

FPTP electoral system of Myanmar as a barrier for Ethnic
Minority Inclusiveness in parliamentary decision-making

Miss Yamonh Pwint Thit

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CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

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น.ส.ยามอนห์ พวินทร์ ธิท

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
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ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

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By	Miss Yamonh Pwint Thit
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Thesis Advisor	Dr. BALAZS SZANTO

Accepted by the FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE,
Chulalongkorn University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Master of Arts

..... Dean of the FACULTY
OF POLITICAL
SCIENCE

()

THESIS COMMITTEE

..... Chairman
(THANAPAT THONGMA)

..... Thesis Advisor
(Dr. BALAZS SZANTO)

..... External Examiner
(Dr. Weera Wongsatjachock)

CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

ยามอนห์ พวีนท์ ธิท : . (FPTP electoral system of Myanmar as a barrier for Ethnic Minority Inclusiveness in parliamentary decision-making) อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : บอพาท ชารย์โต

ใ น เ มี ย น ม า ร์

ชนกลุ่มน้อยไม่สามารถเข้าถึงบริการสาธารณะอย่างเท่าเทียมเพื่อหยิบยกประเด็นปัญหาและแสดงความคิดเห็นได้ พวกเขาไม่ได้เป็นตัวแทนอย่างเพียงพอในสถาบันของรัฐโดยระบบการเมืองซึ่งไม่ได้ให้โอกาสอย่างเพียงพอในการมีส่วนร่วมในการตัดสินใจในระดับสหภาพแรงงาน ชนกลุ่มน้อยทางชาติพันธุ์เชื่อว่าทุกกลุ่มควรเข้าถึงบริการสาธารณะอย่างเท่าเทียมกันและมีระบบการคุ้มครองสิทธิมนุษยชนที่มีประสิทธิภาพ ความหลากหลายทางชาติพันธุ์อาจส่งผลให้เกิดความตึงเครียดภายในประเทศเมื่อกลุ่มหนึ่งมีฐานะทางเศรษฐกิจหรือสังคมหรือมีอำนาจเหนือหรือได้รับสิทธิพิเศษทางการเมือง การถูกเลือกปฏิบัติและถูกทำให้เป็นชายขอบผ่านระบบการเมือง ความคับข้องใจของชาติพันธุ์มีศูนย์กลางอยู่ที่การขาดการตัดสินใจอย่างรอบด้าน และนำไปสู่ความตึงเครียดภายในและสงครามกลางเมืองระหว่างกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์กับรัฐบาล ดังนั้นการขาดการมีส่วนร่วมของชนกลุ่มน้อยทางชาติพันธุ์และระบบที่อ่อนแอของตัวแทนที่เป็นธรรมส่งผลกระทบต่อความมั่นคงของมนุษย์ของชนกลุ่มน้อยทางชาติพันธุ์

ระบบการเลือกตั้งของเมียนมาร์ “First Past the Post” (FPTP)

ไม่ได้สร้างส่วนแบ่งที่นั่งที่ยุติธรรมตามจำนวนคะแนนเสียงที่แต่ละพรรคการเมืองได้รับ ผลที่ตามมาคือ กลุ่มเหล่านี้ไม่ได้รับตัวแทนที่ตนต้องการเพื่อส่งเสียงในรัฐสภา ในขณะที่ผู้ชนะซึ่งเป็นตัวแทนเพียงบางคนจะกลายเป็นตัวแทนของเขตเลือกตั้งทั้งหมด ดังนั้นระบบการเลือกตั้งปัจจุบันของเมียนมาร์จึงไม่ได้สร้างตัวแทนของพรรคการเมืองในรัฐสภาตามหลักการของการมีส่วนร่วม สาขาวิชา การพัฒนาระหว่างประเทศ ลายมือชื่อนิติ

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In Myanmar, the ethnic minority do not have equal access to public services to raise their issues and voices for it. They are not adequately represented in state institutions by the political system which does not grant the adequate opportunities to participate in decision-making at union level.

Ethnic minorities believe that all groups should have equal access to public services and enjoy an efficient system of protection of human rights. Ethnic Diversity may result in tensions within the nation when one group is economically or socially or politically dominant or privileged. By being discriminated and marginalized through the political system, ethnic grievances have centered on the lack of inclusive decision making and it leads to internal tension and civil wars between ethnic groups and government. Hence, the lack of ethnic minority inclusiveness and a weak system of fair representation impact on the human security of ethnic minority groups.

The electoral system of Myanmar, “First Past the Post”

Field of Study:	International Development Studies	Student's Signature
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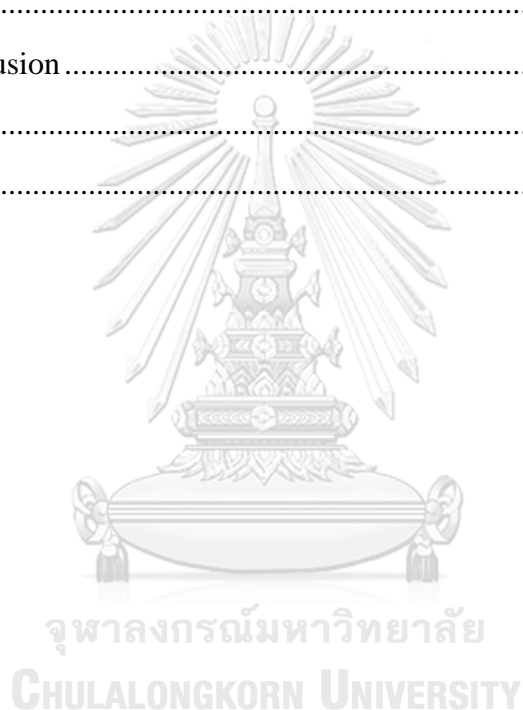
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Abbreviation of Political Party Names

All Mon Region Democracy Party- AMRDP

Arakan National Party -ANP

Arakan League for Democracy - ALD

Democratic Party - DP

Kachin State Democracy Party -KSDP

Kayin People's Party - KPP

Kokang Democracy and Unity Party - KDUP

La Hu National Development Party - LHNDP

Lisu National Development Party - NDP

Mon National Party - MNP

Mon nationalism

National League for Democracy - NLD

National Unity Party - NUP

Pa-O National Organisation - PNO

Rakhine Nationalities Development Party - RNDP

Shan Nationalities Democratic Party - SNDP

Shan Nationalities League for Democracy - SNLD

Ta'ang National Party - TNP

Tai-Leng Nationalities Development Party- TNDP

Union Solidarity and Development Party - USDP

Unity and Democracy Party of Kachin State - UDPKS

Wa Democratic Party - WDP

Wa National Unity Party - WNUP

Zomi Congress for Democracy – ZCD



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Chapter (1)

1.Introduction

1.1 Ethnic Diversity and the importance of Minority Inclusiveness

Every country, no matter how isolated or less populated, forms with diverse ethnicities: majority and minority groups. While each country strives to meet the development goals, there are threats and drawbacks to development: conflict and civil wars between the ethnic groups and ruling government. ¹What is the cause of these arguments and conflicts is a weak form of inclusive decision at union-level which diminishes the political participation and representation for the voices and issues raised by the ethnic minorities in the legislature.

Ethnic minorities believe that all groups should have equal access to public services and enjoy an efficient system of protection of human rights. Ethnic Diversity may result in tensions within the nation when one group is economically or socially or politically dominant or privileged. Minority inclusion issues are more raised and spoken out in democratic countries than less democratic and autocratic countries. ²

Inclusiveness contributes to stability, peace and prosperity and sustainable as it allows all groups to channel their demands and aspirations through the political process undertaken by state institutions. According to the principle of inclusivity, governance systems should ensure that all significant communities in a country are represented in state institutions and that they are granted adequate opportunities to meaningfully influence decision making.³ There are numerous institutional mechanisms that can be

¹ International Crisis Group. (2020). *Liberalisation and Ethno-nationalism. In Identity Crisis: Ethnicity and Conflict in Myanmar*. Pp. 9-12. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep31436.6>

² Mill, J. (2010). *Of True and False Democracy; Representation of All, and Representation of the Majority Only*. In *Considerations on Representative Government* (Cambridge Library Collection - British and Irish History, 19th Century, pp. 131-161). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511783128.008

³ Lijphart, A. & Reynold, A. (ed.) (2002). *The Wave of Power-sharing Democracy. Architecture of Democracy: Constitutional Design, Conflict Management, and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.37-54.

adopted to make government systems more representative and more inclusive while there is a wrong political system which weakens the inclusive participation by the ethnic minority groups.

1.2 Lack of Ethnic Minority Inclusiveness in decision making: a case of Myanmar

Author, Lipi Ghosh (2008), classified the two statements on ethnicity and minority right issues. Firstly, Myanmar is one of the countries with many diverse ethnic groups in Southeast Asia and the country has experienced the ethnic conflicts since post-independence not only of in Southeast Asia but also of in the world.⁴

In the 2014 census, household data were collected based on these categories as well. Ethnic minorities make up one-third of the people in the country and ethnic states are occupied approximately half of the land area of country. An assessment report of Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB) has shown that the total population of ethnic minorities in Myanmar accounted for 32% of the country's total population while ethnic states occupies 57% of the total area of Myanmar.⁵

Moreover, the seven ethnic states (Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Rakhine and Shan) and the six self-administered zones within States (Naga, Danu, Pao, Ko Kang, Palaung and Wa) are named after the dominant ethnic minorities in each. The term 'ethnic nationalities' and 'ethnic minorities' are often used to refer to non-Burmese. In Myanmar, the ethnic minority believe that Burmanization culture by the central government, which is dominated by Burmese people, has led to the repression of ethnic minority culture, religion, rights, and treatment as marginalized groups.

⁴ Ghosh, L. (2008). *Minority, Polity and Governance in Myanmar: Dynamics of Changes*. *India Quarterly*, 64(4),35–72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097492840806400402>

⁵ MCRB, IHRB, DIHR, (2014). *Myanmar Oil & Gas: Sector Wide Impact Assessment*. p.130, <https://www.myanmar-responsiblebusiness.org/sectors/oil-and-gas-report.html>

In a multi-ethnic nation like Myanmar, each ethnic group has its preferred political parties or candidates for representing them in parliament. Misrepresentation or no representation of these groups could give rise to a number of problems. It is true that, in practice, full representation in parliament is almost impossible to achieve. However, fair representation to some extent is important in order to reduce tensions among diverse groups (Williams, 2005).

A country's political willingness is necessary to adopt an electoral system that would create fair representation or, alternatively, to re-design the electoral system so it becomes more representative. This paper argues that the FPTP electoral system in Myanmar is a barrier for the inclusive representation in the union-level decision making for all ethnic minorities.

2. Problem Statement

In Myanmar, the ethnic minority do not have equal access to public services to raise their issues and voices for it. They are not adequately represented in state institutions by the political system which does not grant the adequate opportunities to participate in decision-making at union level.

By being discriminated and marginalized through the political system, ethnic grievances have centered on the lack of inclusive decision making and it leads to internal tension and civil wars between ethnic groups and government. Hence, the lack of ethnic minority inclusiveness and a weak system of fair representation impact on the human security of ethnic minority groups.

The electoral system of Myanmar, "First Past the Post" (FPTP), or "winner takes all," did not, in fact, create a fair share of seats according to the number of votes each political party receives. As a result, these groups do not get their preferred representatives to raise their voices in parliament,⁶ while the winner who represents

⁶ Mill, J. (2010). *Of True and False Democracy; Representation of All, and Representation of the Majority Only*. In *Considerations on Representative Government* (Cambridge Library

only some people becomes the representative of the whole constituency. Thus, Myanmar's current electoral system is not creating inclusive representation of political parties in parliament.

3. Research Questions

1. What are the barriers to ethnic minority inclusion in political representation at the union-government level?

Sub-questions

- How does FPTP electoral system affect the role of ethnic minority representation?
- How does institutional design (2008 Constitution) affect the role of ethnic minority representation?
- How do favoritism and populism affect the role of ethnic minority representation?

2. How does the exclusion of ethnic minorities from decision-making impact human security?

Sub-question

What kind of human insecurity is impacted to the ethnic minority?

3. What type of electoral system can be possibly reformed for more inclusive representation of ethnic minorities in Future?

4. Research Objectives

- To address the FPTP electoral system is a barrier to inclusive representation of ethnic minorities in union-level decision making
- To identify the impact of lack of inclusiveness on human security
- To recommend the electoral reform which can be a proportional or fair representation for better inclusiveness of ethnic minorities

5. Conceptual Framework

Inclusiveness contributes to stability in the long term as it allows all groups to channel their demands and aspirations through the electoral system and political process undertaken by state institutions. Inclusiveness provides not only a fairer society with equality but also for long-term peace and prosperity. This thesis will work to analyze the causes of why ethnic minority in Myanmar failed for their fair representation and inclusive decision-making by this conceptual framework.

Dependent variable

Effect



Lack of minority ethnic inclusiveness = FPTP system

↓
composition

Impact on Human Security

= Independent variables

= Cause



= Favorism, populism by FPTP

= 2008 constitution and the parliamentary seat

Concept applied

- Democracy and Elections (Paul Collier (2009), Reynolds (2008), . Craig Calhoun (2010))

- Democracy and representation (Arend Lijphart (1969), Anne Phillips (1997))
- Political stability and Human Security (Paul Collier (2009) , *Cederman Lars-Erik* (2009), **Sané, Pierre (2008)**)

Democracy, elections and votes

Paul Collier (2009) classified the democracy and elections in his book of Wars, Guns and Votes. He highlighted that a proper democracy does not merely have competitive elections. A proper democracy also has checks and balances that limit the power of a government once elected. The great political sea change may superficially have looked like the spread of democracy, but it was actually the spread of elections. This conceptualization helps to analyze the role of central government in Myanmar and its check and balance for the minority inclusiveness in decision making for public goods: how elections contribute to what extent of democracy.⁷

Collier also stated the role of democratic constitution, and its legitimacy and accountability. He mentioned that the standard approach of the international community to the end of a civil war is to insist on a democratic constitution and crown this after a few years by an election. This is the theory of legitimacy and accountability at its clearest. This notion is clearly analytical for the politics of Myanmar with civil wars and it questioned 'is the constitution of Myanmar is truly democratic? And did the constitution take legitimacy and accountability to solve the conflicts?

Collier also portrayed his notion on the ethnically homogenous societies with winner-take-all voting systems. This tends to be driven to the extreme in which everyone amalgamates into only two parties. Although the leaders of these parties are chosen only by their respective supporters, once chosen, both leaders chase the median voter to get elected. This produces a politics of moderation that broadly describes how

⁷ Collier, P. (2009). *Wars Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*, New York: Harper Perennial.

modern democracies function. This assumption works the competition of two large parties in Myanmar by the big numbers of voters to support them.

The discourse by Collier ‘If there are no limits on the power of the winner, the election becomes a matter of life and death’ takes the deep consideration for the power competition between majority and minority in Myanmar for fair representation while the elections are not enough to contribute it.⁸

He claimed that peace will be secured by an election because the winner will be recognized as legitimate by the population, making violent opposition more difficult. Not only will the elected government be recognized as legitimate, the democratic process will ensure that it will need to be inclusive and so there will be less reason for grievance: the government will be accountable to its citizens. By his conceptualization, it is time to look at the evidence of why Myanmar political system was not democratic which failed the inclusiveness by the FPTP electoral system.

Favorism and Populism in majoritarian system

FPTP is the majoritarian system also known as plurality electoral systems. By this electoral system, the candidates with a highest number of votes automatically win.⁹ Reynolds (2008) claimed that “First Past the Post” (FPTP), which is a system of “winner takes all,” does not create a fair representation but also does not enable a fair share of seats for small ethnic minority parties according to the number of votes each political party receives. This thesis will diagnose the FPTP electoral system of Myanmar which reflects the small representation of ethnic minority in the parliament.

⁸ Collier, P. (2009). *Wars Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*, New York: Harper Perennial.

⁹ Reynolds, A., et al. (2008). *Electoral system design: The new International IDEA handbook*. Stockholm, Sweden: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

While carefully focusing the majoritarian system, it is useful to view the winning electoral strategies which are mentioned by Collier. He mentioned the politicians focus on playing the ethnic card. Playing on ethnic fears and hatreds is truly the politics of the gutter. There, the politicians adopt a campaign message that they would provide good national governance or a message that they would provide ethnic favoritism. Collier stated that favoritism was more effective at pulling in the votes. If voters had strong ethnic identities, then politicians would organize their parties on ethnic lines: this would simply be the cheapest way of attracting voter loyalty. The election itself would sound very different from an election in an ethnically homogenous society: leaders would imply be mobilizing their own ethnic base. Collier's notion of favoritism in the elections says true to the condition of Myanmar: NLD won by the landslide through favoritism.

Not only favoritism, populism can be asserted for the dominance of NLD and the reason of which ethnic minorities failed for the votes and taking the seats in parliament. Craig Calhoun (2010) mentioned the elite-driven systems: accommodation among the elites, who are, in these systems, popularly elected by their respective populations, is what determines policy outcomes, with little or no direct dependence on mass public opinion.¹⁰ Author stressed the dominance of Populism ideology in politics diminishes the role of representation by the historically marginalized groups who are virtually certain to lose the political competition.

Hence, by the supports of these theories and concepts, the paper will scrutinize Myanmar's FPTP system and populism which is one of main reason of that ethnic minority in Myanmar failed for their fair representation for inclusive decision-making.

¹⁰ Calhoun, C. (2010). *The Public Sphere in the Field of Power*. *Social Science History*, 34(3), 301–335. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40927615>

Democracy and representation

Arend Lijphart (1969) identified consociational democracy in his influential study. Both in theory and practice, consociational democracy is designed to compel cooperation between two or more national blocs with fundamentally different interests through institutions that will balance their political power.¹¹ In this model of politics, historically marginalized groups are virtually certain to lose the political competition. As the minorities who do not control the most powerful positions within the legislature, they lack sufficient clout to secure their constituents' interests. By his notion, it reflects that historically marginalized groups don't have a deeply transformative effect on the political agenda and offer the prospect of redesigning public policies that will have the long-term effect of group-structured inequality.

Anne Phillips (1997) argues that the partial autonomy of representatives and the presence of marginalized groups in legislative bodies is very important for democratic process.¹² "Representatives do have autonomy, which is why it matters who those representatives are.". In the discussion of marginalized group representation, Anne Phillips focuses considerable attention on the relationship between deliberative models of legislative decision making and the problem of representatives' accountability to constituents.¹³ She is deeply ambivalent about the idea of deliberation because the deliberative role requires that representatives have some degree of freedom to modify their positions in response to others' arguments. Following the theory, thesis will conceptualize the importance of ethnic minority

¹¹ Lijphart, A. (1969). *Consociational Democracy*. *World Politics*, 21(2), 207–225.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2009820>

¹² Melissa, S. W. (1998). *Voice, Trust, and Memory Book Subtitle: Marginalized Groups and the Failings of Liberal Representation*, The Institutions of Fair Representation, Princeton University Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1fkgdhc.11>

¹³ Mansbridge, J. (2003). *Rethinking Representation*. *The American Political Science Review*, 97(4), 515–528. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3593021>

representation in legislature by analyzing the unfair representation of ethnic minority in the legislature by the FPTP system and the design of seat composition for each parliament by 2008 constitution's provisions. Besides, by her concept, thesis can explore the electoral reform which can be recommended for proportional representation or to some deliberative degree for the inclusive decision making.

Elections, political stability and human security

Paul Collier (2009) claimed that electoral competition is not producing accountable government in his book, by the evidence on how elections are actually won, and the actual policy performance of democratic governments in the conditions of the bottom billion. Then, he proclaimed that accountability and security are vital: without them a country cannot develop. So development, with the attendant education, jobs, and electoral competition, is increasing the salience of ethnic diversity rather than erasing it.¹⁴ There is thus a powerful case for security and accountability to be regarded as basic social needs, providing the security and the checks and balances that their citizens need. It reflects that not only free but also truly fair elections with ethnic political contests can only bring the visionary political system through the representation by the ethnic minorities for the social needs and human security.

Collier asserted that the abuse of democracy in the acquisition of power and the misuse of power once acquired impact on the structural insecurity for the societies of the bottom billion. In places where there was high ethnic diversity and the states were also unusually small, there may face the most severe problems of internal security. He discoursed on that security comes with development rather than with guns. The need for security from political violence has always been fundamental to human society.

The concept of human security first proposed in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report and it led to the

¹⁴ Collier, P. (2009). *Wars Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*, New York: Harper Perennial.

establishment of the Human Security Network.¹⁵ In addition definition to enshrine the essence of Human security, **Sané, Pierre (2008), who was UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences stated that** ;‘human security is the protection of the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive environmental, economic, food, health, personal and political threats’.¹⁶

Cederman Lars-Erik (2009) conceptualize that: when the share of ethnic groups in power (EGIP) is small and the share of marginalized ethnic groups (MEG) is high, the risk of political instability and ethnic conflicts.¹⁷ It is true that the ethnic conflicts in Myanmar are interlinked with the political grievance for being marginalized, rooting by Nationalism and Ethno-nationalism. When their arguments over their rights, fairness and equality are not recognized and neglected, it turns out the political instability. The political exclusion, inequalities, discrimination of every kind and marginalization on the ethnic minority are bound to result conflicts and wars which impact on the human security.

This thesis will conceptualize the impacts on human security of ethnic minority in Myanmar by the lack of fair representation and inclusive decision-making for their rights and voices in the legislature. According to the principle of inclusivity, governance systems should ensure that all significant communities in a country are represented in state institutions and that they are granted adequate opportunities to

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¹⁵ Tabyshalieva, A. (2006). *Promoting human security: ethical, normative and educational frameworks in Central Asia*, UNESCO.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000149376.locale=en>

¹⁶ Sané, P. (2008), UNESCO. Director-General. *Human security: approaches and challenges*. UNESCO.<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000159307.locale=en>

¹⁷ Cederman, L.E. & Rød, J. K. (2009). *Ethno-Nationalist Dyads and Civil War: A GIS-Based Analysis*. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53(4), 496–525.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20684600>

meaningfully influence decision making. Good governance and inclusive institutions require performing to ensure the human security.

To be concluded, thesis will conceptualize the fair representation of ethnic minorities and the inclusive decision making for their demands, voices and arguments which protect the human security of those.

6. Research methodology

6.1 Data Collection

The thesis will undertake with the documentary research design. It will utilize the secondary data from the academic papers on the electoral system, and inclusiveness, ethnic diversity and minority inclusiveness for a case of Myanmar. For the systematic review, thesis will review the literature to investigate the legacy of ethnic diversity, a political system which contradicts the inclusiveness, electoral system which favors the large party with more seat and constitution's provision for the composition of seats in the parliament.

The primary data sources from the news articles and published reports by the Civil society organizations and non-governmental organization will broaden to collect the data of election results, the percentage of ethnic minority's seat in the parliaments and the recommended electoral system for fair and inclusive representation in parliaments.

This academic paper will allow the research to examine the key cause of political system which diminishes the inclusive decision making for the ethnic minority. It will then examine the barrier which is the FPTP electoral system through systematic review. The paper will scrutinize to the human security concept and approach to analyze the impact of lack of inclusiveness in the union-level decision making.

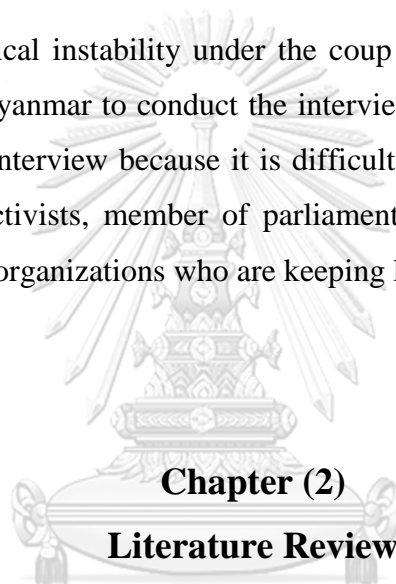
6.2 Data analysis

To analyze the data from the academic books and data from the published reports by research organization and NGOs, content analysis will apply to determine the concepts and information about constitution, electoral system on inclusiveness and human security impacts.

