective actors in a community (of states), proponents of transnational activism claimed that

⁵³ Keck, Margaret and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activist Beyond Border : Advocacy Networks in International Politic* New York : Cornel University Press, 2010), 28-32

⁵⁴ Ibid.

groups advancing specific universal norms such as human rights could shape the behavior of states and governments without having the control over significant material resources

If we traced back to the aim of Transnational Advocacy Networks, they actually emphasize on the proliferating which its goal is to alter the behavior of state and also international organization through their powers. They frame the issue to be much more comprehensible in targeting the audiences easily, attracting attention, encouraging action, and to fit with the favorable institutional venues.⁵⁵

The emergence of Transnational Advocacy Networks in Myanmar are led by the promotion of human right value done by some actors within such as the domestic and international non-governmental organizations, people movement, party, and also media. They share the common value in order to have the good implementation of human right in their states. It is aimed at reducing or even removing the dictatorship of Military Junta that has been existed during years in Myanmar.

⁵⁵ T. Checkel, Jeffrey, *The Constructivist Turn in International Relations*, 2nd edition, John

B. Actors Involved in Transnational Advocacy Networks

In general, the prominent actors who are getting involved in the Transnational Advocacy Networks are the following:⁵⁶ the international and domestic non-governmental organizations, local social movements (it is sometimes changed into party or union), the foundations, media, churches, experts or intellectuals, and also part of the executive or parliamentary branches of the government.

If we see in Myanmar, there are some parts of actors who are taking an important role in the release of Aung San Suu Kyi under Military Junta, they are:

a.) Domestic and International non-Governmental Organizations

Both domestic and international non-Governmental (NGO) play an important role in all forms of advocacy networks. They initiate actions and also pressuring more powerful actions to take positions. The action that is done by them is not merely a frontal action. They somehow apply the boomerang pattern in which they try to seek for international attention in redressing Myanmar to change their policy in detaining Aung San Suu Kyi.

The examples of the domestic non-governmental organization (NGO) who takes part actively is the ND Burma (Network for Human Right

⁵⁶ Keck, Margaret and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activist Beyond Border : Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (New York : Cornell University Press, 2010), 12-19.

Documentation of Burma).⁵⁷ They commit on making the documentation for all forms of discriminations done by Military Junta towards the citizen. They are formed in 2004. They are aimed at seeking to collectively truth of what people in Myanmar have endured to challenge the regime's power through present-day advocacy as well as prepare for justice and accountability measure in a potential transition.⁵⁸

They made a comprehensive report on all forms of human right abuses done by Military Junta towards the people and connect or share the information to the international arena. In the previous phase, it was quite difficult for them to share it internationally because of the freedom limitation conducted by the Junta. Here are some examples of the reports that they have released such as "Extreme Measures: Torture and Ill Treatment in Burma since the 2010 Elections", "Intimidation, Imprisonment and Repression: The road to Military Victory in 2010 Elections", and also "Monthly Chronology of Burma's Political Prisoners for September 2010".⁵⁹

Besides, there are also some other international non-governmental organizations (INGO) who take part on the release of Aung San Suu Kyi through introducing new ideas, providing information, and also having lobby activity for policy change. They are the Amnesty International and Human

⁵⁷National League for Democracy Official Website, *Documentation*, retrieved November 1st 2012, <<http://www.nd-burma.org/>>

⁵⁸National League for Democracy Official Website, *Human Right Report*, retrieved November 1st 2012, <http://www.nd-burma.org/about-us/activities.html>

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Right Watch. These two INGOs have been known as the prominent actors in the world of human right advocacy. They made a comprehensive and also annual report which show about the human right abuse and its progress in Myanmar.

The examples of the report that have been made by Human Right Watch are "The Government Could Have Stopped This", "Vote to Nowhere : the May 2008 Constitutional Referendum in Burma", and also the Annual report of Human Right Situation in Myanmar in 2006. They actually make those reports as the evidence for the recent condition in Myanmar where bundles of human right abuses exist. Later on, those reports are sent to United Nations in order to ask for their actions to stop the violations soon.

Reports by the United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other groups have repeatedly detailed a gruesome litany of abuses, including the destruction of more than 3,500 villages in eastern Myanmar, widespread use of rape as a weapon of war against ethnic minorities, the forced displacement of over 1 million refugees and internally displaced people, tens of thousands of child soldiers, murder, torture, detention without trial, massive forced relocations, and forced labor. Those groups in a network share values and also exchange information regularly. They publish it in order to attract international attention so then they can redress the Myanmar in order to change their authoritarian regime. The support of INGOs is also seen from the recent achievement of Aung San Suu Kyi in having the Ambassador of Conscience

Awards as Amnesty International's most prestigious honor

b.) Local social movement who are bound into National League for Democracy Party

This party is led by Aung San Suu Kyi and it was established on Septemebr 27th 1988. The party won a substantial parliamentary majority in 1990 Myanmar general election. This party is considered as one of the big parts of the domestic power who can give big contribution towards the transition from the authoritarian into the more democratic system of government. In the first time, people who are bound into this party are being kidnapped by the Military Junta.⁶⁰ Those who are being kidnapped are usually lost as well.