In according with the documentary research design, critical empirical analysis will be applied to interpret the information, facts and data from the academic books and published reports. By collecting the data and fact with an evidence-based approach, the electoral system will be analyzed according to the structure of conceptual framework on the fair representation, inclusive decision-making, political stability and human security.

6.3 Limitation

According to the political instability under the coup in Myanmar, the author is not possible to travel to Myanmar to conduct the interview and survey. It is not possible to conduct the online interview because it is difficult to contact the interviewees are they are politicians, activists, member of parliaments, political parties and people from the ethnic-armed organizations who are keeping low-profiles and considering for security concerns.



Chapter (2)

Literature Review

This paper will examine the inclusiveness of ethnic minorities as a key option and positive political adaption for Myanmar's inclusive development with human security through peace and prosperity. It will highlight on the political grievance caused by decade-long conflicts and its cost to ethnic minorities, missing chances in representation in decision-making level caused by the failure of first-post-the-past (FPTP) rules, other factors why ethnic minority failed their inclusive representation in political decision-making level. This paper argues that the FPTP electoral system in Myanmar is a barrier for the inclusive representation in the union-level decision making for all ethnic minorities.

Reviewing on the legacy of ethnic division in Myanmar

1.1.1 Legacy of colonialism: a division of ethnic majority and minority

Ethnic minorities across Myanmar strongly feel that they are not equally treated as Burman majority by the government and by the legislature.¹⁸ Ethno-nationalism has been rooted since historically as Myanmar has historical legacy of division (International Crisis group Report, 2020).¹⁹ In the report, it analyzed the ethnic division since the British colonial administration before the independence. Ethnic variety developed throughout the colonial era (1886–1948) and after independence (in 1948) as a result of migration surges by the Austronesian, Mon–Khmer, and Tibeto–Burman peoples.²⁰

The British government controlled the ethnic-minority-dominated uplands in order to separate from Burma property. These semi-self-governing areas are identified as frontier areas under their rule. In order to ensure that they would not be completely under the control of the Burmese state, the colonial "divide and rule" strategy was used to exacerbate the existing intergroup conflicts and profound divisions. The population was counted in the final colonial census in 193, which roughly recognized 135 different groups. Since then, this information has been widely acknowledged.

According to the 1982 Citizenship Law's legal framework, ethnicity continues to be a part of their citizenship. The 1948 definition on indigenous ethnics is maintained by this law. Then it is constrained by the introduction of three different levels of citizenship that provide different rights: citizen by birth or descent, associate citizen, and naturalized citizen.

¹⁸ International Crisis Group. (2020). *A Legacy of Division. In Identity Crisis: Ethnicity and Conflict in Myanmar*. Pp. 4-8. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep31436.5>

¹⁹ International Crisis Group. (2020). *A Legacy of Division. In Identity Crisis: Ethnicity and Conflict in Myanmar*. Pp. 4-8. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep31436.5>

²⁰ Ibid., Pp.4-8.

1.1.2 Rise of Liberalism: power struggle and liberalization approach by ethnic minority in Myanmar

The authors, Rima Wilkes and Cary Wu (2018), looked at how the majority and minority held power in democratic versus non-democratic nations. This suggests that in democratic institutions, the majority group has a higher potential for influence than the minority, particularly in the political sphere. There is no such thing as the majority rule or minority rule principle in non-democratic society. The power competition between the majority and minority is less significant. In these less democratic countries, justice and equality are not expected by the minority.²¹

In democracies, members of marginalized groups desire the equality, and believe that it is a right. They aware that they have a right to achieve the equality and entitled to it. In Myanmar, ethnic minority groups which are historically marginalized to participate in politics had a high expectation on inclusive participation to represent their right when the country's liberalization comes in 2011. International Crisis group (2020) analyzed the ethno-nationalism came rise when Myanmar liberalization brought greater political and social freedom in 2011.²²

1.1.3 Nationalism and ethno-nationalism in Myanmar Politics combined by authoritarianism and centralism

International Crisis Report (2011) discovered the two key factors that ethnic minority communities point inequality: Burman Nationalism as mainstream cultural factor and its centralization of political power. Burman Nationalism: it turns out as a pride in Burman cultural and its historical achievements since independence by General Aung

²¹ Wilkes, R., & Wu, C. (2018). *Ethnicity, Democracy, Trust: A Majority-Minority Approach*. *Social Forces*, 97(1), 465–494. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26563408>

²² International Crisis Group. (2020). *Liberalisation and Ethno-nationalism*. In *Identity Crisis: Ethnicity and Conflict in Myanmar*. Pp. 9-12. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep31436.6>

San and by the history of Burmese Kingdoms. Decades of military rule have strengthened this perception.²³

Centralization of political power: Since independence, and since the time under the military coup in 1962, political power has been concentrated by Burman elite groups. Over the last 60 years, political regime, the military, the civil servants and bureaucrats have been dominated by Burma, and it has been being difficult for ethnic minorities to work at the senior positions in politics. These two factors of centralization and Burmese nationalism are linked in every sector.

Myanmar politics is mainstreamed by a combination of authoritarianism and centralism. Ethnic nationalist movement, resulting in decade-long conflicts and wars between ethnic arm groups and Burmese military, was fighting against centralism and discrimination. Ethnic minority groups are being marginalized for the social, economic and political opportunities and are not able to enjoy the benefits of development without power-sharing by the central government. Ethno-nationalist movements, resulting in decade-long conflicts and wars between ethnic arm groups and Burmese military, was fighting against centralism and discrimination.

“First Past the Post” (FPTP) or winner-take-all does not create a fair distribution of seats according to the number of votes each party receives. Instead, in FPTP, the candidate with the most votes wins, leaving the remaining smaller party and disadvantaged group candidates with nothing. As a result, these groups do not get their representatives to raise their voices in parliament, while only the elected winner becomes the representative of the entire constituency. The current system for representatives to the Hluttaw in Myanmar is the FPTP system for both levels of government. This is not surprising, as FPTP systems have historically been primarily implemented in British-influenced countries (Reynolds et al., 2008). Such election

²³ International Crisis Group. (2011). *Ethnic Minority Concerns. In Myanmar: A New Peace Initiative*. Pp. 10-16. International Crisis Group. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep36889.7>

results do not take into account minority votes, hence it is called as a "false majority" (Moscrop, Dias & Ejeckam, undated, p. 3).²⁴

Especially in Myanmar, this feature of the FPTP system has allowed the NLD to dominate parliament while it is unfair to other parties that have failed to win seats. In fact, Myanmar's "first to pass the post" (FPTP) or "winner takes all" electoral system generally does not allow for a fair distribution of seats according to the number of votes received by each political party. did not produce good results. Although it does not provide fair representation of political parties in parliament, the general purpose of elections is to elect representatives of the people at the decision-making level. The winner takes all sides, blinding the rulers to other opinions and the needs and desires of opposition voters, making both elections and government a zero-sum competition." (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 27).²⁵

Myanmar's current electoral system therefore does not provide fair representation of political parties of ethnic minorities in parliament for raising the issues and participating for the inclusive decision making.

1.2 Electoral System Analysis: Failure of first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system for ethnic minority inclusiveness in decision-making in parliament

1.2.1 The definition of FPTP system: advantages and disadvantages

FPTP belongs to the family of majority voting systems (or pluralism). These systems work on the simple general rule that the candidate or party with the most votes in a constituency automatically wins (Reynolds et al., 2008).

²⁴ Moscrop, D., Dias, M., & Ejeckam, C. ((2008). *An electoral system for all: Why British Columbia should adopt proportional representation*. Retrieved from <https://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/Myanmar>.

²⁵ Reynolds, A., et al. (2008). *Electoral system design: The new International IDEA handbook*. Stockholm, Sweden: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

Advantages

A positive aspect of the FPTP system is that there are good ties between elected officials and the local population of each constituency. FPTP is majority voting, so only one representative is elected from one district. Representatives elected by the people of the district are responsible to represent the needs and voices of the people living in the area. Meanwhile, voters can easily and accurately see their MP's performance and decide whether or not to vote for that MP again in the next election.²⁶

The FPTP electoral system allows for a wide range of political parties. When the country's electoral districts are not designed fairly, It gives elected parties a chance to get their share of parliament. At the same time, the FPTP system can also open up opportunities for smaller political party candidates in geographically concentrated regions (Moscrop, 2016). For example, the Ta'an, an ethnic minority group geographically concentrated in Shan State, won three seats in the Shan State Legislature in 2015.²⁷

Hence, Ta'ang ethnic groups hold a significant number of seats in both state/regional level parliament and in the Lower House. While this is great for the Ta'ang, it's pretty unfair to other ethnic groups that live scattered across different areas and constituencies. Other ethnic groups end up with no parliament seats or just only very few seats whatsoever no matter how hard they try.

Additionally, the FPTP system gives rises to a one-party government. The system gives the seat bonuses to the largest parties. The advantage of a strong one-party

²⁶ EISA, INE, IFES, International IDEA, UNDP, UNEAD & The Carter Center. ACE Project (1999-2023). *Electoral System: Advantages and disadvantages of FPTP*. Electoral Knowledge Network. <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/es/esd/esd01/esd01a/esd01a01> (Date of access- 1998-2023)

²⁷ Mun, N. T. (2020). *The electoral system at a crossroads: The recalculation of the 2015 election results under the proportional representation system*. Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

government is that it plays an important role in overseeing the functioning of government (Reynolds et al., 2008).

Disadvantages

The main weakness of the FPTP system is that the winner takes all and the minority gets nothing. This system automatically gives majority control to a single political party and more power to the decision-making role of the legislature. Additionally, the system divides vote between political parties by creating winner-loser situations. If the winner becomes the district's winner, the votes received by the losing party are not useful. It leaves a lot of wasted votes when the candidate is not elected.²⁸

It excludes smaller parties and minorities from "fair" representation. Second, excluding members of ethnic minorities from representation can destabilize the entire political system. Moreover, a majority not only excludes minorities from fair representation, it also excludes women from parliament. In particular, "women are less likely to be elected to legislatures under pluralism/majority systems than under PR systems" (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 51).

1.2.2 FPTP electoral system and parliamentary system in Myanmar

The current system for electing representatives to the Hluttaw in Myanmar is the FPTP system for both levels of government. While FPTP is used for elections at every level of parliament, it is crucial to understand the structure of Myanmar's parliament.²⁹ The Myanmar parliament is a 'three-quarter legislature', in which only three quarters of the seats are occupied by elected or people's representatives. The other quarter is reserved for the military. If the constitutional amendments require the support of more

²⁸ EISA, INE, IFES, International IDEA, UNDP, UNEAD & The Carter Center. ACE Project (1999-2023). *Electoral System: Advantages and disadvantages of FPTP*. Electoral Knowledge Network. <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/es/esd/esd01/esd01a/esd01a01> (Date of access- 1998-2023)

²⁹ *Myanmar's 2008 Constitution* (2008). Retrieved from [http:// www.constituteproject.org/](http://www.constituteproject.org/)

than three quarters of the members of parliament, the unelected military bloc has effective veto power over attempts to change the charter.

The Union Parliament has two houses, Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) and Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House). In the Amyotha Hluttaw, each state and region has to elect 12 representatives according to the article 10 of the UEC law. So, there are 168 elected representatives in total from seven states and seven regions, and 56 of these are directly appointed by the military.³⁰ The Pyithu Hluttaw has a total number of 440 seats. Out of these, 110 are appointed by the military and 330 are chosen from the country's 330 townships (Myanmar, 2008). Overall, 25% seats in parliament are reserved for military representatives.³¹

At the state and regional level, each township has two representatives in the respective parliaments. Different states and regions have different numbers of representatives, as seats are reserved based on the number of townships of each state and region. The elections for both the Union Hluttaw and the State and Regional Hluttaws are held simultaneously every five years.

In terms of legislative powers between the Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw, both houses can propose bills not listed by the union legislature according to the prescribed procedures, as stated in Chapter 4, Article 136 and 156 of the 2008 Constitution. If there is disagreement between the two houses, the proposal needs to be submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

1.2.3 2008 constitution, Composition of seats and Lack of inclusiveness in decision making

The Tatmadaw (Myanmar Armed Forces) retained significant control of the government under the 2008 constitution. 25% of seats in the Parliament of Myanmar were reserved for serving military officers. The ministries of home, border affairs and defense had to be headed by a serving military officer.

³⁰ Hluttaw Brochure Working Group. (2017). *The Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Hluttaw Brochure*. Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

³¹ Ibid.

Notable provisions regarding the electoral system in the 2008 Constitution are as following:

In Myanmar, while FPTP is used for elections at every level of parliament, the provisions of constitution on does not explicitly prescribe the use of single-member districts for any level of the legislature. The article 109(a) states that 330 members of the Pyithu Hluttaw shall be elected on the basis of township as well as population. This explains that these 330 representatives have to be elected from 330 townships, which in turn mean the use of single-member districts for the lower house.

For the Amyotha Hluttaw, the constitution provides that 12 members shall be elected from each state/region, including one member each from the self-administrative zones and division. However, the article 109(a) does not interpret clearly for the 168 members of Amyotha Hluttaw: there is no specific provision that would state that its 12 representatives shall be elected from 12 constituencies. This removes applying the system of single-member constituencies and allows the representatives for the Amyotha Hluttaw to be elected using any electoral system.³²

Likewise, the constitutional provisions on State/ Region Hluttaws only mention that two representatives shall be elected per township, but it does not mention how. In the state and region parliaments, most of the chief minister roles are taken by the Burma while other ethnic minority leader is appointed for the position of deputy speaker and speaker in the respective state parliaments.

Moreover, in terms of minority group representation, Article 161, Sub-Article (c) mentions that each representative of State Hluttaw can be only elected from each national race which have a population of 0.1 percent and above of the population.³³ According to this article, an ethnic group with a population of less than 0.1% of the nation cannot have the chance to contest the election or to form the constituency for the state and regional representation. Hence, the political system through 2008

³² Maung, N. G. M (2021). *Burma's Electoral System change and proportional representation*. Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

³³ *Myanmar's 2008 Constitution* (2008). Retrieved from [http:// www.constituteproject.org/](http://www.constituteproject.org/)

constitution effects minority and disadvantaged groups with a population of less than 0.1% and they cannot have representation in state and regional parliaments (U Win Kyi, 2015).³⁴ All in all, it can be argued that the election law entrenched in the 2008 Constitution does not create an equal chance to all minority groups in the country.

Since the adoption of the 2008 Constitution in Myanmar, the election results have never favored ethnic minority groups. The minorities are continued to be under-represented in the legislature while Bamar majority parties always get large number of seats. Hence, FPTP electoral system, which is being the default electoral system in Myanmar, provide significant disparities in the distribution of parliament seats among the competing political parties. It significantly results the unfair representation by the ethnic minorities which contradicts the inclusive decision making in the parliament.³⁵

Thus, Myanmar's current electoral system is not creating fair representation of political parties in parliament, although the common purpose of election is choosing people's representatives at the decision-making level.

1.2.4 FPTP electoral system, Favorism and Populism

FPTP gives a chance for populist independent candidates to be elected. The populist leader claims to represent the demand of the people. The voters believe that elected populist stands in opposition to an enemy. In Myanmar, FPTP electoral system favors the rise of NLD party as the dominant party, taking a number of seats in legislature for decision-making. NID party gained the popularity by the people's support on Party leader- Daw Aung San Suu Kyi who is the daughter of Aung San who is a martyred national hero of independent Myanmar in 1948.

³⁴ Kyi, W. (2015). *General knowledge about the 2015 election*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/346ae9j>

³⁵ People's Alliance for Credible Elections. (2019). *Citizen's political preferences for 2020*. Yangon, Myanmar: People's Alliance for Credible Elections.

While carefully focusing the majoritarian system, it is useful to view the winning electoral strategies which are mentioned by Collier.³⁶ He mentioned the politicians focus on playing the ethnic card. Playing on ethnic fears and hatreds is truly the politics of the gutter. There, the politicians adopt a campaign message that they would provide good national governance or a message that they would provide ethnic favoritism. Collier stated that favoritism was more effective at pulling in the votes. If voters had strong ethnic identities, then politicians would organize their parties on ethnic lines: this would simply be the cheapest way of attracting voter loyalty. The election itself would sound very different from an election in an ethnically homogenous society: leaders would imply be mobilizing their own ethnic base. Collier's notion of favoritism in the elections says true to the condition of Myanmar: NLD won by the landslide through favoritism.

Not only favoritism, populism can be asserted for the dominance of NLD and the reason of which ethnic minorities failed for the votes and taking the seats in parliament. Craig Calhoun (2010) mentioned the elite-driven systems: accommodation among the elites, who are, in these systems, popularly elected by their respective populations, is what determines policy outcomes, with little or no direct dependence on mass public opinion.³⁷ Author stressed the dominance of Populism ideology in politics diminishes the role of representation by the historically marginalized groups who are virtually certain to lose the political competition.

Based on the FPTP system, the party gained populist dominance by the perception of the voters for the elections. The majority of people believed that they could oppose military authority by voting. Voters supported Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party because they saw NLD as the military's principal rival in the fight to end fifty years of military tyranny. Between the 2015-2020, regardless of its status as the country's

³⁶ Collier, P. (2009). *Wars Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*, New York: Harper Perennial.

³⁷ Calhoun, C. (2010). *The Public Sphere in the Field of Power*. *Social Science History*, 34(3), 301–335. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40927615>

ruling party, the NLD took an approach that is effectively populist, based on Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde's well-known concept of populism.³⁸

By constantly challenging the military personals in parliament, the NLD has been able to position itself as the representative of the general will of the Myanmar people against corrupt, power-hungry military elites within and outside parliament. The NLD was joined by some ethnic party representatives, responding that the legitimate owner and guardian of democracy was the people. It embraced that is a classic populist narrative. This is one of the reasons of why ethnic minorities failed for their equal representation in politics (Marte Nilsen, Stein Tonnesson, 2016).³⁹

1.2.5 Lack of alliance and increasing emergence of small political parties

The competition between various political parties in ethnic states is one of the reasons why ethnic minorities failed for having more seats in the parliament. They have been contesting for representation in parliament as by appearing many political parties in the same ethnic community, without considering the alliance with same ethnic parties.

These features of the political system make ethnic minorities increasingly diversified around the country. It happens the unintended conflicts amongst various ethnic groupings when they compete for the political dominance. This continues to spread the idea that the size of group matters in terms of ethnic differences. By competing with one another for self-benefits, as a result, the ethnic minorities engage in a zero-sum game of rivalry.

³⁸ Cas, M. (2018). *How populism became the concept that defines our age*. The new populism politics. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/22/populism-concept-defines-our-age> (accessed on 22. Nov.2018)

³⁹ Nilsen, M., & Tonnesson, S. (2016), *New era for Myanmar trouble ahead for ethnic minorities*, Prio Policy Brief 2016 , PRIO Policy Brief, 5. Oslo: PRIO.

<https://www.prio.org/publications/9015>

1.3 Inclusiveness and human security

1.3.1 Concept of human security

Roosevelt introduced the Human security by defining the four freedoms such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear. It is closely related to the freedoms of speech and of religion, which represent civil and human rights, as well as the freedom from want, which alludes to social and economic growth. Mahbub ul Haq, a special counselor to the UN Development Program, popularized the notion of human security, which was first put forth in the Human Development Report of 1994.⁴⁰

The concept of human security first proposed in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report and it led to the establishment of the Human Security Network.⁴¹ The addition definition to enshrine the essence of Human security is followed; ‘human security is the protection of the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive environmental, economic, food, health, personal and political threats’.⁴²

Economic crisis, poor nutrition and health, and a lack of personal and political freedom were all listed as the root causes of insecurity in the commission on human security's 2003 report. According to the report, ‘Human Security complements state

⁴⁰ United Nations Development Programme. (1994). *Human Security Report*, New York. Oxford University Press.

<https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents//hdr1994encompletenostatpdf.pdf>

⁴¹ *Tabyshalieva, A. (2006). Promoting human security: ethical, normative and educational frameworks in Central Asia, UNESCO.*

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000149376.locale=en>

⁴² Sané, P. (2008), UNESCO. Director-General. *Human security: approaches and challenges*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000159307.locale=en>

security, furthers human development, and enhance human rights'.⁴³ The commission's co-chair, Amartya Sen, described human security as 'freedom from basic insecurities'. Human Security is intimately linked to inclusive participation in decision making for ensuring public accountability.

1.3.2 Human security and Peace

Traditional interstate warfare has been largely replaced in the post-Cold War world by intrastate warfare and struggles for self-determination and national identity. From 2002 to 2002, of the 58 major armed conflicts in 46 locations around the world, 95% were civil or communal conflicts within the borders of sovereign states.⁴⁴

Paul Collier (2009) claimed that peace will be secured by an election because the winner will be recognized as legitimate by the population, making violent opposition more difficult. Not only will the elected government be recognized as legitimate, the democratic process will ensure that it will need to be inclusive and so there will be less reason for grievance: the government will be accountable to its citizens. By his conceptualization, it is time to look at the evidence of why Myanmar political system was not democratic which failed the inclusiveness by the FPTP electoral system.

Peace and conflict is another important area for thinking about 'common security' as the foundation of human security. Nishikawa (2009) argues that human security has a large disparity between what governments and other groups within Southeast Asian society perceive as a threat, and thus its applicability in dealing with internal conflicts in Southeast Asia.⁴⁵ The concept is nevertheless useful for understanding the complex

⁴³ Commission on Human Security (2003). *Outline of the Report of the Commission on Human Security*, http://www.icbjapan.org/humansecurity_outline.pdf

⁴⁴ Shin-wha, L. (2004), *Promoting Human Security: Ethical, Normative and Educational Frameworks in East Asia*, Paris, UNESCO, p. 19.

⁴⁵ Yukiko, N. (2012). *Human Security in Southeast Asia*. *Asian Politics & Policy*. Pp. 119-126. DOI:10.1111/j.1943-0787.2011.001323.x

root causes of violence and clarifies the relationship between human insecurity and conflict.

Therefore, the concept of security is evolving. Today's security requirements include protecting territories from external attacks as well as protecting communities and individuals from internal violence.⁴⁶

Many political conflicts are orchestrated by political systems that underestimate the participation and representation of minorities in inclusive decision-making for their rights to socioeconomic opportunity, peace, and security.

1.3.3 Human security and equal socio-economic opportunities

When the respect for ethnic diversity is not promoted, socio-economic opportunities and rights are not protected. Inequalities of opportunity and choice have great impact to human security.

The status of being ethnic minority disadvantaged groups can be characterized by high ethnic diversity, political exploitation/discrimination by elite members, political marginalization by large ethnic groups, traditional economic or social interaction between the majority and minority groups that forms the political rivalries, violations of the rights of minorities, such as a failure to equal access to natural resources and ethnic minority's desire to self-determination and territoriality issues. Conflicts over natural resources have become a key issue for disadvantaged groups to fairly access their country's natural resources.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Annan, K. (2000). *Definition of Human Security*. Millennium Report, New York, United Nations, Chapter 3, pp. 43–44. <https://www.gdrc.org/sustdev/husec/Definitions.pdf>

⁴⁷ Tabyshalieva, A. (2006). *Promoting human security: ethical, normative and educational frameworks in Central Asia*, UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000149376.locale=en>

Exclusion is related to the inequality and inability of minority groups to participate in state institutions, which keeps minority groups in an inferior position and is considered the most vulnerable group. Inequalities based on gender, wealth, geography, and ethnicity are detrimental to democracy, peace, social cohesion and economic growth. If the poor and most vulnerable groups, such as women, rural people, indigenous communities and marginalized minorities, do not have a chance for a political voice in the institutions, the state is not providing the human security for those.

Equal opportunity in socio-economic activities, health care and education are based primarily on the political system and the effectiveness of that system. Improving equity and efficiency not only benefits the disadvantaged, but also meets human security needs.

2.Knowledge Gap

The literature review emphasizes on the failure to inclusive representation and participation of ethnic minorities by FPTP electoral system and its impact on human security. The gap by the literature is on the information of election results from 2010 to 2020 and how these votes to seats which reflects on the weak form of inclusive participation of ethnic minorities in legislature. There will be a future study on the composition of seats in the legislature by the taken seats of majority and minority and its impact on decision-making process and making laws to protect the rights of ethnic minorities. Moreover, the paper will examine how the lack of inclusive representation in decision-making at union-level impact on human security of ethnic minorities; by investigating their socio-economic challenges and risks affected by the ethnic conflicts.

Chapterization on Thesis Arguments

Chapterization	Arguments for FPTP (Causes)	Effects by FPTP	Failure of seats for ethnic minorities = Limited representation of Ethnic minorities, Lack of inclusiveness in parliamentary decision making
Chapter -3	Weak form of Party institutionalization of ethnic parities	Fragmentation and vote splitting	
	Single-member plurality and Party fragmentation		
Chapter -4	Two party dominance	Polarization and proliferation of Ethnic political parties	
	NLD dominance with its populism		
	The rise of Merged parties	Limited resources as Uneven Playing field	
	Concentration of support in specific concentrated areas		
Chapter -5	Geographically concentrated populations and concentration of support	Discrepancy of votes & shares	
	Unequal Distribution votes with constituency delimitation	Unequal Distribution votes with constituency delimitation	
Chapter -6	Township-based Constitution composition	Inequality of votes	
	Inequality of votes by population-size	Lack of proportionality in vote share and seat share in Parliaments	
Chapter -7	Lack of inclusive representation	Impacts on Human security	
Chapter-8	Implication: redesigning electoral sys	Proportional representation system	

Chapter (3) Proliferation of Ethnic political parties and single-member plurality-ruled elections

3.1 History of Myanmar politics and Political parties

In Myanmar, various political groups are not based on social class or religion. Instead, they are split into two groups. The first one has to do with ethnicity, and most of the period it shows up as a conflict between Burma and other ethnic groups. The second difference is a distinction between the military's sovereignty and the position of pro-democracy groups.⁴⁸

Based on these differences, parties have formed in Myanmar: nationwide multi-ethnic parties, ethnic-based parties which we called as smaller single-ethnic parties that serve the interests of minority groups. Even though the USDP and the NLD are called mass-based and multi-ethnic parties, ethnic minority groups are most well-represented by non-Bamar ethnic parties.

Between 1988 and 1990, these single-ethnicity parties that were smaller than the NLD were formed. They have strong ties to the NLD. These groups include the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), the Mon National Party (MNP), and the Arakan Patriotic Party (APP), among others.⁴⁹

Between 2011 and 2015, single-ethnic parties that were formed in 2010 to run in the general elections of that year cooperated pragmatically with the USDP government. They are the All Mon Region Democracy Party (AMRDP), the Chin Progressive

⁴⁸ Kurlantzick, J. (2021). *The Regional Implications of Myanmar's Coup*. Asia Program. Aspenia.

⁴⁹ Stokke, K. (2019). *Political Representation by Ethnic Parties? Electoral Performance and Party-Building Processes among Ethnic Parties in Myanmar*. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 38(3), 307–336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103419893530>

Party (CPP), the Chin National Party (CNP), the Phalon- Sawaw Democratic Party (PSDP), and the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP).⁵⁰

Since 2010, a proliferation of parties has been formed to promote democracy or obtain back rights that their communities have lost. Most ethnic parties are very different in size, resulting how well they do in elections, and what they stand for. SNLD is one of the largest and most well-known ethnic parties, as well as its core ethnic followers in Shan State give it a lot of support. Many of the larger single-ethnic parties, like the SNLD, are made up of a large group of people who live all over the country.

On the other hand, there are minor single-ethnic parties that serve small ethnic groups which are mostly concentrated in a few electoral districts within ethnic states. Since about a third of the population identifies as an ethnic minority, this means that single-ethnic parties have not been able to give non-Bamar ethnic groups enough support in the past. Most of the single-ethnic parties performed poorly, except for the SNLD and the ANP.

Single-ethnic parties are at a disadvantage because small, ethno-regional parties don't usually do well in elections in single-member plurality-rule elections. They risk splitting the vote and making it harder for smaller parties to get enough votes. In fact, the merger of the Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) and the new Rakhine National Development Party (RNDP) made the Arakan National Party (ANP) the third most popular party in both the 2015 and 2020 elections. Because of this, a lot of ethnic parties have chosen to work together for the next elections. Also, groups that are focused on being pragmatic will probably not run candidates in constituencies where there is a lot of competitiveness.⁵¹

Decades of military rule changed the political landscape because it made it hard for ethnic political parties to gain legitimacy and rise to leadership. Military power led to a bipolar situation that made people want to change the status quo, so they backed the

⁵⁰ Ibid., Pp 307–336.

⁵¹ Tan, N., P, C. (2020). *Electoral System, Ethnic Parties, and Party System Stability in Myanmar*. Eur J Dev Res 32, 431–456 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-020-00264-1>

NLD. So, improving the economy is not the most important thing when it comes to getting votes. Ethnic minority voters should care more about their political and cultural rights. But ethnic minorities will only vote for groups that have shown they will protect these rights.

Voters were locked into the political atmosphere of the transitional election, which messed up the way elections usually work in a democracy. This was good for the NLD, which is a major anti-military party, because people cared more about the removal of the military.

Therefore, NLD's increased number of seats in 2020 isn't because of its campaign plan or FPTP protection. Instead, it's because the military created a political climate to keep its power. On the other hand, long-term ethnic conflict has led many ethnic groups to try to defend their cultural and political rights.

3.2 Party institutionalization nature of Myanmar ethnic parties

Ethnic minorities are more likely to vote for political groups that have shown they have fought for minority rights. These groups are more "institutionalized" in the sense that they connect with their supporters by giving them ideals and a sense of who they are. Party institutionalization is "the process by which the party becomes established in terms of integrated patterns of behavior and attitudes, or culture" (Randall and Svendsen 2002, 12).⁵²

Generally, weak party institutionalization is thought of as lacking a value system or ideology that guides policy formulation (Stokke 2019, 327; Moser 1999) which it fosters the spirit of loyalty to the survival of an organization (Levitsky 1998, 79). In developing countries, political parties are often formed from the top down around a popular leader, but they don't have many resources and are divided into many different groups.

⁵² Vicky. R (2002), *Party Institutionalization in New Democracies*, Party Politics Journal, 2002, Pg- 29 – 5

There are problems of weak party institutionalization by looking at Myanmar's political history of repressive party-state relations (Stokke, forthcoming soon). Most of Myanmar's post-colonial time has been marked by military rule and state suppression of parties, but there have been times when the military has pulled back from government (Egreteau, 2016; Huang, 2016).

In the overall setting of a praetorian state, these situations have given some temporary and limited political spaces for party growth, but not enough political opportunities for gradual and continuous party growth based on social and political divides in society. In this situation, Myanmar's political parties, especially the ethnic parties, tend to be more like networks based on leadership and identity politics than organizations based on policies.

3.3 Single-member plurality and Party fragmentation

When there are too many parties, it can be hard to solve conflicts and reflect ethnic interests (Diamond 1999; Stokke et al. 2015). When voters have more party options, it can also be hard to keep track of everything. Also, Myanmar's democratic opening has restored back electoral democracy, and the constitution offers a framework for political representation, but the representation has been unequal and weak" (2019, p. 15).

It is well known that small, ethno-regional parties do not do well in Myanmar's single-member plurality-rule elections (see, for example, Selway 2015 and Marston 2013). For example, Duverger's law says that elections with more than one winner tend to favor the two biggest groups and hurt the smaller ones.⁵³

Plurality-based voting systems, in which the candidate with the most votes wins, are meant to create a majority government and hurt small parties, especially those whose supporters are spread out across the country (Liphart, 1994). Ethnic groups have a hard time getting into the legislature because they need a majority of votes to win. If

⁵³ Stokke, K., & Aung, S. M. (2019). *Transition to Democracy or Hybrid Regime? The Dynamics and Outcomes of Democratization in Myanmar*, European Journal of Development Research DOI - 10.1057/s41287-019-00247

there were too many parties running in one district without focused voter support, votes would be split or wasted, which could negatively impact small or less-known parties (Lijphart 1994; Nor-is 2002; Lublin and Wright 2013).

3.4 Fragmentation among ethnic parties and vote splitting under FPTP

The changes in the political sphere also influence the fragmentation of ethnic parties. Most significantly, the military-imposed transition has created a rift between the new electoralist parties that were formed specifically to run in the 2010 election and the old movement parties that were founded in 1988–1990 but did not participate in the election.

Vote splitting has consequently emerged as a common theory to explain why ethnic parties have failed to give formal and accurate representation for ethnic groups, especially among party representatives. Many people believe that vote splitting was crucial in the context of single-member electoral districts and first-past-the-post voting.⁵⁴

Table (1) shows the vote splitting by ethnic minority parties in 2015 elections.

Table 1: Vote splitting pattern in Pyithu Hluttaw in 2015 Elections

State and Constituency	Winner's vote share		
	Split Vote Share of Ethnic Parties		
Shan State: Namkham Constituency	TPNP (36.63%)	SNDP (21.88%)	SNLD (21.34%)
Shan State: Minpan Constituency	USDP (36.82%)	SNDP (33.50%)	SNLD (16.28%)
Shan State: Namsan Constituency	USDP (37.23%)	SNDP (5.27%)	SNLD (32.45%)

Source: adopted from Briefing paper on electoral system and results, 2015 General Elections of Myanmar, Democracy Reporting International Myanmar

⁵⁴ Stokke, K. (2019). *Political Representation by Ethnic Parties? Electoral Performance and Party-Building Processes among Ethnic Parties in Myanmar*. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 38(3), 307–336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103419893530>

According to Table (1), Shan State, for example, saw a polarised competition in 2015 between SNLD and SNDP, resulting in a clear shift from SNDP to SNLD as the dominant Shan party.

By looking at the Shan state parties who contested for Namkham Constituency, Minpan Constituency and Namsan Constituency, the polarized competition between SNDP and SNLD make another party won the elections, resulting TPNP with highest votes for Namkham Constituency, USDP with largest votes for Minpan Constituency and Namsan Constituency.

In Chin and Mon states, it is notable that both the 1990-era movement parties (Chin National League for Democracy and Mon National Party) and the 2010-era electoralist parties (CPP, CNP, and AMRDP) performed poorly at the 2015 election (Figure 1). Similar patterns are also found in Kachin, Kayin, and Kayah states.⁵⁵

Aside from the vote split, the NLD's choice to support ethnic candidates in order to attract and win over supporters in ethnic constituencies had an impact on voting patterns in ethnic States. Voters were attracted to Aung San Suu Kyi's personality-driven campaign, which also expanded the gap between the parties (Kempel et al. 2015; Burke 2015).

Voters lost interest in local ethnic parties since they appeared small and weak due to the proliferation of parties (TNI 2015b, p. 11). The high number of contesting parties in the four ethnic States eventually led to split votes and votes wasted on small parties. For example, ethnic vote splits were reported in Thandaunggyi, Kayin (between NLD, KPP, and KNP); Madupi, Chin (between NLD, CLD, and CNDP); Ye. Mon (between NLD, MNP, and AMDP) and three constituencies (Nansang;

⁵⁵ Stokke, K. (2019). *Political Representation by Ethnic Parties? Electoral Performance and Party-Building Processes among Ethnic Parties in Myanmar*. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 38(3), 307–336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103419893530>

Mongpan, Namkham) in Shan (between USDP, SNLD, SNDP or TNP) (TNI 2015b, p. 11).⁵⁶

3.5 Political context: 2010, 2015 and 2020 elections

2010 Elections

Particularly after the 1990 elections, Myanmar has become engaged in two political conflicts: the establishment or restoration of democracy and the resolution of ethnic disputes. The SLORC did establish peace and cease-fire agreements with a number of ethnic armed groups, but it did not carry out any development or peace-building programs as a result. The SLORC also called a national convention after the election to solicit suggestions for the drafting of a constitution from the opposition and ethnic ceasefire organizations.⁵⁷ Between 1993 to 2004, the National Convention was put on hold because of arguments about the process and differences within the administration about its necessity. The NLD was one of several organizations and people who left the process, alleging a lack of sincere engagement as the main cause.⁵⁸

The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) government introduced the 7-Step Political Roadmap in August 2003 in an effort to achieve what the 2008 Constitution refers to as "disciplined democracy." The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Myanmar is a member, and other international pressures were among the forces that compelled the military government to move

⁵⁶ Tan, N., P. C. (2020). *Electoral System, Ethnic Parties, and Party System Stability in Myanmar*. *Eur J Dev Res* 32, 431–456 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-020-00264-1>

⁵⁷ Tonkin, D. (2007). *The 1990 Elections in Myanmar: Broken Promises or a Failure of Communication?*. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 29(1), 33–54. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25798813>

⁵⁸ Richard, H. (2011), *2010 Myanmar General Elections: Learning and Sharing for Future*, Observation Report. p. 97. <http://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2010-Myanmar-Observer-report.pdf>

toward a political change.⁵⁹ The Roadmap, however, has been widely perceived and condemned as a procedure that has institutionalized and legitimized the role of the armed forces in politics.

The first general elections in 20 years were outlined in the new constitution, and the date of November 11, 2010, was established. The constitution institutionalizes military power in particular by mandating that the military have 25% of the seats in the legislature and by creating a security and defense council under the command of the commander in chief. The new organization also grants the Commander tremendous authority and control over crucial security ministries. According to the new constitution, the Tatmadaw would be the sole authorized armed force in the nation.⁶⁰

Concerned that the 2010 elections would not be free or fair, the international community and civil society organizations from both inside and outside of the nation encouraged the SPDC to make sure that the polls would take place in genuinely democratic circumstances.

The NLD decided not to run in the elections and to stage a boycott on March 29 after the release of the election legislation by forgoing submission of an application to the Elections Commission. The electoral laws came under intense scrutiny for being exclusive and restricted. The Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP) and other minor ethnic parties were prohibited from registering, most likely because the Kachin Independence Army demanded that certain requirements be satisfied before they could participate in the Border Guard Force program. Others, including the Shan NLD, the Shan State Kokang Democratic Party, the Union Paoh National Organization, and the Wa National Development Party, elected not to submit applications to continue their parties. Due to all of this, there was disagreement

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Steinberg, D. I. (2013), 2nd ed., *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know*, USA: Oxford university Press, pp. 78 – 79.

among the electorate on whether or not to vote. Unsurprisingly, armed organizations still at odds with the government were also barred from voting.⁶¹

The elections took place despite the challenging circumstances and were criticized as being unfree and unfair by domestic and international organizations as well as by the majority of the world community. The degree of fraudulent voting exceeded expectations for the opposition parties who took part. Poor representation of ethnic and opposition candidates in legislatures and low legitimacy of the new government are the outcomes of the fraudulent advance votes. Before the elections, ethnic and other opposition groups were aware that there would be problems like these, but they also recognized that there were opportunities to be found in the changes that the new system might bring, especially if they allowed for increased ethnic participation and voice in political structures and processes.

USDP as one dominance party at the time of authoritarian-based elections

In the polls, the USDP won 883 out of 1154 seats (76.5% of all seats), earning it the title of "landslide victory." The party won 78.7 percent of seats in the Union Legislature (the People's Legislature and the National Legislature) and 74.9 percent in the Region and State Legislatures. The USDP won the election by a margin of 79.4 percent with 1112 candidates running.⁶²

With just 63 seats (5.5% of total seats), the NUP placed second. Their victory rate was a low 6.3 percent with 995 people running. With 57 seats (4.9%) and 35 seats (3.0%), respectively, the SNDP and RNDP—both ethnic minority parties—took third and fourth place. The NDF gained 16 seats (1.4%) and held onto fifth place. The outcome was undoubtedly the "landslide" of the USDP. However, as will be discussed further

⁶¹ Michael, F. M. (2021). *The Importance of Ethnic Minorities to Myanmar's Future*. Policy paper. STIMSON, <https://www.stimson.org/2021/the-importance-of-ethnic-minorities-to-myanmars-future/>

⁶² Steinberg, D. I. (2011). *Myanmar in 2010: The Elections Year and Beyond*. Southeast Asian Affairs, 173–189. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41418643>

down, there were several cases where pro-democracy and ethnic minority parties successfully contested elections in districts where the USDP mobilization proved to be less successful.⁶³

USDP's "landslide victory" was unquestionably the outcome of mobilization operations supported by their immense organizational and financial power as well as their dispensing of favors. Two things stand out in this situation: the NDF has a sizable following in Yangon, and ethnic minority parties performed well.⁶⁴

2015 Elections

President Thein Sein's administration, which took office in March 2011, has begun a significant reform process toward greater democratic freedoms and interethnic peace after decades of civil conflict and military control. The 2015 general election presents a crucial opportunity to represent the variety of Myanmar's ethno-political environment and the political needs and ambitions of its peoples now that peace talks have been announced.⁶⁵

Since 1990, there haven't been any openly fought elections until the general elections in 2015. Although not without imperfections, the general elections held in Myanmar on November 8, 2015, unmistakably signalled the start of fresh optimism for the nation's change. 30 million eligible voters cast their ballots at 41,000 polling places across the nation's more than 300 constituencies, or around 80% of the total. Voting was canceled in 600 village tracts that are located in conflict-affected areas. This, together with the threat of violence during the campaign, detracted from the otherwise tense environment. For 1150 seats in the upper and lower chambers of parliament as

⁶³ Ibid., Pp.173-189.

⁶⁴International Crisis Group. (2009). *Myanmar: Towards the elections*. Asia Report No.174, available at http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/174_myanmar_towards_the_elections.ashx

⁶⁵ Transnational Institute. (2015). *Ethnic Politics and the 2015 Elections in Myanmar*. Myanmar Policy Briefing.

well as the local assemblies in the 14 administrative states and regions, 92 political parties—60 of which were ethnic parties—contended. These seats do not include the 25% of all seats that are taken up by active military personnel in all assemblies.⁶⁶

The election season started on August 8. For people who had official missions or health concerns, advance voting was also made available in-country. International polling centers were opened at Myanmar embassies across the world. A "genuinely civilian government" was expected to successfully carry out much-needed political, administrative, and economic reforms. There was a great deal of anticipation that the 2015 elections would be more fair and credible than the previous ones (1990 and 2010). However, there was also concern that the incumbent might manipulate the results. This sentiment has some historical roots, despite the election results showing differently.⁶⁷

2020 General Election

Myanmar's political transitions are notorious for being drawn out and filled with several uncertainty. The nation's present constitution went into force in 2008, and elections were held in 2010 following a protracted period of military junta control. The National League for Democracy (NLD) opted out of the election, which was roundly criticized for its lack of openness. The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) won handily thanks to military intervention. In a more open election in 2015, democratic forces headed by the NLD triumphed handily. However, because at

⁶⁶ Freedom House. (2011). *Freedom in the World 2011- Burma(Myanmar)*.

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2011/burma> (accessed 9 July 2023)

⁶⁷ Stokke, K & Aung, S. M. (2019). *Transition to democracy or hybrid regime? The dynamics and outcomes of democratization in Myanmar*. The European Journal of Development Research. DOI: 10.1057/s41287-019-00247-x

least 25% of the seats are constitutionally reserved for the military, the Tatmadaw (Myanmar's military) still plays a big part in politics in Myanmar.⁶⁸

The 2020 election will be the third national one held in accordance with the 2008 constitution. The NLD, who was then the opposition party, the right to govern. Both local and foreign observers widely saw that election as a trustworthy turning point in Myanmar's path to democracy.⁶⁹

The democratic element of Myanmar's political system has been further enhanced as a result of the general elections held on November 8, 2020. In order to participate in the general election in Myanmar scheduled for November 8th, about 100 political parties have registered. The NLD's electoral success is influenced by its handling of the economy, its track record of revising the 2008 Constitution, the rise in armed conflict throughout the nation, the impasse in the national peace process, and how it handled the COVID-19 outbreak.

Deep rifts still exist in Myanmar, including ethnic conflicts all over the nation and sectarian bloodshed in the province of Rakhine. Over 1.5 million individuals nationwide were denied the right to vote after the Union Election Commission (UEC) delayed polling in 22 seats. While the general election results of 2020 show that the NLD is the most powerful political force in the nation, a closer look, especially at the results at the state level, reveals that there are a variety of political actors. Thus, while a secure central administration is a positive development, especially in terms of regional security, bridging the ethnic gap will continue to be of utmost significance.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ghoshal, D. (2016). *A year after winning power, Aung San Suu Kyi is struggling to transform Myanmar*. Quartz.

⁶⁹ The Carter Center. (2015). *Observing Myanmar's 2015 general elections*. Final report. Retrieved from <https://www.cartercenter.org/>

⁷⁰ Ghoshal, D. (2016). *A year after winning power, Aung San Suu Kyi is struggling to transform Myanmar*. Quartz.

3.6 Overall Assessment

The growth of multiple parties in Myanmar could lead to a fragmented party structure, which would make it hard to solve conflicts and represent ethnic interests.⁷¹ This is because voters have more parties to choose from, which can make it harder for smaller ethno-regional parties to be heard.

Myanmar's ethnic parties tend to be more like networks based on leadership and identity politics than groups with specific policies. This means that these parties give more importance to representing and advancing ethnic identities and interests than to specific policy goals, so that ethnic parties can take part in parliaments in a more equal way.

After a 20-year break, Myanmar held its first general elections in 2010. The rules for these votes came from the new constitution. But it's important to remember that the 2010 elections were attacked for not being open and honest, and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), which was backed by the military, won most of the seats.

The 2015 general elections were important because they were the first ones since 1990 that were fought publicly.⁷² These elections were a chance to show how different Myanmar's ethnic and political groups are, as well as what its people want and need from their government. Even though there were some problems, like polling places being closed in areas of violence, the 2015 elections were seen as a new sign of hope for the country's transition.

The National League for Democracy (NLD) is likely to get more seats in the 2020 general elections. The NLD's campaign strategy and populism, or the first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting method, are responsible for the increase in votes. On the other

⁷¹ Tan, N., P, C. (2020). *Electoral System, Ethnic Parties, and Party System Stability in Myanmar*. *Eur J Dev Res* 32, 431–456 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-020-00264-1>

⁷² Kyi, W. (2015). *General knowledge about the 2015 election*, Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/346ae9j>

hand, ethnic parties tried to protect culture and political rights when there were long-lasting ethnic conflicts.

Vote splitting is one reason why ethnic parties in Myanmar haven't been able to give formal and clear support to ethnic groups. People think that vote splitting makes a big difference in a first-past-the-post system and single-member electoral areas.⁷³ So, under the FPTP system, the failure of ethnic minority parties to win the majority vote is caused by party fragmentation, split votes, and the control of two parties.