The condition is getting worse when their leader Aung San Suu Kyi was under home arrest. Junta did so many violations towards the people. Yet, it does not stop their efforts of them to establish the connection with international arena to seek for support. It is seen from the effort done by activist in sending the fax through British Embassy in Myanmar abroad such as to United Nations in order to ask for the help to secure them.⁶¹ They try to persuade international arena that Myanmar government has done big violations to them. Then, they got the respond by which United Nations declare on the need of Human Right recovery by sending the letter to the government of Myanmar in 2007.⁶²

⁶⁰ 88 Students Activist Run as Candidates, 2010, retrieved November 2nd 2012, <<http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/6230-burmas-nld-to-let-five-88-student-activists-run-as-candidates.html>>

⁶¹ BBC News on Asia Pacific World, retrieved November 3rd 2012, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12992883>>

⁶² UN Official Website, *Report on Myanmar*, retrieved November 3rd 2012, <<http://www.un.org/sg/srsg/myanmar/>>

National League for Democracy is becoming one of the biggest parties who have an aim to implement the freedom and democracy under Military Junta. Thus, people gathered into National League for Democracy in order to gain the support from the domestic and also international power to make a better condition in Myanmar as a whole.

c.) Media

Media is considered as one of the important actors that brings the betterment in Myanmar, especially towards the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. Yet, media got the strict censorship and regulation since the coup d'etat of Myanmar in 1962. Even though the constitution provides the space for freedom of speech and press, yet the government prohibits the exercise of these rights in practice.

There are some major channels in Myanmar such as MRTV, Myawaddy, MRTV4, TV5, Skynet TV, and also Myanmar International. Among them, MRTV, Myawaddy, and MRTV4 are the state-owned TV channels, and the rest are private or joint ventures between state and private. Yet, the publication about Aung San Suu Kyi when she was under detention and the harassment did by Military Junta are published by international media such as BC Burmese Service, Voice of America, and Radio Free Asia which are popular in Myanmar. Those are the media who continuously publish the recent condition about the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi.

It is quite hard for having media freedom in Myanmar, that is why the international media such as BC Burmese Service, Voice of America, and Radio Free Asia do the strong publication to the world about the circumstances in Myanmar. It attracts international community to see in depth and give their attention to the problem there. World solidarity for Myanmar is build through media as well for instance about the publication from Radio Free Asia about the need of freedom for people in Myanmar which is published continuously. It composes about the information about every idea carried by Aung San Suu Kyi for having the freedom.⁶³ Media plays an important role because there will be difficult for the non-governmental organization and also the National League for Democracy to gain support if they do not publish it entirely.

C. Discursive Position of Transnational Advocacy Networks

Transnational Advocacy Networks are having the influence in the decision making process taken by the government of Myanmar which is led by the Military Junta. They are being an advocate for the otherwise powerless confers moral power and credibility on them and provides them with possibilities to campaign displaying various dimensions of symbolic power. As what has been explained previously that the boomerang pattern in the movement of Transnational Advocacy Networks in Myanmar emphasizes on the concept of marketability of movements.

⁶³ *Conversation with Aung San Suu Kyi*, retrieved November 9th 2012, <http://www.efo.org/english/women/conversation_aungSanSuuKyi/section_main?h_start:int=35>

In analyzing about the discursive position of Transnational Advocacy Networks, it uses the Foucauldian notion of discourse⁶⁴ which states that the discourse is something considered as culturally constructed representation of reality. Besides, it also analyzes that power circulates throughout society, while hierarchized, is not simply a top down phenomenon. The phenomenon in Myanmar showed that the people power is aggregated through people power who are bound into the networks. They create such agenda settings and they also ask the help from international phase to join with them such as by sending the letter to United Nations Secretary General and it works. United Nations has urged Myanmar to stop their abuses towards civilians in the late of 2000s by making the report about the recent human right abuses happened in Myanmar and ask for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi as soon as possible.⁶⁵

One of the most influential actors in Transnational Advocacy Networks is the figure of Aung San Suu Kyi itself. She is aware of the significance of her foreign connections and the international esteem in which she is held. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, further enhancing an international reputation that she has used effectively as a lobby instrument outside Myanmar.

Then, Transnational Advocacy Networks are also linked with the international arena such as trying to ask for the help from any other

⁶⁴ Foucault, M, 'Politics and The Study of Discourse in *The Foucault Effect : Studies in Governmentality*' Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, 53-62.

⁶⁵ Recent UN Reports in Myanmar, retrieved November 1st 2012 <<http://unic.un.org/imucms/vangon/80/384/recent-un-reports-on-myanmar.aspx> accessed in

international institutions such as the international non-governmental organization for instance Amnesty International and Human Right Watch as well as United Nations in order to create such reports dealing with their problem. It is expected that this report would be seen and international eyes. Then, it works. United Nations has urged Myanmar to stop their abuses towards civilians in the late of 2000s by making the report about the recent human right abuses happened in Myanmar.⁶⁶

One of the most seen effects is when United States tried to do embargo towards Myanmar in term of trade, economic cooperation, and also any other forms of cooperation. Yet, as the time goes by, this embargo eases when Myanmar shown their efforts in implementing the transparency in their government to the people. The embargo is happened because United States considered that Myanmar lacks on the transparency from the government to the people, corruption, abuse of power, and human right abuses are usually occurred in Myanmar.⁶⁷

In talking about international politics, we actually talk about which influence is bigger than the other by based on the discursive position owned by the influenced actors within. In Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi has the strong and charismatic position since she was actively doing campaign for the

freedom in all parts of Myanmar. Besides, she also tried to open the connection with international worlds.

It is also done by her supporters which are bound into the National League for Democracy. Once she was detained, her party still conducted many efforts in opening their links with international levels such as with international NGO who concerned about the issue of human right. This discursive position determines the success of Transnational Advocacy Networks in overthrowing the Military Junta from their dictatorship.