Chapter (4) FPTP political system and ethnic political party fragmentation

4.1 The rise of two party dominance: polarization by FPTP system

In Myanmar, ethnic parties are outmatched in the polarized competition between the USDP and NLD. For tactical reasons or because they found the NLD's promises of being a representation of all ethnic groups more appealing, many ethnic voters supported NLD over ethnic parties (Sai Wansai, 2015). The first election where the NLD and USDP had open competition was in 2015. Due to this, the election became a contest between the legacies of military rule and the USDP's "unity and development" campaign, on the one hand, and the pro-democracy movement's legacy and the NLD's "change" campaign, on the other (Ardeth, 2016; Tin Maung Maung Than, 2016). Ethnic parties and identity politics were demoted to a supporting role in this polarized political fight between two strong non-ethnic parties.⁷⁴

However, when combined with the first-past-the-post system, it gives large national parties the upper hand in parliament when it comes to representing the interests of the

⁷³ Tan, N., P. C. (2020). *Electoral System, Ethnic Parties, and Party System Stability in Myanmar*. Eur J Dev Res 32, 431–456 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-020-00264-1>

⁷⁴ Maung, N.G.M. (2020). *Getting ready for the 2020 election: Ways to improve the campaign strategies of ethnic political parties in Myanmar*. Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

majority party. Many ethnic minority areas also have sizable Burma populations as a result of recent or historical migration, which enables the major parties to gain additional seats in the states even without the help of minority voters. As a result, the NLD and USDP compete for national supremacy by concentrating their election efforts on Burmese people. Two parties dominated all three elections, as seen in Table (2).

As per the results of 2015 elections, NLD achieved dominance with 255 seats in lower house and 135 seats in upper house as well as USDP obtained 30 seats in lower house and 11 seats in upper house. In 2020 elections, NLD had the largest seats with 258 in lower house and 138 seats in upper house while USDP attained second largest seats with 26 in lower house and 7 seats in upper house.

Table 2: Comparison of Parliamentary elections by 2010, 2015 and 2020

Political Party	2010	2015	2020
<i>People's Assembly (Lower House)-330 seats</i>			
National League for Democracy (NLD)	0	255	258
Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	259	30	26
<i>National Assembly (Upper House) -168 seats</i>			
National League for Democracy (NLD)	0	135	138
Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	129	11	7

Note: adopted from Union Election Commission, ‘Announcement of the results of 2020 Multi-party Democratic General Elections’ November 15. 2020

In addition, Table (2) demonstrates that NLD won the elections in 2010, 2015, and 2020, with USDP coming in second place. Election outcomes demonstrate the two-party system's emergence.

According to Thawngmung (2016), Aung San Suu Kyi's popularity and the belief that she would bring about the nation's urgently required political and economic

improvements were both major factors in the NLD's victory. ⁷⁵ In contrast, vote splitting, poor institutionalization, and disadvantages in the first-past-the-post election system affected ethnic parties (Aung 2018; Stokke 2019; Tan and Preece 2020). ⁷⁶

Between USDP and NLD Candidates from ethnic minority parties were prominent in states where ethnic minorities make up the majority, according to a national assessment. It was impossible to figure out voting habits in locations with a high concentration of ethnic minorities due to complaints that the NLD dominated these areas. The Arakan National Party (ANP) and the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) ultimately gained a majority of seats in the northeastern Shan State and the western Arakan State, respectively.⁷⁷

4.2 NLD with its populism

Ethnic groups claimed the 2015 elections were fraudulent so the army would win. Many first-time voters in the 2010 elections exhibited apathy and showed little interest in the political party programs. Some voters took the more practical route and supported "continuity," pointing out the need for "stability." Then there were some who believed that their votes mattered in order to open up some space for democratization. Theirs were the votes that contributed significantly to the minority of opposition seats in parliament. Due to increased access to a variety of information sources, voters also became more politically conscious and involved.

⁷⁵ Thawngmung, A. (2016), *The politics of indigeneity in Myanmar: competing narratives in Rakhine state*, Asian Ethnicity, 10.1080/14631369.2016.1179096

⁷⁷ Ostwald, K., & Courtin, C. (2020). *Malapportionment in Myanmar's Elections: A Slumbering Menace*. Contemporary Southeast Asia, 42(2), 145–173.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26937798>

Early campaigning was done by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who had been placed under house arrest before to, during, and after the 1990 and 2010 elections. The NLD's campaign slogan "It's time (to change)" resonated with people from all socioeconomic levels and backgrounds in a country where the population had grown accustomed to decades of authoritarian control. This was also true in the most democratic environment for expressing ideas and opinions in decades.⁷⁸

Only eight of the 16 armed ethnic groups came to the table to sign the statewide ceasefire agreement that was signed on October 15, 2015, which greatly diminished its significance. The privatization of the telecommunications sector, which resulted in normalization of the rates for mobile phones and cellular phone smart cards, appears to have been the sole reform step that was well-received by the general public. This increased public communication and information sharing, played a significant role in disseminating news about the election campaign, and helped monitor polling results.⁷⁹

Running a nationwide campaign with Suu Kyi's well-known persona at the forefront appears to have been a successful plan. The NLD was able to win many seats that had previously been held by ethnic parties by emphasizing the effect of voters' decisions at the national level and by convincing voters that supporting the local NLD MP was the same as supporting Suu Kyi. It is still unclear how the NLD's hold over so many municipal assemblies and its connections to established bigwigs will play out.

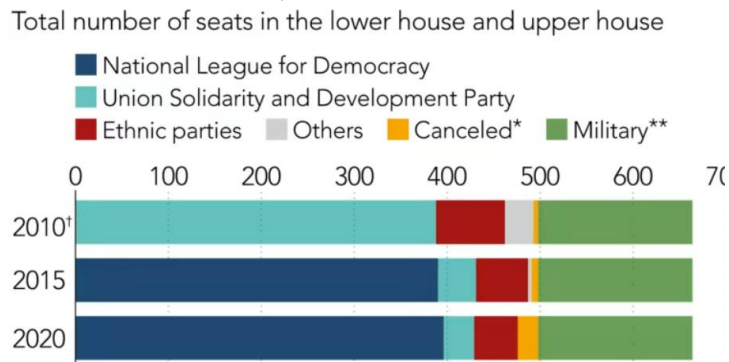
NLD was notably strong in the state and regional legislatures in addition to the upper and lower houses, winning the majority of the vote in very few states. According to

⁷⁸ Thuzar, M. (2015). *Myanmar's 2015 Elections: New Hope on the Horizon?*. ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

⁷⁹ Institute for Security and Development Policy (2015). *Myanmar's Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement*. Background. ISDP. <http://isdp.eu/content/uploads/publications/2015-isdp-background-myanmar-nca.pdf>

the broad consensus, this can be explained by variations in voting behavior brought on by ethnic divisions. The relationship between these variables and voting behavior is still not well understood, but there are also significant differences in economic growth and educational attainment between the regions and the states.

Figure 1 Myanmar elections of 2010, 2015 and 2020



Source: Nikkei research for Myanmar election data, Suu Kyi's Myanmar election win fails to excite foreign investors, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Asia-Insight/Suu-Kyi-s-Myanmar-election-win-fails-to-excite-foreign-investors>

The political climate has liberalized after the 2008 constitution's adoption, but the military still had a lot of influence over the civilian government. The political situation that is typically present during the first post-authoritarian election, when the pro-democracy and pro-authoritarian groups struggle in a bipolar environment, was prolonged by this circumstance.⁸⁰

Figure (1) shows that since 2015, the NLD has benefited from the anti-military attitude, which has caused most Bamar voters to overlook the party's poor economic record. In addition, despite the bias of the election system, ethnic parties that have

⁸⁰ Huang, K. (2022). *Myanmar's 2020 Election: Explaining the Strong Performance of the NLD and Some Ethnic Parties*. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 22(2), 309-331.

doi:10.1017/jea.2022.10

defended the interests of their community stood a better chance of sustaining consistent support. The social roots formed via conflicts against the military were the driving force behind the rise of those ethnic parties. Therefore, they were initially defeated by the political environment that the military and the USDP constructed.

4.3 Merged parties in geographically concentrated areas: Did ANP and SNLD benefit from FPTP ?

In contrast to combining with non-ethnic or multi-ethnic parties to create multi-ethnic or nationwide parties that appeal to a variety of constituencies, ethnic parties are splitting votes among the same ethnic voter base. The unique aspect of party mergers in Rakhine state in Myanmar illustrates the advantages of FPTP by bringing together ethnic parties from the same ethnic State or group.

Mergers or "no-compete" contracts between parties that represent the same ethnic group, as well as party alliances, are two possible strategic responses from parties to these difficulties. Even while many parties have talked about joining forces, especially after the 2012 by-elections when the re-registration of parties from the 1990s added a new level of intra-ethnic competitiveness, the majority of conversations have fallen through.⁸¹

The 1990 and 2010 Rakhine parties merged successfully to establish the Rakhine (Arakan) National Party, which currently seems poised to win a sizable majority of the seats in its state. This is the only successful merger to date. The risk of split votes is increased by the fact that "no-compete" agreements haven't been very successful in reaching an agreement.

There were two major political organizations in Rakhine State that bore the names of the Rakhine (Arakan) ethnic group: the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party

⁸¹ Hlaing, K. H (2022), *Myanmar's Rakhine State: Parties Split, Rebels Rise, and the Junta Schemes*, United States Institute of Peace.

(RNDP) and the Arakan League for Democracy (ALD). However, in 2013, they came to an agreement to combine into the Arakan National Party (ANP). In northern Rakhine State, the party received a sizable number of votes, winning 12 seats in the lower house and 10 seats in the upper house. This was the most seats an ethnic minority party had ever won. Given that the RNDP garnered 16 seats in the 2010 election, the ANP somewhat increased the number of seats it held.⁸²

One of the main Shan parties has decided not to contest in one township where its rival is likely to win, but the two parties will go head-to-head in many other places. Similarly, “no-compete” discussions among Chin and also Mon parties have not achieved a tangible outcome.

In a township where its adversary is sure to win, one of the major Shan parties has opted not to run, but the two parties will face off in many other locations. The “no-compete” conversations between the Chin and Mon parties have similarly failed to produce a concrete result.⁸³

In the 2015 elections, SNLD gained 12 seats in the lower house and 3 seats in the upper house for Shan state. In contrast, the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP), which received support in the general elections of 2010, lost every one of its 21 seats in both houses.⁸⁴

⁸² Hlaing, K. H (2022), *Myanmar’s Rakhine State: Parties Split, Rebels Rise, and the Junta Schemes*, United States Institute of Peace.

⁸³ Yoshihiro, N. & Noriyuki, O. (2016). *The 2015 Myanmar General Election: A Historic Victory for the National League for Democracy*. Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Kyoto University. Current Affairs Studies Group. Area Studies Center.

⁸⁴ Hlaing, K. H (2022), *Myanmar’s Rakhine State: Parties Split, Rebels Rise, and the Junta Schemes*, United States Institute of Peace.

Table (3) demonstrates that in the 2010 elections, the minority ethnic parties only received a relatively small number of seats in Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, Regional, and State Hluttaw. With 18 seats for Pyithu Hluttaw, 3 seats for Amyotha Hluttaw, and 37 seats for state and region Hluttaw, Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP) received the highest votes of any minority party. Rakhine Nationalities Development Party only got the second largest seats among ethnic parties, resulting 9 seats for Pyithu Hluttaw, 7 seats for Amyotha Hluttaw, and 19 seats for state and region Hluttaw.

Table 3 Seats won by the minority political parties in the 2010 general elections

Political Party	Pyithu Hluttaw	Amyotha Hluttaw	Regional and State Hluttaw
Shan Nationalities Democratic Party- SNDP	18	3	37
Rakhine Nationalities Development Party - RNDP	9	7	19
All Mon Region Democracy Party- AMRDP	3	4	9
Chin Progressive Party - CPP	2	4	6
Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party - PSDP	2	3	4
Chin National Party - CNP	2	2	5
Pa-O National Organisation, PNO	3	1	6
Other minority ethnic parties	5	6	20
Total	44	30	106

Note: adopted from 2010 Myanmar General Election: Learning and sharing for future, Observation Report, Center for peace and conflict studies, April 2011

Voters' strategic considerations resulted in the NLD's resounding victory in 2015.⁸⁵ Due to the high level of unrest, potential vote tampering, and vote splitting, the multi-

⁸⁵ Yoshihiro, N. & Noriyuki, O. (2016). *The 2015 Myanmar General Election: A Historic Victory for the National League for Democracy*. Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Kyoto University. Current Affairs Studies Group. Area Studies Center.

ethnic USD also took home roughly a third of the seats up for election in Shan State (TNI 2015b, p. 11).

Due to the strategy merger efforts between the two major parties, the RNDP and the ALD, to form the AN before the election, Rakhine State was an exception. The ANP won 12 seats in the Lower House and an additional 10 seats in the Upper House in 2015 as a result of the parties' shared ideologies and larger voter appeal (TNI 2015b, p. 6). Despite a more open and transparent electoral process, most ethnic parties, with the exception of SNLD and AN, ended up performing poorly, gaining only 9% of all elected seats.⁸⁶

Shan, Chin, and Mon states are distinct from Rakhine State. In contrast, the Arakan Nationalities Party (ANP) won the 2015 election in Rakhine State when the old Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) and the new Rakhine Nationalities Development Party merged.⁸⁷ The ANP later broke up due to political disagreements, but the striking disparity between Rakhine and other ethnic states is frequently cited as proof that the failure to unite was the primary cause of the dismal electoral results most ethnic parties experienced in 2015 (Burke, 2015).

Following Rakhine State's lead, the Karen National Democratic Party (KNDP) was created in February 2018 as the result of party mergers, the Kachin State Party (KSP) in August 2018, the Mon Party in August 2018, and the Kayah State Democratic Party (KSDP) in August 2017 after a merger of several ethnic-based Kaya parties (Aung 2018). The KSDP and KNP are planning to work together strategically in Kayah State to avoid direct competition and prevent voters from having to pick between two parties that represent the same ethnic community (So 2018).⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Hlaing, K. H (2022), *Myanmar's Rakhine State: Parties Split, Rebels Rise, and the Junta Schemes*, United States Institute of Peace.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Hlaing, K. H. (2022). *Myanmar's Rakhine State: Parties Split, Rebels Rise, and the Junta Schemes*. Analysis and Commentary. United States Institute of Peace.

This suggests that party elites from related ethnic groups are sharing power and making strategic decisions. The risks associated with party mergers, on the other hand, can be significant for elites and include ideological sacrifices and challenging logistical cooperation (Budge and Laver 1992; Golder 2006).

Table (4) explains the votes obtained by the result of Rakhine merged parties in comparison with other ethnic parties. Table (4) demonstrates that in the 2015 elections, the minority ethnic parties only received a relatively small number of seats in Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, Regional, and State Hluttaw. With 12 seats for Pyithu Hluttaw, 10 seats for Amyotha Hluttaw, and 22 seats for state and region Hluttaw, Arakhan National Party- ANP received the highest votes of any minority party. But not like 2015 Elections, Shan Nationalities Democratic Party- SNDP only got the second largest seats among ethnic parties, resulting 12 seats for Pyithu Hluttaw, 3 seats for Amyotha Hluttaw, and 25 seats for state and region Hluttaw.

Table 4 Seats won by the minority political parties in the 2015 general elections

Political Party	Pyithu Hluttaw	Amyotha Hluttaw	Regional and State Hluttaw
Arakhan National Party- ANP	12	10	22
Shan Nationalities Democratic Party- SNDP	12	3	25
Ta-ang National Party - TNP	3	2	7
Pa-O National Organisation, PNO	3	1	6
Zomi Congress for Democracy - ZCD	2	2	2
Lisu National Development Party - LNDP	2	0	2
Other minority ethnic parties	3	1	14
Total	37	19	79

Note: adopted from 2015 Myanmar General Election: Learning and sharing for future, Observation Report, Center for peace and conflict studies

This was most likely caused by the merging of the major political parties, which contributed to its success in garnering votes from the Rakhine people. These were the

only two of the seven ethnic minority states where ethnic political parties gained a considerable number of votes.⁸⁹

When two Rakhine ethnic parties are combined for a coalition, the ethnic minority parties do poorly, as evidenced by the SNLD cases and the extremely low seats of ethnic parties. On a national level, the election was a fight between the ND and the USDP, but in states where ethnic minorities are the majority, candidates from ethnic minority parties were prominent. It was impossible to figure out voting patterns in locations with a high concentration of ethnic minorities due to allegations that the NLD dominated these areas. In Shan State in the northeast and Arakan State in the west, respectively, the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) and Arakan National Party (ANP) gained a small number of seats.⁹⁰

4.4 Concentration of support/votes: uneven playing field with limitation on nation-wide reach

There are concerns about whether the election will help heal the nation's ethnic division. Both the claim that ethnic conflicts offer ethnic parties with rebel antecedents the social roots to retain consistent electoral support and the claim that military power boosts pro-democracy forces that benefit the NLD are made in support of these claims.

⁸⁹ Michael, F. M. (2021). *The Importance of Ethnic Minorities to Myanmar's Future*. Policy paper. STIMSON, <https://www.stimson.org/2021/the-importance-of-ethnic-minorities-to-myanmars-future/>

⁹⁰ Michael, F. M. (2021). *The Importance of Ethnic Minorities to Myanmar's Future*. Policy paper. STIMSON, <https://www.stimson.org/2021/the-importance-of-ethnic-minorities-to-myanmars-future/>

In 2015, the NLD won by a landslide that included victories in ethnically diverse areas.⁹¹ Suu Kyi's popularity persisted even among votes from ethnic minorities in 2020. Even in states where multiple ethnic parties combined to run for seats, NLD won elections. The NLD's electoral strategy and Aung San Suu Kyi were the driving forces behind its success. Daw Suu was still well-liked by the people of Myanmar despite losing her status as a democracy icon in the outside community (Liu and Kyaw 2020). The NLD ran as a multi-ethnic party and nominated ethnic candidates in areas where ethnic parties were also represented.

When ethnic voters defected from their fellow co-ethnic parties, FPTP offered the party an advantage through strategic voting. In order to compete with the NLD and the USDP, who are resource-rich and have strong institutionalization, many new parties were created for electoral objectives. Vote splitting also involved many parties with the same ethnicity. Even though these arguments can still account for the 2020 election results, they fall short of explaining why NLD support increased despite subpar performance.⁹²

As a result of NLD's overwhelming support in all states with a Bamar majority and in the majority of ethnic states, opposition parties received about 12% of all votes cast. On a national level, the USDP, the biggest opposition party, has so far gained over 20 seats in both houses of Parliament (down from 41 seats in 2015), while the UBP, PPP, and People's Party were unable to win even a single seat.

⁹¹ Mun, N. T. (2020). *The electoral system at a crossroads: The recalculation of the 2015 election results under the proportional representation system*. Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

⁹² Stokke, K. (2019). *Political Representation by Ethnic Parties? Electoral Performance and Party-Building Processes among Ethnic Parties in Myanmar*. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 38(3), 307–336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103419893530>

4.5 Limited resources as poorly-balanced Competition with National Parties

Additionally, ethnic parties lacked the organizational and financial resources to run successful campaigns and mobilize ethnic constituencies (Burke, 2015; Transnational Institute, 2015). Ethnic parties also lacked the potential to develop political alternatives.

Beyond basic identity indicators, ethnic parties are often characterized by the absence of full political platforms or explicit objectives (Stokke et al., 2015; Wells, 2018). Additionally, internal democracy and organizational strength are common weaknesses among political parties. They have a constrained ability to coordinate party activities, mobilize supporters, and serve as political representatives, with some significant outliers like the SNLD.⁹³

In spite of the deteriorating public health situation, the government and election commission were determined to proceed with the voting, which forced much of the campaigning online and barred any in-person campaigning in Rakhine State or the Yangon Region owing to stay-at-home orders. Due to its very visible government roles and the fact that Aung San Suu Kyi's Facebook page is one of the most well-known and influential in the nation, the NLD's incumbent advantage is amplified by the digital campaign.⁹⁴

No election campaigning of any type has been permitted in the seven townships of Rakhine State where the government continues to impose an internet blockade, leading one analyst to conclude that "election campaigning ended before it began."

4.6 Overall Assessment

A number of things led ethnic voters in Myanmar to choose the NLD over ethnic parties. First, ethnic minority voters still liked Aung San Suu Kyi, who is the leader of

⁹³ Stokke, K. (2019). *Political Representation by Ethnic Parties? Electoral Performance and Party-Building Processes among Ethnic Parties in Myanmar*. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 38(3), 307–336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103419893530>

the NLD. Second, the NLD said it was a party for many different ethnic groups and put up ethnic candidates in areas where ethnic parties also ran. Ethnic voters liked this strategy because they saw the NLD as a party that could serve their needs and goals. Myanmar's 2015 election helped drive a wedge between the USDP and NLD parties by setting up a political battle between the USDP's legacy of military rule and the NLD's memory of the pro-democracy movement.⁹⁵

Also, the first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting method gave the NLD an advantage when ethnic voters stopped voting for their own parties. Votes were also split because there were multiple parties for the same ethnic group, which made it harder for ethnic parties to fight with the NLD. Ethnic parties also had problems because they didn't have enough money or organization to run successful campaigns and get their people to vote. They often didn't have political plans or policies that went beyond simple ways to show who they were. On the other hand, the NLD had more means and ways to reach out to voters and act as political representatives. All of these things led ethnic voters in Myanmar to choose the NLD over ethnic parties.

Many ethnic minority places in Myanmar have a lot of Bamar people because they moved there recently or in the past. So, big national parties can win more seats in these places without the help of voters from minority groups. This lets the major parties, like the NLD and USDP,⁹⁶ compete for power at the national level by focusing their election campaigns on Bamar voters. In short, the FPTP system and the way people move around in Myanmar lead to big national parties having the most power because they can get more seats in ethnic minority places with large Bamar populations. This could change how the interests of racial minorities are represented in the parliament.

⁹⁵ Kyi W. (2015). *General knowledge about the 2015 election*, Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/346ae9j>

⁹⁶ Mun, N. T. (2020). *The electoral system at a crossroads: The recalculation of the 2015 election results under the proportional representation system*. Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

Chapter (5) FPTP electoral system, political geography and election results

5.1 Geographically concentrated populations and Concentration of support

Larger ethnic parties might have a moderate amount of success, especially if they represent geographically concentrated communities that can gain from the first-past-the-post system. Some have also attempted to improve their chances by a series of mergers, which enables them to offer voters a more consolidated and trustworthy option. Three ethnic Karen parties, for instance, as well as three Chin, three Kachin, and two Mon parties, have combined into a single organization.⁹⁷

They are running in numerous multi-ethnic constituencies, and vote splitting among various ethnic communities in a particular location might tip the scales in favor of a national party. Given its strength and the USDP's weakness, the NLD will probably be able to form a government on its own without needing the support of smaller ethnic parties, opposing the expectation of many ethnic parties that they will be able to play a kingmaker role in the parliament.⁹⁸

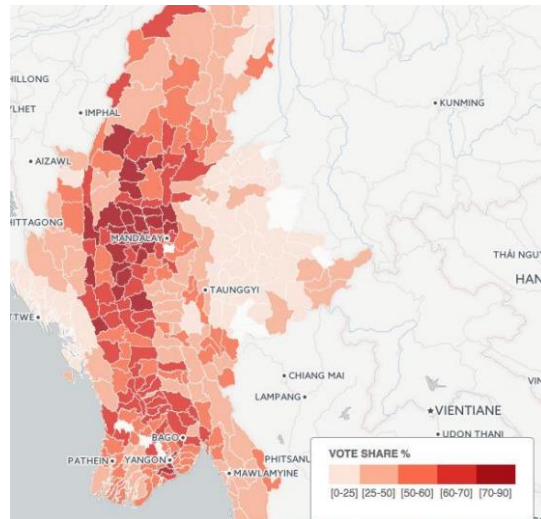


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⁹⁷ Crisis Group Asia Briefing. (2020). *Majority Rules in Myanmar's Second Democratic Election*. Yangon/Brussel, Briefing report.

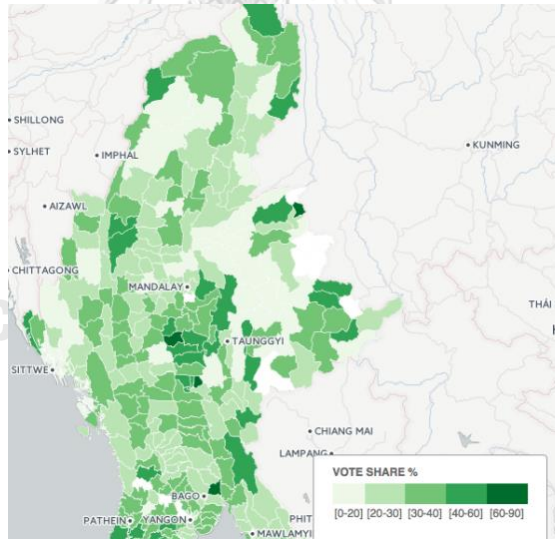
⁹⁸ Stokke, K. (2019). *Political Representation by Ethnic Parties? Electoral Performance and Party-Building Processes among Ethnic Parties in Myanmar*. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 38(3), 307–336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103419893530>

Map 1 Vote share of NLD in 2015 Elections



Source: adopted from Briefing paper on electoral system and results, 2015 General Elections of Myanmar, Democracy Reporting International Myanmar

Map 2: Vote share of USDP in 2015 Elections



Source: adopted from Briefing paper on electoral system and results, 2015 General Elections of Myanmar, Democracy Reporting International Myanmar

According to Map 1 and 2 about concentrated areas with concentration of support, Many ethnic political parties had strong support within specific ethnic communities or

regions, but they struggled to appeal to voters outside of their targeted demographics. It makes the minority parties less chance of votes with only focus on less concentrated support, instead of support from nation-wide by limiting their ability to gain widespread support across the country.

5.2 Unequal Distribution votes with constituency delimitation

In Huttaws, improper appointments are caused by an unequal distribution of voters among electoral constituencies. It reduces the impact of votes from constituencies with a large number of voters while amplifying the impact of votes from constituencies with a small number of voters.⁹⁹ Consider two electorates: constituency A has 10 voters, while Constituency B has 100. Votes from constituency A are 10 times more influential (and hence over-represented) than votes from constituency B if each constituency elects one representative to the legislature. The "one person, one vote, one value" concept of representative democracy is categorically shattered here, and this has many real-world implications.¹⁰⁰

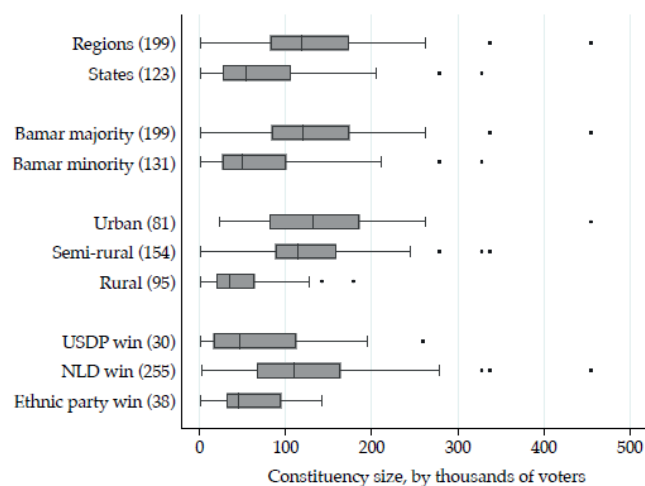
Evidence from a variety of global contexts indicates that over-represented constituencies—those with, for example, relatively fewer voters—receive a disproportionately large percentage of government spending.

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⁹⁹ Samuels, D., & Snyder, R. (2001). *The Value of a Vote: Malapportionment in Comparative Perspective*. *British Journal of Political Science*, 31(4), 651–671.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3593296>

¹⁰⁰ Daxecker, U. (2020). *Unequal votes, unequal violence: Malapportionment and election violence in India*. *Journal of Peace Research*, 57(1), 156–170.

Figure 2 Constituency-level variation in the number of votes on Key dimension (In lower House)



Source: adopted from Briefing paper on electoral system and results, 2015 General Elections of Myanmar, Democracy Reporting International Myanmar

The numbers in brackets next to the category indicate the number of constituencies inside that category, according to Figure (2) to explain constituencies delimitation. The first cluster contrasts state and regional constituencies. The second cluster contrasts constituencies with Bamar majorities and minorities. Comparing voter density categories is done in the third cluster.¹⁰¹ This is significant to malapportionment since electoral systems frequently overrepresent rural areas with sparse populations, especially in developing nations where a lack of infrastructure may make it difficult for representatives to interact with their voters. We divide the world into three major categories: urban, semi-rural, and rural areas because this is our main concern.¹⁰²

The final cluster contrasts the districts won by the USDP, the NLD, and other ethnic parties. Again, a few observations are notable. The constituencies in the (Bamar-

¹⁰¹ 2015 General Elections of Myanmar (2015), Briefing paper on electoral system and results, Democracy Reporting International Myanmar

¹⁰² Democracy Reporting International Myanmar (2015), *2015 General Elections of Myanmar*. Briefing paper on electoral system and results,

minority) states are, on average, much smaller than those in the (Bamar-majority) areas, as the high-level indicators.¹⁰³

5.3 Geographic concentration and Discrepancy of votes & seat shares

The degree to which votes are converted into seats is affected by the FPTP system. The fact that parties obtaining a majority of the vote frequently get larger seat shares than their vote shares, while other parties are hurt by FPTP and gain smaller seat than vote shares, should have been obvious to the military.

Malapportionment is the difference in the proportions of parliamentary seats held by each constituency's population. It is crucial to take into account since the wide disparity in voter turnout among constituencies compromises both the integrity of democratic elections and the equality of votes. Given the lack of a detailed ethno-demographic breakdown of voters in each constituency, one way to evaluate the influence of electoral geography is to take into account the distribution of voters per electoral seat or the deviation from the electoral quotient (the average number of voters per elected legislative seat).¹⁰⁴

The value of votes in under-populated constituencies is greater than the value of votes in over-populated constituencies, hence distribution has an impact on political inequality. As a result of their underrepresentation in the legislature, voters from overpopulated seats suffer (Monroe 1994; Grofman et al. 1997).¹⁰⁵

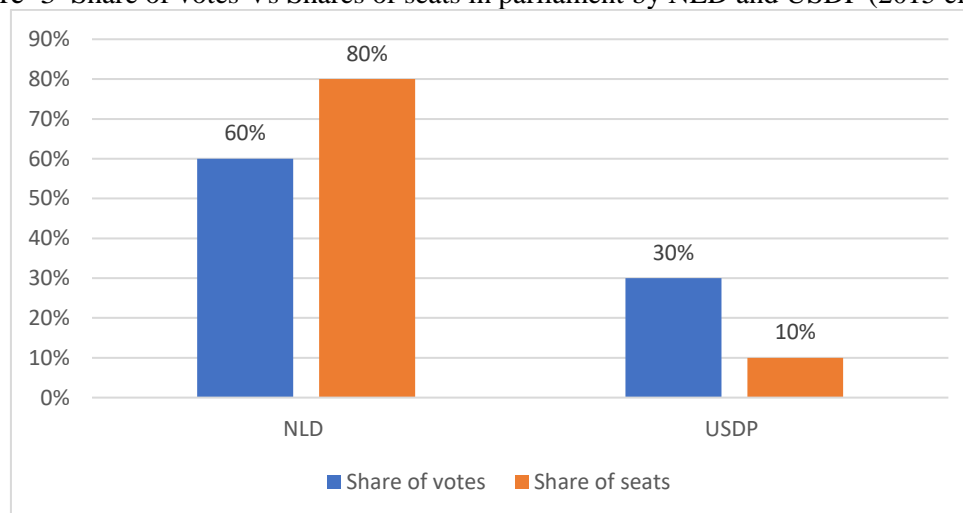
¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Samuels, D., & Snyder, R. (2001). *The Value of a Vote: Malapportionment in Comparative Perspective*. *British Journal of Political Science*, 31(4), 651–671. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3593296>

¹⁰⁵ Taagepera, R., & Grofman, B. (2003). *Mapping the Indices of Seats–Votes Disproportionality and Inter-Election Volatility*. *Party Politics*, 9(6), 659–677. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688030096001>

Figure (3), which displays the vote and seat shares of the NLD and USDP in the 2015 elections, illustrates this. Higher ratios indicate that parties received a greater proportion of seats than votes.

Figure 3 Share of votes Vs Shares of seats in parliament by NLD and USDP (2015 election)



Source: adopted from Briefing paper on electoral system and results, General Elections of Myanmar, Democracy Reporting International Myanmar

In Myanmar's highly malapportioned constituencies, if ethnic party leaders are strategic in co-ordinating the division of electoral constituencies to prevent multi-cornered fights and vote splitting, small ethnic parties may still benefit and win, as long as they are contesting in underpopulated, ethnically concentrated constituencies. Ethnic parties will require a smaller margin of victory than in an overpopulated area because there will be fewer opponents and a more concentrated support base.¹⁰⁶

The parties that represent ethnic minorities concentrated in particular locations are the exceptions to this rule, and they may wind up gaining more seats than vote shares

¹⁰⁶ Tan, N., P, C. (2020). *Electoral System, Ethnic Parties, and Party System Stability in Myanmar*. *Eur J Dev Res* 32, 431–456 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-020-00264-1>

because their geographically concentrated voter bases make them competitive in these regions. Even the limited experience of the Myanmar elections demonstrates that the FPTP system mainly performed as expected.

5.4 Assessment on the results of 2015 and 2020 elections

2015 Elections

Table (5) clearly indicates that the significant majority numbers of seats by NLD and USDP as the second.

In analyzing the number of seats (Table 5), NLD holds 135 of the 224 seats in the upper house and 255 of 440 seats in the lower house which gave a total of 390 seats in both houses. Both of these results were a major victory, with the party forming a majority by itself in the parliament.

On the other hand, the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USD) won 11 seats in the upper house and 30 seats in the lower house, which gave a total of 41 seats in both houses, a significant reduction from its 342 seats before the election.¹⁰⁷

Table 5: Number/Percentage of the votes and seats won by NLD and USDP in 2015 elections

	Upper House			Lower House		
	Percentage of votes	Number of seats	Percentage of seats	Percentage of votes	Number of seats	Percentage of seats
NLD	57.68%	135	80.36%	57.20%	255	78.95%
USDP	28.37%	11	6.55%	28.33%	30	9.29%

Note: compiled by the author based on announcements from the Union Election Commission (<http://uec.myanmar.org/>)

¹⁰⁷ Nakanishi, Y. (2016), *2015 General Election: Historic Victory for the National league for democracy*, IDE-JETRO

In analyzing the NLD and USDP data in percentage, Table (5) shows the majority seat data of USDP and NLD in percentage. While the NLD's percentage of the vote was 57.68% and 57.20% for the upper house and the lower house respectively, the party gained 80.36% for the upper house and 78.95% of the seats the lower house, respectively.¹⁰⁸

It can be seen that the NLD gained many seats relative to its percentage of the votes. Taken together, these results give the NLD a total of 290 seats (58.7%) in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, the combined upper and lower houses of parliament which votes to determine the president after the upper, lower, and military blocs nominate one candidate each.

On the other hand, while the USDP's percentage of the vote was 28.37% and 28.33% respectively, the party gained 6.55% and 9.29% of the seats (see Table 5). USDP party which is NLD's main rival has a drastic drop by its number of seats in upper and lower houses.

2020 elections

The results were officially released on November 14 2020, with the NLD winning 396 (out of 476) seats in the Union Parliament (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw) as per Table (6).

In analyzing the NLD and USDP data in percentage, Table (6) shows the majority seat data of USDP and NLD in percentage. While the NLD's percentage of the seat was 85.70% and 81.90% for the upper house and the lower house respectively.

¹⁰⁸ Yoshihiro, N. & Noriyuki, O. (2016). *The 2015 Myanmar General Election: A Historic Victory for the National League for Democracy*. Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Kyoto University. Current Affairs Studies Group. Area Studies Center.

It can be seen that the NLD gained many seats relative to its percentage of the votes. Taken together, these results give the NLD a total of 396 seats in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, the combined upper and lower houses of parliament which votes to determine the president after the upper, lower, and military blocs nominate one candidate each.¹⁰⁹

On the other hand, while the USDP's percentage of the seat was 4.35% for upper house and 8.25% for lower house respectively (see Table 6). USDP party which is NLD's main rival has a drastic drop by its number of seats in upper and lower houses.

Table 6 Number/Percentage of the votes and seats won by NLD and USDP in 2020 elections

	Upper House		Lower House	
	Number of seats	Percentage of seats	Number of seats	Percentage of seats
NLD	138	85.70%	258	81.90%
USDP	7	4.35%	26	8.25%

Source: global new light of Myanmar

State Hluttaw data analysis

While looking at (Table 7) about the cumulative seat allocation for the local Assemblies, it does provide the seat allocation of each individual Assembly. Nationwide, the NLD won 496 local Assembly seats while the USDP won 76 seats,

¹⁰⁹ Huang, K. (2022). *Myanmar's 2020 Election: Explaining the Strong Performance of the NLD and Some Ethnic Parties*. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 22(2), 309-331. doi:10.1017/jea.2022.10

the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) won 25 seats, and the Arakan National Party won 23 seats.¹¹⁰

Table 7 Number of seats in Region and State Hluttaw by NLD, USDP, SNLD and ANP in 2015 elections

Region and State Hluttaw	
	Number of seats
NLD	496
USDP	76
SNLD	25
ANP	23
Other	39

Note: adopted from General and Local election of Myanmar 2015, ASIAN NETWORK for FREE ELECTIONS (ANFREL) FOUNDATION, Election observation mission report

Several other ethnic parties won a single digit number of seats in their local contests, a total surely pushed down by the NLD's ambitious plan to field candidates nationwide, rather than dividing territory with ethnic parties as some of their leaders had hoped before the election. Total number of seats by other minority parties is results as only 39 seats.

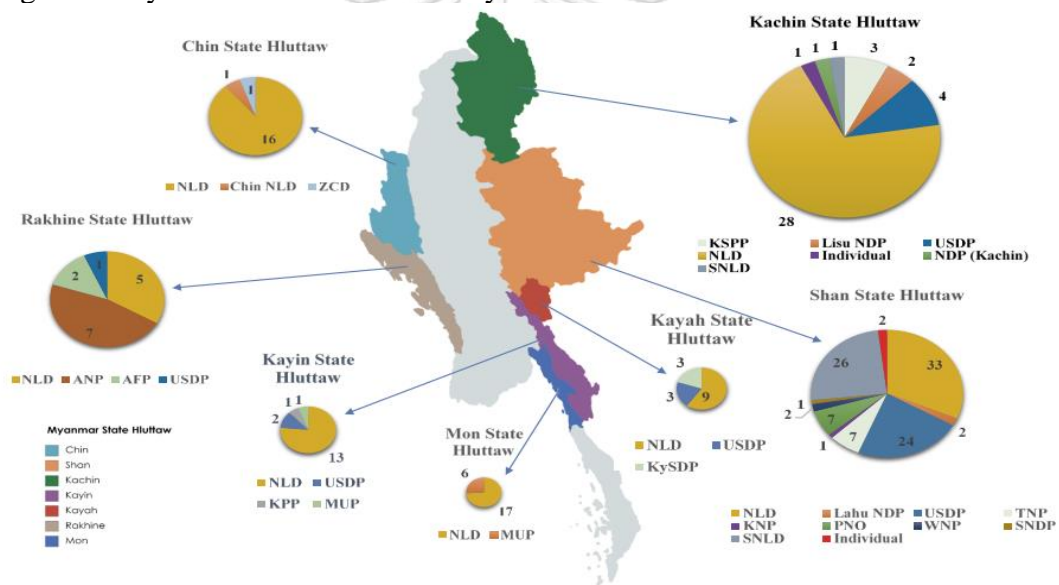
The NLD's national level electoral success was mirrored in most of the local assembly contests as well. According to the Table (7), the party won absolute majorities in all seven Region Assemblies and three of the State Assemblies, while winning electoral majorities in two others. The exceptions to the NLD's control of

¹¹⁰ Yoshihiro, N. & Noriyuki, O. (2016). *The 2015 Myanmar General Election: A Historic Victory for the National League for Democracy*. Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Kyoto University. Current Affairs Studies Group. Area Studies Center.

local Assemblies are in Rakhine, where the Arakan National Party won a majority, and Shan State, where the military and the USDP, if they coalition together, will hold a majority of seats.¹¹¹

The figure (4) shows NLD dominance in the seat composition in state Hluttaws of ethnic states. NLD took the 16 seats in Chin state Hluttaw while ZCD and Chin NLD possess only 1 seat respectively. In Kayin Hluttaw, NLD won the majority of votes by taking 13 seats, USDP with 2 seats, KPP with 1 seat and MUP with 1 seat. Mon state Hluttaw's seats are belonged mostly by NLD with 17 seats and MUP owns only 6 seats.¹¹²The seat composition of Kayah state Hluttaw occupied by NLD with 9 seats at highest, USDP and KYSDP received 3 places in Hluttaw accordingly.

Figure 4 Myanmar State Hluttaw Party-wise 2020 General Election results



¹¹¹ Yoshihiro, N. & Noriyuki, O. (2016). *The 2015 Myanmar General Election: A Historic Victory for the National League for Democracy*. Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Kyoto University. Current Affairs Studies Group. Area Studies Center.

¹¹² Yoshihiro, N. & Noriyuki, O. (2016). *The 2015 Myanmar General Election: A Historic Victory for the National League for Democracy*. Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Kyoto University. Current Affairs Studies Group. Area Studies Center.

Note: figure designed by authors from open-source information, Myanmar Election 2022 Analysis, Delhi Policy Group

In Shan state Hluttaw, NLD dominantly won the 33 seats as the largest amount while SNLD follows as the second largest amount of seats with 26 places. USDP possessed the 24 seats as the third largest amount. The other shan ethnic parties either only took small amount of places or single seat for Hluttaw (TNP-7, PNO - 7, WNP-2, Lahu NDP -2, KNP-1, SNDP-1, Individual-2). In Kachin state hluttaw, NLD took the majority of seats with 28 places. Only the small amount of ethnic parties are placed for taking seats: KSPP – 3, SNLD- 1, Lisu NDP -2, Individual- 1 and USDP received 4 seats (figure 4).¹¹³

While NLD took the majority of seats in the State Hluttaw of ethnic minority states, only Rakhine state Hluttaw is significant by the Rakhine ethnic political party with majority of seats by 7 places. Then NLD followed by taking 5 seats as second largest amount, AFP with 2 seats and USDP with 1 seat.

5.5 Overall Assessment

Myanmar's first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting method helps people who live in close proximity to each other. The FPTP system can help ethnic parties that reflect geographically concentrated groups of people. This means that an ethnic party has a better chance of winning an election in a certain region or district if it has a lot of supporters there. The party that gets the most votes in a constituency wins under the FPTP method. So, an ethnic party has a better chance of getting a seat in parliament if it can get most of its votes from a certain area.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Naw Gladys Maung Maung. (2020), Getting ready for the 2020 election: Ways to improve the campaign strategies of ethnic political parties in Myanmar. Yangon.

¹¹⁴ Tan, N., P, C. (2020). *Electoral System, Ethnic Parties, and Party System Stability in Myanmar*. Eur J Dev Res 32, 431–456 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-020-00264-1>

In Myanmar, the way that multi-ethnic districts are made up affects the chances of ethnic parties at the polls. When different ethnic groups in a certain place split their votes, it can tip the scales in favor of a national party. In these areas, where people from more than one ethnic group live, the support for a single ethnic party may be split between different groups, which lowers the party's chances of winning overall. This can be good for national parties that can get support from people of different races.

Myanmar's ethnic parties have used a variety of methods to improve their reputation and chances of winning elections. Some ethnic parties, like AND and SNLD, have tried to improve their chances by merging with other parties. This makes them look more united and trustworthy to voters. Many of the areas where they are running are made up of people from different ethnic groups, and if the votes of these different groups are split, it can help a national party win.

Chapter (6) FPTP electoral system and Mal-appointment

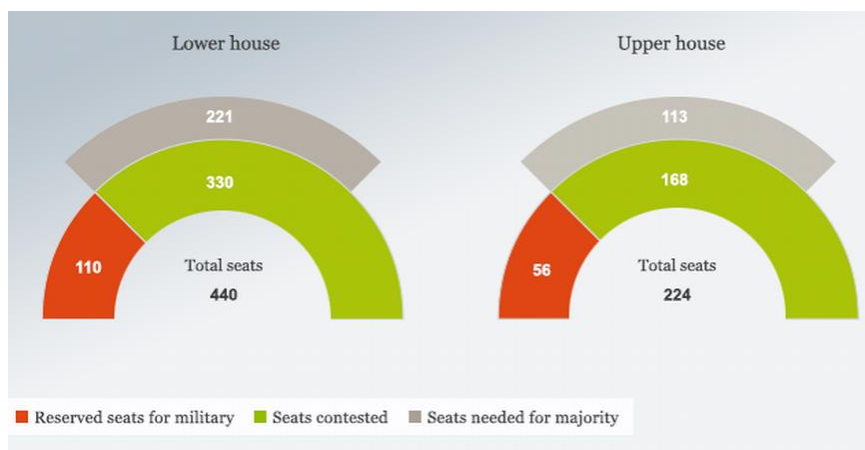
6.1 Seat composition in Parliaments by 2008 Constitution

There are 1,171 seats up for election at the national, regional and state levels. At the national

level, the Assembly of the Union (Pyihtaungsu Hluttaw)— the national-level legislature of Myanmar – is made up of two bodies: the House of Nationalities (a 224-seat upper house, Amyotha Hluttaw) and the House of Representatives (a 440-seat lower house, Pyithu Hluttaw).¹¹⁵ Three quarters (498) of the national seats in each House are filled through elections; the remaining seats (166) are filled by army representatives selected by the Commander-in-Chief, as enshrined in the 2008 Constitution (Figure 5).

¹¹⁵ Hluttaw Brochure Working Group. (2017). *The Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Hluttaw Brochure*. Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Figure 5 Seat Composition of Parliaments



Source: adopted from report by DW: Suu Kyi's NLD surges ahead, 10.11.2015,
<https://www.dw.com/en/eu-says-myanmar-elections-run-better-than-expected-as-suu-kyis-nld-surges-ahead/a-18838034>

At the regional level, elections will take place in the 14 major administrative regions and states, and altogether, 644 regular seats and 29 for ethnic minorities will be contested. Myanmar is divided into 21 administrative subdivisions (by state, region, union territory, self-administered zone, self-administered division). Members will be elected to the 14 administrative areas, i.e. seven regions and seven states, each with their own Assembly (Region Hluttaw or State Hluttaw). Once elected, parliamentarians will also be involved in the Leading Body in self-administered zones and divisions. (see map 3)¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Hluttaw Brochure Working Group. (2017). *The Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Hluttaw Brochure*. Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Map 3 : Administrative Map of Myanmar



Source from Asia: Myanmar, D-maps.com, http://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=35249&lang=en

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The regions – Ayeyarwady, Bago, Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing, Tanintharyi and Yangon – are predominantly ethnically Bamar. The states – Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine and Shan – on the other hand, have higher proportions of non-Bamar ethnic populations.¹¹⁷

The NLD dominates in the state and regional assemblies as well except in Rakhine State and Shan State. The Arakan National Party (ANP) has the most number of seats

¹¹⁷ Hluttaw Brochure Working Group. (2017). *The Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Hluttaw Brochure*. Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

in the Rakhine State parliament. It is worth noting that the number of single-ethnic parties is larger (17) at the state and regional level than at the national level (10).¹¹⁸

6.2 Constitution composition – Township based is the challenge

The significant variation in constituency sizes was a significant issue with the electoral process. The largest electoral seat in Myanmar had 322 times more eligible voters than the smallest one, based on townships rather than population size. Because of this, voters in smaller seats were greatly overrepresented, which tainted the outcome of the election.

Each township serves as an electoral constituency for the Pyithu Hluttaw's elected seats, which are based on single-member districts. Twelve seats are allocated evenly among the states and regions for the Amyotha Hluttaw's elected seats. Townships or, when a State/Region has more than 12 townships, townships and districts, serve as the foundation for electoral districts. Each of the Self-Administered Zones chooses one Amyotha Hluttaw representative.¹¹⁹

Each seat is awarded based on a simple majority. A total of 1,142 seats were up for grabs in Myanmar's elections, with 498 seats contested at the national level and the remainder in the state and regional Hluttaws. An impressive 91 political parties fielded over 6,000 candidates countrywide, with nearly half (2,619) contesting seats in the national Parliament. The NLD secured 79% of the seats in the Parliament, significantly more than most analysts expected. The party won 135 seats in the Amyotha Hluttaw and 255 seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw. With a combined 390 seats in

¹¹⁸ Hlaing, K. H. (2022), *Myanmar's Rakhine State: Parties Split, Rebels Rise, and the Junta Schemes*, United States Institute of Peace.

¹¹⁹ Hluttaw Brochure Working Group. (2017). *The Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Hluttaw Brochure*. Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, the NLD secured the ability to pass legislation as well as elect a vice-president and Myanmar's next president.¹²⁰

Although the NLD received 57% of the popular vote, they won 79% of the seats. By contrast, despite having 28% of the vote, the USDP won just 9% of seats in the bicameral legislature. This discrepancy represents a stunning 390 seats to 41. In other words, with only two times the vote share of the USDP, the NLD won nine and a half times more seats.

Myanmar is a country with a diversified racial and linguistic makeup (Smith 1994, p. 17). Four alternative institutional representations of ethnic identities have existed since 2008: ethnic states, self-administered regions, ethnic affairs ministers, and constituencies won by ethnic parties. Geographically, the nation is divided into seven Regions in the center region, where the Bamar ethnic majority population predominates, and seven States in the borderlands, where ethnic minority groups dominate.¹²¹

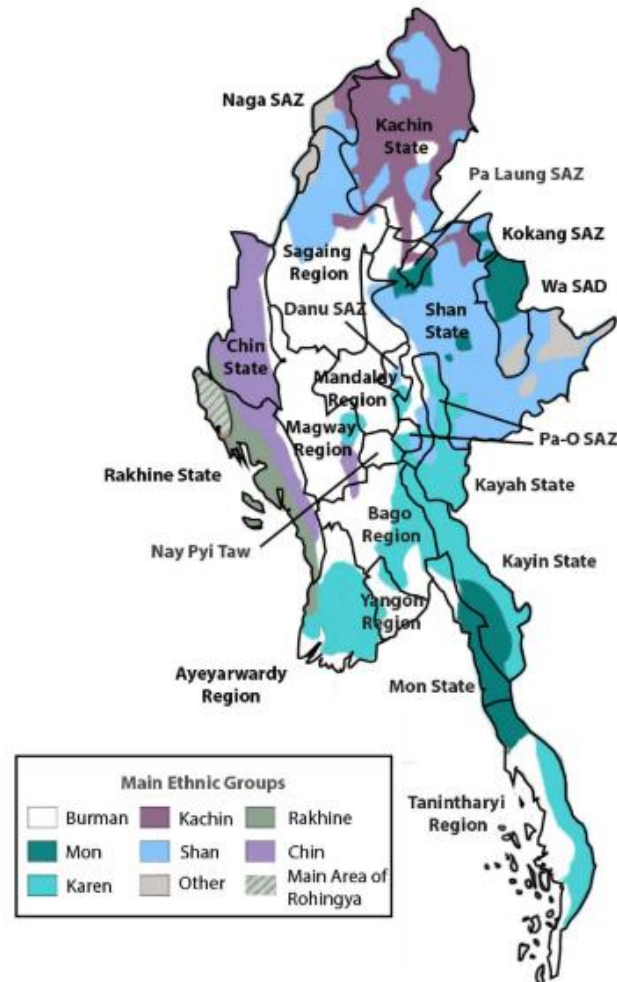
As Map (4) shows, the 2008 Constitution created six Self-Administered Zones/Districts (SAZ/SAD) for the smaller ethnic groups considered minorities within a State or Region, which have a majority within specific townships (Jolliffe 2015).

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¹²⁰ Hluttaw Brochure Working Group. (2017). *The Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Hluttaw Brochure*. Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

¹²¹ Jack L. Walker. (1966). *A Critique of the Elitist Theory of Democracy*, *The American Political Science Review* 60, No. 2: 295.

Map 4 : Regions, States and distribution of ethnic groups in Myanmar



Source: map recreated by authors based on sources from Smith (1999), Electoral System, Ethnic Parties, and Party System Stability in Myanmar. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-020-00264-1>

There are now self-administered zones or districts for the Wa, Kokang, Naga, Pa-O, Palaung and Danu (Saw and Arnold 2014). The dominant ethnic minority groups, including Kachins, Arakanese, Kayin, Mons and Shan, are categorized and located in

the regionally-based or geographically-concentrated ethnic States.¹²²All these ethnic groups have at least one ethnic party that has contested elections since 1990. As this study shows, the geographic concentration of voters has a direct impact on the electoral fortunes of ethnic parties.¹²³For example, the two largest ethnic-based parties, the ANP in Rakhine and the SNLD in Shan, benefited significantly from the concentration of their voter base in 2015 (TNI 2015b, p. 13)¹²⁴

The Amyotha Hluttaw's members are currently chosen using a hybrid method. In the upper chamber, each State and Region is entitled to 16 representatives. The people directly elect 12 representatives using a first-past-the-post voting system based on townships. One representative from each of the distinct status zones is elected in sub-units with self-administered zones. The most populated townships in States and Regions with fewer than 12 townships are divided into two constituencies. For instance, Kayin State has just 7 townships.

There are two constituencies in each of the top five most populous townships. Instead of representing the voters of their whole Region or State, elected members of the upper house act largely as representatives of the voters in the townships from which they were chosen.

6.3 Inequality of votes by population size

Each seat represents an electoral constituency of a number of eligible voters or a given population. Each constituency must have roughly the same number of electors (registered voters) or residents in order for their votes to have roughly the same "weight" nationally. This is required under the equality of the vote.¹²⁵

¹²² Hluttaw Brochure Working Group. (2017). *The Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Hluttaw Brochure*. Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

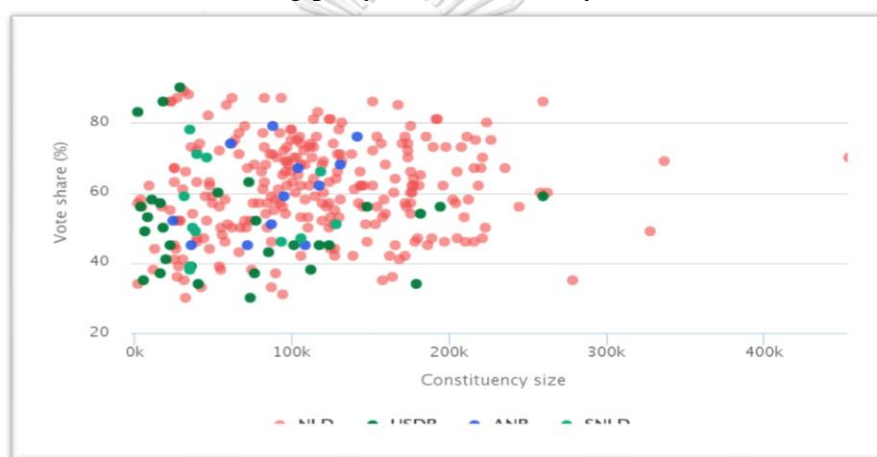
¹²³ Tan, N., P, C. (2020). *Electoral System, Ethnic Parties, and Party System Stability in Myanmar*. *Eur J Dev Res* 32, 431–456 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-020-00264-1>

¹²⁴ Ibid. Pp. 431–456.

¹²⁵ Hluttaw Brochure Working Group. (2017). *The Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Hluttaw Brochure*. Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

In Myanmar's 2015 elections, however, there was a large inequality of the vote because constituencies varied considerably in size. On the election roll for each constituency, there were 106,176 eligible voters. The number of voters ranged from 1,408 in the smallest constituency (Inja Yan Township) to 453,307 in the largest constituency (Hlaing Tharyar Township). Votes cast in Inja Yan Township therefore had a 322-times greater impact than votes cast in Hlaing Tharyar. Determining electoral seats based on townships, each of which have wildly different populations and voter figures, results in these enormous discrepancies.

Figure 6 Vote share of winning party Vs Constituency size (Hluttaw Results)



Source: adopted from Briefing paper on electoral system and results, 2015 General Elections of Myanmar, Democracy Reporting International Myanmar

According to the Figure (6), the results indicate that despite the significant variation in constituency sizes, this did not play against or in favour of any party. This is shown in the chart. Of the smallest 32 constituencies (the bottom 10%) in the Pyithu Hluttaw both the NLD and the USDP swept nearly half of the seats, winning 12 each, whereas in the largest 32 constituencies (the top 10%), the NLD won all seats but one.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Hluttaw Brochure Working Group. (2017). *The Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Hluttaw Brochure*. Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

6.4 Disproportionate Representation: Lack of Proportionality in vote share and seat share

A common critique of FPTP is disproportionality and how it rewards larger, established parties.

The absolute difference between the total percentage of votes for and the total percentage of seats won by the party with the largest overrepresentation determines the degree of disproportionality. Overall, the disproportionality is very low, demonstrating that Myanmar's FPTP system does convert votes into seats.

This indicates that despite the criticism of FPTP's disproportionality and concerns about the biggest parties winning every seat under the winner-takes-all system, disproportionality is not a major stress in Myanmar. This conclusion indicates that FPTP in Myanmar does not adversely affect tiny ethnic parties as much as anticipated.

The plurality system, also referred to as first-past-the-post (FPTP), and its "winner's bonus" are the main causes of the disparity between the percentage of votes cast for each party and the number of seats gained. This disparity occurs under FPTP since a party only needs to win a constituency with a plurality of votes, or one more vote than the party in second place.

For instance, in a two-party race, the party with 51% of the vote in each constituency would win 100% of the seats, regardless of the party with 49% of the vote in second place. It is not intended to minimize the NLD's electoral achievement by highlighting the winner's bonus from which the party benefited. 196 of the 255 seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw that the NLD gained were obtained by absolute majorities. The NLD's vote distribution is quite effective, as evidenced by an analysis of its vote share throughout all constituencies.¹²⁷ The breakdown of seats versus vote share for both houses is shown in Tables 8 and 9.

¹²⁷ Huang. K. P (2020), *Myanmar 's 2020 election: Explaining the strong performance of the NLD and some ethnic parties*, Journal of East Asian Studies, National Taiwan University, Taipei City

Table 8 Votes vs Seats in Amyotha Hluttaw (2015 Elections)

Party	Vote Share	Seats	Seat share
National League for Democracy- NLD	58%	135	80%
Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	28%	11	7%
Arakan National Party (ANP)	2.2%	10	6%
Shan National Party (TPNP)	1.6%	3	2%
Ta-Ang (Palau) National Party (TPNP)	0.41%	2	1%
Pao National Organization (PNO)	0.70%	1	1%
Zomi Congress for Democracy Party (ZCDP)	0.6%	2	0.5%
Mon National Party (MNP)	1.88%	1	1%

Source: adopted the data from book by NAKANISHI Yoshihiro, *The 2015 Myanmar General Election: A Historic Victory for the National League for Democracy*, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, March 2016

According to Table (8), NLD keeps the 80% of seat for Pyithu Hluttaw and 58% votes of share while USDP only obtain 7% of seat though it has 28% of total votes. Fragmentation and vote splitting played a role by the small ethnic parties by the results.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Yoshihiro, N. & Noriyuki, O. (2016). *The 2015 Myanmar General Election: A Historic Victory for the National League for Democracy*. Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Kyoto University. Current Affairs Studies Group. Area Studies Center

Table 9 Votes vs Seats in Pyithu Hluttaw (2015 Elections)

Party	Vote Share	Seats	Seat share
National League for Democracy- NLD	57.2%	255	79%
Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	28.3%	30	9%
Arakan National Party (ANP)	2.2%	12	4%
Shan National Party (TPNP)	1.6%	12	4%
Ta-Ang (Palau) National Party (TPNP)	0.4%	3	1%
Pao National Organization (PNO)	1%	3	1%
Zomi Congress for Democracy Party (ZCDP)	0.1%	2	1%
Lisu National Development Party (LNDP)	0.1%	2	1%
Kachin State Development Party (KSDP)	0.1%	1	0%
Kokang Democracy and Unity Party (KDUP)	0.1%	1	0%
Wa Democractic Party (WDP)	0.04%	1	0%

Source: adopted the data from book by NAKANISHI Yoshihiro, *The 2015 Myanmar General Election: A Historic Victory for the National League for Democracy*, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, March 2016

According to Table (9), NLD keeps the 79% of seat for Pyithu Hluttaw and 57% votes of share while USDP only obtain 9% of seat though it has 28% of total votes.¹²⁹ Fragmentation and vote splitting played a role in these results. For example, states like Kachin saw as many as 12 different candidates competing in one constituency,

¹²⁹ Yoshihiro, N. & Noriyuki, O. (2016). *The 2015 Myanmar General Election: A Historic Victory for the National League for Democracy*. Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Kyoto University. Current Affairs Studies Group. Area Studies Center

spreading voters across ethnic parties of all stripes and making it easier for national-level parties to win constituencies with relatively few votes.¹³⁰

At the same time, the NLD won 57 seats overall and 20 of them with absolute majorities, securing impressive vote shares even in a number of ethnic areas. The NLD's policy of running local candidates who are in line with ethnic identities and the public's preference for a national party that can more effectively implement changes may have contributed significantly to its electoral victory in these regions. The desire for voters to back the opposition party in order to oppose the ruling class may possibly have contributed to the NLD's rise.

The results make clear that some ethnic parties benefited more than others from the current voting system. Because the bulk of their votes were geographically concentrated, the Arakan National Party (ANP) and the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) benefited from the FPTP system, earning them more seats in the Parliament than their proportion of the popular vote. Similar ethnic candidates who, combined, would have won the seat over the national-level party elsewhere received a split of the vote.¹³¹

6.5 Overall Assessment

In the 2015 elections in Myanmar, the votes were very different because the sizes of the districts were so different. There may be an uneven number of voters and people

¹³⁰ Mun, N. T. (2020). *The electoral system at a crossroads: The recalculation of the 2015 election results under the proportional representation system*. Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

¹³¹ International Crisis Group. (2020). *Liberalisation and Ethno-nationalism*. In *Identity Crisis: Ethnicity and Conflict in Myanmar*. Pp. 9-12.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep31436.6>

in each constituency, which could lead to an uneven number of votes based on population growth.¹³²

In Myanmar's election system, the fact that seats are divided up by region is seen as a problem. Because of the big difference in the sizes of districts based on townships instead of population size, voters in smaller constituencies are significantly overrepresented.¹³³ This has led to voters in smaller constituencies having more power than voters in bigger constituencies, which has an unfair effect on how elections turn out. This means that the way seats are divided up based on townships may not exactly reflect how the people live, which can lead to an uneven amount of representation.

Because of this, voters in smaller constituencies have been overrepresented, giving them more power than voters in bigger constituencies. This difference in the size of constituencies can lead to a difference in how they are represented.¹³⁴

Chapter (7) Lack of inclusive representation and Human security

7.1 Marginalization for political representation by FPTP and and Discrimination against the civil and political rights of ethnic minorities

As for Myanmar, the first-past-the-post system determines that the two major parties, NLD and USDP, must take the middle road to attract more voters, increase their advantages and expand their ticket bunker, so as to maintain political stability in Myanmar. Due to the first-past-the-post system, Myanmar's ethnic political parties suffer from the difficulties of Duverger, which reduces the representativeness and

¹³² Mun, N. T. (2020). *The electoral system at a crossroads: The recalculation of the 2015 election results under the proportional representation system*. Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

¹³³ Lijphart, A. & Reynold, A. (ed.) (2002). *The Wave of Power-sharing Democracy. Architecture of Democracy: Constitutional Design, Conflict Management, and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.37-54.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.37-54.

enthusiasm of ethnic minorities and minority groups.¹³⁵ Because smaller parties have fewer chances to win and influence policy, voters turn to stronger parties, a phenomenon known as the "strategic vote." The minority political parties are too weak to compete with the national political parties and can only take the path of alliance or integration.

Under the FPTP system, political parties that enjoy concentrated support in specific regions or constituencies have a higher chance of winning seats in the legislature. In Myanmar, this system contributed to the dominance of the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, in the 2010 2015 and 2020 elections.

As per the data of Table (10), ethnic parties only obtained very few percentages of seats by 15% in 2010, 11% in 2015 and 10% in 2020. The NLD won a significant majority of seats, especially in regions with large ethnic Burman populations.

Table 10 Ethnic minority representation in three elections of Myanmar

	2010	2015	2020
Ethnic Parties who contested	24	55	54
Ethnic Parties who won seats	13	10	11
% available seats won	15%	11%	10%

Source: data are adopted from Myanmar Policy Briefing Paper by Transnational Institute, 2020 General Elections Myanmar, December 2020

¹³⁵ International Crisis Group. (2020). *A Legacy of Division. In Identity Crisis: Ethnicity and Conflict in Myanmar*. Pp. 4-8. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep31436.5>

Myanmar has had a complex political history, and its transition to democracy has been challenging. The country was under military rule from 1962 to 2011, during which time it experienced political repression and isolation from the international community.¹³⁶

In 2011, the military government initiated a series of political reforms that led to a transition toward a civilian government. This process included the release of political prisoners, the relaxation of media censorship, and the holding of general elections. In 2015, Myanmar held its first open general elections in over two decades, which resulted in a victory for the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

However, despite the democratic progress, the military retained significant power and influence in Myanmar's political system. The 2008 constitution, drafted by the military junta, reserved 25% of the seats in parliament for unelected military representatives. It also granted the military control over key ministries and security institutions.

While majoritarian electoral systems can provide stability by producing clear winners and strong governing majorities, they can also lead to political tensions and potential instability. In the case of Myanmar, the dominance of the NLD in the 2015 and 2020 elections, combined with the military's retention of significant power, created a polarized political landscape.¹³⁷ The military, which had reservations about the growing influence of the NLD, alleged voter fraud in the 2020 elections and used it as a pretext to stage a coup.

While the electoral system itself may not directly determine the protection of civil and political rights, it can have an impact on the overall democratic framework and the extent to which these rights are safeguarded. Myanmar is a country with diverse

¹³⁶ Kurlantzick, J. (2012), *How Myanmar Changed and What It Means*, Expert Brief.

¹³⁷ Maung, N.G.M. (2020). *Getting ready for the 2020 election: Ways to improve the campaign strategies of ethnic political parties in Myanmar*. Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

ethnic and religious communities. The FPTP electoral system tends to favor majority groups and can lead to the marginalization of minority voices and interests. This can result in the limited protection of civil and political rights for minority communities, including their right to representation, cultural preservation, and equal participation in the political process.¹³⁸ The lack of protection of ethnic minority rights can lead to grievances, conflicts, and human rights abuses.

FPTP systems tend to favor majority groups, potentially marginalizing minority voices. In Myanmar, where there is significant ethnic diversity, the majoritarian electoral system could result in limited representation and recognition of minority rights. This can lead to discrimination, exclusion, and a weakening of civil and political rights for minority communities.

In Myanmar, according to data of 2015 and 2020 elections, NLD secures a majority of seats often gains significant power, sometimes leading to a concentration of power in the hands of a few. This concentration of power can undermine checks and balances, limit political competition, and weaken the protection of civil and political rights. It is essential to have robust institutional safeguards to prevent abuse of power and ensure the protection of rights for minorities.

The concentration of power which is controlled by the dominant party can weaken accountability mechanisms. When a dominant single party holds significant power, there may be less effective checks and balances on government actions, which can lead to a lack of accountability for human rights abuses and corruption. This undermines the protection of civil and political rights by impeding mechanisms to hold elected officials accountable for their actions.

Due to the data of minority's seat in parliaments of Myanmar, FPTP system tends to discourage smaller parties or independent candidates from gaining representation, as

¹³⁸ Lublin, D. (2014). *Majoritarian Electoral Systems, Minority Rules: Electoral Systems, Decentralization, and Ethnoregional Party Success*. American University Washington D.C. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199948826.003.0002>

they are less likely to win seats. This can reduce political pluralism and limit the range of choices available to voters. When political participation is limited, it can hinder the protection of civil and political rights by impeding diverse voices and perspectives from being heard. Limited representation and political power can result in the neglect of minority rights, including their cultural preservation, access to resources, and equal participation in decision-making processes.¹³⁹ When minority rights are not adequately protected, violations can occur with impunity, and accountability mechanisms may be weak or ineffective. This can include issues such as land rights, cultural preservation, access to education, and political participation.

Due to the lack of inclusive participation in Parliament, ethnic minority communities in Myanmar have experienced systemic discrimination and inequality. The majoritarian system may not adequately address these issues and can perpetuate the unequal treatment of ethnic minorities. Ethnic minority communities in Myanmar have faced restricted access to resources, including land, natural resources, and economic opportunities. Land confiscation, displacement, and unequal distribution of resources have disproportionately affected ethnic minority groups. The lack of control and ownership over resources has perpetuated their marginalization and economic disadvantage.¹⁴⁰

Ethnic minority communities have rich cultural traditions, languages, and identities that are distinct from the majority Burman population. However, these cultures and languages have often been marginalized and devalued. Limited access to education in their native languages, restrictions on cultural practices, and a lack of recognition of

¹³⁹ Kasuya, Y., & Reilly, B. (2022). *The shift to consensus democracy and limits of institutional design in Asia*. The Pacific Review. Pp. 1-27.

¹⁴⁰ Tan, N. (2022). *Introduction: Quotas, Parties and Electoral Design – Mechanisms and Effects of Ethnic Representation in Diverse Societies*. Representation 58:3, pages 339-346.

their cultural rights have contributed to the marginalization of ethnic minority groups.¹⁴¹

7.2 Ethnic conflicts and Human security

Ethnic minority areas in Myanmar have experienced longstanding armed conflicts between ethnic armed groups and the military. Minority groups have been facing the prolonged ethnic conflicts and internal displacement, which are closely linked to the protection of ethnic minority rights. The cause is Electoral system of Myanmar.¹⁴² The FPPF system of Myanmar does not provide sufficient representation and address the underlying causes of conflicts. The lack of political power and voice for ethnic minorities to raise in the Parliaments can perpetuate a cycle of violence and conflicts. These conflicts have resulted in displacement, human rights abuses, and humanitarian crises.¹⁴³ Displaced communities often face additional challenges in accessing basic services, healthcare, and education, exacerbating their marginalization and vulnerability.

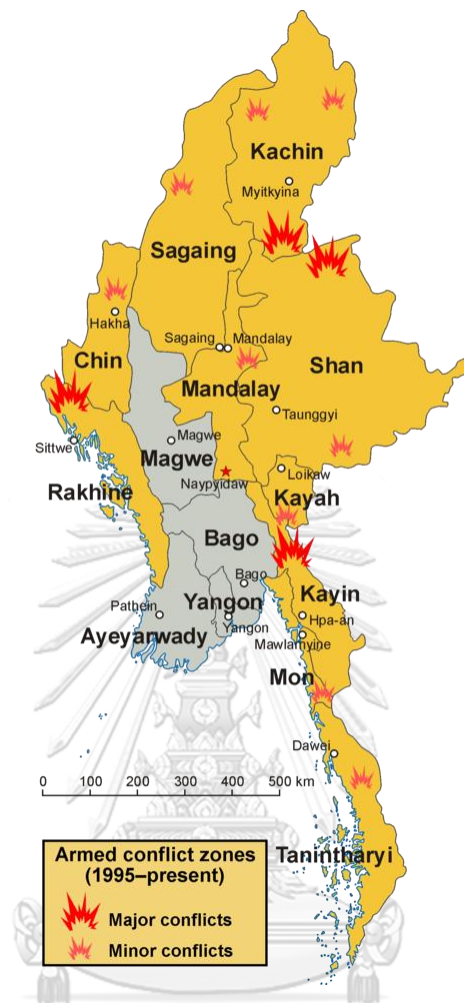


¹⁴¹ Kasuya, Y., & Reilly, B. (2022). *The shift to consensus democracy and limits of institutional design in Asia*. The Pacific Review. Pp. 1-27.

¹⁴² International Crisis Group. (2020). *A Legacy of Division*. In *Identity Crisis: Ethnicity and Conflict in Myanmar*. Pp. 4-8. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep31436.5>

¹⁴³ Ibid, Pp.4-8

Map 5: Conflict areas of Myanmar



Source: created by Lee Yuet-man, Wikimedia commons, File:Armed conflict zones in Myanmar.png, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burma_en.png, 6 May 2016

The ongoing political instability in Myanmar highlights the complex dynamics at play, which go beyond the electoral system.¹⁴⁴ The country's history of military rule, ethnic conflicts, and unresolved political issues have contributed to a fragile political environment. Achieving political stability in Myanmar will require addressing deep-

¹⁴⁴ International Crisis Group. (2020). *A Legacy of Division. In Identity Crisis: Ethnicity and Conflict in Myanmar*. Pp. 4-8. <http://www.ictor.org/stable/resrep31436.5>

rooted issues and building inclusive institutions that can accommodate the diverse interests of the country's various ethnic groups and political parties.

7.3 Case study: Role of Rakhine state's representation and Human security

7.3.1 Party fragmentation, vote splitting of Rakhine state by FPTP system

In expressing the issue and views of the human security needs deriving from it, the role of political parties in Rakhine State and the parliamentarians from these parties in the regional and central parliaments is also highly essential. Several reasons could limit the authority of the Rakhine state representatives in the Parliament. There are structural impediments that make it difficult to engage and have an impact, power disparities in Parliament, and the reality that the majority of decisions are made by large political parties.¹⁴⁵

The organization of the seat composition in the parliament is largely influenced by the electoral system in Myanmar. The political representation in Rakhine is characterized by inherent party fragmentation and an unequal distribution of seats among the major parties under the FPTP system.¹⁴⁶ Rakhine states have several parties that reflect a variety of interests and viewpoints due to party fragmentation.

As a first stage, party fragmentation may make it more difficult for the political groups in Rakhine to collaborate in order to decide on issues pertaining to human security. Officials from the Rakhine state may find it challenging to make choices and have less of an impact on the results of policy if they do not cooperate and are not united. Rakhine state is underrepresented in the senate due to the low number of its seats.

Under Rakhine pressure, the ALD and the RNDP united as the ANP in 2014, which went on to win the most votes among ethnic groups in the elections in November

¹⁴⁵ Stephanie, R. (2020), *Human Security in the United States*, CATO institute.

¹⁴⁶ Hlaing, K. H (2022), *Myanmar's Rakhine State: Parties Split, Rebels Rise, and the Junta Schemes*, United States Institute of Peace.

2015. In other ways, the three parties are also rivals. These days, the ALD and AFP are remnants of the ANP.¹⁴⁷

In the elections held on November 8, 2015, the ANP did well, gaining ten seats in the upper house and 12 seats in the lower house of the national parliament from Rakhine State.¹⁴⁸ The USDP fared poorly, as they did in the majority of Myanmar, and now only have one Rakhine State representative in each house. One in the upper house and four in the lower house, the NLD won the remaining national seats from Rakhine State constituencies.

In addition to the national vote, elections for state legislatures were also held. At that level as well, the ANP did well, taking home 22 of the 35 seats up for election in Rakhine State. In all parliament chambers, 25% of seats are automatically designated for military lawmakers under Myanmar's hybrid system, hence the ANP nonetheless came just short of a majority on the house floor.¹⁴⁹

Due to vote sharing by Rakhine ethnic parties and party disintegration, the ANP's resounding victory in 2015 did not completely eliminate the NLD's existence under the FPTP system. However, it only managed to win 3 seats in the lower house, 1 in the upper house, and 8 members in the Rakhine State legislature. There is no doubt about the NLD's continued control, the state of Rakhine's representation at the federal level, and the increasingly helpless Rakhine State Parliament.

¹⁴⁷ Hlaing, K. H (2022), *Myanmar's Rakhine State: Parties Split, Rebels Rise, and the Junta Schemes*, United States Institute of Peace.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Kyaw, N. N. (2020). *Elections or War? The Dilemma Facing Rakhine State*, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. Issue: 2020 No. 116

7.3.2 Conflicts and Human security affairs in Rakhine State

In Myanmar's democratic transition since 2010, ethnic Rakhine people regard themselves as losing out. After the elections, Myanmar prepared for additional violent warfare in Rakhine State. Rakhine ethnonationalism wants independence and self-rule from what it perceives Bamar hegemony in Rakhine State. Rakhine state has consistently had to choose between electoral democracy and violence.¹⁵⁰

There are currently just three major players on the stage. They are the Tatmadaw, the ruling NLD, and the Rakhines (both the Arakan Army-AA and Rakhine ethnic parties).¹⁵¹ Rakhine parties align themselves against the NLD, adopting a different strategy from the AA, which has waged an armed uprising for autonomy, self-determination, or secession against the Tatmadaw and the state of Myanmar. However, the AA, Rakhine parties, and many everyday Rakhines are united by strong ethnonationalist beliefs. They assert that the Bamar ethnic majority controls the Tatmadaw and the central government, and as a result, the Bamar rule Rakhine.

Since 2011, long-standing negative stereotypes have gained new life. The 969 Movement and the Association for the Protection of Race and Religion (or MaBaTha), two nationalist, identity-based movements led by Buddhist monks, called for boycotts of Muslim-run companies and frequently portrayed Muslims as a deadly menace.¹⁵² They promoted their cause widely, using mass media and the internet as well as political connections.

Although the AA didn't start a full-fledged uprising until 2019, Rakhines' mistrust in electoral democracy has been growing ever since 2016 due to the political rivalry

¹⁵⁰ Kyaw, N. N. (2020). *Elections or War? The Dilemma Facing Rakhine State*, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. Issue: 2020 No. 116

¹⁵¹ Hlaing, K. H (2022), *Myanmar's Rakhine State: Parties Split, Rebels Rise, and the Junta Schemes*, United States Institute of Peace.

¹⁵² Foxeus, N. (2023). *Buddhist Nationalist Sermons in Myanmar: Anti-Muslim Moral Panic, Conspiracy Theories and Socio-Cultural Legacies*. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 53:3. Pp. 423-449

between the NLD and the ANP as well as the marginalization of Rakhines in the legislature and in the administration of Rakhine State.¹⁵³ Beginning in January 2019, the intermittent fighting between the AA and Tatmadaw turned into their most severe round of armed confrontation.¹⁵⁴

Paletwa Township in Chin State and northern Rakhine State saw 654 skirmishes in 2019, according to Peace and Security. In late 2019 and early 2020, there were almost a thousand combatants from both sides, 86 civilians, and 176 civilian casualties. As of July 2020, 190,000 individuals had fled the Rakhine violence; 62,000 of them were living in IDP camps, and the remaining ones were dispersed around the state.¹⁵⁵

Communities in Rakhine are very impoverished. With a poverty rate of 78% compared to the national average of 38%, Rakhine State is one of the two poorest states and areas in the nation, according to a widely cited estimate from 2011.¹⁵⁶ Rising economic and political expectations by the community have been raised.

The recent exploitation of offshore natural gas close to the Rakhine coastline has produced a significant cash stream for the national potential government in addition to national level reforms and faster national economic growth. Politicians in the area want Rakhine State to receive a cut of the earnings since the gas is routed directly to China as part of a long-term concession. Local parliaments haven't been able to do much more than enact modest local bylaws due to their lack of administrative

¹⁵³ Aron, G. (2018). *Reframing the Crisis in Myanmar's Rakhine State*, Peace Brief. United States Institute of Peace.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Kyaw, N. N. (2020). *Elections or War? The Dilemma Facing Rakhine State*, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. Issue: 2020 No. 116

¹⁵⁶ Crisis watch (2017), *Rohingya refugee crisis: Violence displaces thousands in Myanmar's Rakhine State*, IRC.

capacity and budget management. Frustration and tensions have increased as a result of these political and economic tendencies.¹⁵⁷

The Rakhine people's viewpoints and issues are marginalized by their exclusion from political representation in parliaments, making it difficult for them to successfully advance their interests and take part in decision-making processes. This may intensify already-existing complaints and tensions by contributing to sentiments of exclusion and marginalization.

The Rohingya and Rakhine Buddhist populations have engaged in intercommunal violence in the Rakhine State. Historical grudges and socio-political variables have fuelled tensions, which have exploded into violent battles that have resulted in fatalities, evictions, and property damage. Intercommunal violence has fueled the region's cycle of mistrust, hostility, and persistent tensions.¹⁵⁸ As a result, there is a humanitarian and refugee crisis, and many Rohingya have fled to nearby nations. One of the most urgent challenges in Rakhine State is the Rohingya situation. A Muslim ethnic minority, the Rohingya, has long been persecuted and subjected to prejudice. Since 2017, a massive military operation has resulted in extensive violations of human rights, including murders, sexual assaults, and the eviction of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya.¹⁵⁹

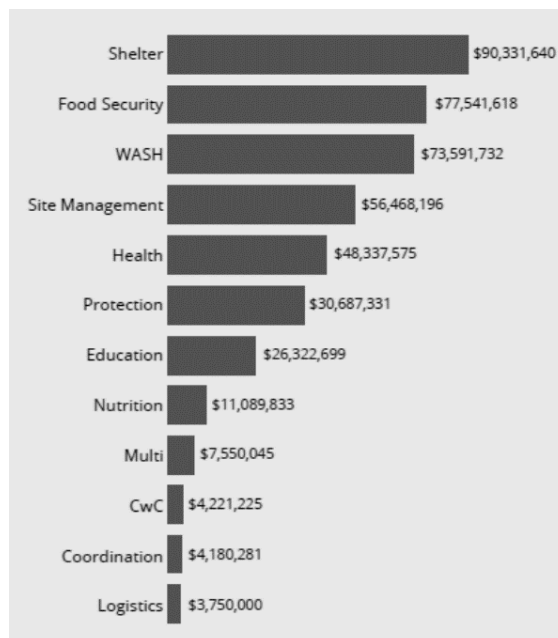
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

¹⁵⁷ Hlaing, K. H (2022), *Myanmar's Rakhine State: Parties Split, Rebels Rise, and the Junta Schemes*, United States Institute of Peace.

¹⁵⁸ Aron, G. (2018). *Reframing the Crisis in Myanmar's Rakhine State*, Peace Brief. United States Institute of Peace.

¹⁵⁹ Crisis watch (2017), *Rohingya refugee crisis: Violence displaces thousands in Myanmar's Rakhine State*, IRC.

Figure 7 Impacts on Human Security of Rohingya people at the midst of conflicts



Source: adopted from the report by Shelter Box, *Recovery Starts with Shelter*,

Design and layout by Matthew Stone

Because of the conflicts and crisis, Rakhine State faces significant humanitarian challenges Figure (7), particularly in conflict-affected areas. Displaced populations, including both Rohingya and Rakhine communities, struggle to access essential services such as food, clean water, healthcare, and education. Humanitarian organizations face difficulties in delivering aid due to security concerns and restrictions.¹⁶⁰

These disparities, coupled with the effects of conflict and displacement, have marginalized communities and hindered socio-economic development in the state. Rakhine State is resulted as one of the least developed regions in Myanmar, characterized by significant economic disparities and limited infrastructure.

¹⁶⁰Crisis watch (2017), *Rohingya refugee crisis: Violence displaces thousands in Myanmar's Rakhine State*, IRC.

7.3.3 Poor representation of Rakhine state in legislature and impact on human security

FPTP electoral system's impact on political stability have repercussions for Rakhine State. When the electoral system fails to ensure fair and inclusive representation, it can lead to political tensions, protests, and instability.¹⁶¹ These factors can impact the overall governance and socio-political environment, potentially exacerbating existing challenges in Rakhine State.

This lack of political representation and exclusion from the electoral system has contributed to the violation of the Rohingya's civil and political rights. It has allowed discriminatory policies, such as restrictions on movement, limited access to education and healthcare, and targeted violence to persist against the Rohingya community.

Because the FPTP system doesn't give Rakhine state enough votes, it is often left out of Myanmar's politics and treated unfairly. This can make it harder for them to speak up for human security issues and have their voices heard during decision-making. Structured barriers, unfair power dynamics, and discriminatory attitudes can make it hard for Rakhine state officials to do their jobs and be heard.¹⁶²

Rakhine political parties may have trouble getting into decision-making processes and platforms where important problems about human security are talked about. Some groups or bodies in Parliament have a lot of power and can make decisions on their own.¹⁶³ This can make it harder for Rakhine political parties to get involved.

Lack of inclusion and openness in decision-making processes could make their opinions and points of view less important. Rakhine political parties can have less of

¹⁶¹ Hlaing, K. H (2022), *Myanmar's Rakhine State: Parties Split, Rebels Rise, and the Junta Schemes*, United States Institute of Peace.

¹⁶² Aron, G. (2018). *Reframing the Crisis in Myanmar's Rakhine State*, Peace Brief. United States Institute of Peace.

¹⁶³ Kyaw, N. N. (2020). *Elections or War? The Dilemma Facing Rakhine State*, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. Issue: 2020 No. 116

an impact if big political parties rule at both the national and regional levels.¹⁶⁴ Most of the time, big parties have the most seats in Parliament and more money and political power. Rakhine political groups may find it hard to compete with these bigger parties, which could make it harder for them to influence decisions about human security.

Due to underrepresentation and exclusion, Rakhine state makes it very hard for political parties to handle human security concerns in an effective way. Peace and reconciliation processes that have been going on for a long time and involve a lot of different people and ethnic groups require ongoing work and input from everyone.¹⁶⁵ Rakhine political parties may find it hard to understand how these processes work, which could make it harder for them to advocate for human security successfully.¹⁶⁶

7.4 FPTP electoral system and impacts on Human security of Myanmar

The first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting system, which is also called a "winner-takes-all" system, has positive as well as negative impacts on human security in Myanmar.

FPTP can make it harder for ethnic minorities to be represented in parliaments because it makes it harder for them to get a place proportionally. Minority groups aren't taken into account in Myanmar's FPTP system,¹⁶⁷ which leads to party polarization with two parties dominating, ethnic party division, and underrepresentation of ethnic minority parties in parliament because votes aren't distributed evenly and there aren't enough seats for them. That electoral system of

¹⁶⁴ Lynn, K. (2021), *Ethnic Conflict in Myanmar. Reflections on military coups in Myanmar: and why political actors in Arakan chose a different path*. Myanmar Commentary. Transnational Institute.

¹⁶⁵ Stephanie, R. (2020), *Human Security in the United States*, CATO institute.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ International Crisis Group Asia Briefing (2015). *The Myanmar Elections: Results and Implications*. Yangon/Brussels, p.7, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/b147-the-myanmar-elections-results-and-implications.pdf>

Myanmar potentially sidelines the concerns of minority groups and impede efforts to address human security issues in the Parliament for legislative decision-making.

FPTP can add to political polarization and a divisive political environment. Because the winner gets everything, the system encourages parties to focus on getting a majority instead of building a broad consensus or working together to rule. In Myanmar, where there have been a lot of ethnic and political tensions, FPTP could make things worse and make it harder to work towards reconciliation and social harmony, which could affect human security.¹⁶⁸

Majoritarian voting systems put all the power in the hands of the winning party or individual, which could make other political parties or points of view less important. In Myanmar, where power has been centralized and dominated by two-parties; NLD and USDP, the FPTP system may reinforce existing power imbalances and limit the influence of opposition ethnic minority parties. This can hinder efforts to build a more inclusive and participatory democracy.

FPTP can make people more likely to vote strategically and give most of their votes to the big parties or candidates which are most likely to win. This can make voters less likely to vote for smaller groups or candidates, which diminishes their chances of being elected. In Myanmar, where there are many different political parties and ethnic minority groups, FPTP may push smaller parties to the side and make big parties even stronger. This could affect human security by leaving out some points of view and interests from the political process.

In this way, Myanmar's voting system supports how ethnic minorities are represented in politics and how they might be left out of the decision-making process. This can undermine human security by perpetuating social inequalities and leaving certain communities vulnerable.

¹⁶⁸Mun, N. T. (2020). *The electoral system at a crossroads: The recalculation of the 2015 election results under the proportional representation system*. Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

Chapter (8) Implication for better inclusiveness of ethnic minority

8.1 Introduction: Re-designing the Electoral System of Myanmar

In a country like Burma, which has a long history of political and social conflicts and a lot of different people, an electoral system should make a democratic space for everyone (Reynolds, 2006). Also, the first step toward making a federal union that respects the rights of its states and regions is to make sure that their voices are heard at every level of government. A good election system could be a way to do this.

If it were made and used in a truly democratic system instead of the 2008 Constitution, a PR system might be a better way for Burma's institutions and political system to grow and change in the future. A PR system could do a better job of giving seats to groups based on how many votes they got. This, in turn, would lead to a more open political atmosphere and make it possible for a wider range of parties to participate in politics in a meaningful way.¹⁶⁹

A system like this might make political parties work together more instead of just competing, which could be dangerous. It might also make politicians work harder to solve conflicts between communities instead of just trying to win. But it's important to remember that even in a democratic system, there are alternatives to PR, like alternative vote plurality systems, that may also meet some of these goals.¹⁷⁰ In addition, PR is a type of election method. Whether or not it will achieve the goals set for it relies a lot on how its details are designed, how it is put into action, and other parts of Burma's political system, such as whether or not it is a true democracy that includes everyone.

¹⁶⁹ International Crisis Group Asia Briefing (2015). *The Myanmar Elections: Results and Implications*. Yangon/Brussels, p.7.[http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/b147-the-myanmar-elections-results-and-implications.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/b147-the-myanmar-elections-results-and-implications.pdf)

¹⁷⁰ Low-Beer, J. R. (1984). *The Constitutional Imperative of Proportional Representation*. The Yale Law Journal, 94(1), 163–188. <https://doi.org/10.2307/796319>

When you look at the trends in electoral system reform, it is true that countries tend to either switch to a more proportional system by using PR versions of plurality systems, like the so-called Mixed Member Representation system (MMR), or directly replace a plurality system with a PR system. List PR, which is the easiest type of PR, is used in 35% of countries around the world, while FPTP is used in 24% of countries (Reynolds et al., 2008).¹⁷¹

8.2 Proportional representation: Strength and Weakness

First-past-the-post system in single-member constituencies as one of the main current barriers to inclusiveness in the Union-level parliament. The two houses of the Union parliament are elected through the same election system is an obstacle to inclusiveness. The FPTP system favours nationwide parties and makes it very difficult for minority parties and Region-based parties to secure seats in the legislature.

Arend Lijphart stresses the role of Proportional Representation, that its proportional allocation of seats and public resources is more favorable for the inclusion of minorities and allows them to influence policy, so that it realizes the "consociational democracy" between the main nationality and minorities.¹⁷² Therefore, proportional representation system enables political actors to form a "broad consensus of the state", provides space for compromise and game between different groups, promotes communication and cooperation between ethnic minorities and the main nationality, and thus is more suitable for the current ethnic relations in Myanmar.

In a proportional system, political parties are allocated seats based on the percentage of votes they receive. They might operate in a list proportional representation system

¹⁷¹ Scheiner, E. (2008), *Does Electoral System Reform Work? Electoral System Lessons from Reforms of the 1990s*, Annual Review of Political Science, 161-181

¹⁷² Lijphart, A. & Reynold, A. (ed.) (2002). *The Wave of Power-sharing Democracy. Architecture of Democracy: Constitutional Design, Conflict Management, and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.37-54.

or a single transferable vote system. Zuo Hongyuan believes that the ethnic party competition system brought by electoral democracy is the worst situation for multi-ethnic countries, which has greatly intensified ethnic conflicts and ethnic violence.¹⁷³ The proportional representation system will inevitably lead to the rise of ethnic parties and disordered competition. The politics dominated by national parties in Myanmar will further shift to ethnic parties, which will bring the risk of splitting of the country.¹⁷⁴

Two national parties, NLD and USDP and that FPTP is leading Myanmar's party politics toward populism which is now sweeping the world.¹⁷⁵ Thus, proportional representation is not entirely conducive to Myanmar's political development. The selection of different election systems will have different effects on ethnic relations. An election system that is not suitable for ethnic relations will give rise to ethnic division. Ethnic relations and the electoral system are interacted. Therefore, when considering the electoral system of a multi-ethnic country, it is necessary to consider the influence of various factors, such as the inclusiveness of the electoral system to ethnic relations and whether it is conducive to balancing the interests of different ethnic groups.



¹⁷³ Debus, M., & Schulte, F. (2022). *How party competition shapes ethnic parties' positions on migration and immigration*. *Party Politics*, 0(0).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688221136107>

¹⁷⁴ Hongyuan, Z. (2005). *Electoral Democracy and Ethnic Conflict: The Dilemma of Democratization in a Deep Divided Multi-Ethnic Country*. Published in *Ethnic Studies*. Issue2

¹⁷⁵ Win, K. Z. (2018). *Myanmar's Mid-Term Crises and the Elections to Come*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) —Yusof Ishak Institute, p.4.

8.2 (a) Strengths by PR

Hence PR is one of best remedy to fix the limited representation of ethnic minorities. If designed properly, PR does have promising attributes that could effectively solve the political and social problems of the country:

PR might encourage the practice of more than two parties cooperating to discover workable solutions because it would prevent major political parties from monopolizing the parliament. The fact that many parties would have to cooperatively make policy decisions would allow the parliament to establish more long-lasting arrangements rather than having a couple of large parties with opposing economic and political views alternate in governing the country.¹⁷⁶

PR could help solve the majority-minority problem between Bamar and non-Bamar ethnic groups as well as the problem of inequality by pushing for more inclusive politics in government.

On the one hand, how quickly we can move forward as a country during a democratic transition relies on how well different political forces can work together. Having to wait for a lot of political parties to agree on every decision may slow things down. On the other hand, this could give these groups the push they need to learn democratic practices like working together, taking turns leading, and negotiating.¹⁷⁷

PR could get rid of the idea that political representation is only possible for ethnic groups with a lot of people living in one place.¹⁷⁸ Instead, it could spread the idea that every ethnic group has the right to political representation, no matter how packed or

¹⁷⁶ Reynolds, A. (2006). *Electoral systems and the protection and participation of minorities*. London, UK: Minority Rights Group International.

¹⁷⁷ Low-Beer, J. R. (1984). *The Constitutional Imperative of Proportional Representation*. The Yale Law Journal, 94(1), 163–188. <https://doi.org/10.2307/796319>

¹⁷⁸ Antweiler, W. (2019). *Electoral economics: Maximizing local representation under proportionality*. University of British Columbia, Sauder School of Business. Economic Letter 182. Pp. 109–113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2019.06.015>, 2019

spread out its people are.¹⁷⁹ Parties would this way be forced to lay out their policies and appeal to not only their own ethnic groups but also other voters, incentivizing their candidates and representatives to look beyond ethnic identities and attend to the needs of constituents at large (see Naw Gladys Maung Maung, 2020). PR also ensures that more voters feel that they have representation in parliament.

8.2 (b) Considerable weakness by PR

At the same time, in a country with more than 90 political parties and a lot of diversity, a PR system that is only used to serve party interests without proper research or evaluation will hurt the country in the long run, no matter how appealing the short-term benefits may seem.¹⁸⁰ Some of the most important risks are:

Under PR, it's possible that the number of people in parliament from ethnic minorities whose people live in a small area would go down.¹⁸¹ This means that local political parties like the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) and the Arakan National Party (ANP), which have a lot of support from the people, would lose seats (see Nu Tsen Mun, 2020). If PR is adopted too quickly, it could lead to a system that neither limits the power of big parties nor makes sure that smaller parties are included in a meaningful way.

Under PR, constituencies would be bigger than under FPTP, which could make it harder for people to get to know their chosen representatives. Also, for candidates to get a place in parliament, party-lists would be more important than constituents. This

¹⁷⁹ Williams, M., & Schertzer, R. (2019). *Is Indigeneity like Ethnicity? Theorizing and Assessing Models of Indigenous Political Representation*. Canadian Journal of Political Science. Pp. 677-696, Doi: 10.1017/S0008423919000192

¹⁸⁰ Low-Ber, J. R. (1984). *The Constitutional Imperative of Proportional Representation*. The Yale Law Journal, 94(1), 163–188. <https://doi.org/10.2307/796319>

would encourage candidates to be more accountable to their parties than to their voters. Since this is already a problem with the way the FPTP method works.¹⁸²

8.3 FPTP electoral system versus Proportional representation

FPTP electoral system and proportional representation (PR) are two different kinds of voting systems that use different ways to turn votes into political power. Here's a look at how the two methods compare:

FPTP electoral system:

Winner-Takes-All: In plurality voting, the candidate who gets the most votes in each district wins the seat.

Single Choice: Most of the time, voters only have one choice on the ballot.¹⁸³

3. Seat Allocation: Seats are given to candidates based on who gets the most votes in each district, or area.¹⁸⁴

4. Majoritarian: FPTP system tends to support big parties and can lead to a two-party system, potentially marginalizing smaller parties or independent candidates.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Antweiler, W. (2019). *Electoral economics: Maximizing local representation under proportionality*. University of British Columbia, Sauder School of Business. Economic Letter 182. Pp. 109–113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2019.06.015>, 2019

¹⁸³ Lijphart, A. (1984). *Electoral Systems: Majority and Plurality Methods vs. Proportional Representation*. In *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (pp. 150–168). Yale University Press.

¹⁸⁴ Jowei, C. & Rodden, J (2016). *The Loser's Bonus: Political Geography and Minority Representation*. Working paper. UC Berkeley.

¹⁸⁵ Kaplan, E. (2021). *Majoritarian versus Proportional Representation Voting*. Policy Brief 31. Economics for Inclusive Prosperity (econfip.org).

5. Lack of Proportional Representation: It doesn't make sure that each party or candidate gets an equal number of seats. This means that the number of seats a party or candidate gets may not be equivalent to the number of votes they got overall.¹⁸⁶

6. Regional Concentration: FPTP electoral system can lead to regional concentrations of political power, since the same parties or candidates may always get support from the same areas or constituencies.

7. Inclusivity: The system marginalizes minority or underrepresented groups as the system favors majority preferences.¹⁸⁷

Proportional Representation (PR):

1. Multiple Choices: In PR systems, voters often get to choose more than one candidate or party on the ballot. This lets them say their preferences more comprehensively.

2. Proportional Allocation: PR aims to allocate seats proportionally to the share of votes received by political parties or candidates.

3. Seat Allocation: Seats are allocated to parties or candidates based on the overall percentage of votes they receive, ensuring a more proportional distribution.¹⁸⁸

4. Building coalitions: Public relations often lead to coalition governments, since groups must communicate to each other and make deals in order to run the nation's affairs well.

¹⁸⁶ Lijphart, A. (1984). *Electoral Systems: Majority and Plurality Methods vs. Proportional Representation*. In *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (pp. 150–168). Yale University Press.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Pp. 150–168

5. Representing Different Points of View: PR systems tend to give more weight to different points of view, making it easier for smaller parties and minority groups to get seats.¹⁸⁹

6. Voter Influence: PR gives voters a stronger sense of influence and a proportional impact on the composition of the legislature. It can get more people to vote and make parties try to meet the needs of a wider range of voters.

7. More Inclusion: PR supports inclusion by making sure that a wider range of voices and points of view are heard in the legislature.¹⁹⁰

8.4 Case Study: New Zealand's Proportional Representation System

Before Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) representation was put in place, New Zealand used a system called "first-past-the-post" (FPTP), which often led to governments where smaller political parties were underrepresented and didn't have much of a say. The PR method was put in place after a referendum in 1993. The goal was to make democracy more representative and open to everyone.

In 1996, New Zealand started using a method called Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) representation, which is based on proportional representation (PR). Concerns about fairness and participation in the country's voting system led to the PR system being put in place. This case study looks at how PR has affected voting, party dynamics, and government in New Zealand.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Kaplan, E. (2021). *Majoritarian versus Proportional Representation Voting*. Policy Brief 31. Economics for Inclusive Prosperity (econfip.org).

¹⁹⁰ Lijphart, A. (1984). *Electoral Systems: Majority and Plurality Methods vs. Proportional Representation*. In *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (pp. 150–168). Yale University Press.

¹⁹¹ Ministry for Culture and Heritage. (2021). *The road to MMP*.

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/fpp-to-mmp> (Date of access 9 June 2021 Updated)

The PR method in New Zealand is a mix of single-member electorates and party lists. Voters have two choices: one for a candidate in their voting and one for a political party.

New Zealand has 72 electorates, and each one is represented by a Member of Parliament (MP) who is chosen by the FPTP system. The idea behind electorate seats is to keep a direct link between voters and their area representatives.

In addition to electorate places, political parties are also given seats in Parliament based on their share of the party vote. These seats are filled by people from the party's list, which makes sure that everyone gets an equal say. To be qualified for list seats, political parties must get at least 5% of the party vote or win at least one electorate seat. This threshold is meant to keep the number of groups in Parliament from getting too small and prevent them from splitting up.¹⁹²

PR has helped get more New Zealanders to vote. Because the system is proportional, each vote is more important because it affects how Parliament is made up as a whole. Voters feel like they are more represented and have more power, which makes them more interested in politics.

In New Zealand, PR has made representation much better. Under FPTP, it was hard for smaller groups to get seats in Parliament, but now they do. This has led to a wider range of opinions and points of view, which better represents the voters.¹⁹³

PR has caused alliance governments to form in New Zealand. Since no single party can win a majority on its own, parties must work together to rule. This has made it easier for political groups to reach agreements and find middle ground. New Zealand's governing has become more stable thanks to coalition governments. The need for parties to work together and negotiate has led to more thoughtful decision-making

¹⁹² Ministry for Culture and Heritage. (2016). *'First past the post'*.

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/fpp-to-mmp/first-past-the-post>. (Date of access: 13-Jan-2016)

¹⁹³ Ibid.

processes, making it less likely that different governments' policies will change drastically.¹⁹⁴

By switching to a system of proportional representation, New Zealand has made its government more open and representative. PR has made it easier for smaller parties to get involved in politics and has made voters more interested in politics. Coalition governments have brought stability and policies based on consensus. But it can be hard for parties to keep their own personalities within coalitions. Overall, New Zealand's experience with proportional representation showcases the potential benefits of this electoral system.¹⁹⁵

8.5 How Proportional representation fixes the effects by FPTP system of Myanmar

Effects by FPTP	How Proportional representation fixes the effects by FPTP
Single-member plurality Party fragmentation-weak institutionalization and vote splitting	Multi-member voting district. Encouraging coalition-building among parties with shared interests or policy goals - Better institutionalization
Two-party Dominance	Promoting multi-party competition

¹⁹⁴ Andrew. G. (2016). *Parliamentary government in New Zealand: Lines of continuity and moments of change*, *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, Volume 14, Issue 1, Pp. 99–118, <https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/mow001>

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Pp. 99-118

Limited resources as Uneven Playing field by small parties	Preventing the dominance of a single party or two-parties
Unequal votes and constituency delimitation	PR is based on a percentage of the votes or winning a certain number of constituencies.
Discrepancy of votes & shares	Parliamentary seats in proportion to the votes received by each part
Malappointment	Significant portion of the votes have a corresponding legislative presence
Impacts on Human security	Enhancing representation role to address and respond the Human Security Issues

8.6 Is Proportional Representation a cure for Human Security Impacts?

Proportional representation (PR) can help ensure human security by promoting inclusive governance and representation, fostering social cohesion, and addressing the needs and concerns of different groups.

There are how PR can support human security of ethnic minorities.

- Protecting the rights of minorities: Proportional representation system can protect the rights of minorities by making sure that they are represented fairly in legislative groups. In traditional majoritarian systems, where their opinions may be ignored, minority groups often have trouble. PR lets different points of view be heard, which helps bring people together and makes discrimination and exclusion less likely.¹⁹⁶
- Inclusive institutions: Proportional representation system provides opportunities and marginalized groups a chance to be heard in politics. By making sure that seats are

¹⁹⁶ Amy, D. J. (1995). *Proportional Representation: Empowering Minorities or Promoting Balkanization?* *The Good Society*, 5(2), 22–24. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20710686>

given out in a fair way, PR lets more people have their views heard in the decision-making process. This inclusivity promotes human security by addressing the needs and interests of various social, ethnic, and cultural groups.¹⁹⁷ Since political parties need votes from a wide range of people and proportional seats in parliament, they have an opportunity to address the concerns and goals of different parts of society.

- **Responsive Governance:** Proportional representation system tools help elected officials be more accountable and responsive. This kind of engagement strengthens democratic institutions, improves social cohesion, and makes people feel safer by giving them a chance to shape the policies and decisions that affect their lives. The action taken by the government makes it more likely that human security problems will be on the legislative agenda and handled with.¹⁹⁸
- **Policy Prioritization:** Proportional representation system encourages political parties and candidates to think about a wide range of policy issues to draw voters from different parts of society. This method encourages policymaking that gives people access to schooling, health care, social welfare, and protection of the environment. PR can help make sure that policy goals are more well-rounded and reflect the needs and hopes of the people.¹⁹⁹
- **Conflict Resolution:** Proportional representation system can play a role in conflict resolution by facilitating the representation of different ethnic, religious, or regional groups within the political system. By providing a platform for dialogue and negotiation, PR can contribute to peaceful resolution of conflicts and the prevention

¹⁹⁷ Antweiler, W. (2019). *Electoral economics: Maximizing local representation under proportionality*. University of British Columbia, Sauder School of Business. *Economic Letter* 182. Pp. 109–113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2019.06.015>, 2019

¹⁹⁹ Hill, S., & Richie, R. (1998), *The Case for Proportional Representation*, *Boston Review*. <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/robert-richie-steven-hill-case-proportional-representation/>

of violence. It gives different groups a voice in the political process and makes people feel like they own the country and have a part in keeping the peace.

In the end, Myanmar has had ethnic conflicts for a long time, which have undermined stability in politics and human security. PR could help solve these problems by supporting power-sharing agreements and open government. PR can help ethnic minority parties get more votes by giving seats out in proportion to how many votes they got. This can lead to more dialogue, cooperation, and conflict settlement.

For PR to work in Myanmar, the design of the election system would have to be carefully thought out, including the size and number of electoral districts, the minimum voting requirements, and the ways seats are given out. When making these decisions, the goal should be to find a balance between effective representation, manageable government, and stability, while also taking into account the country's unique challenges and needs.²⁰⁰ PR could support this transition by promoting multi-party competition and preventing the dominance of a single party. It could also help build trust between different political players, leading for a more balanced distribution of power and fostering a democratic political culture.²⁰¹

8.7 Is PR system a right time to apply for Myanmar? : Assessment on PR drawbacks

Myanmar is a country with more than 90 political parties and a lot of diversity, a PR system that is only used to serve party interests without proper study or evaluation will hurt the country in the long run, no matter how appealing the short-term benefits

²⁰⁰ Reynolds, A. (2006). *Electoral systems and the protection and participation of minorities*. London, UK: Minority Rights Group International.

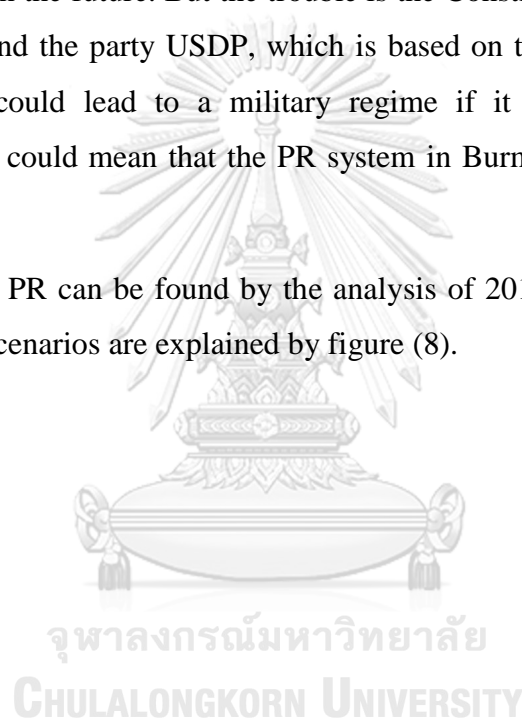
²⁰¹ Amy, D. J. (1995). *Proportional Representation: Empowering Minorities or Promoting Balkanization?* *The Good Society*, 5(2), 22–24. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20710686>

may seem.²⁰² In consideration of applying PR for Myanmar political landscape, there are possible drawbacks by PR.²⁰³

In theory, PR would be fairer, but the political effects are too risky and the representation of minorities is unclear. This is because Myanmar has a long history of two parties dominating the government by winning elections by landslides in 2010, 2015, and 2020.²⁰⁴

A PR system might be a better way for Burma's institutions and government system to grow and change in the future. But the trouble is the Constitution of 2008, which says that the military and the party USDP, which is based on the military, can't be in the parliaments. PR could lead to a military regime if it was run under the 2008 Constitution. This could mean that the PR system in Burma would have favored the military.

The drawbacks of PR can be found by the analysis of 2015 elections and its seat in parliament. Two scenarios are explained by figure (8).

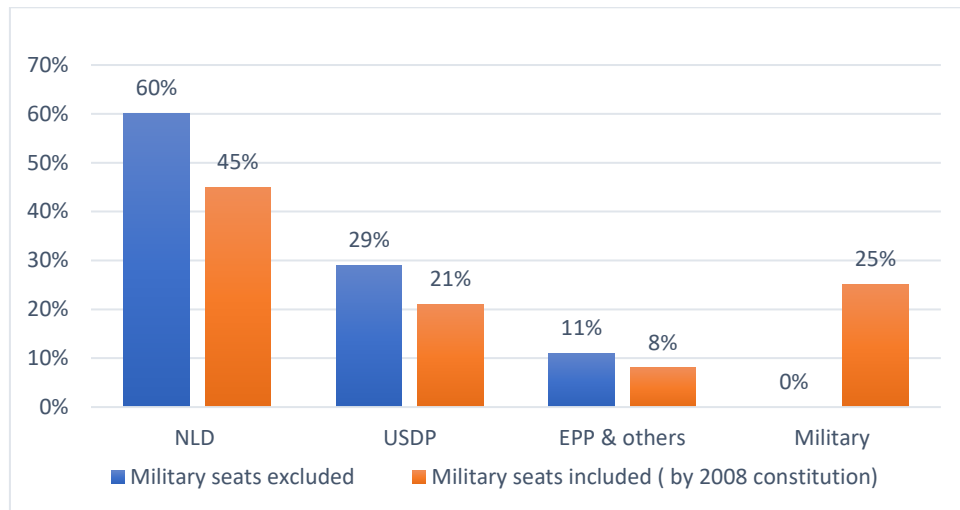


²⁰² Low-Beer, J. R. (1984). The Constitutional Imperative of Proportional Representation. *The Yale Law Journal*, 94(1), 163–188. <https://doi.org/10.2307/796319>

²⁰³ Reynolds, A., et al. (2008). *Electoral system design: The new International IDEA handbook*. Stockholm, Sweden: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

²⁰⁴ Naing, I. (2012). *Burma eyes proportional representation: Groups call for electoral reform and more representation for ethnic minorities*. Radio Free Asia.

Figure 8 Two scenarios in the Union Parliament under PR: based on 2015 Election results



Source: data adopted from *Proportional Representation: Why Now is Not the Right Time*, Nu Tsen Mun. (2020)

The first scenario explains the results with blue bars if 25% of the seats had no longer been reserved for the military. In such a set-up of PR, the NLD would have received 60% of the seats while it received 77% of the seats under FPTP.²⁰⁵ It would have remained the majority in the parliament.

On the other hand, the opposition party, the USDP, would have received more seats under PR than FPTP, with an increase from 10% to 29%. Finally, ethnic groups and other small parties would have gotten fewer seats in PR (11%) than in FPTP (13%).²⁰⁶

In the second scenario, which is shown by the orange columns, 25% of the seats are still set aside for the military under the Constitution of 2008. In this case, the NLD

²⁰⁵ Mun, N. T. (2020). *Proportional Representation: Why Now is Not the Right Time*, Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

²⁰⁶ The Carter Center. (2015). *Observing Myanmar's 2015 general elections*. Final report. Retrieved from <https://www.cartercenter.org/>

would have only gotten 45% of the seats, which means it would have lost its majority. The USDP would also have gained less seats than in the first case (21% vs. 26%).²⁰⁷

Taking into consideration on second scenario, combining the results of reserved military seats and the elected seats of the military-based party USDP, there are 46% of seats in total in this particular scenario. Thus, the USDP would have become the new “dictator” in the parliament.²⁰⁸

Finally, the representation of ethnic and other political parties would have seen even a bigger decline in this scenario than in the previous one, dropping from 13% under FPTP to 8% under PR within the 2008 Constitution framework.²⁰⁹

Figure (8) shows that PR could lead to a military system if it was used under the 2008 Constitution. This shows that the PR system in Burma would have favored the military. Another important finding is that the USDP could become the new "dictator" with just 21% of the total votes and combine by 25% seats supported by 2008 constitution. It wouldn't even need to get the most votes from the people.

PR ends popular parties like the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (Shan Nationalities League for Democracy) from winning by huge margins. It also makes it easier for parties like the Union Solidarity and Development Party, which is the military's proxy, and others that lost in previous elections to get more seats in Parliament. Several racial groups have also been against the PR system. The secretary general of the Zomi Congress for Democracy party, Pu Gin Kam Lian, said he was against the method before because it would be hard to use in Chin State.

²⁰⁷ Mun, N. T. (2020). *Proportional Representation: Why Now is Not the Right Time*, Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Reynolds, A., et al. (2008). *Electoral system design: The new International IDEA handbook*. Stockholm, Sweden: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

Myanmar's military holds 25 percent of the seats in national and sub-national legislatures under the 2008 Constitution, and only 75 percent are elected seats.²¹⁰ Political analysts say democratic forces will lose strength in Parliament under PR, as around 30 political parties out of some 90 political parties in Myanmar are believed to be the military's allies.²¹¹

A politician who contested the 2020 general election said on condition of anonymity: "They originally have 25 percent."²¹² If PR is practiced, for example, the Union Solidarity and Development Party USDP may win, due to the support of the military and military sympathizers. Even if people don't vote for the party, it will still have seats in the Parliament because of the percentage of votes it wins in the election. PR is very complicated. There are problems even in the current FPTP system.²¹³

Yet, in comparison with the FPTP system, the PR system still introduced more parties into the three parliaments. Moreover, seat changes among the two biggest parties across the electoral systems were obvious, especially in the case of the Union parliament. Here, under the PR system, the NLD seats were reduced from 77% (FPTP) to 45% (PR) while the number of USDP seats increased from 21% (FPTP) to 46% (PR) as per Figure (8).²¹⁴ Representation of ethnic political parties would have a bigger decline, dropping from 13% under FPTP to 8% under PR within the 2008

²¹⁰ Mun, N. T. (2020). *The electoral system at a crossroads: The recalculation of the 2015 election results under the proportional representation system*. Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

²¹¹ Naing, I. (2012). *Burma eyes proportional representation: Groups call for electoral reform and more representation for ethnic minorities*. Radio Free Asia.

²¹² Myanmar News Agency. (2021). *All the people need to emphasize national interests by forging the Union spirit*: Senior General. The Global New Light of Myanmar. Retrieved from <https://www.gnlm.com.mm/>

²¹⁴ Ibid

Constitution framework. Hence, PR could lead to a military system if it was used under the 2008 Constitution which supports Myanmar's military holds 25 percent of the seats in national and sub-national legislatures.

Chapter (9) Conclusion

The FPTP electoral system in Myanmar limits the representation of ethnic minorities in a number of ways. First, the winner-takes-all nature of the method means that only the candidate or party with the most votes in a constituency wins the seat. All other votes go unrepresented. This can make it hard for groups that represent ethnic minorities to get a majority in any one constituency because their votes are spread across multiple constituencies.

Also, the unequal way votes are given out can make ethnic group parties even less powerful. With the FPTP system, voters may be more likely to vote for big parties or candidates they think are most likely to win, and they may be less likely to vote for smaller parties or candidates. This makes it harder for ethnic minority parties to get elected and gives big parties even more power.²¹⁵ Overall, the FPTP voting method in Myanmar can make it hard for ethnic minorities to be represented in the parliament.²¹⁶ This could put their concerns on the back burner and make it harder to deal with human security issues through legislative decision-making.

In Myanmar, where there have been a lot of ethnic and political tensions, the FPTP system could make things worse and make it harder to work towards reconciliation and social harmony. When people focus on getting a majority, they may have a "zero-

²¹⁵ Mun, N. T. (2020). *The electoral system at a crossroads: The recalculation of the 2015 election results under the proportional representation system*. Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

²¹⁶ Lijphart, A. & Reynold, A. (ed.) (2002). *The Wave of Power-sharing Democracy. Architecture of Democracy: Constitutional Design, Conflict Management, and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.37-54.

sum" mentality in which they care more about their own goals than finding things they can agree on. This can make it harder to deal with human security issues in a good way.

So, the winner-takes-all nature of the FPTP system in Myanmar could cause political polarization, which could lead to a lack of cooperation, difficulties reaching a consensus, and a divided political environment that could make it harder to work toward reconciliation and social cohesion, which could affect human security.

PR (proportional representation) systems could help make sure that minority ethnic groups have the same amount of power in a political system. According to the theory, PR makes sure that minority parties have a good chance of being represented in the legislature by giving seats in proportion to the number of votes each party got. In places like Myanmar, where there have been ethnic battles for a long time and where there are many different ethnic groups, PR can be a key part of solving these problems and making it easier for people to share power. It gives different ethnic groups a place to talk, negotiate, and cooperate together, building a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for keeping the peace.²¹⁷ This could lead to a more open political scene that takes into account the needs and worries of minority ethnic parties. This broad representation can help address the concerns and needs of ethnic minorities, including those linked to human security.

However, in the current political dynamic of Myanmar and 2008 constitution with 25% military involvement, Union Solidarity and Development Party USDP may win the largest number of seats. Even if people don't vote for the party, it will still have seats in the Parliament because of the percentage of votes it wins in the election.

As per the two scenarios analysis of thesis on the data of 2015 elections, NLD seats were reduced from 77% (FPTP) to 45% (PR) while the number of USDP seats

²¹⁷ Lijphart, A. (1984). *Electoral Systems: Majority and Plurality Methods vs. Proportional Representation*. In *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (pp. 150–168). Yale University Press.

increased from 21% (FPTP) to 46% (PR) as per Figure (8).²¹⁸ Representation of ethnic political parties would have a bigger decline, dropping from 13% under FPTP to 8% under PR within the 2008 Constitution framework. Hence, PR could lead to a military system if it was used under the 2008 Constitution which supports Myanmar's military holds 25 percent of the seats in national and sub-national legislatures.



²¹⁸ Mun, N. T. (2020). *Proportional Representation: Why Now is Not the Right Time*, Yangon, Myanmar: The Salween Institute for Public Policy.

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VITA

NAME Yamonh Pwint Thit
DATE OF BIRTH 10.01.1997
PLACE OF BIRTH Yangon, Myanmar
INSTITUTIONS ATTENDED Yangon University
HOME ADDRESS Myanmar



จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY