ALTERNATIVE FUTURES FOR GOVERNANCE IN BURMA: 2040

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

AUGUST 2008

By Wylma C. Samaranayake-Robinson

Dissertation Committee:

James Dator, Chairperson
Michael Aung-Thwin
Nevzat Soğuk
Dae-Sook Suh
Kate Zhou
We certify that we have read this dissertation and that, in our opinion, it is satisfactory in scope and quality as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

[Signatures]

Chairperson

Kate Zhou

[Signatures]

Dae-Sool Suh
© Wylma C. Samaranayake-Robinson 2008
Acknowledgements

"Do you think it is possible to govern innocently?"
Jean-Paul Sartre
Dirty Hands

My heartfelt thanks to my husband, Dr. Brooks Bruce Robinson, for supporting my academic aspirations.

Mahalo to my daughters Marjorie Mariah (Ma Khin Hla) and Miriam Michelle (Ma Khin Aye), whose rainbow presence in my world inspired me to undertake this scholarship.

Chezutinbadeh to everyone who responded to my survey on Burma and to the many colleagues and friends who encouraged this endeavor, especially my dear friend, Ms. Katrina Hourani, and my Sayama, Daw Tin Tin Nu Raschid, and her spouse, U Bilal Raschid. Acknowledging these individuals in no way signifies that they agree with the perspectives reflected in my dissertation.

To Bertha and Bailey Anzai-Flanigan, I simply say cheers!

Finally, this effort is dedicated to my maternal great-grandmother Daw Khin Hlaing, a Burman Christian from Shwebo; to my grandmother Mary Andrews-Fernando lost at sea near Mergui when the British steamer Sir Harvey Adamson disappeared without a trace in April 1947; to my mother Marjorie Isabel (Ma Ma Gyi) for initiating me to all things Burmese; to my kinfolk presently living in Myanmar whose progeny will reside in Burma’s futures; and to Walter Olavi (Aung Thu Ya) and Xander Aarre (Hla Than Htay).
Abstract

This dissertation uses the filter of futures studies to envision an array of alternative futures for what governance in Burma could be by the year 2040. The use of the plural "futures" stresses the element of choice concerning what the future will be like. The term "alternative futures" denotes that the future is not fixed and various possibilities should be explored.

A review of the relevant literature on Burma and the results of a small sample survey conducted outside Burma to gather information about images that people (mostly expatriates) have about governance in Burma serve as the springboard for the designing of four alternative scenarios. These scenarios consider whether Burma, by 2040, will be a nation that is in a state of governance that (1) has shown economic growth; (2) has collapsed; (3) has organized itself around some overarching set of values; or (4) has transformed itself to become completely different from what is expected or assumed.

A fifth preferred scenario imagines governance in Burma in 2040 that reintroduces features of a monarchy into Burma's futures.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments........................................ iv  
Abstract................................................... v  
List of Tables.............................................. vii  
List of Figures ........................................... viii  
Chapter 1: Introduction................................. 1  
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature on Burma........ 13  
  Literature on Burma Tier One......................... 16  
  Literature on Burma Tier Two......................... 44  
Chapter 3: Background on Burma......................... 55  
  What Burma Was......................................... 60  
  What Burma Became.................................... 72  
  What Burma Is.......................................... 78  
Chapter 4: Theory and Methodology...................... 86  
  Futures Studies........................................ 87  
  Collecting Opinion Data.............................. 100  
  Futures Concepts..................................... 108  
Chapter 5: Results........................................ 114  
  Results Related to Demographics..................... 117  
  Results Related to Governance......................... 127  
Chapter 6: Discussion..................................... 141  
  Results Related to Demographics and Governance... 142  
  Factors Important for Shaping Governance........... 158  
Chapter 7: What Burma Could Become.................... 170  
  Alternative Futures for Burma (2040)............... 176  
  Preferred Futures for Burma (2040)................... 222  
Chapter 8: Summary....................................... 247  
Appendix A: Questionnaire on Burma..................... 256  
Appendix B: Selected Data on Burma.................... 262  
Appendix C: Map of Burma............................... 263  
Bibliography.............................................. 264
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Governance Selections by Respondents' Place of Birth and Citizenship</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Governance Selections by Respondents with Children and Respondents without Children</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Comparisons of Governance Selections between All Respondents and Respondents Born in Burma.</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Factors Important for Shaping Governance in Burma</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Respondents by Gender</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Respondents by Era</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Respondents by Countries of Birth, Citizenship, and Residency</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Respondents by Religion</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Respondents by Ethnicity</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Respondents' Parental Status</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1st &amp; 2nd Languages Spoken by Parents</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Respondents' Description of Current Governance</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Total Value of Respondents' Weighted Selections by Category for 2020, 2040,</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Preferred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Number of Respondents' Weighted, Scaled, and Standardized Scores by Category</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Along the Political Spectrum for 2020, 2040, and Preferred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Four Alternative Futures for Burma for 2040</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation is about the futures of Burma. It is not about Burma studies or futures studies. Instead, using the filter of futures studies, this dissertation envisions an array of alternative and preferred futures for what governance in the Union of Myanmar (formerly known and hereafter referred to as Burma)\(^1\) could be by the year 2040. The discourse that ensues on these futures for Burma includes a review of the relevant literature pertaining to Burma; a broad brush of Burma’s history and politics; selective theories and methods from the futures discipline; and a discussion of the results of a survey conducted outside Burma to gather information about images that people (mostly expatriates and academics who are knowledgeable on the subject of Burma) have regarding alternative futures for governance in Burma. I should make clear from the outset that the dissertation does not include the voices and visions of the Burmese people living inside Burma whose futures I will be describing.

\(^1\) Burma’s current governance promotes the formal usage of the term *Pyidaungzu Myanmar Naingngandaw* or the Union of Myanmar to describe its nation which, in a previous era, was called the Union of Burma. Numerous authors today use the terms Burma and Myanmar interchangeably. In this dissertation, and merely as a preference centered on the issue of consistency, I mostly employ the term Burma.
This is a major limitation of this project but one that could not be avoided at this time. I thus see this dissertation as a first step in assessing, and not the last word in determining, Burma’s alternative futures.

But, first, what is commonly understood by the term futures studies? Briefly, futures studies refers to the study of the future with the use of the plural “futures” stressing the element of choice concerning what the future will be like. The term “alternative futures” denotes that the future is not fixed and various possibilities should be explored and one should seek to realize those that seem the most desirable. This characterization by H. Didsbury (1979) about futures studies lends credence to Futurist J. A. Dator’s (2002) emphasis that one’s values are central to and do become a clear consideration at every stage of any futures studies research.

Second, undertaking a dissertation centered on governance means that there needs to be at least a cursory acknowledgement of what is commonly understood by the term “governance.” There are scores of scholarly books detailing this vast subject of governance that encompasses everything from narrow problems of
institutional development upholding elements such as accountability, participation, predictability and transparency to broad questions related to the manner in which power is exercised within a society (R. Beschel, 1998). For purposes of this dissertation, I turned to The Global Development Research Center website launched in 2001 and which remains active to date to provide some insights on how this topic of governance is defined, characterized, and understood by numerous world players, including the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, and The British Council. I selected to utilize The British Council’s working definition of this term, ‘that governance involves interaction between the formal institutions and those in civil society and is a process whereby elements in society wield power, authority and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life and social upliftment,’ in the survey that I conducted on the futures of governance in Burma.

Finally, on Burma studies, I have freely borrowed from the available literature on Burma and selectively woven in appropriate futures facts to this undertaking. All the while, I remained mindful of the reality that
much of the relevant and most current literature has been provided by non-Burmese authors and scholars.

To clarify marrying Burma studies to futures studies to envision the futures of Burma, I accept that academia, as with much of the world today, is itself a global village and most studies are interwoven one with another. As a futures studies student, I have accepted that not only should the study of political science and history also be extremely important to a scholarly undertaking, but so should the disciplines of anthropology, cultural studies, and evolutionary systems theories. So much of futures studies include cross-fertilization with sociology, economics, psychology, ecology, and theory. Extensive cooperation between all of these several areas should come naturally and inter-disciplinary approaches should remain undisputed. In fact, I have learned from Futurist Dator that, to envision any futures, I would need to have the widest possible knowledge of history, cultures, languages, social sciences, natural sciences, space sciences, and philosophies. But, of course, I cannot know everything about these subjects. What I do know is that, in order to reconcile my focus on Burma with the field of futures studies, I have to draw
materials from the one and apply them to the other and vice-versa. Certainly, there is an inherent futures orientation to all inquiry-based education. And I can only presume that my envisioning alternative futures for governance for Burma for 2040 should be no exception and that my research would need to be a seamless task that takes this into consideration.

Practically, however, what remains at the heart of this undertaking is my concern for western knowledge of Burma being the key informant of my own research. Most world-wide academia and every discipline of it indeed appear to have been created by the west. The discipline of history itself is a western invention—as is political science. There appears to be few disciplines we can consider that have been created by any culture other than the west. This is not to ignore the extensive and vital influences of nonwestern learning on the evolution of western scholarship and academic forms and the emphasis in the world of learning today to move beyond the western academic hegemony. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that, despite my effort to shy away from seeming to speak for the Burmese people while engaging in research that partakes in envisioning their futures, I am handicapped
by the very nature of my undertaking. And I acknowledge that my assumption that I can adequately visualize Burma’s future by engaging in a discourse about it in the English language versus Burmese grammar, vocabulary, and syntax, from the very outset, flags this serious handicap. E. Said (1979) best describes my predicament:

No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society. These continue to bear on what he does professionally, even though naturally enough his research and its fruits do attempt to reach a level of relative freedom from the inhibitions and the restrictions of brute, everyday reality (p. 10).

Therefore, as I move forward with this project, what will be my real test is to see if, at a minimum, the discipline of futures studies indeed allows me to view alternatives for governance in Burma in 2040 through a more authentic prism. For my own preference would be that Burma, by 2040, readapts some indigenous form of governance, if that be what the Burmese people want. And that Burma does not find itself overly subject to the remote-controlled colonization prevalent in the politics of a technologically advanced 21st Century. In other
words, that Burma would be able to steer clear of the virtual governance that too often permits external actors and institutions to dictate from afar the mode of governance that must exist internally in any given number of sovereign nations that dot our globe. And its leadership still be able to independently ensure its citizens good governance.

The rest of this dissertation consists of Chapters 2 (Review of the Literature on Burma), Chapter 3 (Background on Burma), Chapter 4 (Theory and Methodology), Chapter 5 (Results), Chapter 6 (Discussion), Chapter 7 (What Burma Could Become), and Chapter 8 (Summary). A rundown of Chapters 2 through 7 follows.

The purpose of Chapter 2 (Review of the Literature on Burma) is to garner familiarity with some of the major scholarly works published in English on Burma and its environment and to enable me to use the information gleaned from these works to further my thinking on alternative and preferred futures for governance in Burma. Chapter 3 (Background on Burma) describes Burma's past and present governance. For instance, what Burma was pre-1886 ("monarchism") and between 1886-1947
("colonialism"); what Burma became during 1948-1962 ("civilianism") and during 1962-1988 ("dictatorism")2; and what Burma is 1988-present ("militarism"). Taken together, these two chapters permit snapshots of how Burma has come to be understood through its anthropology, religion, history, and politics. They help to (1) establish a basic working knowledge of Burma that dates back to the Pagan kingdom between the 9th and 14th centuries (a classical era considered to be the genesis for the modern Burma state); (2) bring attention to the relationship between the state and the sangha (the Buddhist religious establishment) that began then and continues today; and (3) consider Burma in the context of 19th Century European imperialism and the complicated power relations that have since unfolded, to include a scrutiny of the current military governance that unwaveringly has been in place since 1988.

Chapter 4 (Theory and Methodology) lays down a keystone futures theory related to the images of the futures, which originates from the work of post World War II Futurist, F. Polak. Chapter 5 (Results) provides the

2 I have coined the terms ‘civilianism’ and ‘dictatorism’ to describe these two periods, but acknowledge that the ‘dictatorism’ period is far more complicated. Later chapters in the dissertation further describe and discuss the mainly one-man-rule that ensued during 1962-1988.
particulars gleaned from a 21-question survey I conducted in 2006 to gather information about visions that people who are knowledgeable about Burma have about forms of governance that could unfold in Burma's futures. I must highlight up front that these visions are primarily based on the responses of the Burmese and others who live outside of Burma and this in itself speaks volumes for the impact that spatial-politics has on undertakings such as mine. For a sundry of reasons further discussed in this chapter, I did not rely on a random sample of people living in Burma to express their opinions and preferences, nor did I attempt to try to deduce their preferences from newspapers or stories or any such indigenous sources, nor did I try to deduce futures from any quantitative data from within Burma. Chapter 6 (Discussion) hones in on some key survey results related to respondents' demographics, examines respondents' overall governance selections, and compares specific selections made by respondents who are Burmese citizens or non-citizens and by respondents who have or do not have children. I assumed that Burmese citizens and respondents who have children would consider themselves as having more of a stake in Burma's futures. This
chapter also lists several factors that respondents rank as important for shaping future governance in Burma, to include a sound economy; a solid educational system; resolution of ethnic issues; the influence of a politically involved Buddhist sangha; student movements and activities; technological advancement; actions and views of regional and international nations; and the impact of globalization. Most of these are responses in relation to the current governance, so may be somewhat misleading. Finally, the chapter considers whether or not respondents' expectations and aspirations for Burma's futures would sway my images for alternative and preferred futures for governance for Burma for 2040.

Chapter 7 (What Burma Could Become) further explores my images for Burma. I utilize the Four Futures analytical tool outlined in Chapter 4 to imagine whether Burma, by 2040, will be a nation that is in a state of governance that has shown economic growth, that has collapsed, that has organized itself around some overarching set of values, or that has transformed itself to become completely different from what is expected or assumed. In addition to developing a sequence of events
that could bring about these scenarios, I also design my preferred futures for governance for Burma for 2040.

At no time does this research lead to a prediction of any single future in the sense of stating "precisely" which form of governance will emerge in Burma by 2040. Its only aim is to identify and examine manifold images of political futures that exist for Burma, eventually discarding those that appear too strait-jacketed. As put forth by Dator (2002), ultimately, what it permits me to do is to detail the origins and history of these varying images, look at how these images may animate individual and group action, and then anticipate how the Burmese, acting on the basis of such images of their futures, may push their society toward one future or another, while simultaneously letting their images pull them forward.

As a final point, the data collected from a comprehensive review of the literature and communications with indigenous Burmese and non-Burmese experts via the survey instrument obviously are what have helped me to envision these alternative futures and to describe my own preferred future. Again, I want to highlight that most of my survey respondents live outside of Burma and I recognize that the nature of my study would change
considerably were my survey to be conducted inside the borders of Burma. What is most important is that, while part of my dissertation research was spent in assessing the factors that will shape this governance and how it might evolve, part of my research called for me to simply keep an open mind so that I could stay true to the timeless urging of Polak (1973) and "dream finer dreams" than I had ever considered dreaming about new possibilities of governance for Burma.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature on Burma

A review of the literature discloses that no single study is devoted solely to what could transpire in Burma in the 21st Century. While there is no dearth of literature discussing Burma's past and present, only a handful of these works mention what could be Burma's futures. There appears to be a paucity of current information about theories and methods and facts and figures on or about Burma. As D. Steinberg (2001) explains it, if one should happen upon such direly needed research material, it often has been produced, provided, and published primarily by those who are not Burmese, whose agendas could be construed as starkly foreign, and whose intent is possibly suspect. Authentic information about Burma is limited; field work is generally prohibited by the Burmese authorities; information is hoarded for undeclared reasons; statistics are unreliable; and outsiders are discouraged from probing.

M. Aung-Thwin (1985) elaborates on this dilemma. He writes that scholars too often approach Burma studies by focusing on the 1886-1948 short, colonial period in its
history, where readily available primary data from English language sources help exacerbate the problem of autonomous history. He points out that these problems are further compounded by the irony that, “While Burmese historians with the language skills have been weak in current theoretical issues, Western historians of Burma endowed with a wealth of theory have been weaker in the indigenous language” (p. 245).

I therefore approach this literature review with some trepidation, but remain wedded to echoing a truth expressed by E. E. Schattschneider (1983), who said, “The thesis is that we shall never understand politics unless we know what the struggle is about” (p. v). Hence, I undertake this review intent on gaining an understanding of what Burma’s struggle is about and I will not deign to discuss my preferred futures for Burma without this direly needed buttressing.

Although this dissertation uses the filter of futures studies to envision an array of alternative futures for governance in Burma, I clarify upfront that this is a dissertation about Burma and its futures and not a dissertation about futures studies with Burma as an example of what futures studies concepts mean or how they
can be used. As such, I will not privilege futures studies, but instead simply utilize some of its concepts discussed in Chapter 4 (Theory and Methodology) to abet my thoughts about Burma’s futures. Consequently, the principal purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate some familiarity with the major scholarly works derived from English language sources on Burma and its environment. Where appropriate, I will indicate how I intend to use the information I learn from the works I review elsewhere in my dissertation.

The review will examine literature that runs the gamut from numerous 19th and 20th Century publications on Burma at large to a handful of recently published works by academic experts on Burma’s governance. I purposely concentrated on a body of literature that will open up my eyes to what is intrinsically Burma, that is, works that focused on or extensively discussed Burma’s religion, its beliefs, its traditions, its history, its politics, and its governance. Each of my selections is meant to be encapsulated by the following objectives: (1) to help gain insights into what Burma was; (2) to help understand why and what Burma became; and (3) to help acknowledge what Burma is. I believe that by laying this foundation
and working within this framework, I will be able to go on to utilizing the filter of futures studies to envision what Burma could become.

What follows are two tiers of literature that I perused. Tier One reflects the literature that I relied heavily on to gain some insight into Burma’s religion, including its belief system, folk elements, and traditions and aspects of Burma’s history, society, politics, and governance. This is the literature that provoked my own thinking about Burma and that helped me to eventually think out of the box to envision alternative and preferred futures for governance for Burma in 2040. Tier Two is a rundown of other added-value literature that I browsed through and that contributed at the margins as I worked at building a knowledge base with which to think about Burma.

Literature on Burma: Tier One

Insights into Burma’s classical history and religion

In Pagan: The origins of modern Burma, Aung-Thwin (1985) utilizes the long-term approach to study the classical kingdom of Pagan. He considers this 12th and
13th Century classical kingdom the basis for understanding the origins of the Burmese state. His sources are primarily derived from Old Burmese, Pali, and Mon stone inscriptions that recorded the pious deeds of Pagan’s merit-seeking donors. His view is that Pagan and its underlying principles shaped the Burmese state and society until British annexation occurred in the 19th century. At the core of his discussion is the issue of institutional continuity, a theme I will revisit as I envision alternative and preferred futures for governance in Burma. He emphasizes that what remained continuous throughout the centuries in Burmese society were critical concepts related to kingship, law, religious beliefs, the merit-path-to-salvation, monastic landlordism, and *sasana* (religious) reform.

On an aside, and as if to prevent my being overly enamored with Burma’s classical past, S. Krishna (1999) reminds, in a study titled *Postcolonial insecurities: India, Sri Lanka, and the question of nationhood*, that “Nations, whatever their illusions about their timeless existence, have invariably emerged out of accidents and conjunctures” (p. 238). Still, in the case of Burma, it would be hard-pressed to argue that the classical kingdom
of Pagan was a mere accident, especially since it lasted 400 years. Indeed, Aung-Thwin points out that Pagan did not suddenly appear, but that it probably grew from a small, fortified city to a sophisticated and bustling metropolis because of the socioeconomic and cultural foundations established by the pre-classical Pyu period. Archeological excavations in Burma suggest the presence of an Early Hoabinhian culture that lasted until approximately 4000 B.C., a later Hoabinhian period between 4000 and 2000 B.C., and a fully metal manufacturing period between 2000 and 1000 B.C. However, there is a dearth of information about what occurred between 1000 and 200 B.C. when the Pyu appeared. Following the destruction of the last Pyu city in 832 A.D., four major dynasties followed, of which Pagan is the first.

According to Aung-Thwin, a prime example of the continuity of Burmese institutions and the circular relationships that reoccur in Burmese society can be found in the intricate relations that existed between the sangha (the Buddhist religious establishment) and the state. It was this relationship that allowed Pagan to flourish and grow, but it also was this relationship that
led to Pagan’s eventual downfall. He says that the factors that had nurtured Pagan in the first place eventually became the forces that contradicted and destroyed it. What kept this relationship afloat during the Pagan era was the fundamental Burmese Buddhist belief in the merit path to salvation and the ultimate Burmese Buddhist desire to be free from rebirths. This was a compelling factor for rulers to lavishly donate to the sangha so that they could accumulate a storehouse of merit. He details the relationship between the king and the sangha and the economic ties between this religious establishment and the state in classical Burma. With the belief that monks served as intermediaries to one’s attainment of salvation, there remained entrenched in the society the need to be responsive to the needs of the monastery. During the Pagan era, land and labor donations were at its height and the approximately 3,000 temples built during this period are a testament to these grand gestures. But heavy donations led to a wealthy sangha and a wealthy sangha meant a less-than-austere sangha, which then required the king, as defender of the faith and the chief donor, to exercise his right to purify the religious order. A purified sangha, however,
once again justified an increase in donations to the monasteries. Thus the circuitous relationship repeated. These acts of charity to the one key element of society that was tax-exempt came with a high price tag. For a fattened sangha eventually led to a shortage of revenues and royal coffers would once again suffer losses that were in the long run detrimental to their survival.

Following its decline, other dynasties followed but did not fundamentally alter Pagan’s institutions. For it behooved successive rulers to retain or resurrect the traditions of their predecessors in order to legitimize their own raison d’etre. Aung-Thwin says this is where the continuity of Burmese institutions originated and survived long after the destruction of Pagan as a viable state and well into the framework of the Burmese society of today. He notes that the relationship between sangha and state is today less one of economics and more politically based, and that the merit-path to salvation may have less meaning in an emerging modern economy that could be linked to the world market system. He adds, however, that the sangha still holds considerable wealth and only time will tell how secular Burmese Buddhist society will become.
The daughter of Burma’s founding father Aung San has stated that Burma’s future is assured (Aung San Suu Kyi, 1995). With Pagan as the foundation of its very existence, I almost certainly can echo this sentiment and sense myself why Burma’s futures will always be assured. My preference would be for the Burmese to always have the option to turn to that which is ancient and tradition and to return to their past values that have upheld them for hundreds of years.

V. Lieberman (1987) in “Reinterpreting Burmese History,” espouses a more linear, progressive perspective, but agrees that major structural themes in modern Burmese history have pre-colonial precedents. Lieberman challenges viewing the entire pre-colonial royal era (from the mid-9th Century A.D. to the late-19th Century A.D.) in Burma as one era during which the state’s political, economic, social, administrative, and religious systems remained static. He confronts the idea of assuming that it was the advent or ascent of the British that finally broke this static mold. Lieberman argues that Burma experienced significant administrative, military, and economic transformations post-British rule that were derived from self-conscious experimentation,
from foreign invasions, from domestic agricultural and demographic growth and from the Indian Ocean influences. In other words, even if only weakly, administrative changes in the monarchical period foreshadowed 21st Century transformations.

Lieberman concedes that the colonial era may have represented an extremely dramatic acceleration in change, but there was no fundamental change of direction. He admits that he once argued that the military-based government of contemporary Burma had drawn very substantially upon pre-colonial traditions, that British rule was a short-lived interlude between regimes that showed more similarity to one another than to the colonial order, and that moral principles used to justify the suppression of extra-bureaucratic power centers offered parallels to pre-colonial concepts of Buddhist regulation. Lieberman acknowledges that he no longer defends these propositions, at least not on the basis of available research. He states it is possible that many Buddhist references in military pronouncements are partly rhetorical and designed to explain socialism to the rural masses in a familiar language that allows for the legitimization of military rule. The current military
government shares with the British a historically rationalized commitment to linear progress, economic development and social engineering. That, in theory and practice, the Burmese army of today has favored a degree of socioeconomic mobility that contrasts sharply with the royal determination to preserve hereditary caste-like service groups throughout the countryside.

Especially interesting are his comments related to the tendency among Western scholars to assess movements against both the colonial regime and the current socialist government primarily in terms of their ethnic content. While he does not deny the importance of ethnicity as a symbol of political identity, he suggests that many of the rebellions of the past three centuries in Burmese history were reactions to taxation and not to who was controlling the state. In my view, perhaps Lieberman is arguing in the lingo of the 20th Century, "It's the Economy, Stupid."

The many works of M. Spiro (1966, 1978, 1982), J. Brohm (1972), and M. Mendelson (1961) provide glimpses into Burma's spirituality. Spiro details Burmese-held religious ideas and what the social and cultural consequences of holding them were (and are) for the
Burmese society. Summarizing the concepts of Buddhism as materialism, atheism, pessimism, nihilism, egoism, and renunciation, he discusses three types of Buddhism, one that aspires to be released from the Wheel of Life, one that remains tied to it, and one that is concerned with such things as the curing of illness, protection from demons, prevention of droughts, etc. He notes that it is not that there were three types of Buddhism in Burma, but that all three types were found in varying degrees in Burma’s Buddhists. In his fieldwork, he found that the importance of Buddhism in the lives of the people was revealed in the extraordinary percentage of the average family income devoted to Buddhism, in the high percentage of males who entered the Buddhist order and the great reverence in which they were held, in the large amounts of time and energy expended toward Buddhist ends, and in the importance of Buddhist piety as a crucial dimension in political success. He found Scripture was constantly appealed to in order to justify one’s actions and to criticize another’s behavior. He also found that villagers spent an inordinate amount of time discussing things Buddhist. He found that it is essential to emphasize the importance of Buddhism as a fundamental
ingredient and symbol of Burmese national identity. In other words, for the Burmese villager, to be Burman is to be Buddhist. Burmese who are not Buddhists were viewed for the most part as non-Burmese.

M. Spiro also elaborates on the paradox of the Buddhist doctrine of suffering and the Burmese attachment to the world and its pleasures. He says that not only do the Burmese desire a long duration of life, but that thousands of monks and many more laymen invest much time and great wealth in prolonging their lives through an occult practice by which they aspire to prolong their lives to the time when the future Buddha, Maitreya, is to appear in 2,500 years, with their goal still being nirvana. For it is believed that those alive at that time can attain nirvana by worshiping the resurrected Buddha. While the exact date of Buddha’s birth is uncertain, it usually is cited as 400-480 BCE.

Spiro says that nobody knows how many monks there really are in Burma and that the Burmese Order has long resisted any governmental attempt to take its monastic census. They fear a census would constitute government interference and also would uncover how many bogus men in yellow robes inhabit the monasteries, thus bringing
discredit to the monkhood. Meanwhile, the genuine monks—most from poor village families—have merely exchanged one social system for another and are required to live in accordance with the norms and regulations of the Rule. He points out that the existence of rival monastic branches in the Burmese sangha is as old as Burmese Buddhism itself and that political monks are not a recent phenomenon in Buddhist Burmese history. Spiro notes that, ultimately, the relationship between the sangha and the state continue to be one of interdependence, the state being responsible for purifying the order and the order being responsible for assuring that the state keep steadfast to Buddhist principles.

Spiro concludes that most monks and laymen, especially in the villages, are deeply opposed to the involvement of the sangha in political activities and demand absolute indifference to politics. This opposition is based on the classical Buddhist distinction between the secular and worldly and the sacred and otherworldly. Of those who are politically involved today, there appear to be three types: (a) those bogus monks who wear the robes, but hold a hidden political agenda; (b) those monks who believe the political process
must be influenced, but only when Buddhism is at stake; and (c) those monks who believe they must influence politics in all matters related to the welfare of the human. I will utilize this base knowledge of the monkhood to better understand the September 2007 protest marches inside Burma that included the participation of hundreds of monks.

J. Brohm discusses an integrated religious system wherein aspects of Buddhism and Animism constitute the Burmese religious scene. He notes that much of the literature on Burma is based on the premise that Burma is one of the most actively Buddhist countries in the world, but he reminds that there are residual elements in Burmese religion that owe little or nothing to Buddhism. This he describes as the "animatism" that involves the belief that even inorganic objects may contain a form of life energy, personal or impersonal, that will permit or cause interaction with the biological world. Specifically, the Burmese believe that there are a number of classes of spiritual creatures and toward whom behavior is directed, best known as nats. He advises against holding the view of Burmese being only Buddhist or only Animist. At least at the village level, both
these appear to be two sides of the same coin. He says there is only one legitimate religion practiced by the Burmese. Until or unless the symbols that the Burmese associate with the supernatural changes, this practice can best be called a “Burmese religion.”

M. Mendelson too discovered in his field work that not all the beliefs and rituals in Burma neatly fitted into the categories of Theravada Buddhism or Animism. He describes the existence and activities of an association he calls Messianic Buddhist to which he had first-hand exposure. The cult consisted of people whose manipulation of various magical techniques associated with alchemy, mantras, medicine, and cabbalistic signs lead them to gradually acquire hierarchical degrees of material power over the animate, the inanimate, and the supernatural. The object of the group is to await the coming of the future Buddha and, during this wait, an individual or individuals assume the throne and purports to clean up the country. But utilizing the concept of his several reincarnations, he succeeds in claiming legitimate authority over the people.

Maung Htin Aung (1959), in Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism, also writes at great length about the Burmese
belief in astrology, alchemy, and in the spirits (nats). Burmese, whether in the villages or in the cities, consult astrologers and worship the spirits without letting these spirits interfere in their practice of Buddhism. He traces the folklore that is present in Burmese Buddhist and traces its origins to folklore that was present over fifteen centuries ago. The astrology practiced in Burma stems from Hindu origins and centers around the position of the planets. He discusses what Burmese magical beliefs allowed that Buddhism prevented, for example, the idea that a soul is transferred from one body to another.

The above span of literature on Burma most certainly helps to solidify my understanding and acceptance that religion, spirituality, and traditions will all have to weigh heavily on my envisioning of alternative futures for Burma. That this is all innately Burmese and will know no past, present, or futures times barriers.

 Insights into Burma’s minorities

F. K. Lehman (1981) writes that Burma traditionally has experienced complex relations with various minority groups, that traditionally there have been varying models
of relations with individual groups, and that it may not always be clear just who the minorities are. Furthermore, even if it were clear, there would be no single minority problem and therefore no single blanket minority solution or policy that can solve the problems that exist. He advises finding out what a minority's traditional relation to Burman civilization has been before attempting to change the relationship. In other words, not to simply judge the groups from their outward appearances but to dig back into their historical ties. He suggests that the several ethnic categories should be treated as roles and that these roles need not be defined in absolute terms but instead could be relative to the whole system of other roles. Most striking of what he said is that, throughout the pre-colonial period of history, the Burmese had a reasonable correct tacit understanding of the nature of their relations with bordering peoples, tribal and non-tribal. That Burma seems to have lost this understanding today is almost certainly directly attributable to the importation of very explicit European ideas about nations, societies, and cultures, and the kinds of phenomena that they are taken to be.
R. Taylor (1982) characterizes Burma ethnographically as one of the most diverse countries in the world with an immense range of linguistic, cultural, and ecological variation. He writes that it was the colonialists who introduced broad ethnic labels such as Burmans, Chins, Shans, Kachins, Kayahs, Mons, Arakanese, Tavoyans, and Karens that then eventually became accepted by Burma’s political elite. According to Taylor, what this 19th Century European conceptual shorthand of Burma’s ethnicity has done is burden the nation throughout the 20th Century with an irresolvable political issue wherein these ethnic categories have taken on a life of their own. Taylor’s concerns certainly seem justified especially given our awareness that these ethnic issues still need readdressing in the 21st Century.

Taylor echoes Lieberman’s view that, in pre-colonial politics and war, ethnicity was of limited importance in determining political behavior except perhaps in times of extreme crisis or when political leaders needed a differentiating ploy to distinguish their positions from the hegemonic claims of their rivals. That, in the Burma before the British, what was important were traditional patron-client relations, the nature of kingship, and
regional loyalties. But Taylor again reminds us that we are studying a Burma that has long been modernized and where western ideas of ethnic conflict and western notions of frontier, state, and nation have not only shaped Burma’s politics, but also have been subscribed to by the Burmese political elite. As Taylor makes clear, in the end what was left were Burmese political leaders who use the ethnic issue as a basis for their claims about mass support and autonomous or separate power, thus further entrenching the concept of ethnicity in its western archaic meaning.

Insights into Burma’s militarism, democracy, and leadership

Two questions that I now pose relate to “what of militarism?” and “whither democracy?” For the former, I turn to J. Wiant’s paper on the “Tradition in the service of revolution” (Lehman, 1981). Wiant examines two broad symbolic areas—the structure of rule and the role of the military—in the BURMESE WAY to socialism (versus the Burmese way to SOCIALISM). I would venture that much of what he says about the military still holds true today. That the corporate solidarity and commitment to the
revolution displayed during the March 1962 coup continues today. That in the minds of the military rulers, there probably is no turning back and that any glance at the past is made only to draw from the vast symbolic reservoir of Burmese tradition and whatever is quintessentially Burmese. He also describes the successful manipulation of Burmese symbols by contemporary leaders. If military rule is to continue into the future, Wiant seems to be suggesting that the men in charge will need to upgrade these symbols. That the younger military officers will be calling for a new symbolic justification for their participation in a continued revolutionary role.

For whither democracy, I examine the writings of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi who, in Freedom from fear and other writings (1995), appears to be trapped in a time warp. Under political house arrest for most of her political life during the past decade, she devotes a segment of her book to the notion that the people of Burma are on a quest for democracy. But she caveats this by saying that they are on a "Burmese" quest for democracy, that they will explore not only politics and practices of the external world, but will look to their
internal spiritual and intellectual values in their search for this path.

In his comments included in her biography cited above, J. Silverstein raises some rather telling questions when he asks whether she can come through for the Burmese people if she were to be put to the test. He notes that, so far, she does not appear to have a well thought-out plan of execution of how to translate her proposal for democracy into reality, how to institutionalize it, how to achieve national unity, how to improve the economy, and how to rectify Burma’s human rights violations. That, to date, she has remained untried and isolated and thus has succeeded in keeping the Burmese people believing she is the one who will set them on a new course if only she would be set free to do so. Silverstein seems to fear that were she indeed given an opportunity to rule the roost, she too may be forced to compromise and accept the realities of Burma that have developed over the past 40 plus years.

Aung-Thwin (2002) derides the scenario where western influences have imposed upon Burma a situation with an either/or choice, that it is a choice between Aung San Suu Kyi and the military government’s policies. He
discerns a forced polarization. He states that, in the end, most Burmese are cut from the same cloth whether they are those currently governing, those who wish to govern, and those who may come to govern. In short, one Burmese can be as authoritarian and intolerant as the next. Or, as Tayeb Salih in *Season of Migration to the North* writes, "The fact that they came to our house, I know not why, does that mean we should poison our present and our future? Sooner or later they will leave our country....Once again, we shall be as we were...and if we are lies, we shall be lies of our own making" (Said, 1994, p. 212).

Aung-Thwin reminds that there is a post after post-colonialism and that Said (1979) asking whether modern imperialism ever ended continues to be a valid question. He zooms in on what he terms "democracy jihad," which he describes as a secular crusade to force upon nations such as Burma a western yardstick that does not appear to be meaningful, at best is impractical, and almost certainly is unlikely to bear the expected "western" results. He also reminds us that white missionaries who once upon a time felt obliged to save the souls of those whom they perceived as savages have simply been replaced by a
different sort of mission—one bent on propagating democracy among those it perceives as being “political heathens.” He discusses democracy jihad’s assumption that the electoral process is the sole criterion for determining legitimate authority and cautions against overemphasis on the quantification of legitimacy. In my view, to enforce a western yardstick in a case such as Burma is to then be echoing to the people of Burma the words of Karl Marx that they cannot represent themselves; that they must be represented.

Aung-Thwin reiterates that, unlike in the west, among the Burmese people, anarchy is feared far more than is tyranny (a concern that Thant Myint-U (2006) also touches on in The River of Lost Footsteps). He cautions against imposing on the Burmese natives concepts that resemble western-style democracy for which there is no equivalent indigenous Burmese term. Why, Aung-Thwin asks, is it intrinsically more desirable for Burma to shed overnight seven hundred years of what it has been simply to become a copy of what the west or the “Other” thinks it should be. Burma is far too complex to be regarded so simplistically. He points out that it has been scarred by British colonialism for whom the East was
a career; that the current power struggle is one between elite individuals; that there are ongoing socio-economic and political tensions between various forces, including generational tensions; and that there has been and will continue to be unique problems related to Burma's several minority ethnic groups. Into this mix must be thrown regional conflicts, traditions, and religious beliefs that are intrinsic to Burmese society. But what Burma can be counted on to do, according to Aung-Thwin, is what it has done before. It simply will choose to choose the "Burmese" way, whatever that may entail.

I also felt it important to examine books about the leadership styles and behaviors of Burma's past leaders. As such, I reviewed numerous books on Burma's founders, including Maung Maung's (1969), Burmese and General Ne Win; U Thaung's (1990, 1995), Ne Win and his hangmen and A journalist, a general and an army in Burma; U Nu's (1975), U Nu Saturday's Son, and J. Silverstein (Ed), The Political Legacy of Aung San (1993).

Insights on Burma from three selected authors

In the remainder of this Tier One review, I have singled out for special mention the works of three
authors (one American and two Australians) for their scholarly focus on Burma in a more modern period and for outlining directions in which Burma could traverse in the future. Their contemporary and objective works have greatly shaped my own musing on all things Burma mainly because I sense that what is mostly absent from their writing is the underlying notion that one must privilege democracy. As I attempt to gain knowledge about Burma as a country, I view it important to maintain a baseline that accepts the "ill-legacy" of disorder that 20th Century Burmese inherited from their British colonialists when they were handed back a supposedly sovereign nation sans a sovereign ruler—this in a land where monarchism can be traced back to Pagan days and where traditional relations between the monarch, the sangha, and the populace can be traced back for centuries.

First, Australian-citizen R. Taylor (1987), in The State in Burma, discusses two options that the state now faces. One is to open the society to external institutions and forces such as the world economy and powerful military alliances. This access to outside resources will allow the state to better establish its own position, but also cause it to lose some, if not all,
of its autonomy and sovereignty. The other is for the state to force itself, as is, on its own society, eliminate its rivals through the power of law, and allow only those institutions that are dependent on it to exist. By staging the 1962 military coup and what has transpired since then, this appears to be the route Burma’s leaders have selected.

During the colonial stage, what made the state seem different was the British concern with the growth of trade, which set it apart from the government of the kings. If the pre-colonial state grew and expanded organically in response to internal political ideas, pressures and challenges, the colonial state sought to remake Burma in its own image and thus had the will to reshape internal social and economic structures to suit its own interests (profit motives). Consequently, Taylor says, the colonial state became more efficient and comprehensive than the pre-colonial state in the eyes of foreign observers, the British-Indian civil servants who constructed it and, eventually, even the Burmese political elite who inherited it. Taylor concludes that, if the soul of the pre-colonial state was the king, who was obliged to guard the customary legal concepts of the
Buddhist law of cause and effect, then the mind of the colonial state was the civil servant constrained by British legal concepts of precise bounds of authority, rigid rules of procedure, and the protection of life and property.

Taylor writes that the army justified its March 1962 coup, elaborated on in the next chapter, in the name of ensuring the continued unity of the nation or state, that the army attributed the weakness of the postcolonial state to parliamentary democracy and federalism. He states that although the Revolutionary Council, established by General Ne Win following this coup, did not initially phrase its seizure of power in the name of state reassertion, it did so in 1974 when it stated that it intended to establish a society of affluence and without human exploitation, with a strong governing power, and the long term independence of the state. Institutional rivals were forced to accept the Council’s terms for participation in a new political order or be eliminated by law. Those institutions allowed to persist were made dependent upon the state either through their personnel or their finances and were therefore unlikely to organize an opposition. The process of state
reassertion was gradual and many compromises had to be made between the ideal of state autonomy and dominance and the political, economic, and social conditions within which the state and its leading personnel functioned. What most determined the style of the Council and has consequently become characteristic of the style of the state since 1962, according to Taylor, is that a majority of its leading personnel have had their formative administrative and political experiences within the army. The army styles of command and planning and military analogies and examples have tended to be adopted by the state and its senior leaders. He concludes that it is difficult to know to what extent the state has been able to legitimize itself in the eyes of the population that appears resigned to accepting its symbols, ceremonies and message despite gaps that exist between the ideals of state and actions of leaders.

Second, D. Steinberg writes at the other end of the spectrum about the future of Burma, highlighting the need for a new public policy debate about Burma. In The future of Burma: Crisis and choice in Myanmar and Burma (1990) and in Burma: The state of Myanmar (2001), the starting point of his discussion is the coup of 1988 that
interestingly replaced one military regime with another. He talks about the current economic conditions, United Nations actions, and the complex and changing relations between Thailand and Burma. He stresses numerous tensions facing Burma that are caused or exacerbated by military rule that need to be addressed. Some of these tensions are related to issues of nationalism, ethnicity, narcotics, regional powers, and globalization. In his most recent book titled *Turmoil in Burma: Contested legitimacies in Myanmar* (2006), Steinberg encourages riddance of a western dualism that engenders absolutes, explaining that there is likely to be no single, positive solution for Burma. The Burmese future, he notes, “is obscure, but in all likelihood the military will continue in effective power under a civilianized government, with a degree of ‘democratic’ procedures but without their spirit of compromise and transparency...” (p. 269).

In his contribution to *Burma Myanmar: Strong regime, weak state*, Steinberg focuses on the importance of the perception of the patterns of power in Burmese society. These revolve around two contrasting, yet overlapping concepts, ana and awza. The former, he explains, is an ‘authority’ grounded in a centralized
sense of power inherent in an individual and inherited by certain individuals because of deeds that occurred in other incarnations and not necessarily related to a moral presence. The latter is an 'influence' that an individual has and is usually viewed as positive, whereas ana can be either positive or negative. So, for instance, Steinberg writes, the military governance has ana (authority) but specific individuals in Burma (such as opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi) could be considered as having awza (influence) because of her personal characteristics (Pedersen, et al., p. 97-98).

Lastly, Australian academic H. James (2005) also strongly contributes to the literature on Burma’s future and is distinctively prescriptive in her discussions of education, health, environment, and other security and sustainable developments that must occur if Burma is serious about shaking off the international community’s characterization of it as a least developed country.

In Security and sustainable development in Myanmar (2006), she focuses on the nexus between the Burmese people’s need to be free from fear (which she characterizes as the political climate) versus the Burmese people’s need to be free from want (which she
notes are the economic indices) and the inability of the general populace to fully participate in their nation's governance, thus leaving them both politically and economically poor. She urges the international community to rethink sanctions-oriented, isolationist policies aimed at Burma and encourages consideration of Burma as a normal developing country that is transitioning from socialism that could, given the right climate, overtime move to a more civil society (p. 176).

**Literature on Burma: Tier Two**

For additional insights into the functioning of Burma as a kingdom, a colony, a democracy, a dictatorship, and a military regime, I briefly turned to books written by both indigenous Burmese and non-Burmese authors.

**Insights into Burma by indigenous authors**


Of especial note is the work of an indigenous author: Thant Myint-U’s (2006), The river of lost footsteps: Histories of Burma permitted me not only to return to Burma’s historic past, but also enabled me to use it as a starting point to think about possible scenarios for alternative and preferred futures for Burma in 2040.
Insights into Burma by non-Burmese authors

Among non-Burmese authors, J. S. Furnivall's *The governance of modern Burma* (1958) is a meticulous work that told me as much about the author as his works. Furnivall, from the outset, seemed uncomfortable trying to describe the Burmese machinery without true insight into the Burmese mind. This apologist footnote is apparent in much of the literature on Burma that is produced by those who themselves are not Burmese. It appears to me that, almost with one accord, non-Burmese writers appreciate the reality that they lack, as puts it, the storehouse of Burmese oral history.

One author who, in my view, appears to have somewhat overcome this handicap, albeit I suppose still minimally from the Burman's perspective, is G. C. Scott (Shway Yoe) who resided in Burma in the 1880s and provides captivating glimpses into the everyday life of the Burmese from cradle to grave as well as rare and vivid pictures of the court life of Burma's last king, Thibaw. In *The Burman: His life and notions* (1882), Scott applauds and decries British rule by writing that the fall of Burma is overdue, yet admitting that Mandalay,
following British conquest, “is a vastly less interesting place than it used to be” (p. xx).

Silverstein (1977, 1980), whose works include *Burma: Military rule and the politics of stagnation* and *Burmese politics: The dilemma of national unity*, is a five-decade-long Burma watcher. Silverstein (2005)\(^3\) opines that what continues to keep the military in power stems from the ability of the generals to hijack critical socializing tools, such as schools and textbooks. He says that this is a deliberate campaign on their part to rewrite history and asserts that future generations could be denied knowledge of Burma’s past.

I also consulted C. Fink (2001), *Living silence: Burma under military rule*; M. P. Callahan (2003), *Making enemies: War and state building in Burma*; and A. Selth (2002), *Burma’s armed forces: Power without glory* to gain insights into Burma’s military mores. What I hear these authors say is that Burma’s military is here to stay. It has taken on a life of its own and will remain Burma’s bedrock.

A handful of other non-Burmese authors serve as a backdrop for my understanding of Burma because they have

---

\(^3\) Presentation at a Burma Round Table at the Annual Asia Society Conference in Chicago, 2005.
written first-hand accounts of their experiences in Burma. However, I kept in mind that some of these works may contain personal innuendos, may be heavily in favor of only democracy as a form of governance, or that one or another author may even be politically motivated and overloaded with anti-military sentiments. Such works include those by (a) J. F. Cady (1958, 1983), A history of modern Burma and Contacts with Burma, 1935-1949: A personal account; (b) B. Singh (1993, 2001), Independence & democracy in Burma, 1945-1952: The turbulent years and Burma’s democratic decade: 1952-1962: Prelude to dictatorship; (c) J. Sell (1999), Whispers at the pagoda: Portraits of modern Burma; (d) S. Tucker (2000, 2001), Among insurgents: Walking through Burma and Burma: The curse of independence; and (e) M. Skidmore (2004, 2005), Karaoke fascism: Burma and the politics of fear and Burma at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Cady is considered one of a relatively small number of Americans to be introduced first-hand to Southeast Asia prior to World War II. Singh, an Indian Sikh, was Commissioner of the Pegu Division in Burma in 1958 before he was forced to retire by the military government that seized control in 1962. American writers Sell and Tucker
each set out to discover Burma in the past decade and to chronicle stories relayed to them by the Burmese. Skidmore, an Australian, lived in Yangon (Rangoon) in the mid-1990s.

I realize that it will not be possible to envision Burma’s futures in isolation of what is going on globally and, in particular, regionally. As such, the roles of two powerful and gigantic neighboring states, China and India, must be taken into consideration as they vie to exert their influence not just on Burma but regionally and globally. Numerous authors mention, in passing, Burma’s relations with its several neighbors, including China and India. But Chi-shad Liang (1990), in *Burma’s Foreign Relations: Neutralism in Theory and Practice* has methodically recorded all of Burma’s relations, including with China and with India, up to 1990.

Finally, acknowledging that a grasp of current events in Burma is as necessary to envision its futures as is a solid foundation of its history, and not only in terms of its government structures and policies, I have examined the figures published by various organizations, including The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations on Burma’s demographic and
environmental trends. The most current figures I was able to obtain are listed in Appendix B and accompanied by a recent map of Burma in Appendix C. Other sources that provided demographic information related to developments in Burma’s social and economic sectors that I took into consideration as I researched and envisioned Burma’s futures included Khin Maung Kyi, et al. (2000), *Economic development of Burma: A vision and a strategy* and Mya Than’s (2005), *Myanmar in ASEAN: Regional cooperation experience*. The latter work states that Burma has a land area of more 676,000 sq. km, with a population over 50 million people that comprises 135 nationalities. The World Fact Book (2007) breaks these figures down into eight primary groups who speak approximately 100 languages and dialect (as the national language, nearly everyone can speak Burmese). The groups are Burman 68 percent; Shan 9 percent; Karen 7 percent; Mon 2 percent; Rakhine/Arakan 4 percent; Indian 2 percent; Chinese 3 percent; and Other 5 percent. Buddhists comprise 89 percent of the population; Christian 4 percent; Muslim 4 percent; Animist 1 percent; and Other 2 percent. Burma’s current divisions are Sagaing, Mandalay, Magwe (Magway), Pegu (Bago), Irrawaddy
Given the widespread role of changing technologies worldwide, I also bore in mind that political control in Burma’s futures will be affected by this phenomena and thus scanned the literature closely for any mention of this influence already being set in motion. To date, little appears to have been published on this issue.

I also have kept up with articles in The Journal of Burma Studies, an annual scholarly journal jointly sponsored by the Burma Studies Group, The Center for Burma Studies, and the Northern Illinois University’s Center for Southeast Asian Studies and also with The Journal of Asian Studies. Additionally, I have stayed up with media reports and a plethora of website postings about the current ongoing political and social events inside Burma, to include numerous reports about the mass protests and street demonstrations that transpired in September 2007 and the first known case of self-immolation in protest of military rule since 1962 that occurred in March 2008. I remain aware that my biggest challenge will be to continuously reflect upon these
contemporary occurrences because they could lead me to different conclusions and different alternative futures for governance in Burma in 2040. However, given these media reports and web postings are constantly moving targets, I will not address in any detail such individual articles or contributions in this literature review, but will plan to capture them in the remainder of the dissertation, as appropriate.

In summation, these two tiers of the literature review on Burma have helped me to lay the groundwork for what is to follow in the remainder of this dissertation and, as important, served notice that I too must heed Foucault's views about colonial discourses relating to a system of statements made up about colonies by the colonizers, only to become the discourse within which the colonized may come to see themselves (Ashcroft, 1998, p. 42).

Chapter 3 (Background on Burma) will hone in on what I learned from this review of the literature and discuss the types of governance that Burma has experienced in centuries past: Monarchism (Pre-1886); Colonialism (1886-1948); Civilianism (1948-1962); Dictatorism (1962-1988); and Militarism (1988-present). Numerous authors
vary in their descriptions of Burma's governance types. A. M. Mutebi in Kyaw Yin Hlaing (2005), *Myanmar: Beyond politics to societal imperatives*, as an example, breaks down the period 1948-present as follows: Parliamentary Rule (1948-62), Socialist Rule (1962-88), and Stratocratic Rule (1988-present). He admits he has oversimplified these periods and describes the first period as the sovereign Union of Burma through the end of democratic rule in 1962; the next period as 26 years of General Ne Win's rule; and the last period as Myanmar under military rule (pp. 142-144).

James (2005), in *Governance and civil society in Myanmar*, terms these "the various forms of political culture that Burma has experienced" and describes these as Monarchical (c.850-1886); Colonial (1886-1948); Democratic Welfare (1948-1958 and 1960-1962); and Socialist (1962-1988). She refers to post 1988 simply as Burma transitioning to a market economy state (p. 34). Elsewhere, she discusses the years 1948-1958 and 1960-1962 as Burma experiencing 12 years of a parliamentary democracy (p. 41).

The next chapter provides a brief explanation of the military's brief role during 1958-1960 in its capacity as
a "caretaker" government. While acknowledging that any number of more precise terms could arguably be used to describe the period between 1962-1988, given that General Ne Win led a military coup in 1962, after which he established a military dictatorship, and formed a one-party state, for purposes of this dissertation, I coined the label “dictatorism” to best capture, in my view, the numerous complicated facets that unfolded during this era.

Of final import, it is James who provides the lynchpin for my discussion of preferred futures in Chapter 7 (What Burma could become), when she surmises that “the postcolonial state since 1948 has been seeking to recover aspects of the monarchical state as part of the ongoing discourse on cultural identity in Myanmar” (p. 35). I take away from this the need for Burma to perhaps bring back the pre-colonial relations it had with its minority groups that have become garbled as a result of colonialism.
Chapter 3: Background on Burma

Again, no single study is fully devoted solely to what could transpire in Burma in the 21st Century. Several Burmese and non-Burmese authors discuss at great length Burma’s past and Burma’s present, causing one to speculate whether they view Burma’s future as immaterial or maybe Burma as not having any future. Perhaps E. Said (1994) best explains this oddity. Burma “is.” Burma “is” 1962. Burma “is” 1988. Given recent events, Burma “is” 2007 or Burma “is” 2008 eventually could supersede all previous descriptors. Aung-Thwin (1999) elaborates on this as freezing in time an image of Burma that is used over and over again as needed, where no new or current information about Burma is sought. Let alone some vision of its futures. Plainly, Burma “is” not yet 2040.

Nevertheless, what is imperative for me as a scholar attempting to envision Burma’s futures is first to establish a basic working knowledge of Burma’s past and Burma’s present. Hence, the intent of this chapter on the background of Burma is to permit me some familiarity
with and allow for an appreciation of the splendor that once was Southeast Asia, as it relates to Burma. It perhaps will then lead to discovering that the classical kingdoms that existed between the 9th and the 14th centuries A.D. are the foundations upon which most of the modern countries of Southeast Asia, including Burma, are built. It also will permit some exposure to the superior civilization of Pagan (Bagan) in Burma, an essential benchmark given the claim that the modern Burmese state originated from the Pagan kingdom. Next will come gaining an awareness of the existence of numerous Burmese chronicles and attempting to grasp the intricacies of Burmese society with its never ending beliefs and its ever present nats (spirits). Finally, following an appreciation of an assortment of literature on Burma, I could begin to learn--and in most instances, unlearn--the numerous published views that have accumulated overtime related to Burma's history, sociology, literature, politics, economics, and religion, including the symbiotic relation between the state and the sangha and remain sensitive to the rhetoric related to Burma's current governance widespread in the world media about a nation that Thant Myint-U (2001) says is often portrayed
as a 'rich country gone wrong,' blessed at independence with everything from a high literacy rate to plentiful natural resources (p. 253). Interestingly, Burma’s literacy rate is still high (over 85 percent) and its natural resources still potentially represent a vast source of wealth.

The scene-setter that follows is drawn from these endeavors outlined above and eventually lead to snapshots subtitled (a) What Burma Was; (b) What Burma Became; and (c) What Burma Is. In addition to providing context for the rest of the dissertation, this backdrop also is meant to attest to the view that history does matter. D. North (1990), explaining the vastly different performances of economies over long periods of time, says that history “matters not just because we can learn from the past, but because the present and the future are connected to the past by the continuity of a society’s institutions” (p. vii). North’s belief that the choices of today and tomorrow are shaped by the past indeed is worth seconding. Burma’s political history certainly bears the responsibility for the formation of the governance that exists in Burma. What exists today in Burma’s political arena undeniably will have an impact on Burma’s futures.
R. A. Slaughter (1988) too emphasizes that, if we are to write convincingly about the futures, "we must know who we are, where we are from and whose interests we are pursuing" and that, instead of denying our historicity, reflexively appreciate it (p. 30).

Outside an initial description of the early formation of Burma, this chapter also contains an overview of political events that led to Burma’s independence in 1948, following approximately sixty years of British rule. It touches briefly on the Japanese occupation that began in 1942. It examines what transpired politically during the forty-year period of 1948-1988 and sketches what is the present nature of governance in Burma’s political society. Discussion of Burma’s present government is deliberately brief in this background segment because this issue, as needed, will be woven into the rest of the dissertation.

Given that leaders and leadership do help to shape governance to some extent, the discussion in this chapter also is interspersed with comments about the leadership styles of three key past political personalities who came to the forefront in three consecutive decades: Aung San (1940s), who is viewed as Burma’s George Washington; Nu
(1950s), who was independent Burma’s first prime minister; and Ne Win, who led a military coup in 1962 that displaced Nu’s civilian government (1960s). The discussion attempts to identify points, if any, at which these leaders could have, through their actions, made a difference to Burma’s current state of governance. Max Weber would have asked, did each of these leaders, during his era, ask of himself, through what qualities could he hope to do justice to this power given to him? How could he do justice to the responsibility that power imposed on him? And what kind of man did he have to be if he were to be allowed to put his hand on the wheel of history? (Gerth & Wright, 1958). Unquestionably, the power exerted by Burma’s various leaders has made a difference to the governance in Burma’s past and Burma’s present. Their past roles and, more importantly, the roles currently played by those in power today will have some impact on the governance that ensues in Burma’s futures. Steinberg (1990) says,

Power has always been intensely personal in Burma; loyalty within the government is to the person, not the institution. Burma never developed an indigenous, institutionalized civil service based on merit. Because loyalty is personal, political parties have generally
been devoted to their leaders rather than to programs (pp. 1-2).

Since the military took power some four decades ago, it has created a chokehold on power unrivaled in the world; it has endured the crumbling of authoritarian regimes all around the region; and the generals seemingly have remained untouched by international embargoes and bans (Callahan, 2003). For how much longer will the tatmadaw (military) be able to prolong its self-designation as the protector of the Union of Burma? If power in Burma indeed is highly personalized, then within the hierarchical ranks of the governing armed forces, power loyalties that could have an impact on envisioning alternative futures for governance in Burma probably already are at play. Who today has his or her hand on the wheel of Burma’s futures?

What Burma Was

Monarchism (Pre-1886)

What stands out in Burma’s prehistory is its geology and early stone cultures, its Anyathian and post-Anyathian tool types, and a Moulmein limestone cave uncovered in 2000 in Kayin State which is thought to have
been inhabited by humans between 9,000 and 6,000 years ago. Archeological excavations in Burma suggest the presence of an Early Hoabinhian culture that lasted until approximately 4000 B.C., a later Hoabinhian period between 4000 and 2000 B.C., and a fully metal manufacturing period between 2000 and 1000 B.C. There is some dearth of information about what occurred between 1000 and 200 B.C. when the cities of the Pyu appeared. But, by 180 B.C., Burma clearly had reached its formative age (Aung-Thwin, 1988).

Wheatley (1983) describes the urbanization of the Burmese Pyu cities where the population and its rulers appeared to have dwelt in houses of perishable materials such as timber and bamboo while their bricks seem to have been utilized for religious, funerary, and other ceremonial purposes. Three key Pyu cities (Beikthano, Halin, and Sri Ksetra) housed brickmakers, bricklayers, blacksmiths, silversmiths, goldsmiths, carpenters, potters, weavers, dancers, drummers, sculptors, scribes, monks, priests, courtiers, and rulers. Stargardt (1990) draws a picture of the Pyu as an agricultural society that had gained mastery over irrigation systems and as a culture that was devoted to Buddhism as well as to music,
song, and dance. She notes that cosmology, especially as it related to the concept of The Wheel, was evident in the construction of their cities, adding that labor was mobilized, an active trade was evident, brick manufacturing was ongoing, and a system of tax collection was in place. She argues that the urban character of the Pyu sites emerges strongly from the presence of the royal inner cities or citadels, the large number and size of the funeral halls, burial terraces, temples, stupas, and monasteries, the massive length and volume of the fortifications and the clear evidence that at each site there were large numbers of non-food producers who pursued their specialized callings in an hierarchical and well-organized society over many centuries. The Pyu people also appeared to have paid great attention to the burial of their dead with water playing a symbolic role. During the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C., they tended to group their funeral urns within as well as outside the great pre-Buddhist halls. Following their acceptance of Buddhist teachings in the 2nd Century B.C. to the 3rd Century A.D., urns were grouped along the perimeter of the stupa platforms. In a third stage (4th Century A.D. to the 7th and 8th centuries A.D.), urns were grouped
together in small tomb structures outside the city walls well away from the areas of habitation and worship. What emerges from these details is that the existence of the Pyu is a pronouncement that the classical kingdom of Pagan did not appear out of thin air, but may have been a successor to Pyu.

Aung-Thwin (1985) agrees that Pagan did not suddenly come into being, but that socioeconomic and cultural foundations established by the urbanized sites of the first nine centuries led to it growing from a small, fortified city to a sophisticated and bustling metropolis and the political and cultural capital of the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries. Burmese chronicles date its founding to about A.D. 849. Thus the classical kingdom of Pagan becomes the bedrock for understanding the origins of the Burmese state. Aung-Thwin opines that the modern Burmese state originated from the Pagan kingdom that had a superior civilization, and he describes a relationship between the conceptual and the structural and the effects of that relationship on the Pagan dynasty as well as on dynasties that followed.

Pagan's two and one-half million people consisted of Burmese, Mons, Shans, Chins, Kachins, Arakanese, Karens,
and Indians who were divided into horizontal classes and vertical patron-client structures. The three major horizontal class divisions were commoners, officialdom, and the royalty. Vertical ties cut across these horizontal divisions and were based on birth, occupation, political power, and spiritual rank. The commoners were further divided into those who were unattached, those who were attached to private individuals, those who were attached to the sangha, and those who were attached to the state. Everyone had a place in society distinguished by titles, sometimes identified by tattoos, recognized by dress, and substantiated by personal names. The State's rituals and ceremonies preserved and perpetuated this hierarchy that did not just extend from the bottom to the top, but also from the center to its extremities, from king to commoner, from Buddhahood to animality. Units of administration included provinces, towns, and villages. Laws were divided into sangha, or civil, or royal, or criminal categories. Land and labor were either crown, or sangha, or private. And the entire political structure was a matter of relationships between the king and his princes, his queens, his ministers, and his advisers. His legitimacy and his survival were
determined by how he managed each of these relationships. Most important, the king also had to manage an intricate relationship with the sangha.

The next two centuries for Pagan were a period of development, unification, and centralization of resources, both material and intellectual. Pagan kings individually and each in his own style insured the perpetuation of the civilization. Aung-Thwin describes the five fundamental components of the Pagan system: Theravada Buddhism involved primarily with the merit-path to salvation; an economy of redistribution embedded primarily in religion, but also in politics, social status, and law; an administration based on an agrarian environment, juxtaposed to and affected by a limited and continuously low supply of labor, a cellular and hierarchic social organization consisting of both patron-client ties and horizontal classes; codified law, whose principles reflected the values inherent in these institutions founded upon the concept of hierarchy and communalism, which upheld, supported and articulated the essence of Burmese conceptions of justice; and a polity based on the kammaraja (superhuman) form of kingship, with a structure that supported and also contradicted it,
rituals that justified it, and symbols that simplified it.

Aung-Thwin suggests that what primarily followed during the Pagan period was the institutionalization of the Burmese Theravada Buddhist tradition. He notes that Pagan's eventual collapse resulted from the devolution of wealth in the form of taxable land and labor to the religious sector. It was a problem that plagued Burmese society for the next millennium. The merit path to salvation, the spending of one's material resources on religious things to insure a better rebirth dominated religious belief and the ultimate material result of this belief was the construction, on a tremendous scale, of temples and monasteries, permanently endowed with productive but tax-exempt land and labor. Thus Pagan declined because these very factors that nurtured it in the first place were the ultimate forces that contradicted and destroyed it. This significant relationship between the king (the world conqueror), and the monk (the world renouncer)—with each king attempting to purify the order of the sangha and with the last king facing so strong and wealthy a sangha that he was unable
to reduce it in size or power--was what led to the subsequent downfall of Pagan.

Over the next several hundred years, a series of small competing rulers, often feuding with each other and all failing to recreate the glories of Pagan, appeared and disappeared. Some key periods included the politically disorderly Ava period (approximately the next two centuries); the unified Toungoo dynasty (lasted until the end of the 16th Century); the Second Ava period (1800-1752) and the Konbaung dynasty (mid-18th Century to the last quarter of the 19th Century when the British terminated the dynasty).

Meanwhile, Britain, in the guise of the East India Company, strategically began extending its territory from India in the early 17th Century. Church writes that the Burmese court greatly underestimated the strength of the British East India Company. Thus, Burma, to its detriment, ended up having three altercations with the British in the 1800s.

A border dispute is cited for the first Anglo-Burma war (1824-1826), but the victorious British also are accused of engaging in this confrontation to lay claim to Burma’s natural resources. A minor dispute between
British and Burmese officials led to the second Anglo-Burma war (1852-1853). Evasion of royal taxes by the major British enterprise in Burma--The Bombay Burma Trading Corporation—supposedly resulted in the third Anglo-Burma war in 1885.

The victorious British abolished the Burmese monarchy and the indigenous institutions that had upheld it, exiled Burma’s last king, Thibaw, and his family to India and imposed six decades of colonial rule, even administering it as just another province of India until 1937.

Church writes that the two most vital institutions of Burmese society defining what it meant to be Burmese were seriously fragmented by British governance. The absence of a king destroyed the ritual and symbolism of the court and meant the Burmese state no longer had a center. The demise of the king also reduced the authority of the religious hierarchy because, for centuries, the king had been the patron of the sangha. The elimination of these binding forces in Burmese society was further compounded because there also were no indigenous replacements put in place.
Colonialism (1886-1948)

With its annexation to India in 1886, Burma became one more British province in British India. It was first governed from Calcutta and, later, from Delhi as a province of India under a chief commissioner. Administrative decisions and the Burmese military were based on Indian models and the Indian Civil Service managed all Burmese issues. The elite Indian Civil Service did not admit Burmese into its ranks for almost four decades following this annexation. In 1930, Britain recognized the need for separating Burma from India and a two-chamber parliament was decreed. Burmese politicians now had some authority, but defense, foreign affairs, and monetary policy portfolios were reserved for the British governor.

With the onset of World War II, the Burmese (already predisposed to the concept of independence during the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese war), were now further influenced by calls for independence in neighboring India. Leading the struggle for independence and also leading the Burma Independent Army, Aung San and 29 of his comrades secretly left Burma to negotiate with the Japanese. The "Thirty Comrades," as they historically are known,
returned to Burma accompanied by Japanese forces. Japan
defeated the British, occupied Burma, and rewarded its
supporters. In August 1943, Burma was given nominal
independence by the Japanese. Ba Maw, a founder of a
quasi-socialist party and someone who had escaped from
British imprisonment, was named the prime minister; Aung
San became minister of defense; and Nu (then another
student leader) became minister of foreign affairs. At
this time, the other future key leader, Ne Win, was a
brigadier in the Burma Defense Army, set up under
Japanese auspices.

But this collaboration between the Burmese and
Japanese was short-lived. The Burmese soon viewed the
Japanese presence as yet another occupation and not the
liberation from colonial rule that they were seeking.

Aung San Suu Kyi (1991)—the daughter of Aung San—writes,

"The soldiers of Nippon, whom many had welcomed
as liberators, turned out to be worse
oppressors than the unpopular British. Ugly
incidents multiplied daily. Kempei (the
Japanese Military Police) became a dreaded
word, and people had to learn to live in a
world where disappearance, torture, and forced
labour conscription were part of everyday
existence....There were, of course, Japanese
who lived in accordance with the principles of
justice and humanity and who befriended the
Burmese, but their positive contributions were
lost beneath the welter of militarist racism (p. 21).

Ironically, it was again with one-time student leader Aung San’s assistance that the British regained control of Burma from the Japanese in 1945. But it also was Aung San who later insisted, in a seven-point resolution drawn up by his Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL), that Burma should “become an independent sovereign republic called the Union of Burma, that all power should emanate from the people, that the constitution should guarantee social, economic, and political justice to all, and that the minorities must be granted safeguards” (Silverstein, 1977, p. 20). But the assassination of Aung San in July 1947 by a political rival at this critical juncture immeasurably changed the course of Burma’s history. Regarded by the peoples of Burma as their prewar and wartime resistance leader and the symbol of the drive for political independence, Aung San is acknowledged as the postwar architect of national unity and independence.

After Aung San’s death, British governor Hubert Rance called on Nu to reorganize the government. Nu, in a public address to the nation, pledged to walk in Aung
San's wake. A constitution was drawn and a final settlement was negotiated with Britain and signed by Nu and Britain's Prime Minister Clement Attlee in October 1947. This agreement provided that Burma would become a fully sovereign and independent state outside the Commonwealth. The British Parliament ratified the agreement in December and Burma became independent on 4 January 1948.

What Burma Became

Civilianism⁴ (1948-1962)

The British had divided Burma into two major sections: (a) Burma Proper included the geographical regions of central Burma, upper Burma, Irrawady Delta, Tanessarin and Arakan and the ethnic groups of Bama, Mon, and Arakanese and (b) Frontier Areas included the geographical and ethnic regions that belonged to the Chin, the Kachin, the Shan, the Kaya, and the Karen. The latter groups found the independent Union of Burma to be a one-sided domination and merely a mirror image of the

⁴ Given varying views of whether the terminology "democracy" is truly applicable to the governance mode that existed in Burma during this decade, I have coined the term "civilianism" in this dissertation to simply sum that civilians (vice monarchs or colonialists) primarily governed during this brief period.
British colonial Burma. Prime Minister Nu tried waging a political propaganda and psychological warfare to counter these anti-government forces. In 1951, he held general elections in some parts of Burma to boost democracy and he followed this win with another successful election in 1956. One could argue that his efforts resulted merely in reinforcing a formal structure and one could question the very characterization of Burma as a democracy during this period. James (2005) echoes Taylor (1996) in pointing out that dirty politics did occur during this era of so-called parliamentary-democracy that included "civil war, social disturbances, and authoritarian, non-democratic political actions" by Prime Minister Nu’s political party in its attempts to retain power by suppressing its opponents (p. 42). Meanwhile, by then, Lt. Colonel Ne Win was leading the Burmese Independence Army (now called the Burma National Army) in its push against the Burmese Communist Party and ethnic insurgents who were rebelling against the newly founded nation. A split in the party eventually tore apart the AFPFL in 1958 and led to Prime Minister Nu temporarily turning the reins of governance over to Ne Win on a caretaker basis so that the Union could be preserved. Parliament was not
dissolved and the Parliament actually passed an act that allowed him to take over for a specific time and Ne Win still had to answer to it. But, under the name of “Caretaker” Government, he took charge until 1960 at which time a third general election was held.

Nu was victorious and resumed charge. During this administration, he added three new states, Arakan, Mon, and Chin to the four existing states of Kachin, Shan, Kaya, and Karen. However, he would not acquiesce to demands by these states for a Federation of Burma. He viewed federation as akin to secession while these minority states viewed his government as chauvinistic, colonialist, and a betrayal of Aung San’s legacy.

These minorities...believed that they were promised the right to exercise authority in their own areas and preserve and protect their languages and cultures in exchange for voluntarily joining the Burmans in forming a political union and giving their loyalty to this new state. This policy of unity in diversity was articulated by Aung San and it was their faith in him as the future leader of the nation that convinced many among them to participate in writing the constitution and to join the union...[But] there were leaders among the Burmans who felt that the ethnic, cultural and territorial divisions amongst the peoples of Burma were artificial...result of British rule and colonial policy and that, in fact, all the people were really one (Silverstein in Lehman (Ed.), 1981, p. 51)
Nu’s decision to make Buddhism the state religion also met with opposition, but the religious issue soon subsided and Burma remained secular, but the question of federation, despite its ambiguities, did not go away.

**Dictatorism (1962-1988)**

In 1962, General Ne Win staged a coup aimed at preserving the Union and restoring law and order. Much of the literature depicts Ne Win as a dictator, hence my coining the descriptor “dictatorism” to capture this period of strongman Ne Win’s rule in Burma’s political history. Undoubtedly, numerous other terms could also be put forward to describe this era. A Revolutionary Council assumed all powers and, in turn, conferred all legislative, executive, and judicial power on its chairman, General Ne Win. A brigadier speaking for the Revolutionary Council justified the coup by explaining that leaders among the indigenous minorities were seeking greater autonomy or even secession, with some openly threatening revolt if their demands were not met, and with some feudal lords wanting a return to feudal rule. The military feared that, if it did not act, Nu might accede to some or all of the minorities’ demands at the
Federal Seminar that happened to be in progress at that time.

The first phase of military rule with Ne Win in control lasted until 1972. By 1974, the Revolutionary Council proclaimed that the people had adopted the State Constitution of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma. Much of what occurred on the electoral front during this period appeared to be an attempt to follow the Eastern European model. The Revolutionary Council was abolished and Ne Win was chosen chairman, under a new constitution, to become president of this military-led, one-party socialist system (the Burma Socialist Programme Party—the BSPP).

In 1987, acknowledging the economic degradation to which Burma had sunk when the United Nations declared it one of the world’s least developed nations, Ne Win initiated two contradictory moves: He freed the grain trade from government control in the most sweeping economic liberalization since 1962 and he demonetized 70 percent of the country’s currency, turning the economy into shambles. Societal turmoil erupted and demonstrations were rampant and, in July 1988, General Ne
Win resigned his position from the last official position
he held as chairman of the BSPP.

In September 1988, a second phase of military rule
began. The government was dissolved and replaced by a
post-BSPP military council called the State Law and Order
Restoration Council (SLORC). The literature describes
SLORC's response to student and street demonstrations
that continued as ruthless. Sell (1999) claims that
death tolls were higher than Tiananmen Square and
hundreds of students were killed or injured. Absent any
factual evidence, she writes,

But CNN did not broadcast live from Rangoon.
Indeed, months of dramatic street
demonstrations in the Burmese capital went
largely unrecognized by the rest of the world.
During one three-day period in September 1988,
an estimated one thousand people were killed.
Many of them were university students and
Buddhist monks (p. 30).

Burma, under this socialist military governance,
thus began her move from what was a long time ago an
epoch of monarchism to what would turn out to be an era
of militarism. Maung Maung (1999) uses the philosophy of
the BSSP to sum up what now is viewed as the ultimate
fate of Burma's past leaders and past history:

Things in this universe are transient and every
period in life is all too brief. Names are
forgotten as fast as all things fade; history books become obsolete even as they are written. Founders of religions and ideologies, men of world renown—statesman, generals, scholars, authors, kings—all are prone to this universal law of transience. They live and die as every other being on this earth. When they die, they leave behind a faint echo of their existence, but this echo does not resound forever (p. 37).

So what became of Burma’s prominent leaders Nu and Ne Win? Nu sought exile in India, but returned to Burma under an amnesty in 1980. He died a playwright and author in February 1995. Ne Win died in December 2002, while under house arrest and somewhat inconspicuously for such a public figure.

What Burma Is

**Militarism (1988–present)**

The events of 1988 spawned army reorganization, the demise of the BSPP, the appearance of the SLORC (renamed the State Peace and Development Committee, SPDC, in 1997), and a reinforcing of military rule. While not a national election for head of state, the military government did attempt to hold elections for a constituent assembly in 1990. Taylor (1996) writes that 93 parties fielded candidates, 27 successfully won seats,
and the National League for Democracy (NLD) (one of many political parties that appeared during this period) won 392 out of 485 seats, approximately 60 percent of the vote (p. 177). However, when the SLORC’s political party (the National Unity Party) was defeated by the opposition NLD headed by Aung San Suu Kyi, the government refused to honor the results and arrested several NLD leaders, (including Aung San Suu Kyi). She remains under house arrest in Rangoon despite two brief releases in 1995 and 2002.

Unquestionably, Burma’s military presence is pre-eminent in Burma’s governance today. The Head of State is General Than Shwe who, as recently as March 2008, during an Armed Forces Day public address to the nation, harkened back to a golden era of monarchical reign and linked Burmese armed forces with the battles of Burma’s dead kings in a war against imperialism and regressive policies (Mizzima News, March 28, 2008). In any event, perhaps the faint echo of General Ne Win’s existence continues to resound in his oft-quoted words that, “The Burmese Army is not only the hope of the country, but its very life and soul” (Silverstein, 1995, p. 45). James (2005) points out military governments in neighboring
countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea, and the Philippines have toppled, while the military governments in Burma have continuously held onto power for over four decades. She echoes a statement by M. Alagappa (2001) who states that “the military is the only institution in town” since the state “through its extensive surveillance and intimidation networks” leaves “no space for political and civil society” (p. 493).

Callahan (2003) writes that citizenry in modern Burma “has never been about the rights of individuals to make claims on the state or about the obligations of the state to treat the population in fair or standardized ways” (p. 221). She sums up by saying that what have become standard fares in state-society relations are coercion and the threat of violence by the military government—sentiments, albeit mostly western, repeated ad nauseam in most of the literature reviewed.

On this road from monarchism to militarism (pre-1886 to the present), the Burma of today is aptly described by Steinberg (2006) as:

Patched together as an artificial state under British colonial rule that established contrived boundaries ignoring ethnicity and based on geopolitical considerations and happenstance ...the Burmese peoples...lacked
the commonality of history, of memory imaged [sic] or real, and of aspirations.... If [Benedict Anderson’s (1991) concept of] “imagined communities” are sometimes created to service contemporary nationalistic needs, Myanmar suffers from a plethora of such communities, which often lack the symmetry of both history and goals.... Those problems continue negatively to prevent the state of Burma/Myanmar from becoming a nation with a shared set of positive ideals and a national ethos.... (pp. xxxi-xxxii).

Given Steinberg’s characterization of Burma as “an artificial state,” the task of envisioning alternative and preferred futures for Burma in 2040 becomes even more challenging for me. I recognize that I first may need to return to Burma’s pre-artificial state to acknowledge and accept that what has historically been core to Burma’s centrism was its monarchy. A traditional monarchy that Burma appears to have lost forever once Britain determined it was in its best interest to publicly sell the “image of a corrupt king ruling over a mismanaged but otherwise attractive and egalitarian Burmese society” (Thant-Myint-U, 2006, p. 6). Perhaps this is the fork in Burma’s past to which I need to return in my attempt to envision Burma’s futures. But I also acknowledge that plausible futures can include those that are almost totally discontinuous from the past.
In her discussion of the core and the periphery during the indigenous monarchical state, James (2005) writes that, for the Burmese, hierarchy is everything and views are expressed up the chain of command and directives issued and carried down it. She notes that even Aung San’s vision of Burma in 1947 was that it would be a unitary state with no hint of democracy or individualism and that this vision could be applied to the monarchical or the socialist state (p. 50). Steinberg (1990) complements these sentiments.

In a tradition that began in India, the monarch lived as the symbolic center of the universe and was theoretically omnipotent. Whatever power he lacked in practice was made up for by the theory of his glory and his role as an embryonic Buddha or world monarch (p. 12-13).

He goes on to characterize elitist leaders such as Nu and Ne Win as continuing this imperial tradition and operating in “the manner prescribed for the monarchs” by their building of pagodas and their need to purify the sangha (p. 13).

In Conception of state and kingship in Southeast Asia, Heine-Geldern (1956) questions whether “Orientals” with “western education” should disregard and despise the “superstitions” which governed their nations in the past.
He reminds that masses of common people have grown up in the "old tradition" and "modern ideas of democracy and representative government" mean "little or nothing" to them. He cautions against a complete break of cultural tradition and suggests a compromise between old and new concepts. He cites Japan as an example of a nation that houses an idea more primitive than the cosmic state in its belief in being descendants of the Sun Goddess alongside "all the refinements of modern science and techniques" (pp. 11-12).

The shattering of Burma's trinity (the monarch, the sangha, and the state) over a hundred years ago with the British careless displacement of the monarchy may have scarred the Burmese nation for life. James (2005) says that there still are deep feelings about this displacement today with Burmese youth even now pointing to images of Burma's last king Thibaw and saying, "That is my king" (p. 44). Ridiculous as this may sound in the Rangoon of today into which are creeping cell phones and cyber cafes, such sentiments about the institution of the monarchy surely are no different than having 21st Century British citizens line the streets of London to curtsey to their Queen.
Finally, the mass, non-violent protests that occurred in September 2007, which included the participation of Buddhist monks and supposedly was set off by rising and unaffordable fuel costs, certainly will impinge on Burma’s present governance and could have an impact on Burma’s futures. Likewise, the devastations caused by the 2008 cyclones in southern Burma that killed thousands could similarly influence the citizenry’s overall reaction to its present governance.

This chapter on the background on Burma has been my attempt to gain an understanding of what the Burmese struggle is all about. It was undertaken to provide me with a framework by which to avoid thinking about Burma in terms too simplistic to do full justice to the multifaceted factors that have brought Burma to where it is today. A century has passed since British colonialists ripped Burmese society apart and Burmese leaders have since been attempting to pick up the pieces and to patch their nation together again, some would argue not very successfully.

The above argument aside, I want to utilize my understanding of what Burma was, what Burma became, and what Burma is, to envision what Burma could become. The
chapter that follows is the first step in this endeavor. It will lay down some political futures studies theories and methods I considered to help me envision what Burma could become and to then go on to further explore, in Chapter 7 (What Burma Could Become), some alternative and preferred futures for governance in Burma by 2040.
Chapter 4: Theory and Methodology

The previous two chapters provided snapshots of how Burma has come to be understood through its anthropology, religion, history, and politics. This chapter lays down some futures studies theories and methods I will use to help me envision alternative and preferred futures for governance in Burma by 2040. Theory and methods often are intertwined and the contents of this chapter will attest to that. Nevertheless, in this chapter, I will discuss what futures studies is and what futures studies is not, including the theory of the images of the futures, which is essential to my endeavor. I will describe my execution of a survey to get opinion data and, since I will be combining these methods with other futures concepts such as trends and scenarios to outline my vision of what Burma could become by 2040, I will provide definitions of these and any other concepts relevant to my study. Finally, given that several other political future studies theories and methods I scrutinized lie outside the limits of this narrowly-focused study, I will stay mindful of Spiro’s (1972)
argument that every application of a theory is at the same time a validation procedure; that a good fit between theory and data only helps to provide additional support for one’s theory and that, conversely, a not-good fit weakens one’s confidence in the validity of a theory and could lead to it being revised or even discarded.

Before delving into the theories that underlie futures studies and the methods that I used as part of my research, I think it important to recapture the essence of a key term utilized in this research provided in the Introduction (Chapter 1). That, for purposes of this study, the British Council’s broad working definition of “governance” (that combines both “government”–the formal institutions–with all of the agencies and processes of civil society) is utilized: ‘Governance refers to a process whereby elements in society wield power, authority and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life and social upliftment.’

Futures Studies

What is commonly understood by the term futures studies? According to H. Didsbury (1979), it denotes the
study of the future with the use of the plural "futures" emphasizing the element of choice concerning what the future will be like. The term "alternative futures" emphasizes that the future is not fixed and various possibilities should be explored and one should seek to realize those that seem the most desirable (pp. 173-174). Numerous other authors offer telling viewpoints in their theoretical discussions about what futures studies entails. For instance,

- The future must be different from the present, as the present is different from the past. Yet they cannot be too different, since one grows out of the other. And some aspects of history are circular or cyclical or spiraling, repeating or mirroring earlier patterns (Elkins, 1995, p. 3).

- The study of the future can only be conducted in relation to history...historical interpretations provide an indispensable theoretical basis for the prediction of large-scale social change (Encel, et al., 1975, p. 3).

- There are no future facts, but there are no past possibilities (Bell and Mau, 1971, p. 9).

Aung-Thwin (1991) lends credence to the first statement with his insistence that the past as a model can be found in virtually every segment of Burmese intellectual and material life, with most Burmese
considering the ideal society to be in the past. I would add, in keeping with the second statement, that the study of the future of Burma must be conducted in relation to its history. Burma has been affected by British imperialism and will need to be considered in the context of its pervasive colonialist past. Finally, the third statement above clarifies that there simply are no future facts. Given that even trend extrapolations can be found to be inadequate and mostly absent any current authentic data related to Burma that has not been produced by external actors, I will adhere to qualitative methods to envision possible forthcoming developments for governance in Burma.

Dator (2002) informs what is not considered futures studies. He writes that it does not predict the future in the sense of saying precisely what will happen to an individual, organization, or country before it actually happens; that it is fundamentally plural and open; and that it is an arena of possibilities and not of discernible inevitabilities (pp. 5-6).

A. Toffler (1972) too underscores the need to avoid any connotations of prediction. He writes that the futurists who engage in futures studies are those "who
concern themselves with the alternatives facing man...[who] lay no claim to the ability to predict...[who] focus on the array of alternatives open to decision-makers, stressing that the future is fluid, not fixed or frozen...." (p. x).

Images of the futures

The keystone futures theory that underscores my research originates from the work of a post World War II futurologists, F. Polak. As early as 1951, Polak introduces an image of the future as a new category of thought for social science, spelling it out as follows:

Man's conscious striving to foreknow the future plus his partly unconscious dreams, yearnings, urges, hopes and aspirations for that future, periodically and successively, are condensed, crystallized and clarified into different sets of more or less specific, outlined and projective expectations or ideational goals. Such a set, at its end-stage of collective and positive, prospective and constructive development, may be called...an image of the future (1961, p. 16).

Elsie Boulding, who translated Polak's Dutch works into English, writes that he traces the interaction between the image of the future and the dynamics of the ongoing social process in the present and that he gives less attention to the process by which images of the
future are generated than to the effects of the images once created (Maruyama and Harkins, 1978, p. 366). It also was Polak’s contention that the "capacity to image the future is a core capacity in any culture that is manifested in every aspect of that culture (p. 79).

In sum, Polak (in Boulding’s 1973 translation of his works) writes that the materials out of which images are drawn originate largely from the cultural heritage of the social group or society to which one belongs; that images are at work everywhere, individually and collectively; and that the development of images of the future and ethics are intimately related. He points out that it is the positive ideas and ideals of man, cast in the form of images of the future, picturing another and better world to come, which have largely made history what it is (p. 31). Although he discusses an overall view that we are pulled toward an idealistic future while being pushed by a realistic past, he also cautions that we should not "make the mistake of romanticizing the past. There was never a time when man en masse was overflowing with altruism and spirituality" (p. 197).

Polak’s work on this issue is underscored by his disheartenment that the pulsing and impassioned images of
the future that have always moved man and society laid dormant post World War II and he expressed concern about the growing disuse of his contemporaries’ visioning capacity. He contended that “failure to work with the imagination to create other and better futures would lead to endless projections of present trends” (Boulding, 1971, p. 76).

A bottom line from Polak will be central to my reason for undertaking imagining Burma’s futures: “Man has the capacity to dream finer dreams than he has ever succeeded in dreaming. He has the capacity to build a finer society than he has ever succeeded in building” (p. 305). Clearly, Polak is daring us to dream and I have chosen to take up this challenge and to let his image of the futures be an essential part of the theory that underwrites my envisioning of preferred futures for Burma. I will bear in mind that Polak articulates that values are a central part of images of the futures. That one’s image of the future without question will reflect and reinforce one’s own values. That as a society develops a common set of values and norms in its ethics and moral philosophy, this undoubtedly will lead one to
adopt a more or less stable set of expectations regarding the futures for that society (p. 37).

Dator (2002), whose work is a derivative from Polak’s, echoes up front that each individual’s ethical considerations and values are central to any futures research and must be clearly considered at every stage of futures studies research. Foucault (1972) surely would endorse this advice and give me notice that I indeed will be speaking from a locatable, particular site.

Dator also holds that there is no common set of values that underlie all human actions across all cultures or that rise beyond vague generalities. Futurist W. Bell (2002) embraces the opposite perspective that there indeed is a set of core values. I tend to agree with Dator that, “People live in different realities constructed by language and culture” (Dator, 2002, p. 5), and I already am stumbling on my inability to understand Burma through its “grammar, syntax, and vocabulary” (Dator, 1998, p. 617). Recognizing this shortcoming, my methodology will take into account that, in the end, what futures studies researchers can study, as Dator succinctly puts it, are:
"images of the future" in people's minds...images differ between individuals, cultures, men and women, social class, and age groups. One job for futurists is to identify and study these varying images, to understand their origins and history, to see how they animate individual and group action, and then to anticipate how people, acting on the basis of an image of the future, "push" society into one future or another... (pp. 7-8).

But I also accept Bell's invitation. I will "look at people as future-oriented and value-driven decisional systems and to look at society as a product of their behavior" (p. 46) and adhere to his view that "accurate understanding of modern societies come from investigating the effects of deliberate social action on the part of individuals and groups, asking how people create their own social worlds and how their actions are causes of social change" (p. 48).

Dator (1983) has expanded Polak's work on the images of the futures and developed four generic alternative futures that he labeled "Continued Growth," "Collapse," "Conserver Society," and High Tech or Transformational Society." Dator views images of the futures as the key focus of futures studies, but he consistently stresses that these images will be personal and will be value-laden. These generic alternative futures stemming from
the images of the futures theory will serve as the primary bedrock for my own designing of alternative and preferred futures for governance in Burma in the next several decades.

While Dator emphasizes that all knowledge, even about the future, is personal, he has concluded that all images in all cultures can be lumped into one of these four major generic images of the futures. He discourages favoring one category or image over any of the others and assuming that one or more is good, or the most likely, or the best, or the worst case scenario. Instead, these generic images can be used for deductive forecasting, that is, asking whether Burma will have certain characteristics if its future is one of continuation, of collapse, of a disciplined society, or of a transformational society. He also notes that there could be the unexpected appearance of wild cards.

In their analysis of Korean youth, Park and Seo (2006) envision four alternative futures of Korean democracy quite different from what exists today in Korea. They do not predict these alternative futures nor do they assume it will be a linear process. As a method, they utilize the template of the four generic alternative
futures described above to develop their own futures. They describe a representative democracy that continued to grow, a discipline democracy that results from a disciplined society, the return of autocracy resulting from a society that has collapsed, or a recreational democracy that springs from a transformational society.

Rather than take them up on a similar approach for Burma, I intend to engage in a futures envisioning exercise that will allow me to examine trends, outline scenarios, and describe my own visions of alternative and preferred futures for governance in Burma for 2040. And, as with S. Inayatullah's *Images of Pakistan's future* (1992), my goal will be insight not prediction, but my failing too will be the use of western textural sources to arrive at this goal. However, in my vision of a preferred future for Burma and in contrast to the scenarios I will build for alternative futures, I plan to go back to the future and to explore returning to "ways and values long ridiculed, marginalized, destroyed, and all but forgotten" (Dator, 1993, p. 23) and to come up with futures that will be instinctive and personal.

My decision to utilize the four alternative futures method to envision Burma's futures provides me with an
exercise by which to determine whether Burma, by 2040, will be a nation that is in a state of governance that has collapsed (folded); that is disciplined (maintained); that has shown continued growth (progressed); or that has transformed itself (become completely different from whatever is expected or assumed) (Dator, 2002).

I will opt to envision alternative futures for governance in Burma in 2040 by first asking what visions Burmese have about the future of their nation and then letting these images be propelled by, and filtered through, the theory of the image of the future. By utilizing the essence of four alternative futures, I am attempting to ascertain whether any one of several forms of governance could emerge in Burma in 2040. Rhetorically, I could ask would Burma remain grounded in a continuation of the status quo for another three plus decades or could it make totally unexpected changes in how it is governed? Would governance continue to be militaristic; switch to being democratic in the 21st Century western understanding of the term; revert to a monarchy of some kind; return to being colonized by one power or another; turn into a theocracy of sorts; or transform into postmodern, cybernetic forms of
governance—highly unlikely as it may sound—envisioned in the literature of electronic democracy and perhaps foreshadowed by the role of the Internet. If governance were to originate from newer ways of thinking, would a more peaceful system emerge resulting in certain people leading as the need arises and these same people following at other times. Or were it to emerge from either traditional or religious paradigms, could Burma have governance quite different from its more recent experiences, but that resonates with certain aspects of its classical history. Above and beyond, perhaps Burma could end up having no governance at all, at least not in ways in which mostly the west has pre-packaged what governance supposedly means.

I do not intend to provide a prediction of any single future in the sense of stating 'precisely' which form of governance will emerge in Burma by 2040. Dator states that political futures are pluralistic and a number of possibilities most likely will emerge. So what I intend to do is to identify and examine some of the most likely images of political futures that exist for Burma, detail the origins and history of these varying images, look at how these images may animate individual
and group action, consider their relevance (or even irrelevance) to the futures theories selected, and then anticipate how the Burmese, acting on the basis of such images of their futures, may push their society toward one image or another (Dator, 2002). Admittedly, the Burmese also could push their society toward an image that I am unable to conceive of.

As an aside, I want to mention that I have opted not to use some methods that, on the surface, seemed plausible but, in reality, proved unsuitable for this limited study on Burma. For instance, I had considered utilizing futuristic analytical tools related to generations (that is, different generations have different worldviews) and cyclical waves (that is, rhythmic repetitions of events that occur in more or less uniform time intervals and strongly influence a society) to give me a hand with imagining alternative and preferred futures for Burma. But I have set aside these tools as not applicable to my limited research at this time. I am unable to empirically discover the generations that currently exist inside Burma. Additionally, most cyclical theories are usually heavily quantitative and require reliable native economic data to
support any genuine analysis. Perhaps, someday, were Burma to become a more reachable nation to all and sundry, such methods would carry more weight. What is needed is for Burma to make more readily available its authentic data and access to its populace, specially the youth living inside Burma who undoubtedly share galvanizing experiences. There then would be more merit to utilizing future studies theories and methods related to generations and cycles to study Burmese society in such situations.

Collecting Opinion Data

I undertook a survey to get opinion data that I could then combine with other futures concepts, (for example trends, scenarios, visions), in order to write my alternative and preferred futures. Given the primary purpose of this undertaking is to envision some alternative and preferred futures for governance in Burma in 2040, I felt it imperative to gain an understanding about what images of the futures indigenous Burmese and other non-Burmese interested in Burma issues had. I
wanted this opinion survey to serve as a springboard for my own imagining.

Optimally, the best method for envisioning Burma’s futures would have been to elicit the views of the Burmese people living in Burma and to examine their first-hand responses to what type of governance they believe the 2040s could hold for their nation. But current policies inside Burma prevented this from being the primary approach for this study. Occasional first-hand anecdotal evidence aside, there presently is little or no on-the-ground access to the person-on-the-street in Burma because of the strict controls Burma’s government requires of its citizenry. The Burmese that I interacted with during brief visits to Rangoon opted to talk about everything but politics. Therefore, any engagement with indigenous Burmese that I had generally was restricted to interactions with people of Burmese descent living or traveling outside of Burma.

As such, an unscientific sample of Burmese expatriates and students in the United States and elsewhere in the world serves as the bedrock for this research. Critics at once would argue that it is pointless to gauge the supposedly obvious views of the
Burmese exile community; that there are about 57 million Burmese people in Burma, and perhaps less than a million in Thailand, and even fewer elsewhere in the world. And what would my eliciting the views of the exile community show? It certainly would not be a representative sample. It unquestionably is an unusually politicized group that is tilted toward the young, toward the elite, and toward the ethnic minorities. And all it would do is illustrate the longings of a group that is marginal to how their country is being run today.

Laying aside this criticism, I went ahead and designed a normative and opinion-based questionnaire to survey not only the expatriate community, but also to include a non-expatriate community consisting of foreign academics and other foreign experts on Burma. In short, the survey was distributed to any and all recipients who indicated that they were either knowledgeable about or interested in issues related to Burma. My intent simply was to poll this sample regarding what they perceive will be the political futures for Burma and to then draw on their responses to envision some viable alternatives. Thus, the primary data collection method remained a one-time 21-question Burma survey that was simultaneously
distributed to approximately 800 people in the United States and elsewhere in the world by stamped mail and by E-mail. Brief descriptions of the sample and the survey follow.

Sample

Recipients of the survey included people of Burmese descent who are Burmese expatriates and/or Burmese students studying outside Burma; people who identified themselves as being intimately connected to Burma and/or expressed interest in all issues related to Burma; and other Burma experts, including academicians who specialize in Burma issues, but are themselves not of Burmese origin. The sample list expanded by word-of-mouth and by data trawling via E-mail.

Engagement with survey respondents was conducted mostly by stamped mail and E-mail communications and, occasionally, included a telephone conversation or face-to-face discussion on Burma issues. All respondents were provided with a minimum of approximately two weeks to complete the survey and to return it by stamped mail or e-mail. The former were provided self-addressed stamped envelopes to return their completed surveys.
Respondents were assured that their names would not be identified in any way and that there also would be no way to link any specific response to any person. Respondents also were assured that their responses would be integrated with other respondents so that their individual selections or preferences for future governance in Burma would not be identifiable in the overall study. Nonetheless, some survey recipients refused to complete the survey for fear that the long arm of the military government in Burma would accost their kinfolk residing inside Burma and/or even find ways to make their lives outside of Burma difficult. One often-cited concern was that they would at some point be refused entry into Burma to visit their kinfolk, if authorities learned that they had participated in a survey on governance in Burma. Conversely, many survey recipients opted to send in their responses via their identifiable electronic mail or to include their own return addresses on the stamped envelope that was provided and that already was pre-addressed to include the surveyor’s information in both the ‘to’ and ‘from’ sections of the envelope.
Given the sample was deliberately chosen for certain characteristics believed to be relevant to the study, and were selected intuitively rather than scientifically, it can not be relied on to represent the whole population fairly and thus is a non-probability sample. However, the majority of respondents represent Burmese voices and the survey results could be used to help envision the aspirations, hopes, and perceptions of an unidentifiable segment of the Burmese population in Burma, albeit by inference.

Survey

In the main, the questionnaire (see Appendix A) had three segments. The demographic questions on the survey (Questions 1-16) were primarily designed to establish the governance eras during which respondents were born and socialized. For instance, asking for the year of birth would help determine what historical, political, economic, and other events helped shape respondents' images of Burma's futures. Specifically, respondents in the first category (0-18 years) would only know current military governance; those in the second category (18-35 years) would have experienced military governance and
dictatorship; those in the third category (35-50 years), would be acquainted with military governance, dictatorship, and parliamentary-democracy/civilian; those in the fourth category (50-65 years) military governance, dictatorship, parliamentary-democracy-civilian, and colonialism; and those in the fifth category (65+) would have been exposed to military governance, dictatorship, parliamentary-democracy/civilian, colonialism, and perhaps even some passing knowledge of monarchism. The underlying assumption was that respondents born after Burma’s first military coup in 1962 are likely to be more limited than respondents born before 1962 in their visions of Burma’s future governance, given they have known only military rule and thus are unlikely to expect anything more than the status quo.

Question 17 and Questions 19-21, asking respondents to describe the current governance in Burma, to identify what they believed could be likely governances in 2020 and 2040, and to then share what type of governance they preferred to see in 2040, were meant to facilitate a discussion of the four images of Burma as described in the theory on four alternative futures. For instance, if a majority of respondents believed by 2020 or 2040 that
Burma would have cybernetic governance, would this show a Burma destined to technologically progress? Or if a majority of respondents believed that anarchy is what the future holds, would this mean a Burma that would fold?

Respondents’ ranking of the factors important for shaping future governance in Burma in Question 18 was largely meant to help ascertain how respondents viewed numerous factors that could have an impact on Burma’s political history. For instance, how influential did respondents think student movements and activities would be in shaping future governance in Burma? Would they rank it first, last, or not at all? Would the past periodic student activism no longer be a factor in Burma’s futures?

It cannot be overemphasized that issues of time or resources were not the primary constraints of this survey being conducted inside Burma. Unquestionably, if politics inside Burma had been more permissible, a survey such as this would have reaped great statistical rewards if it had been openly served to widespread constituencies inside Burma.

Burma direly needs surveys and current, up-to-date information about how people live in the country, where
they live, what they do, what their education levels are, how old they are, etc. is mostly absent or not publicly available. Burma has had censuses since pre-colonial days but the last census data available to the public is 1983. Most non-governmental organizations in Burma are dogged by the same problem of inaccessibility as they attempt surveys on health and education and have difficulty coming up with even survey estimates.

Therefore, absent a stronger statistical presentation, the study will not shy away from some speculation. Backstrom and Hursh-Cesar (1963) state that speculation not disguised as proof can aid others’ understanding and the speculations of one study can become the hypotheses of the next. In addition, as previously stated, my values will also remain central to this study.

Futures Concepts

W. Schultz, C. Bezold, and B. P. Monahan (1993), in reviewing futures concepts such as trends, scenarios, and vision, define trend as “a pattern of change over time,” scenarios as a “compilation of trends that present
different images of the future, and vision as “a compelling statement of the preferred future that those who develop and subscribe to it want to create.” I found most convincing their clarification that visions are futures of the heart that touch and move us while scenarios are futures of the head that provide information, identify opportunities and threats, and stretch our imagination (pp. 11-16). Didsbury elaborates on scenario as a sequence of events that might possibly occur in the future and is developed by studying the facts of a situation, selecting a development that might occur, and imagining the range and sequence of developments that might follow (p. 177). Any scenarios I develop will need to be viewed simply as possible paths into the future, will capture the extremes, and is meant to answer how a hypothetical situation might come about, step by step and what alternatives exist, for each actor involved, at each step, to prevent or divert or facilitate the process (Encel, et al., p. 86).

These insights above have enabled me to step back from the commonplace westernized premise that too readily couples progress with democracy, an assumption to which I too easily subscribe to. While my vision for alternative
and preferred futures for governance in Burma will not be strictly based on the results of the survey I conducted, the very testing of a small sample of mostly expatriates Burmese regarding their feelings towards "democracy" helped challenge me in some small measure to think out of my heart and not just my head. And to make a concerted effort to refrain from rote utterances that include phrases that futurist J. F. Coates (2001) cautions against. For example, "That's impossible," "The [Burmese] will never," or "It's unthinkable that [Burma] would...." (p. 11).

Recognizing the import of trend analysis, I also gathered relevant past, current, and trend data about Burma in order to propel my visions for Burma's futures. I will utilize this past, present, and projected information related to basic demographic, land use, economic, and other such in my discussion and analysis in later chapters. Additionally, this data will be used to develop my alternative futures for Burma given the reality that Burma's futures must be placed within the broader context of these variables. But Encel, et al. remind that, "The moral is that caution should be
Finally, any scenario writing I engage in will include backcasting and intuitive forecasting. The former is a technique that would allow me to take a given future in Burma and describe how that future evolved from the present. The latter is any method that will rely heavily on my subjective judgment, personal feelings, or intuition about what I imagine as likely to happen. These scenarios simply will be a qualitative description of what I envision could be occurring in Burma at a particular future time, say 2040. And I will make no bones that they are in any way quantifiable or verifiable, if for no other reason then that the futures about which I will be writing do not yet exist. However, while doing this, I will maintain some basic assumptions outlined by Encel, et al. related to the impact that the goals and values of yesterday and today will have on tomorrow and that any presupposition about what ought to happen must be intertwined with assumptions about what will and can happen as it relates to other factors such as environment, economics, and technology (p. 14). For, as a final point, Encel, et al. write that one cannot
think about the future of a nation in isolation of the global system (p. 253). So I will remain mindful that issues related to broader external influences (for instance, environmental change, capitalism, globalization, information technology occurring elsewhere in the world), also will have an impact upon Burma’s political futures. I recognize that world superpowers and regional players (especially Burma’s neighbors, India and China) could be the wild cards that weigh in, even if only marginally, on the emergence of Burma’s future governance. As such, appropriate references to these critical factors will be interspersed throughout the remainder of this dissertation.

Up to this point, this study has enabled me to become familiar with a range of literature on Burma (Chapter 2) and to utilize this information to build a baseline background on Burma issues (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4, I have sought to clarify what futures studies is and is not and to examine the essential theory related to image of the futures, whose origins lie with Polak but to which theory Dator and other futurists also subscribe. But what will ultimately serve as the main driver for my visions of Burma’s futures remains Dator’s Four
Alternative Futures. These alternative and preferred futures for governance in Burma in 2040 will be elaborated on in Chapter 7 (What Burma Could Become).

The results of the survey that I conducted to gather opinion data from a small sample of Burma watchers is provided in Chapter 5. Discussion of this data will ensue in Chapters 6.
Chapter 5: Results

This chapter provides the results of a 21-question survey that I conducted to gather information about visions that people who are knowledgeable on the subject of Burma have regarding alternative futures for governance in Burma in 2040. Given I distributed the survey to an unscientific sample, I will not venture to show any relevant statistical significance in the graphics that follow. For, without question, tests that assume a random sample would be inappropriate for the non-scientific data that this chapter contains. Rather, I want to make clear that the primary purpose of gathering this information is as follows: First, one of the key hypotheses behind the survey is that respondents would reflect a change in current attitudes or preference for governance in Burma over the course of several decades. And, second, that it is my intention to let these respondents’ selections related to governance serve as an impetus for my own envisioning of Burma’s futures. Chapter 6 will provide a more detailed discussion of these results and will talk about whether or not they
helped to shape and/or steer my vision for alternative and preferred futures for governance in Burma.

Respondents, in this non-probability sample, were deliberately chosen for their affinity to Burma, a characteristic fundamentally relevant to this study. But because this sample was selected intuitively rather than scientifically, their responses cannot be generalized to the population at large. Thus, the results derived from this small sample are merely suggestive and far from definitive. At best, these results provide a window into the attitudes of the specific sample surveyed regarding their views about the future of governance in Burma.

But what should be taken note of here is that these results also provide insights concerning how I might go about constructing a scientific survey to ascertain sentiments about future governance in Burma and focus conducting such a survey inside the borders of Burma and limiting it to just indigenous Burmese. But for this to happen, there would need to be a government in place in Burma's futures that would more freely permit this.

Up front, I also acknowledge that about a quarter of the small sample surveyed responded that they did not belong to any of Burma's ethnic groups and, therefore, I
can only assume that these respondents must be non-Burmese academics or others who feel they know or have a vested interest in Burma. One could argue that this is a huge percentage to give this group that much weight on a study focused on the people of Burma. Additionally, these percentages also tally, though not perfectly but close enough, with the group that said their parents' first language was English. Clearly, there are very few such Burmese people whose parents' first language is English, so I suspect that these respondents too belong to a non-Burmese group. Hence, I will be certain to tabulate any changes that occur when the responses of this so-called "out" group are omitted.

In any event, it was never the original intent of this survey to limit itself only to a sample of indigenous Burmese, but to be inclusive of all respondents who self-described themselves as interested in Burma. And, again, for purposes of this dissertation, it is this simplified glimpse of what informed people who participated in the survey think about governance in Burma, coupled with a review of the literature (provided in Chapter 2) and the background knowledge on Burma (presented in Chapter 3), that will serve as a baseline
for my envisioning some alternative and preferred futures for governance in Burma in 2040. These alternative futures and my preferred futures for Burma will be presented in Chapter 7 (What Burma Could Become) and will center on the images of the future and four alternative futures laid out in Chapter 4 (Theory and Methodology).

The survey was sent out by postal and electronic mail in mid-2006 to approximately 800 recipients. Respondents were allowed a minimum of approximately two weeks to return their completed questionnaires. Only some noteworthy results from the initial set of 16 demographic questions are elaborated in the section below. Ultimately, these personal demographics were gathered mainly to analyze the more substantive questions in 17-21, which directly relate to respondents' visions about future governance.

Results Related to Demographic

One hundred and sixteen respondents (54.3% males and 45.7% females) completed the survey (Figure 1). To better grasp their defining experiences and ascertain what historical and political generations they fall into,
their ages are used to place them in what the Background on Burma chapter identifies as the following eras:

Colonialism (1885-1947) - 35.3% of respondents;

Civilianism (1948-1961) - 20.7% of respondents;

Dictatorship (1962-1987) - 37.9% of respondents; and

Militarism (1988-present) - 0.9% of respondents (Figure 2). Non-respondents were 5.2%. These results reveal that a majority of the sample have some living knowledge.

Figure 1

Respondents by Gender

45.7% 54.3%

Males Females

5Given this period also is termed Parliamentary-Democracy, all figures in this chapter label this era “democracy.”
of all four types of governance. My hypothesis here is that respondents born after Burma’s military coup in 1962 are likely to be more cautious in their outlook about possible changes in governance than respondents born before 1962. My assumption is that generations of Burmese who have known only governance primarily exercised by a dictatorship or the military have less expectations of citizenry participation in governance and may mostly accept what is status quo for fear of reprisal. Or, arguably, that no such fear exists and the status quo acceptable.

Figure 2

Respondents by Era

- Colonialism: 37.9%
- Democracy: 35.3%
- Dictatorship: 20.7%
- Militarism: 5.2%
- N/A: 0.9%
Figure 3 reflects that, although a majority of the respondents was born in Burma (68.1%), only 30.2% of the respondents claim to still be Burmese citizens. And while only 17.2% respondents were born in the United States, a majority (53.4%) claims U.S. citizenship. Respondents born elsewhere in the world were 14.7%; respondents who claim citizenship other than in Burma or in the United States were 16.4%.

![Figure 3](image)

The several views expressed by those who were born in Burma and remain Burmese citizens and those who were born in Burma, but who have adopted other citizenship, are shown in Table 1, which appears later in this
chapter. The hypothesis here is that respondents born in Burma and who remain citizens of Burma are less likely to be optimistic in their selections about prospective governances for Burma than respondents who were born in Burma, but who are no longer citizens of Burma in their visions of Burma's future governance; the hypothesis reflects an assumption that respondents who live outside Burma are more likely to expect and accept new sets of categories for governance in Burma, even if such concepts are somewhat alien to Burma's political history.

Residency in the United States was claimed by 62.1% of this selected sample, while 34.5% reside elsewhere in the world. Interestingly, 3.4% of the respondents acknowledge that they currently live in Burma. Given the survey was not directly sent to anyone inside Burma, these respondents may have been visitors or students outside of Burma during the period the survey was being conducted and who somehow got access to the survey redirected to them by family or colleagues and who apparently showed no fear of reprisal by any so-called "Burmese E-Police." Indeed, I understand that cyber cafes more recently are beginning to slowly but surely
sprout all over Burma and, for a small sum, individuals supposedly can Google away an hour or so.

Figure 4 shows that Buddhist respondents were 48.3%; Christian 33.6%, Muslim 9.5%, animist 6.0% and 2.6% did not select a religion. As a comparison, religion proportions inside Burma are Buddhist 89%, Christian 4%, Muslim 4%, animist 1% and other 2% (World Fact Book, 2007, p. 97).

Figure 5 shows that ethnic affiliations selected were Burman 44.8%, Shan 4.3%, Karen 1.7%, Rakhine 3.4%, Chinese 9.5%, Indian 9.5%, Mon 0.8%, and other 26.7%; 6.9% did not respond. As a comparison, ethnicity in-country is Burman 68%, Shan 9%, Karen 7%, Rakhine 4%, Chinese 3%, Indian 2%, Mon 2%, and other 2% (World Fact Book, 2007, p. 97).

The 26.7% “other” respondents for this survey are respondents who identified themselves as non-Burmese but, nevertheless, claim interest in and/or claim knowledge about Burma. This could mean that over one-fourth of my sample consists of academics or journalists, who probably are mostly westerners. Given this huge percentage could bias selections for governance in favor of western notions of democracy and other such, I will provide 122
additional tabulations later in this chapter that omit their responses to see if any differences result.

Figure 4

![Respondents by Religion](image)

Figure 5

![Respondents by Ethnicity](image)
Also given a majority of the questionnaires were spread among academic institutions and the expatriate communities, the sample reflected a strong tendency for respondents to claim some higher education. About 62% of the respondents claim to hold graduate degrees, while approximately 29% claim to have some undergraduate training. Occupations claimed by respondents ran the gamut from student to retirees.

The reason behind requesting respondents to state their marital status was primarily for this to serve as a lead into the question related to the number of children a respondent has. Sixty-two percent of respondents claim to be parents; 38 percent responded that they have no children (Figure 6). Respondents who indicate they are parents all together claim a total of 184 children ranging in ages from under a year to over 50 years of age. The hypothesis here is that respondents with children will have greater stake in future governance in Burma and will select categories of governance that they perceive as holding the most prospects for their children's future. The selections parents and non-parents made for future governance in Burma are provided in Table 2.
Fifty percent indicated their primary language is Burmese, 45.5% English; 48.3% stated they also spoke English and 16.4% also spoke Burmese (Figure 7). For their parents' primary language, 53.4% selected Burmese and 30.2% selected English. For their parents' secondary language, 18.1% selected Burmese and 29.3% selected English. The purpose for asking what the respondent's parents' languages were was to obtain a better idea of the differences between the perception of one's own ethno-linguistic identity and one's "actual" one.

Finally, although no graphics are provided for a string of questions related to respondents' travel to and from Burma, responses related to when participants last traveled outside Burma and when participants last traveled into Burma were mixed, with many opting to ignore the first question. However, almost half of those who responded indicated that they had traveled into Burma between 2000 and 2006 with stays ranging from a few weeks to several months. A handful of respondents stated that the current government denies them visas to travel into Burma.
Admittedly, if the above query had been more precise and/or worded otherwise, I should have been able to gather information about when respondents moved out of Burma to take up permanent residence elsewhere. In retrospect, I also should have queried respondents about whether they had any interest in returning to Burma to reside there and, if so, under what circumstances would they return.

Results Related to Governance

For question 17 and questions 19-21, respondents were given a working definition of governance as “the process whereby elements in society wield power, authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life”; they also were given the alphabetized list below of 14 types of possible governances from which to select.

Specifically, for question 17, using a Likert Scale, respondents were asked to select one of four terms (very accurate, somewhat accurate, not very accurate, or not at all accurate) that best characterized current governance in Burma. Some new categories of governance that Burma
List of Types of Governance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anarchy</td>
<td>absence of governance resulting in political disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonialist</td>
<td>governance primarily exercised by foreign power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confederacy</td>
<td>governance shared by states/divisions with limited powers at center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cybernetic</td>
<td>governance primarily dependent on electronic governing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>governance with direct citizen participation in making policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictatorship</td>
<td>governance primarily exercised by ruler with absolute power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federative</td>
<td>governance shared by central authority and states/provinces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militaristic</td>
<td>governance primarily exercised by military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monarchic</td>
<td>governance primarily exercised by hereditary ruler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oligarchy</td>
<td>governance exercised by small wealthy or powerful group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary</td>
<td>governance in which members of an executive branch are nominated to their positions by a legislature, are directly responsible to it, and can be dissolved by it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>governance in which citizens choose representatives who then are supposed to act on their behalf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theocratic</td>
<td>governance primarily subject to religious authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totalitarian</td>
<td>governance that subordinates individuals to the state by controlling political/economic matters and also people’s attitudes, values, and beliefs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Derived from The World Factbook 2007, pp. xx-xxi.
has not experienced in the past were suggested to offer some alternatives to those being surveyed, with these being especially relevant to questions 19-21 in which respondents were asked about their views and preferences for governance in 2020 and 2040. An “other” category was included in questions 19-21 to give respondents some flexibility to describe their visions of hybrid governances not adequately covered by the list of predetermined types of governance.

Figure 8 pertains to question 17 related to current governance and presents the degrees of possible agreement and disagreement that respondents selected, including the percentages of those who chose not to describe the current governance. Selections for Militaristic (83%) and Dictatorship (78%) ranked high in terms of what respondents view as an accurate description of the current governance in Burma, while Democratic (71%) and Representative (68%) ranked high as respondents’ view of what is not at all an accurate description of the current governance in Burma. The same definition of governance above was then used to ask respondents to select which type(s) of governance they believed Burma would have by the year 2020 and, again, by the year 2040. Finally,
respondents, still working with exactly the same definition of governance, were asked to indicate what their preference would be for governance in 2040.

Figure 8

Given that respondents were asked to check all that apply in questions 19-21, and given that each respondent
had 14 types of governance to select from, the choice(s) they made were weighted to equal 14. For example, if a respondent made only one selection, 14 points were assigned to that type of governance; if a respondent made two selections, seven points each were assigned to the two types of governance selected; and so on. These assigned weights were then summed for all respondents by type of governance. The sums of these weighted responses by category are reflected in Figure 9.

Figure 9

Total Value of Respondents' Weighted Selections By Category, for 2020, 2040, and Preferred
To further determine where respondents fall along a political spectrum of governances that permit the most participation by citizens versus the least, the governance types were first subjectively ordered along a political spectrum of governances that I designated as possibly affording more citizenry participation and those that, in all likelihood, would permit the least input from its citizens. I acknowledge that such a list could easily be reordered. Nevertheless, my ordinal list reads: Cybernetic (14); Democratic (13); Representative (12); Parliamentary (11); Federative (10); Confederacy (9); Theocratic (8); Militaristic (7); Oligarchy (6); Totalitarian (5); Monarchic (4); Dictatorship (3); Colonialist (2); and Anarchy (1).

Respondents' selections were then weighted using the aforementioned subjective 14-point scheme, scaled (1-14) in accordance with the ordered governance categories selected, and normalized by dividing the resultant product by the total available points (14). The resultant respondents' scores were then mapped to the governance categories and tallied by category of governance. The number of respondents whose weight,
scale, and normalized scores fell into a particular governance category is presented in Figure 10.

Figure 10 displays, for 2020, a preponderance of selections on the lower end of the citizenry participation spectrum with the peak on totalitarian, with some significant representation toward the higher participatory end of the spectrum. But, by 2040, the selections display a stronger movement toward the higher end of the citizenry participation types of governance, with peaks in parliamentary, representative, and democratic governances. For what respondents prefer for 2040, however, there are no selections at the lower end of the spectrum and the preponderance of selections peaks at representative governance.

Table 1 and Table 2 show (1) the differing governance selections among Burma-born citizens, Burma-born but non-citizens, and respondents who were neither Burma-born nor citizens of Burma and (2) the selections made by respondents with children and those without children. The values in these tables reflect the mean, weighted, scaled, and normalized scores based on respondents’ selections of governance types for 2020, 2040, and preferred for 2040.
Table 1: Governance Selections by Respondents' Place of Birth and Citizenship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents Who are</th>
<th>For 2020</th>
<th>For 2040</th>
<th>For 2040-Preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burma-born Burma Citizens</td>
<td>(Confederacy)</td>
<td>Mean: 8.6</td>
<td>Mean: 10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma-born &amp; Not Burma Citizens</td>
<td>(Confederacy)</td>
<td>Mean: 9.0</td>
<td>(Federative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Burma-Born &amp; Not Burma Citizens</td>
<td>(Militaristic)</td>
<td>Mean: 7.4</td>
<td>(Federative)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Governance Selections by Respondents with Children and Respondents without Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>For 2020</th>
<th>For 2040</th>
<th>For 2040-Preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With Children</td>
<td>(Theocratic)</td>
<td>Mean: 8.1</td>
<td>(Federative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without Children</td>
<td>(Confederacy)</td>
<td>Mean: 8.8</td>
<td>(Federative)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Also concerned that over a quarter of my respondents did not self-select as indigenous Burmese, I tabulated the governance selections of all those who claimed to be born in Burma (totaling 79) and compared these percentages to that of all respondents (totaling 116) (Table 3). Separately, I singly examined the ethnic selections of all respondents and found that of the 33 who selected the "Other" ethnic category, 11 were born in Burma and 22 elsewhere, leaving me to conclude that the former were respondents of mixed Burmese ethnicity who opted to select the "Other" category and the latter were of western or other origins.

The most striking discrepancies in the comparisons in Table 3 are that only 27.85% of Burma-Born Respondents believe Burma will have a dictatorship in 2020 compared to 35.34% for all respondents. Again, 43.10% of all respondents believe that militaristic governance could continue through 2020, while only 32.91% of Burmese believe that, by 2020, militaristic governance will still be in place. And while 25.86% and 13.79% of all respondents believe Burma will be governed by an oligarchy by 2020 and 2040 respectively, only 20.25% and 6.33% of Burma-Born Respondents believe this is the case.
for these two same time periods. Likewise, while 23.28% of all respondents believe that, by 2020, Burma could have governance that is totalitarian, only 12.66% of Burma-Born Respondents selected this category.

Table 3: Comparisons of Governance Selections between Respondents and Respondents Born in Burma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anarchy</td>
<td>12.07%</td>
<td>11.39%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>6.33%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonialist</td>
<td>6.03%</td>
<td>8.86%</td>
<td>5.17%</td>
<td>7.59%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confederacy</td>
<td>14.66%</td>
<td>15.19%</td>
<td>12.93%</td>
<td>12.66%</td>
<td>11.21%</td>
<td>10.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cybernetic</td>
<td>4.31%</td>
<td>6.33%</td>
<td>6.03%</td>
<td>6.33%</td>
<td>2.59%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>44.83%</td>
<td>48.10%</td>
<td>57.76%</td>
<td>59.49%</td>
<td>73.28%</td>
<td>72.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictatorship</td>
<td>35.34%</td>
<td>27.85%</td>
<td>18.97%</td>
<td>17.72%</td>
<td>0.86%</td>
<td>1.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federative</td>
<td>37.07%</td>
<td>40.51%</td>
<td>38.79%</td>
<td>41.77%</td>
<td>36.21%</td>
<td>36.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militaristic</td>
<td>43.10%</td>
<td>32.91%</td>
<td>10.34%</td>
<td>7.59%</td>
<td>0.86%</td>
<td>1.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monarchism</td>
<td>4.31%</td>
<td>5.06%</td>
<td>1.72%</td>
<td>1.27%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oligarchy</td>
<td>25.86%</td>
<td>20.25%</td>
<td>13.79%</td>
<td>6.33%</td>
<td>1.72%</td>
<td>2.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary</td>
<td>36.21%</td>
<td>37.97%</td>
<td>43.10%</td>
<td>46.84%</td>
<td>44.83%</td>
<td>46.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>36.21%</td>
<td>36.71%</td>
<td>50.86%</td>
<td>46.84%</td>
<td>46.55%</td>
<td>44.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theocratic</td>
<td>3.45%</td>
<td>2.53%</td>
<td>3.45%</td>
<td>2.56%</td>
<td>3.45%</td>
<td>2.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totalitarian</td>
<td>23.28%</td>
<td>12.66%</td>
<td>11.12%</td>
<td>7.59%</td>
<td>2.59%</td>
<td>3.80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These differences in selections leave me with the view that Burma-Born Respondents appear to be far more optimistic about their nation's futures, if one could agree that governances that are dictatorial,
militaristic, oligarchic, and totalitarian are not to be sought after. More Burma-Born Respondents think a democratic governance could be in place by 2020 and 2040 than did all respondents (for 2020, 48.10% compared to 44.83% and for 2040, 59.49% compared to 57.76%); however, this percentage dropped very slightly when it came down to whether Burma-Born Respondents preferred democracy for 2040 (72.15% compared to 73.28%). Even so, this reconfirms for me the underpinning truth that, in the end, only those of Burmese heritage can and must decide and direct Burma’s futures. Colloquially, you can take Burmese people out of Burma, but you can never take that which is authentically Burma out of Burmese people.

Finally, Question 18 asks respondents to rank from 1-8 which of several broad factors (see list below) they considered as important for shaping governance in Burma, with “1” being the most important. They also were requested to list any other factors they viewed as important and these miscellaneous factors are interwoven into the discussion chapter that follows. Respondents’ top three choices are presented in Table 4 and, not surprisingly, include the economy, education, and ethnic issues.
List of Factors Important For Shaping Governance

- influence of a sound economy
- influence of a solid educational system
- influence of resolution of ethnic issues
- influence of a politically involved Buddhist sangha
- influence of student movements and activities
- influence of technological advancement
- influence of the views of regional nations
- influence of the views of other nations
- influence of the impact of globalization

Table 4: Factors Important for Shaping Governance in Burma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Factor</th>
<th>(A) First Choice</th>
<th>(B) Second Choice</th>
<th>(C) Third Choice</th>
<th>(A+B+C) Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangha</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globalization</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In conclusion, it is important to recognize that these views expressed by this sample in mid-2006 regarding future governance in Burma almost certainly could be reversed in a relatively short period of time were major political changes to occur in Burma's current governance. In fact, the protests and demonstrations that occurred on the streets of Burma as recently as September 2007 and the cyclones that devastated much of the south in May 2008 probably has many a responder of my survey reevaluating the responses they provided in this survey back in 2006. As such, it cannot be overemphasized that the views expressed by this selective sample of mostly an expatriate Burmese community cannot be generalized to the Burmese population at large today and that the views themselves are a moving target and constantly subject to change. All these results achieve, then, is provide a snapshot at a single point in time of the attitudes of 116 people—admittedly not all of Burmese heritage—about the future of governance in Burma and what governance they would prefer to see Burma have by the year 2040. And, it is this snapshot of respondents, who appear to believe that changes in Burma’s governance
can occur given sufficient time, which will serve as a springboard for me to begin to imagine Burma’s futures.

Chapter 6 will entertain additional discussion of these results that I hope will help to shape and/or to steer my vision for what will eventually be laid out in Chapter 7 (What Burma Could Become).
Chapter 6: Discussion

The discourse in this chapter stems from the results of the survey I conducted to collect visions related to Burma's future governance and to ascertain if these visions could serve as an impetus for my own envisioning of Burma's futures. The discourse will not assume that respondents predicted what type of governance Burma will have by 2040. Nor will it evaluate whether one type of governance should have been selected and/or preferred over another by respondents. Instead, it holds fast to the previously stated point that the survey conducted permits only a speculative assessment of what a small sample of Burmese expatriates and other Burma watchers believe and/or prefer will be the type of governance for Burma by 2040. I expect this assessment, in combination with a working knowledge of Burma's history and politics, to propel my images for alternate futures for governance in Burma and to permit me to envision my preferred futures for governance for Burma. These alternative and preferred futures will be described in Chapter 7 titled What Burma Could Become.
This chapter discusses some key results related to demographics and governance that primarily rest on relevant aspects of Polak's (1973) theory, laid out in Chapter 4, on the images of the futures. The chapter also briefly analyzes the results pertaining to respondents' overall governance selections for 2020, 2040, and 2040-preferred governance; governance selections by respondents' place of birth and citizenship; and governance selections by respondents with children and respondents without children. The chapter then looks at how respondents' ranked the factors listed as important for shaping future governance in Burma and explores the viability of this rank order. Finally, the chapter considers whether or not respondents' expectations and aspirations cast in the form of their images for Burma's futures can help to serve as a prism with which to develop my images.

Results Related to Demographics and Governance

Polak writes that images of the futures largely originate from the cultural heritage of the society to which one belongs and that individual and collective
images are at work everywhere. While I admit that my survey is remiss in that it was not conducted inside the borders of Burma, 68.1% of the respondents surveyed were born in Burma and presumably share a cultural heritage that is primarily Burmese. Therefore, on Polak's terms, they supposedly could individually or collectively be pulled toward an idealistic (whatever they deem idealistic to be) future of governance for Burma, while simultaneously being pushed by a realistic past they all are keenly aware of.

That only 116 of some 800 recipients (about 12%) responded to the survey is not unexpected. Skidmore (2004), from her first-hand experiences living in Yangon, discusses the immense fear that has psychologically swept over tiers of Burmese society. This contagious weight of fear appears to have infected even some Burmese expatriates. Many were reluctant to answer questions about governance in Burma, even though they were assured that their responses would remain confidential, citing concern that their participation in a survey could have an impact on their family and friends living in Burma. Most recent works on Burma indeed do not contain the
voices of Burmese citizens. Skidmore (2005), researching
everyday urban and peri-urban life in Burma, writes,

All those approached to contribute eitherquietly ignored the request or pleaded the
continued safety of family and friends within
Burma or their ability to return to the
country. A very limited number of works
documenting the lives and literature of the
Burmese people have appeared in the past two
decades, and there is a small cohort of Burmese
expatriates, largely political refugees, who
write about conditions within Burma, but
without the benefit of contemporary immersion
in a rapidly changing nation (p. 2).

Numerous other authors echo Skidmore. For instance,
Steinberg (2006) hints about the Burmese who have
assisted him with his research, but who must "remain
nameless to protect their identities in an environment in
which alternative views are not encouraged, let alone
allowed" (p. xvi). James (2006), on the other hand,
challenges the above by noting that "despite severe
limitations on political empowerment, the people of
Myanmar do not inhabit the Kafka-esque world portrayed by
Skidmore" (p. 154).

Figure 2 in the previous chapter placed respondents
into four pre-defined Burmese generations: Those who
were born during, directly experienced, or were
influenced by (1) governance considered colonialism
(1885-1947); (2) governance described as parliamentary-democracy ("civilianism") (1948-1962); (3) governance considered a dictatorship ("dictatorism") (1962-1987); and (4) governance labeled "militarism" (1988-present).

Most respondents have no direct recollection of what Burma was pre-1885 (monarchism), but 35.3% do have some knowledge of the colonialism era (1885-1947), with an even higher percentage (59.5%) together sharing defining experiences related to what Burma became (parliamentary-democracy (1948-1962) and dictatorship (1962-1987)) (and what Burma is today (militarism (1988-present))). The assumption is that it is these defining experiences or influences that provide the impetus for what respondents believe will be the governance in Burma in 2020 and 2040 and what they voice as their preferred governance for Burma by 2040.

I hypothesized that respondents born after Burma’s military coup in 1962 would likely be more cautious in their outlook about possible changes in governance than respondents born before 1962. My assumption was that Burmese who have directly known or indirectly only known about governance primarily exercised by a dictatorship or the military would have less expectations or experience
of citizenry participation in governance and would mostly accept continued militaristic governance as a viable future.

But I found that those respondents born after 1962, despite having known only governances described as dictatorial and militaristic, share the views of those respondents born before 1962, who were influenced by elders who directly experienced a brief era of so-called democratic rule and/or participated in Burma's political struggle to free itself from the clutches of colonialism. Both generations believe that, by 2020, governance in Burma would be a confederacy (governance shared by states and divisions with limited powers at center) and, by 2040, a federative (governance shared by central authority and states and provinces). And, by 2040, both generations prefer that there be in place in Burma a representative government (governance in which citizens choose representatives who then are supposed to act on their behalf) (see Table 1 in the previous chapter).

Perhaps the absence of a more clearly defined gap in the attitudinal differences between the Burmese generations in this study is partly explained again by Skidmore (2005), although she is writing about Burmese
living in Burma. First, she notes that the Burmese home remains the domain of children and the locus of family life. She then describes a military that orders women to pass on Burmese traditions and morals to their children, that endlessly exhorts the youth to uphold the traditions of the nation, that educates them in the "union spirit," and that requires them to become members of parastatal organizations. But, more importantly, she also points out that, ultimately

In the privacy of their homes, however, the current generations of Burmese children continue to learn an alternate system of value that is divorced from the modernized urban dream promulgated in the state media and by trans-Asian marketing companies. This is a soft and quiet form of resistance, a deliberate focus upon self-directed values, directly at odds with the incorporation of model families into a modern authoritarian state structure.... (p. 16-17)

Nevertheless, the similar views of future governance shared by the different generations of mostly expatriate respondents in this study reflect that, at the end of the day, it indeed may be the Burmese home and the values passed therein that remain the most influential politically or otherwise. That even though many of the younger respondents have not witnessed first-hand a political climate inside Burma that permits an expansive
citizenry participation, political values passed down by a previous generation who has had such exposure coupled with the younger generation’s own knowledge about democratic ideologies external to Burma that allow for more citizenry participation, result in their hope for a future governance for Burma that is neither dictatorial nor militaristic.

Before further examining three specific sets of results, a reminder that my creation of a “political spectrum” with which to tabulate my survey results (set up in the previous chapter) pits one end (“most participation”) with the other end (least participation”) of citizens in governance. I admit that this could be considered outrageously arbitrary and value-based and that anyone could easily reorder this ranking. Also that this very framing of the issue of democracy in governance certainly brings into question my objectivity and seemingly sets the stage for my study to be one that could be regarded as testing the Burmese on their feelings towards “democracy.” If this indeed appears to be my starting point, I do not intend for it to be my ending point. I will make every attempt to explore alternative and preferred futures for governance in Burma.
that may be a far cry from any western notion or expectancy of democracy.

Govermance selections for 2020, 2040, and 2040-preferred

Overall, the results speak to most of the respondents progressively mapping out their selections for governance in 2020 and 2040. They display a keen sense that, if by 2020, there will not yet be in place in Burma a governance type that is conducive to more citizenry participation, then, at least by 2040, they seem optimistic that there will be such a type of governance in place. And, almost with one accord, respondents prefer by 2040 for there to be a governance type in Burma that allows for increased citizenry participation. Hardly anyone believes or prefers that the military governance that presently rules should be carried into Burma’s futures.

Interestingly, few, if any, selected electronic governance even though that supposedly is a type of governance that could permit more citizenry inclusion, according to my political spectrum, so long as it was fairly instituted. This non-selection of a governance type that is still somewhat alien to a large segment of
Burmese society is quite understandable. Respondents seem to be projecting that, while the privileged few in Burma may have adequate access to telephones and to the Internet, for the most part, electronic communication technologies are still in their nascent stage, if even there, in Burma. This is the reality for Burma, despite more people elsewhere in Asia steadily gaining easier access to advanced technologies, with pockets of Asia’s societies already conducting their personal and professional lives in the realms of the I-Pod and E-Bay worlds.

For instance, in South Korea, Dator (2006) describes usage by a younger generation of South Koreans of electronic communication technologies to energize, even if they cannot thwart, the utterly obsolete political institutions that still strangle self-government everywhere (p. 6). S. Lee (2006), in “The Assertive Nationalism of South Korean Youth: Cultural Dynamism and Political Activism,” writes that mobile phones have practically become part of the bodies of Korean youth today and the Internet is their cyber community (p. 126). This clearly is not the case for Burma’s youth.
But the discourse on electronic governance is catching on like wildfire in the classrooms of the University of Melbourne in Victoria, Australia, in the hallways of the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad, India, and in the laboratories of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, USA. I am confident that it will be the wave and the way of governance worldwide within this century and, at the right time—even if not by 2040—that electronic governance could become the stamp of future governances in Burma. As previously noted, cyber cafes already are dotting the maps in various towns in Burma and are relatively inexpensive to use, even if under the watchful eye of Big Brother Burma.

Governance selections by place of birth and citizenship

An examination of the views expressed by those who were born in Burma and remain Burmese citizens and those who were born in Burma but have adopted other citizenship also produced results similar to the above. The hypothesis related to place of birth and citizenship was that respondents born in Burma and who still are citizens of Burma are less likely to be optimistic in their
selections about prospective governance for Burma than respondents who were born in Burma, but who are no longer citizens of Burma in their visions of Burma’s future governance. The hypothesis reflects an assumption that respondents who live outside Burma are more likely to expect and accept new ideologies for governance in Burma, even if such concepts are somewhat alien to Burma’s political history, while those who remain Burmese citizens will settle for a continuation of militaristic governance, especially given the longevity of the military’s staying power. Additionally, for every military personnel, there are a host of civilians who are related to him and who benefit through commissary privileges, priority on housing, and subsidies on food, gasoline, and other utilities.

Table 1 (Governance Selections by Respondents’ Place of Birth and Citizenship) in the previous chapter reveals that there appears to be some differences between the three subsets, but occurring primarily between respondents who are Burma-born but no longer citizens of Burma and respondents who are neither Burma-born nor citizens of Burma, and not as expected between respondents who are Burma-born but no longer citizens of Burma and respondents who are neither Burma-born nor citizens of Burma.
Burma and respondents who are Burma-born and still Burma-citizens.

The original hypothesis related to citizenship had assumed that more differences would exist between selections for governances made by Burma-born respondents who are still Burmese citizens and Burma-born respondents who are no longer citizens of Burma. Instead, what the results reveal is that the variables are not that different between choices made by Burma-born respondents who remain citizens and Burma-born respondents who have taken on other citizenships. Both groups believe that by 2020, there will be a governance that is confederacy and by 2040 a governance that is federative. And for preferred governance for 2040, both groups are at the more citizen participation end of the political spectrum (representative and parliamentary, respectively).

The above could be a reflection that the locus of political inclinations for Burmese is again expressively internal to the family and the respondents' external physical locations do not matter much. Apparently, it does not matter whether respondents with Burmese heritage live inside or outside Burma, they share the same family values and influences. However, unlike the Burmese-born
respondents, the outsiders (those who are neither Burma-born nor Burmese citizens) come across as more pessimistic about Burma’s near-term future and seem to expect that more time is needed for Burma to change to a governance that allows for increased citizen participation. They seem to assume that 2020 does not provide an adequate timeframe for there to be any changes in the type of governance for Burma and that military governance will remain in place through that period. Such views may be based on the outsiders’ perception that more time is required for there to be any meaningful changes in governance, a view most likely based on their impersonal knowledge of Burma mostly gleaned from the regurgitations of the western media and foreign academia and absent any personal stake in Burma’s futures. But, by 2040, even these outsiders echo the views of Burma-born citizens and Burma-born non-citizens that there could be federative governance. And they too prefer that, by 2040, there be governance in Burma that allows for more citizen participation (representative).

In my view, that those who are inherently Burmese are more hopeful overall speaks volumes for Burmese optimism alluded to over a hundred years ago by S. Yoe in
The Burman: His life and notions (1882): “The Burman is the most calm and contented of mortals....and so the Burman jogs on through a cheerful existence” (p. 65). The introduction to this book quotes Herbert Hoover as calling the Burmans the “only genuinely happy people in all of Asia” (p. ix).

Governance selections by respondents with/without children

The reason behind requesting respondents to state their marital status was primarily for this to serve as a lead into the question related to the number of children a respondent has. Sixty-two percent of respondents who claim to be parents altogether claim a total of 184 children who range in age from under a year to over 50 years of age. The hypothesis here is that respondents with children will have a greater stake in future governance in Burma and will select categories of governance that they perceive as holding the most prospects for their children’s future.

Table 2 (Governance Selections by Respondents with Children and Respondents without Children) reveals that there appears to be not much of a difference between
respondents with children and without children. From their selections of the 14 categories of governance provided in the survey, both groups seem to believe that, by 2040, there will be governance that is federative and both groups expressed preferred governance by 2040 for there to be governance that is more representative. Interestingly, for 2020, respondents who do not have children believe that there could be governance that is theocratic (governance primarily subject to religious authority), while respondents with children believe there could be governance that is a confederacy. It appears that respondents whose children will have a stake in the future want a faster track to increased citizen participation in governance, while those without children are more willing to settle for an interim phase and seem willing to first trade military authority for religious authority before progressing to forms of governance that permit more citizenry participation.

Again, from the subsets examined above, it is interesting that differences in selection occur primarily between respondents who are Burma-born but no longer citizens of Burma and respondents who are neither Burma-born nor citizens of Burma. As previously stated, the
The original hypothesis related to citizenship had assumed that more differences would exist between selections for governances made by Burma-born respondents who are still Burmese citizens and Burma-born respondents who are no longer citizens of Burma. Further reconfirmation that this certainly is not the case occurs when one glances at the results of Table 3, which makes a comparison of governance selections for 2020 and 2040 between (a) all respondents and (b) only the respondents born in Burma. The latter, when looked at as a separate group, selected for 2020 and 2040 governance types that permitted more citizenry participation (democratic, federative, parliamentary, representative) and appeared not to expect governances such as oligarchy, totalitarian, dictatorship, and militaristic. This serves as a reminder to me that, in the end, only those of Burmese heritage can and must decide and direct Burma’s futures. Colloquially, you can take Burmese people out of Burma, but you can never take that which is authentically Burma out of Burmese people and whether Burma-born and still Burmese citizens or Burma-born and no longer Burmese citizens, those of Burmese heritage could have, in the
words of Polak, the capacity to build a finer society than [ever before].

Factors Important for Shaping Governance

Question 18 in the survey provided respondents an opportunity to weigh in on factors they consider important for shaping future governance in Burma. Nine pre-selected factors were listed and respondents asked to rank these factors in order of importance for shaping future governance in Burma. Respondents were given the option to write in other factors they consider as important that may not have been included among the pre-determined factors. The free form comments respondents made mostly mimicked the broad factors already provided, but some respondents did suggest that what is first direly needed is a speedy ouster of the current military governance, while others insisted that only intervention by forces external to Burma could guarantee the nation has a meaningful future. For the most part, however, respondents simply ranked the factors that were provided to reflect what they perceive as key drivers that must be
addressed if there were to be changes in Burma's governance in the future.

The nine pre-selected factors included: (1) the influence of a sound economy on future governance; (2) the influence of a solid educational system on future governance; (3) the influence of resolution of ethnic issues on future governance; (4) the influence of a politically involved Buddhist sangha on future governance; (5) the influence of student movements and activities on future governance; (6) the influence of technological advancement on future governance; (7) the influence of the views of regional nations on future governance; (8) the influence of the views of other nations on future governance; (9) and the influence of the impact of globalization on future governance.

The top three factors that respondents ranked as the most important for shaping future governance were: (1) the influence of a sound economy on future governance, (2) the influence of a solid educational system on future governance, and (3) the influence of resolution of ethnic issues on future governance (see Table 4 in the previous chapter). Most Burma watchers would agree that these are three critical factors that would have an impact on the
successful prospects of any future governance. For almost six decades now, economic woes and ethnic worries have cast a long shadow over governance in Burma. In recent decades, this turmoil resulting from a mismanaged economy and unresolved ethnic strife has been further compounded by what some writers say is an education system gone awry.

**Economic Issues**

D. Metraux and Khin Oo (2004) describe Burma as a land of immense economic potential with rich natural resources, good agricultural land, and a strong educational tradition, yet one that is today one of the most impoverished nations anywhere. They blame it on the stalling of agricultural production, the little usage of modern industrialization, or high technology, an educational system that is in total disarray, and almost half of public spending going toward the military (p. 16). The 2007 World Fact Book provides the following overview of Burma’s economy:

Burma, a resource rich country, suffers from pervasive government controls, inefficient economic policies, and rural poverty. Lacking monetary or fiscal stability, the economy suffers from serious macroeconomic imbalances—
including rising inflation, fiscal deficits, multiple official exchange rates that overvalue the Burmese kyat, distorted interest rate regime, unreliable statistics, and an inability to reconcile national accounts to determine a realistic GDP figure. (p. 97)

Educational Issues

To compound the bleak economic picture painted above, the government supposedly has substantially decreased its overall investments in education. Following the coup in 1962, the content of education was strictly controlled and students were required to complete ideological orientation courses. In recent decades, and to avoid student unrest, the government occasionally closed down its universities.

While some would argue that the outcome of these unfortunate policies has been that one whole generation of Burma’s youth has been lost in the shuffle of a non-functioning educational system, nevertheless, and as noted previously, Burma’s literacy rate remains high with more than 85% of Burmese over the age of 15 being able to read and write. James (2005) counters all this bashing of Burma’s educational system with her extensive and thorough research that traces education in Burma from
monarchical days to more current reforms. While basic Buddhist monastic education may remain pivotal, she writes that the government is keenly aware of Burma’s need to catch up with regional neighbors and thus continues to place a high priority on education. But, more importantly, Burma’s educational reforms now are appropriately shying away from traditional arts and sciences leanings to instead emphasize fields related to business management, environmental studies, biotechnology, and information technology, with the end goal being to have a labor force with the right skill sets, one that can contribute to rebuilding Burma’s economy and society (pp. 109-110).

Ethnic Issues

About the ethnic minorities who constitute a third of the nation’s population and mostly inhabit Burma’s borderlands, M. Smith’s (2002) writes that this unresolved issue is core to Burma’s economic underachievement. His understatement that ethnic and political identities are a complex issue underscores the stark reality that Burma has not yet been able to
successfully achieve the aspiration articulated by its key independence seeker, Aung San, in February 1947:

If we want the nation to prosper, we must pool our resources, manpower, wealth, skills, and work together. If we are divided, the Karen, the Mon, the Kachin, the Chin, the Burmese, the Mon, and the Arakanese, each pulling in a different direction, the Union will be torn, and we will all come to grief (p. 4).

Smith writes that, implicit in the arguments put forward by Burma’s ethnic representatives today, is the continued emphasis on their rights to development, health, education, freedom of religion, and inclusion in policy decisions that will have an impact on their livelihood. In sum, that ethnic inclusiveness and equality of opportunity should be the hallmark of any constitution that underwrites Burma’s future governance (p. 56).

In any event, absent the emergence of a strong economic infrastructure, increased investments in a solid educational system, and a satisfactory redressing of longstanding ethnic conflicts, any form of governance in Burma’s futures could be in for a long haul from the onset. This above discussion only briefly deals with these top three factors that were selected by respondents, given that the existing literature on Burma
already oversubscribes to these three issues as being the issues of main concern for Burma's futures.

Deng Xiaoping once said, "No country can now develop by closing its door..."6 Today, Burma has transitioned from being one of the world's leading rice-producing nations (accounting for nearly three-fourths of the world's rice exports during the first half of the 1900s) to being characterized as one of the world's many producers of illicit opium (north-eastern Burma comprises a major part of the so-called Golden Triangle—one of the world's major sources of opium, morphine, and heroin). The range of criticism levied on Burma includes concern that this nexus between the proliferation of narcotics and the stagnation of economic growth serves as a major obstacle to nation-building for Burma, that the government's excessive military spending often is at the expense of other sectors in the state, and that much of the economy is sustained by a significant underground sector. M. B. Pedersen (2000) writes, "No one would deny that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) could become an important force for economic development in Burma, but unless the government recognizes the need

for fundamental political, economic, and administrative reforms at home, this may remain a pipedream” (p. 12). Burma, a member of ASEAN since 1997, has much to offer the regional association, not the least is its rich traditions and Asian values, and it continues to participate in ASEAN activities fully (Mya Than, 2005, pp. 85-90).

James (2006) throws out challenges for both the Burmese government and the international community. She writes that what is needed from the former is for those presently in power to not impede the political and economic reform process that has begun and that is consistent with Burmese values and national goals (2005, p. 159). And she implores the latter to consider Burma a normal, developing country that is transitioning from socialism to perhaps “democratic governance” (p. 176).

Finally, one must ask why, in the first place, must there be any assumption that Burma’s futures should exclude militaristic governance. In fact, it would be near impossible for any other form of governance to occur without the support of the military. A. Selth (2002) suggests the need for the recruitment, education, and training of a new kind of military officer to help
nourish a sense of national purpose, noting that even the installation of a genuinely democratic government could not occur without at least the passive support of the military. He describes a military that would lend credence to Aung San’s “original vision for the government and the armed forces, than to the kind of philosophical underpinnings for military rule which have been put forward by the regime since it first seized power” (p. 264-289). In short, the military today could be considered as integral to the fabric of Burmese society as has the sangha been since yesteryear.

By 2040, the Burmese of today who have known about or have experienced first-hand all of Burma’s five forms of governance over the past century would no longer be around. The adults of today with first-hand knowledge only of dictatorial and militaristic governance would be in their elderhood. Burma’s youth with only exposure to militarism over the next four decades will become Burma’s prime adults. While my values and biases could lead me to assume that this generation will mostly continue to accept militaristic governance as the status quo for fear of reprisal, what if they like this status quo and have come to accept it as an acceptable lot in life? After
all, military officers are merely Burmese citizens in uniform.

Selth writes that a major conflict within Burma that allows the military to halt narcotic production, wrest back control of territory, and disarm insurgent groups could help the rebirth of the Burmese military, if conducted professionally and for clearly defined reasons against a national threat. The result could be the development of an esprit de corps among Burma’s next generation of officers that could lead to wider nation building to include infrastructure development and aid to the civilian population. All this and more could result in the armed forces coming closer to “Aung San’s ideal of being revered, adored, and depended upon by the people of Burma” (p. 289).

In conclusion, this chapter has yielded the following key discussion points: The survey results display a strong movement on the part of most respondents toward the higher end of the political spectrum that allow for more citizenry participation in governance. The survey results depict the ability of respondents to differentiate between possible and preferred futures for governance outcomes for Burma that may evolve over time.
An underlying hypothesis in this dissertation remains that respondents would reflect a change in current attitude or preference for governance in Burma over the course of 40 years. Overall, the results mirror this. While it reflects a preponderance of selections on the lower end of the citizenry participation spectrum with the peak on totalitarian for 2020, the shift, by 2040, is toward the higher end of the citizenry participation types of governance with peaks in parliamentary, representative, and democratic governances. For 2040-preferred governance, there are no selections at the lower end of the citizenry participation governances and the preponderance of selections peaks at representative governance (see Figure 10 in the previous chapter).

Clearly, respondents want to see a change in governance for Burma from militaristic to something else. But, again, it is important to bear in mind that these are the views shared by an expatriate Burmese community and it is only to be expected that they mostly would call for there to be more citizenry participation in governance. Were such a survey to be conducted inside Burma and extended to communities outside the confines of Yangon, rural respondents could display stronger ties to
traditional values seeped in Burmese Buddhism, loyal to the religious authority of the sangha, geared toward village values, or perhaps even nostalgic about a monarchical society, all part and parcel of the powerful culture passed down to Burmese children from birth and for generations.

Polak's theory dares us to dream. While the views of the survey sample certainly have provided me with a prism from which to create my images, I do not intend to simply rest there. Instead, I dare myself to take the discussion down diverse pathways by talking about forms of governance that few, if any, respondent prefers (for instance, monarchism) or by exploring those factors important for shaping governance that respondents did not rank highly (for instance, the sangha). In the chapter that follows, I not only will utilize Four Alternative Futures to outline scenarios for what governance in Burma could become, but I also will divest from the prevalent one-dimensional notion that governance in Burma can triumphed only when and if Burma were to become a democracy.
Chapter 7: What Burma Could Become

The discussion so far has maintained a key assumption of this research that respondents surveyed would reflect a difference between their description of the current governance in Burma and their preference for what type of future governance there should be in Burma. The survey results indicate that, yes, most respondents do indicate a difference and this difference is heavily in favor of governance that allows for more citizenry participation with a ring of democracy to it. But the survey sample is limited and the results cannot be applied to the larger population inside Burma.

I also acknowledge that the governance selection options I provided to respondents were lacking a new set of categories or hybrid forms of governments. Interestingly, insofar as current real world examples are concerned, many governments appear to have assumed hyphenated versions of some of the governance definitions I listed in my survey. For instance, in the World Factbook, Cambodia’s governance is defined as “multi-party democracy under a constitutional monarchy,”
Bangladesh as "parliamentary democracy," and Nepal as both "parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy"; Japan is a "constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary government," while Australia is a "democratic federal state system recognizing the British monarch as sovereign"; Malaysia is described as a "constitutional monarchy nominally headed by a paramount ruler and a bicameral parliament consisting of a non-elected upper house and an elected lower house"; Thailand and the United Kingdom as "constitutional monarchies"; and Bhutan as a "monarchy." Laos, China, and Vietnam are designated "communist states." And, if I had assumed it would suffice to portray the United States simply as a "democracy," its government type instead is elaborated as a "constitution-based republic with a strong democratic tradition," attesting to the stark reality that there probably is no absolute democracy anywhere in the world. Burma's current government type is described as a "military junta." In any event, what is direly needed is not only for a survey to be designed that considers governance types beyond the typical and familiar formal

---

7 The World Factbook 2007 definitions of government types specific to countries cited, albeit some of these governances presently are undergoing changes and could easily be redefined.
structures such as I have listed, but also for a more scientific survey to be conducted and analyzed that is inclusive of a range of Burmese voices inside Burma.

This chapter will now shy away from the discussion threads in the previous chapters of the dissertation to independently explore my vision of some alternative futures for governance in Burma. I also will develop a scenario of my preferred futures for governance for Burma by 2040. From an array of Futures Studies literature, I have determined that a good starting point is to imagine the possible, assess the probable, and decide on the preferable. Hence, I will attempt to make my selection a preferred real and not that unlikely future versus a preferred but unreal and impossible future, all the while aiming to provide a different perspective on the issue of governance in Burma. As appropriate, I will use elements of various tools (trends, scenarios, visions) defined and described in Chapter 4 (Theory and Methodology) to help me imagine what Burma could become in 2040. This scenario building hopefully can serve as a passage for there to be continued discussion and dialogue on the subject of Burma’s futures. Its primary intent will be to encourage more creative thinking about future
governance in Burma, creative insofar as it attempts to temporarily lay aside the persistent insistence of some non-Burmese Burma watchers that a Burma that does not turn into democracy is a Burma that is doomed. Such insisters perhaps are yet to deconstruct this partial terminology related to democracy to ascertain whether this is indeed what the Burmese people living in Burma really want for their nation.

Pieterse (2001) provides a smorgasbord of choices when it comes to what we could mean by the term democracy, to include participatory democracy, direct democracy, social democracy, associational democracy, substantive democracy, deliberative democracy, and his list goes on (pp. 410-413). In her discourse on freedom from fear, Aung San Su Kyi (1995) projects her own ideal when she writes that “the people of Burma view democracy not merely as a form of government, but as an integrated social and ideological system based on respect for the individual,” adding that they just want to be able to go about their own business “freely and peacefully, not doing anybody any harm, just earning a decent living without anxiety and fear” and they just want “basic human rights which would guarantee a tranquil, dignified
existence free from want and fear" (p. 173). Aung Thwin (2001) contends that ideologies related to democracy and human rights are laden with a consolidated western vision that does not always take into account that the most destructive aspect of such democratization is that it invariably means decentralization which, in a non-western context, could encourage social and political anarchy. Again, he reminds that, in Burma, anarchy is feared far more than tyranny, noting that any genuine desire to promote freedom from fear must address issues relevant to Burmese society before assuming the applicability of western value-laden concepts, such as universalism (p. 1). Thant Myint U (2006), in his description of the events of 1988, discusses the fear of many in Burma of the anarchy that would follow on the heels of a political revolt by disaffected students and also concludes that anarchy would be the worst possible scenario for Burma’s future.

Coates (2001) encourages studying the future to change people’s minds and then their behavior (p. 5). My using futures thinking to envision future governance for Burma already has succeeded in doing that for me. Over the course of my research and analysis, I found myself
unexpectedly discarding the notion of democracy with which I originally came to the table to instead begin considering other more feasible alternatives for governance in Burma in 2040. In so doing, and especially with regard to my own preferred futures, I took into consideration that, as Aung Thwin (1991) puts it, the past as model can be found in virtually every segment of Burmese intellectual and even material life; that Burmese society always recovered by invoking the past because the past not only was the ideal, but the most predictable, reliable, secure, and comfortable; and its diverse contributions historically were never discarded, but continually preserved and added to (p. 601).

My exploration of where some fundamental and traditional aspects of Burma’s past can fit into my preferred futures for Burma for 2040 will be set down in the latter half of this chapter. What follows is a discussion of some possible alternative futures for Burma that could or could not occur by 2040. Again, these suggestions will aim to go beyond the historical present day forms of governance I limited myself to in the survey questionnaire. I will look at the issue differently so to inject a stronger sense of futuristic thinking into my
images and to conjure up new forms of governance that may not be based primarily on geography, as most governance has been in the past and still is today. I will attempt to write alternative futures so each future shows how similar driving forces might combine together in different ways or have different features in each future. Where appropriate, fundamental data points will be taken into account, all the while bearing in mind that these data points might be different and/or become more or less important in each of the alternative futures I outline. It also is important to note upfront that I will be making some very broad assumptions about what could be occurring elsewhere on the globe in order to better support my vision about what will happen in Burma’s futures.

Alternative Futures for Burma (2040)

In a word-match game, if one were to throw out the word “future,” a contestant could hurl back “predict,” “forecast,” or “crystal ball.” Few may think to match the word “future” with the word “image.” Yet we all “daydream about our futures.” And to daydream requires
having sentiments, visions, and images of what we think or hope or expect our futures to be. Before setting down what some plausible futures for governance in Burma could be by 2040, I stress that this is not an attempt to look into crystal balls, to predict, or to forecast what these futures will be. Rather, having surveyed the images of Burma’s futures that exist in the minds of people who claim to have a stake in or have expressed an interest in Burma, and having conducted a review of the literature on Burma, I will attempt to go beyond some typical images to envision other scenarios not commonplace in the present environment.

To do so, I primarily exploit Dator’s “Four Futures” described in Chapter 4 (Theory and Methodology). The exercise of doing so has me asking upfront whether Burma, by 2040, will be a nation that (a) is in a state of governance that has shown progress, measured perhaps by market principles, and shown continued, usually “economic,” growth; (b) has folded or collapsed for one or more of a variety of reasons; (c) is disciplined (maintained), in which a future society is seen as organized around some set of overarching values, be it ancient or traditional, or (d) has transformed itself,
usually "high-tech" or "high spirit" (that is, become completely different from what is expected or assumed).

Dator points out that all images in all cultures can be lumped into one of these four major generic images of the futures. He discourages favoring one category or image over any of the others and assuming that one or more is good, or the most likely, or the best, or the worst case scenario. Instead, he suggests that these generic images could be used for deductive forecasting. For instance, asking whether Burma will have certain characteristics if its future is one of continuation, of collapse, of disciplined society, or of a transformational society. He adds that the four futures are "generic" and may not work fully for all situations or all countries and may require some tweaking or even fusing. I will remain mindful of this cautionary note.

Having consulted the works of Amae (2002), Seo (2002) and Inayatullah (1992), who each utilizes aspects of such futures theory to discuss alternative futures for Taiwan, Korea, and Pakistan, respectively, I will paint a picture of each of these futures as it applies to Burma and will attempt to describe how the future "will be." I will ascertain what features must be in place and/or have
unfolded and which actors must remain at and/or have come to the forefront for Burma to ease into one of these types of governances by 2040.

Finally, I recognize that Burma’s futures cannot be known with any absolute certainty and that my engagement of such futuristic analytical tools is merely an academic exercise. At the end of the day, futures completely different from what I present here could unfold, depending on what decisions Burma’s stakeholders and outside actors make in the coming decades.

Four Futures - Alternative Scenario: Continuation

1. Economic growth has been achieved and sustained.

SYNOPSIS: The year is 2040 and Burma, with a population of about 62 million, is in a state of governance that has shown continued economic growth. Over the past three decades, a new generation of military elite, who have been afforded more education, including opportunities to be globally in-touch, has emerged to govern Burma. For these up-and-

---

8 This population estimate of about 62 million for 2040 was derived by utilizing Burma’s approximate population figure for 2007 of 47,373,958, as stated in The World Factbook 2007, and applying the Factbook’s 2007 estimated population growth rate of 0.815% to it.

179
coming 21st Century leaders, it was a no-brainer to position Burma to follow in the wake of other Asian "tigers" that have progressed immensely, such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore. Burma's military government, in the wake of its reelection in 2010, had begun laying the groundwork for this to come about by steadily adopting policies that enabled the nation to "take off" economically. These leaders succeeded in doing this without having to relinquish political control of their nation because of their willingness to permit some Burmese civilians (many of whom had strong business and economic credentials since the early 2000s) to become extremely wealthy and to consider themselves part of the "ruling class." Additionally, their overall decision to pursue this path to economic development also resulted in the rise of a very comfortable and contented Burmese middle class. A not-unexpected offshoot has been the slow emergence of a rich/poor gap in Burmese society. But the Burmese government does not view this as
unacceptable or as irresolvable. What they consider important is that they have maintained close ties to regional neighbors, especially Asian superpowers China and India, and have created overall better business and investment climates. They also used and are continuing to use Burma’s comparative advantage in agricultural and natural resources (such as petroleum, timber, tin, antimony, zinc, copper, tungsten, lead, coal, marble, limestone, precious stones, natural gas, hydropower); its extractive industries, (especially oil, gas, mining, and timber); its educated and inexpensive labor force (Burma’s literacy rate has now reached 95% from 85.3% in 2007\(^5\)); and its strategic location near Indian Ocean shipping lanes to its advantage to find its niche in the region and to integrate itself into the global capitalist economy.

According to the Futures Literature, the continuation category can be used to mean a continuation

\(^{5}\text{The World Factbook 2007, p. 97.}\)
of whatever is happening now, but usually is based on the outcome of "continued economic growth" (if the system is currently growing economically), or of "renewed economic growth" (if the system currently is in a recession, but wishes to grow again). It can also be used to designate a system that is not now and never has made "economic growth" a main goal, but wants to now "achieve economic growth." What follows in the remainder of this segment is an elaboration of my continuation scenario, to include a backdrop on how Burma’s current economy tends to be portrayed in the foreign media and a discussion of some premises and developments associated with Burma having achieved and sustained economic growth by 2040.

Backdrop

In the past century, Burma transitioned from being one of the world’s leading rice-producing nations (accounting for nearly three-fourths of the world’s rice exports during the first half of the 1900s) to being demonized for being one of the world’s largest producers of illicit opium, with an estimated production in 2005 of 380 metric tons, up 13% from 2004 and accounting for more
than 90 percent of Southeast Asian heroin. Additionally, the foreign media has repeatedly criticized Burma for entering the 21st Century without the institutional basis needed for a strong market economy with assertions that whatever Rangoon market that exists exist more by default than by design; that any alleged openness was highly selective and only with certain enterprises and a handful of nations; that sanctions continued to be heaped on Burma’s unreformed and shrinking economy; and that aid was drying up and embargoes expanding. To compound similar criticisms from a range of other sources, a 2008 assessment by The Heritage Foundation on Burma’s economy reported Burma’s economic freedom score as 39.5 percent, thus making it the world’s 153rd freest economy; ranked Burma 29th out of 30 countries in the Asia-Pacific region; stated Burma’s overall score as being much lower than the regional average; and cautioned that Burma could not develop effectively without serious economic reforms.

11 Lee Kim Chew, “Myanmar needs surgery, not cosmetic changes,” in The Straits Times, May 26, 2000 and “Myanmar on the boil,” in the The Straits Times, July 06, 2003. These are just samples of numerous other commentaries that adopt the same tone.
My continuation scenario for Burma counters all of the above by first reminding that an alternative future does not have to be an extension of the present, but can grow from present possibilities, while illustrating a future that is substantially different from the present.

Second, I would hasten to add that other economically thriving Asian nations, such as South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, were themselves several decades ago entirely impoverished and abysmally conflict-ridden countries. There certainly is no single or timeless template that cuts across nations to bring about unprecedented levels of economic development. But, among the factors that E. M. Kim (1998) lists that the four “Asian Tigers” (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan) had in common were local and indigenous actors and institutions.

A. Booth and P. Moseley (2003) point out that, all over Asia, “military-led governments, displaying scant regard for democratic niceties, have achieved rapid rates of economic growth and structural transformation” (p. 14). So why should not Burma? Why should not Burma too be able to experience an extreme economic makeover in its own time and at its own pace?
Premises and Developments

The premises for the unfolding of my continuation scenario, in which Burma achieves and sustains economic growth, are as follows: First, that military governance in Burma has remained in place through 2040. Second, that Burma’s military government, since the early 2000s, already had begun setting the stage for economic growth by consulting and cooperating with other Asian nations, by accepting assistance from its regional counterparts, and by welcoming many multinational corporations in to help it to achieve a sustainable economic standing. Third, a new breed of military leaders, even more adamantly committed to Burma attaining higher levels of economic prosperity, has emerged to hold the reins of political and economic power.

Khin Maung Kyi, et al. (2000) list fundamental principals that governments must follow for economic growth to be achieved and sustained, to include the need to restore and reenergize the market with a dominant private sector and for the government itself to maintain a role that will be conducive to permitting this to happen (pp. 31-32). Burma’s military governance already is well on its way to making headways with this mandate.
For starters, I agree with Steinberg that, yes indeed, the military government currently has complete control of nonpublic conglomerates, which have dozens of joint ventures with foreign firms, employ hundreds of thousands of workers, and operate in a wide variety of fields, and that the military government institutionally will remain the nation’s primary producers and consumers of economic assets (Steinberg, 2006, p. 139). But I couple this with how Selth (2002) views it: That the military government does recognize that its economic ambitions must not only reap revenues to pay for its own expansion and longevity, but must bring about a “higher standard of living [that] will help defuse popular demands for a change in government” (p. 37).

So, in my continuation scenario, by 2040, the military governance has not only learned lessons from the experiences of the Asian tigers and has opened up the market, but also has managed to hold onto its monopoly over power. This monopoly is now well cushioned by up-and-coming tiers of wealthy and middle-class Burmese citizens and by Burma’s longstanding “patrimonial system of patronage and support involving the military elite” (Steinberg, 2006, p. 139). Therefore, as Steinberg has
put it, Burma's expatriates' calls for massive demobilization of military are for naught; an unemployed ex-military could be a political danger; the military's influence is profound; and the military is the nation's economic base. In fact, Steinberg points out that a military career is the number one choice for most families with children (Kyaw Ying Hlaing, et al., 2005, p. 108).

To Steinberg's position above that the military government is entrenched and Selth's view that the military leaders know they must reach out to the populace if they are to augment their longevity, I would introduce yet another element for what I see as the locus of Burma's raison d'etre. An element that is tied back to one of two Burmese cultural concepts, ana and awza, which are both related to the notion of legitimacy (and earlier touch upon in Chapter 2). In the Burmese vernacular, the former term legitimizes that entity which is able to influence through power; the latter that entity which is able to influence through prestige. The former usually relates to that which is institutional. The latter usually relates to that which is personal. Steinberg (2006) writes, "There is no question that in Myanmar
today the military government has ana" (p. 43). I would offer that, in the Burmese context of which entities to consider legitimate, the military’s steady fiscal returns to the populace as the nation achieves and sustains economic growth can only further enhance the populace’s acceptance of the ana of the military government’s staying power.

The developments for my continuation scenario revolve around the stances that external and internal actors and institutions will uphold: First, externally, that the western international community at-large continues to refuse to engage with Burma because Burma fails to meet so-called “democratic” standards. However, what is in Burma’s favor is that the world’s two most populous Asian giants, China and India, have long taken up economic residence in Burma. Once adversarial about a Burma with whom they both share long contiguous boundaries, China and India, by 2040, would be collaborating to carve up Burma as a primary client state. For each has long seen Burma as a provider of valuable resources and have long recognized that a stable Burma was in its own best interests. China is even a step ahead by having successfully developed, by then, a
land link through Burma to the Bay of Bengal to access the development of a vast natural gas deposit, thereby enabling it to further strengthen its long reach in the economy of the region. Additionally, and also in Burma’s favor, ASEAN member nations continue to uphold the principle of non-interference in other sovereign nations. This, coupled with the economic progress Burma has made, make these regional neighbors even more willing to increase levels of trade with Burma and have them continuing to explore and expand business ventures related to the export of Burma’s jade and gems and the development of offshore oil and gas.

Second, internally, while the military government still retains power in Burma, most of its old-school leaders, who had been trapped in their paranoia that outsiders were all out to divide and destroy their nation, would no longer be around. Instead, this concern has been replaced by a military cadre with a different mindset and whose leadership has undergone a metamorphosis that includes heeding, once again, Chinese Leader Deng Xiaoping’s words that no country can develop by closing its door and embracing the age-old cliché, *It’s the Economy, Stupid.*
While these officers remain ferociously true to the revolutionary legacy passed on to them as it relates to upholding Burma's sovereignty at any and at all costs, they also have become more open to accepting that the time has come for Burma to undergo an economic evolution of some magnitude, if they are to ever catch up with their regional counterparts. Rampant globalization and technology has quickly awakened this new leadership to the gap between their nation's development and that of their neighbors. Many officeholders have traveled and trained overseas and recognize that their military ambitions and governance staying power depend heavily on their nation's economic growth. They foresee that a growing economy will primarily line their pockets, but will still have enough leftover to trickle down to benefit a core Burmese middle class, whose support will be direly needed to sustain continued military governance and to help keep the army politically powerful beyond 2040.

Additionally, they also remain true to commitments made as far back as 1997 by older generations of military leaders related to the necessity of marrying the development of the economy with the preservation of the
This new Roadmap for The Economy that the 2040 military governance has designed has taken into consideration Burma’s cultural practices so as to “retain its attractive natural landscape free of the environmental pollution which has marred other Southeast Asian economic and industrial development programs (James, 2005, p. 115).

Equally important, the 2040 cadre of military leaders has come to fully embrace the nexus between education, health, and economic development and go all out to foster strategies that were tentatively visited by the leadership of the early 2000s in their quest to completely eradicate illiteracy. Such strategies run the gamut from increasing the number of monastic primary schools to sending more Burmese students overseas for higher education. James (2005), writing about the traditional importance accorded to education in Burmese culture and the high regard that teachers have always had in Burmese society, states that “policy-makers are exerting every effort to enhance quality education in Myanmar as a key plank in the country’s program to re-skill its population, rebuild its economy, and take an active role in international affairs again” (p. 103).
Given Burma's literacy rate already was 85.3 percent in 2007, no one is surprised, in 2040, that Burma has attained a literacy rate that is 95 percent.

Four Futures - Alternative Scenario: Collapse

2. **Economic and social disorder ensues.**

SYNOPSIS: The year is 2040 and Burma, with a population of about 62 million, is in a state of governance that has folded or collapsed as a result of the current world disorder. Following a literally "earth shattering" global economic and environmental collapse over the past decade, Burma too rapidly sinks into economic and social disorder. The military government has been overthrown and several key officers killed by violent mobs. Unpaid and hungry soldiers have deserted their posts and returned to their homes but, although back in their villages, are barely able to survive. Without adequate energy to fuel its modern infrastructure, Burma returns to pre-industrial ways of living and working. Even then, the Burmese find it almost impossible to eke out a living, given the shortage of bare necessities,
such as rice, fish, cooking oil, and onions.

In the absence of a strong central authority, governance has now devolved to pockets of local and corrupt strongmen, who have surfaced to form a Burmese mafia and who already have begun to hoard scarce resources.

According to the Futures Literature, an essential element of a collapsed society would be that it would have folded for one or more of a variety of different reasons. It also could be a collapsed future in which at least some conditions deteriorate from their present favorable levels and some critical systems fail, due to either probable, possible, or wildcard factors. What follows in the remainder of this segment is an elaboration of my collapse scenario, to include a backdrop on global economic and environmental collapse and a discussion of some premises and developments associated with the economic and social disorder that ensues inside Burma.

Backdrop

In the early 1970s, D. H. Meadows, et al. wrote about the limits to growth and raised worrisome questions
related to the world's population and the impact that economic growth would have on the environment. They then concluded that the physical limits to human use of materials and energy were still decades ahead. By the early 1990s, while updating their original work, they realized that they had underestimated the extent of these disasters to be and that resources and pollution flows had gone well beyond their limits and human behavior vis-à-vis the earth's natural resources was becoming unsustainable (D. Meadows, et al., 1991). More recently, there has been a proliferation of works on the reality of a global economic collapse, to include energy insufficiencies (Peak Oil), global warming, sea level rise, and a multitude of other environmental challenges. According to a selection of recent writings on this subject of a global crisis, world scientists have for too long warned that "human beings and the natural world are on a collision course, with human activities inflicting harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and on critical resources." These warnings have not been heeded by human society and the environment

13 The trends and quotations listed in this backdrop primarily have been obtained from a website compiled by the Pacific Institute of Resource Management, Inc. (PIRM), a New Zealand-based Non-Governmental Organization: http://www.converge.org.nz/prim/index.html.
can no longer sustain life in the manner that the world has previously known. The depletion of the atmosphere has been lethal to many life forms. Air pollution is near ground level and acid precipitation has injured humans, forests, and crops. Water shortages are rampant and pollution of rivers, lakes, and groundwater have only further limited water supply. Oceans are at risk, fisheries have emptied, and the soil is now toxic. Per capita food production has decreased overnight. The rain forests have been destroyed and there is an irreversible loss of many species that previously provided medicinal and other benefits. Disease is spreading and cures rationed. In short, climate change and global warming have become a reality for humans everywhere. For unrestrained population growth has placed unrealistic demands on an earth that scientists have warned is finite. Scientists have long warned that, "No nation can escape from injury when global biological systems are damaged. No nation can escape from conflicts over increasingly scare resources." They have put everyone on notice that there will be incalculable consequences for both developed and undeveloped nations because of all of these environmental and economic instabilities.
Premises and Developments

The premises for the unfolding of my collapsed scenario, in which economic and social disorder ensues in Burma, are that the military government's decades-old xenophobia has backfired on itself and that Burma has failed to take notice of the growing evidence for and the widespread worldwide hysteria about collapsing global economic and environmental infrastructures. Still a developing nation, Burma's military government for too long had grown accustomed to heavily depending on China and India to bail it out of any economic crisis. But Burma has long fallen off the radar of both Asian superpowers as they each struggle to fend off the effects that the world's economic disorder is having upon their nations and their mammoth populations.

The developments for my collapsed scenario revolve around the following stances that external and internal actors will uphold: First, externally, regional "wannabe" superpowers China and India are struggling to maintain their own competitive and imminent statuses in what is now a collapsing economic and environmental global and regional front, with little success. For it is no longer possible, along the conventional lines, for
any nation to grow economically or to continue to see itself as a superpower. Furthermore, both nations also had gradually become more sensitive to international criticism about their past ties with "undemocratic" countries, such as Burma. For instance, China, an emerging world superpower in the early 2000s, previously had openly defied the international community’s criticism of it being a close ally of Burma. In the current environment, with its own political and economic survival in question and faced with its population explosion, it no longer can afford to foster this "Big Brother" role on behalf of Burma. Likewise, the global economic and environmental disorder has had a domino effect on India’s gigantic population and Indian leaders are consumed with fighting famine, disease, and massive protests and violence inside their borders. Meanwhile, Burma’s other regional cohorts are operating in a "dog-eat-dog" world as markets deteriorate, energy resources recede, and the previously touted Asian miracles come to an end. They shun all engagement with Burma. ASEAN itself is receding into the background as irrelevant. So Burma now finds itself in the unfavorable situation of having to go it alone and discovers that it is unable to do so.
Second, internally, the situation is equally, if not more, unfavorable. The spillover of the global economic and environmental crisis has made it impossible for the governors of Burma to tackle emerging economic and political problems, together with the rise of ethnic tensions and the proliferation of heroin addicts, to ensure even a scrap of stability in the country. Escalating economic discomforts affect everyone, as well as the once elite military, resulting not only in the erosion of public support for any form of governance, but in the complete eradication of any such support.

For Burma’s military institution has become a fragile state structure. The military government gradually had begun to assume a less prominent, if any, role because of its inability to adequately deliver any goods and services to the populace. The once-entrenched military institution suffers a crisis of legitimacy because it has lost the ana (legitimacy) that the Burmese people, in the past, had accorded it. Betrayals in the barracks and mistrust and distrust in the ranks have become commonplace. Recurring coups have permitted only short-lived dictators to emerge. A steady proliferation of military elite, including a new generation of military
upstarts into Burmese society, did lead to the temporary formation of a small, wealthy, and powerful coterie becoming the short-time stakeholders of Burma’s assets and Burma’s nationalism. But a breakdown almost immediately occurred in which all hitherto known critical and previously military-controlled systems fell apart. The Burmese society is in great disarray and has become trapped in the spirals of political, economical, and environmental collapse. Protests and violence become widespread not just because of unaffordable hikes in the price of gasoline or fuel (as they did back in 2007), but because everyday basic commodities, such as cooking oil and onions, are now much sought-after and “to kill for” sparse necessities. Additionally, along with other African and Asian nations in the vicinity of the equator, Burma too has become a hotspot for a myriad of diseases infiltrating the region and with no end in sight for any medical relief.

In short, any governance, let alone good governance, is non-existent as civil and political rights deteriorate, diverse forms of repressive governance suffocate the people en masse, and a condition of economic and social disorder has surfaced. Many in the
populace, especially young thugs, have no choice other than to succumb to drugs as their escapism or to resort to violence to ensure their survival. These thugs form themselves into scattered pockets of local strongmen who emerge to slowly take advantage of the lawlessness and to hoard what few scarce resources are remaining in the country. They soon assume the role of a corrupt mafia that attempts to self-organize the nation from the bottom up and to "govern" in their own limited interests. But this is an unsuccessful venture and governance in Burma, in 2040, indeed has collapsed.

Four Futures - Alternative Scenario: Disciplined

3. Burmese turn to the sangha.

SYNOPSIS: The year is 2040 and Burma, with a population of about 62 million, is in a state of governance that is disciplined (maintained) around overarching ancient and traditional values espoused by the Buddhist clergy (sangha). In the wake of a literally "earth shattering" global economic and environmental collapse, scattered pockets of local strongmen emerged to form a corrupt mafia and to make unsuccessful attempts, in their own limited
self-interests, to govern Burma from the bottom up. But, rather than allow this to happen, the Burmese people, a vast majority of whom are Buddhist, chose instead to return to their historical roots and to turn to ancient and traditional values that have long been upheld by their Buddhist faith and their Buddhist clergy. The sangha is now the effectual ruler of Burma and bases its power on religious and cultural authority. In contrast to the disorder and violence found in other parts of the world, most Burmese are living steady and meaningful spiritual lives in conformity with traditional religious teachings.

According to the Futures Literature, an essential element of a disciplined society would be that it would be disciplined around a common set of values. These values could be ancient, traditional, or draw upon other ideologies. Furthermore, a democratic form of a "disciplined society" also could emerge. For example, citizens might welcome—vote "democratically" for—a set of values (traditional, environmental, religious, or
something entirely new) around which to organize their lives freely because of looming energy and environmental problems. What follows in the remainder of this segment is an elaboration of my disciplined scenario, to include a backdrop on the sangha and a discussion of some premises and developments associated with the Burmese people turning to the sangha.

Backdrop

There is a wide range of beliefs regarding just when Buddhism came to Burma ranging from during the lifetime of the Buddha himself to during the time of King Asoka of India (circa 250 B.C.). The advent of Theravada Buddhism in Burma dates back at least to the Pyu era (first millennium AD) and is described by Spiro (1970) as the “kammatic Buddhism,” or the merit-path-to-salvation. Theravada Buddhism has since remained the ideological, social, and religious glue that has united Burma. Aung-Thwin (1974) writes that every Buddhist in Burma wants to be reborn a nat (deity) awaiting the descent of the Maitreya (The Buddha) or wants to be reborn as a human capable of internalizing the Buddhist Doctrine so she/he can attain nirvana (salvation) when the Maitreya returns to earth to preach the dharmacakra (“wheel of law”). He
adds that those in society who are not monks can acquire merit by donating to the religious order and by performing other good deeds, such as building pagodas (temples). In actuality, what all this makes clear is the integral role that Buddhism and, by extension, the sangha have held for centuries in Burmese society.

In the past century, the sangha has not been above playing a role in Burmese politics, when called on to do so by the masses or when drawn to do so by the monks’ own consciences. U Maung Maung (1979) records, as early as 1921, Burmese nationalists’ pleas to the sangha to “not ignore the sufferings of the people while they concentrated single-mindedly on their own spiritual benefit” (p. 15), a plea that led to the sangha taking on an active role in Burma’s eventual successful ousting of British colonialism. U Maung Maung notes that a separation of church and state occurred in the 1930s because “New concepts of political movements and leadership developed which were quite inconsistent with the traditional Buddhist ethos of the previous decade” (p. 242). Despite this break, the sangha remained in the wings and engaged prominently in the 1988 student movements’ failed attempt to bring down military
dictatorship. And, as recently as September 2007, thousands of monks marched all over Burma to speak out against the economic hardships of the populace.

In keeping with Spiro’s (1982) comments on the monkhood discussed in Chapter 2 (Review of the Literature), Aung-Thwin (2007) too distinguishes between monks who are devotees of the sangha for life and those he describes as “humans in yellow robes.” The latter, he states, are those who join ill-disciplined and unorthodox Orders for a variety of non-religious reasons. The former, he says, are those bona fide monks whose behavior truly represents the best tenets of Buddhism and who complied with the Supreme Council of the Sangha to return to their monasteries during the 2007 protests. These are the real pongyis (monks) who live by the vinaya (Code of Conduct) and who represent the moral authority of Burmese society. This is the sangha to whom the Burmese can turn to show them how to go about treading the merit-path-to-salvation.

Premises and Developments

The premises for the unfolding of my disciplined scenario, in which the Burmese turn to the sangha, are as follows: The demise of the military government has
occurred because it could no longer politically or economically sustain the population. Pockets of local strongmen have emerged slowly to form a corrupt mafia and they are on the verge of self-organizing so they can control the Burmese people en mass and govern from the bottom up. But the general populace, a vast majority of who are Buddhist, recognizing that their nation is on the brink of collapse, is unwilling to accept the disorder they know will ensue. So they turn to the centuries-old cultural continuity they believe can save them even if not economically and politically, at least spiritually, namely, the sangha.

The developments for my disciplined scenario revolve around the following stances that external and internal actors will uphold: First, externally, collapsing global economies and the worldwide deterioration of the environment have compounded the ability of the military government in Burma to achieve and sustain even a modicum of economic growth. “Chindia” (China and India) and other regional cohorts (especially former ASEAN supporters) have long deserted Burma as irrelevant to their own struggle for survival in a global disorder. These godfathers are no longer around or no longer
willing or even no longer able to prop up Burma’s once entrenched military.

Second, internally, from the village level up, the Burmese band together in 2040 to perform religious rites and to resume ancient social activities in an autonomous manner. Also, the sangha has a structure in place that permeates every village and town. The sangha, although it has been sidelined for decades, easily resumes its controlled hierarchy. Human beings in robes begin to redirect the course that Burmese individuals must follow. This course is strictly based on religious tenets and is meant to cater not only to outcomes for individuals in this life, but to reemphasize fundamental beliefs that other lives will follow if they follow the merit-path to salvation. Monastic discipline and religious practices are reintroduced in all realms of everyday life and moral and literary education is provided by learned monks to Burma’s youth. Primary-age children learn reading, writing, and religion in monastic schools, as was the practice during the pre-colonialist era, while Burmese teenagers once again eagerly line up to be novices in the monasteries so that someday they could opt to become monks and nuns, if they so chose to do so.
Soon, Burmese society gradually resettles into a pre-industrial way of living even as they relearn the philosophy of impermanence. They focus their unified energies on contently living simple agrarian lives by sustaining their communal farms and tending to their family gardens.

Thereby, the sangha has come to once again embody an ideology that claims universal authority and permits no rival claim of loyalty or conscience. As has historically and traditionally been the practice in Burma, the scales have tipped in favor of the sangha and the voices of the religious authority once again consume the Burmese. Given all this, I envision a trend where there soon follows an increase in the number of pagodas being built, where the lives of most people only revolve around the tenets of Buddhism, and where a hefty influx of novices recruited into the monasteries soon results in monks and nuns outnumbering every day civilians. Perhaps, in this scenario, a career in the monastery now is viewed not just as the number one choice for most families with children, but the only choice they have.

What matters most for the Burmese now is that they have recovered their Burmese-ness and their Buddhism.
About the former, Shwe Lu Maung (1989) writes that concepts related to democracy and citizenry have been unable to take roots in Burma because such notions are non-existent among the public at large, but "Burmese-ness" is a psychological concept that all Burmese can relate to (p. 102). Likewise, stemming from my discussion in Chapter 3 (Background on Burma) about the pertinence of Buddhism in the fabric of Burma's society, the worship and devotion of the Buddha, and the popular interest in the return of Buddha and the attainment of nirvana, these too are concepts that the Burmese can readily embrace. So there unfolds a scenario in which the Burmese people strive to cooperate with the monks to create what they hope will be a perfect Buddhist society, with the senior pongyangis working overtime to assimilate Burma's numerous minority groups. In sum, the year is 2040, and the sangha has become the face of governance in Burma.

Four Futures - Alternative Scenario: Transformation

4. Burma turns into a "Ubiquitous Society."

SYNOPSIS: The year is 2040 and Burma, with a population of about 62 million, is in a state of governance that has transformed itself into
a technologically-controlled society or, in futures parlance, a "Ubiquitous Society".\(^{14}\)

Over the past three decades, the military government focused not only on achieving and sustaining economic growth, but also made it a priority to send many of Burma’s bright scholars abroad for advanced degrees in electronics, biotechnology, and nanotechnology. These young Burmese not only returned avid consumers of high tech products, but led the charge that turned Burma overnight into a leading regional example of a "Ubiquitous Society," a form pioneered in Japan, Korea, and Finland. Initially, the military government strongly championed this, believing that the omnipresent embedded electronic chips of a "Ubiquitous Society" would enable them to have even tighter control of their citizens, but brilliant young Burmese soon learned how to use the technology to transform Burma into a democratic non-spatial polity, affiliated

\(^{14}\) Dator (2006) recommends that the word ‘ubiquitous’ should always modify something else; for instance, “ubiquitous computers” or “ubiquitous networks” or “ubiquitous information,” noting that it makes no sense to speak of a “ubiquitous society” without some kind of intervening noun.
electronically with Singapore, South Korea, Japan, and Malaysia, and without losing touch with their Burmese and Buddhist roots.

In the Futures Literature, a transformational society is not simply “novel,” but can be novel in specific ways—either high tech or high spirit. What follows in the remainder of this segment is an elaboration of my transformed scenario, to include a backdrop on technological transformations and a discussion of some premises and developments associated with Burma turning into a “Ubiquitous Society,” (hereafter referred to as a U-Society).

Backdrop

Futurists have dubbed the times we live in “the Era of Multiple Transformation” (E. Cornish, 2006, p. 9). Indeed, technological changes have engulfed our lives and, every which way we turn, the interconnectivities between technology and economic and social changes stare us in the face. Cornish writes that the genesis for the current technological revolution, which he terms Cybernetic, was the advent of the computer (in the United States as early as 1944). He alerts that we already are
functioning in the Biotech Revolution, as genetic engineering redesigns plants and animals with the potential to, if it is not doing so, enhance "the physical, mental, and emotional capabilities of humans themselves" and to even reduce our sleep patterns and aging process (pp. 19-20).

To gauge to what extent this cybernetic revolution has spilled over into Burma, one only has to consider that the sprouting cyber cafes of today are a far cry from the palm-leaf scribes of yesteryears. But there also are other essential aspects of the cybernetic revolution that could seriously take on the trappings of high-tech to include, for instance, the development of artificial intelligence as political and social actors in the future. So, ridiculous as it may sound, why should we refrain from imagining robots running Rangoon within this century?

Tonn’s (1995) exploration of non-spatial government is a fine example of how transformational governance could come about. Given advances in telecommunications and information technology, he opines, governments could be populated by people who share a strong affinity with one another, but who do not occupy common spatial
boundaries. In his view, non-spatial governments could address existing regional conflicts whose root causes stem from differences in ethnicity, religion, race, or culture. He describes a world where people can be connected and exhibit organized behavior in cyberspace; where governance can become more specialized; and where this transformation can occur overtime with the help of technology, with the non-spatial governance providing environmental protection, educational opportunities (that is, distance learning), and a range of other critical human services. But Tonn also points out that one of the most significant barriers to non-spatial governments would be human psychology and he emphasizes that high levels of cooperation would be needed to implement non-spatial economic and global environment policies, as well as to maintain financial systems.

For purposes of this scenario, I will envision that Burma's transformation occurs in the form of its conversion to what the Futures Literature describes as a U-Society. Simply stated, a U-Society can be depicted as a computers-everywhere-society, a society in which information technology is embedded into every aspect of a society's day-to-day living that would, in turn,
communicate and link one society’s system to other such systems to enable individuals to realize a more transformational lifestyle. And once a U-Society has been established, individuals in that society can be connected worldwide anytime, anywhere, and with anybody and non-spatial living—and non-spatial governance—can become their reality.

In this technologically-controlled world, we would be surrounded by a series of self-services and smart technologies would reign supreme in our everyday lives. Dutch Futurist M. Bullinga (2004) describes an “ambient intelligence” that will adapt to our ways, respond to our whims, and even pave the way for automatic law enforcement. Our “intelligent cars” would stop us from speeding, chips in our money would guarantee authenticity, and computerized eyeglasses would be specific to our professions (pp. 32-36). R. Kurzweil (1999) already had spelled out this eventual merging of man and machine when he wrote that, by 2009, computers would be embedded in our clothes; by 2019, they’d be hidden in our bodies; and, by 2099, human and machine intelligence would be one (pp. 16-21). I. D. Pearson (2000) too has provided what he sees as a possible
technology timeline. For instance, designer babies by 2010, electronic pets outnumbering organic pets by 2020, emotion chips used to control criminals by 2030, and nuclear fusion used as power source by 2040 (pp. 14-19).

Dator (2006) emphasizes the need for any discussion of a U-Society to include the role of biology and biometrics, alone and in combination with electronics and nanotechnology. He believes that humans and technologies and the environment of both will all merge into one with humans eventually losing their monopoly on intelligence and new forms of artificial life and artificial intelligence eventually superseding humanity to form a transformational future that far exceeds a U-Society.

Former Minister of Information and Communications of the Republic of Korea, Daeje Chin (dubbed Korea’s “Mr. Technology,” because his career was so intertwined with the nation’s technological development), held great aspirations for Korea’s technological future and explained how Korea got to be where it is today as follows: “Korea went through a lot of hardships during the Japanese occupation, as well as during the Korean War. But those years of hardship gave us a hungry spirit. We didn’t want to be too far behind. We were
far behind in the industrialization era, and catching up was actually very difficult for us.” Noting that it all began with the Korean government’s willingness to invest in setting up a high-speed Internet, he describes Korea lifting off from that point onward to move forward, to look at the technological changes around the world, to recognize the need to collaborate and cooperate with other technological giants in the region, such as China and Japan, and to set up a technological roadmap for Korea’s vision of its future. He emphasizes the need for these advanced processes to be kept in place to keep a whole system working smoothly, even if people come and people go (Word ICT Summit 2005, “Korea the Ubiquitous Society,” Seoul, Republic of Korea, June 9-11, 2005, pp. 1-6).

Japan too has successfully sought ways to expand a Japan-initiated U-society. From a nation who, until the 1990s, was focused on its infrastructure construction and revamping its legal system, Japanese business leaders a decade later, vowed to realize a U-Society initiated in Japan, but they also cautioned that this advancement of being “anywhere anytime” must carry with it a moral and cultural fabric. More importantly, from the get-go, 215
Japan expressed a desire to expand this Japanese way of utilizing information technology and this Japanese desire to create a U-Society to include other Asian nations (Toward the Realization of a Japan-Initiated Ubiquitous Society, an article based on the keynote speech given at "CEATEC JAPAN 2003" by Hajime Sasaki, Chairman of the Board, NEC Corporation, Journal of Advanced Technology, January 2004, pp. 63-69).

Premises and Developments

The premises for the unfolding of my transformed scenario in which Burma turns into a U-society are as follows: Burma’s military government has awakened to the realization that it does not want to be left behind. Yes, colonialism was a dastardly thing, but military leaders finally admit that almost a century has gone by since the British occupied Burma and it is time to look to the future and not be held captive to the past. The military leadership cannot help but notice a string of opportunities for technological advancement right on its doorstep. They are well aware that one ASEAN neighbor after another has embraced electronic innovations; has capitulated to biotechnology to improve their nation’s agriculture, health care, manufacturing, and energy
resources; and has accepted that nanotechnology is the way to go to enhance national security and fight the war on terrorism, given the capability of its supersensitive sensors to detect chemical and biological agents. Moreover, Japan is enthusiastically reaching out to bring Burma into its U-Community and Tokyo is only too willing to invest heavily in helping Rangoon leapfrog to state-of-the-art technology.

So the military government, already collaborating with “Chindia” (China and India) and with other regional multinational corporations to help it achieve and sustain economic growth, now becomes even more open to sending Burmese scholars abroad, including to Tokyo, for advanced degrees in electronic, biotechnology, and nanotechnology.

The developments for my transformed scenario revolve around the following stances that external and internal actors will uphold: First, externally, for most of the western world, technological transformations that already have occurred are now viewed as par for the course. There is an expectancy that the pace of changes to come will accelerate. And, for the moment, all eyes are focused on space, the next frontier, with Russians and Chinese considering frequent flyers to Mars. For
futurists all over the world, there also is a fervent expectancy that "singularity" will strike, singularity being a term used to describe a point in time when current trends go wildly off the charts, so that the future beyond the singularity cannot be envisioned. Although there does not appear to yet be a concise definition of this term, Kurzweil and others define it as "a future time when societal, scientific, and economic change is so fast we cannot even imagine what will happen from our present perspective," with the distinctive feature that machine intelligence will have far exceeded and even merged with human intelligence and new definitions of life, nature, and human will take hold—all this in contrast to the commonsense, intuitive, linear view (Bell, 2003, pp. 18-24). Interestingly, Burmese scholars traveling and studying abroad, in addition to being exposed to the fields of electronics, biotechnology, and nanotechnology, are now exposed to Futures Studies and Futures glossary, including recognizing that "singularity" could become Burma’s reality as much as anyone else’s. Hence, there is no turning back for these brilliant Burmese who make it possible for Burma to go along with technological-control
becoming the Burmese Way of Life. Why not? After all, they are the 21st Century descendants of what as far back as the 11th Century was a sophisticated and bustling metropolis (Pagan).

Second, internally, the Burmese people inside Burma, to include a new generation of military officers who have assumed the leadership, now become more receptive to electronic ways of governance that young Burmese, who have been free to travel abroad, have returned to proselytize. In no time, even the nation’s governors become more amenable to having a share of, and being a partner in, a world where global corporations dominate, global capitalism is the unchallenged system, and global citizenship in a non-spatial society is up for consideration.

Kurzweil (1999) cautions us not to underestimate the changes that will occur in the long term, adding that with the accelerated change of pace that happens nowadays, even a decade can constitute a long-term view and the twenty-first century will equal twenty thousand years of progress at today’s rate of progress; about one thousand times greater than the twentieth century.
Burma has had over three decades to go from governance that restricts the movement of its citizens in physical spaces to one that permits a free for all in virtual spaces. The Burmese are no strangers to the Internet. For years, they have been organizing and picketing on-line, thereby forcing past authoritarian military leaders to resort to draconian methods to control the Web. But in this alternative futures, not only have on-line restrictions lightened up and/or disappeared altogether, but with aid from what is now the Asian Union, led by Japan, pouring into Burma, Internet access has become affordable and widespread and Burma’s current usage is a far cry from what was once reported by the media as a big deal, namely, that Rangoon web users had risen from a few thousand in 2000 to about 63,000 at the end of 2005.\textsuperscript{15} By 2040, an “anywhere anytime” society governs Burma. All else is perfunctory.

Figure 11

Four Alternative Futures for Burma for 2040

Continuation
Economic growth has been achieved and sustained

Collapse
Economic and social disorder ensues

Disciplined
Burmese turn to the sangha

Transformation
Burma turns into a "Ubiquitous Society"

Regional Actors look toward or away from Burma
International Actors look toward or away from Burma
Preferred Futures for Burma (2040)

Dator repeatedly reminds that "Any useful idea about the futures should appear to be ridiculous." But he also cautions that futurists have the additional burden of making the initially-ridiculous idea plausible. In this segment, and at the expense of being ridiculed, I will describe my preferred futures for Burma and will make it sound as plausible as possible.

Only two of the 116 respondents I surveyed expected Burma to be a monarchy by 2040. And not a single respondent "preferred" that it be so. Yet that is the type of governance (with some caveats) that I have chosen to set down as my preferred futures for Burma. Ridiculous as it may sound, my vision for 2040 is one in which Burma goes back to its futures to adopt and adapt governance that is some sort of a hyphenated monarchy or is a marriage between a monarchy and a heap of other humanistic principles.

In his personal accounts of Burma going back to the 1930s and 1940s, Cady (1983) provides insights that I hold as worthy of consideration as I think about a
similar preferred governance for Burma for some hundred years later. He writes,

What Burma needed most to weather the stormy crisis of independence was a leadership which could command deep-seated popular admiration and respect. The country’s traditional symbol of kingship...had gone down the drain under late nineteenth-century colonial rule. A commanding personality like Aung San might have been able to command a sufficient following to have weathered the storm of dissent....The Westernized U Nu possessed some admirable personal traits, but he did not command allegiance or authority capable of bridging over the developing rifts within Burmese society (p. 102).

To further justify my preference for the return of some aspects of the monarchical traditions into Burma’s centuries-long history, perhaps a post mortem such as that suggested by Furnivall (1958) is needed. He writes that, “A post mortem is an enquiry into what has happened in the past and not an occasion for speculating as to what may happen in the future. Yet from what has happened in the past we may, if we can appreciate its significance, find guidance for the future (p. 130).” He adds that the magic of independence could not bridge the gap of the centuries that separated Burma from the modern world and that Burmese leaders were overly anxious to demonstrate Burma’s membership in the modern world and
looked for shot cuts to Utopia (p. 131). A significant data point from Burma’s past that I view as seriously needing more appreciation is the issue of its dismantled monarchy that occurred not upon the demands of the indigenous people, but at the cunning of an invasive foreign power.

Thant Myint U (2006), who also conducts a post mortem of sorts some half a century after Furnivall suggested it, writes that there is no doubt that a democratic government should be the aim for Burma, given its diverse ethnicities, languages, and cultures. But he cites two factors that serve as an impediment to such a transition: Burma’s recent history of failed state building and the fact that colonialism fostered the overnight disappearance of Burma’s notions of kingship and the relationship between government and society. He too describes a strong Utopian streak that can be traced back to the 1930s student union days when there was a proclivity for abstract debates on communism, socialism, democracy, diverse constitutional models and long-term political schemes and he emphasizes that what is still missing is pragmatic and rigorous policy debates on economics, finance, health care, education and minority
rights (pp. 345-346). Former Prime Minister U Nu himself lends weight to what he and other young Burmese leaders thrown into a war with colonialism were up against as they grappled with an array of foreign terms such as socialism, communism, marxism, without truly understanding the full scope of these -isms and too rapidly allowed themselves to be swept and swayed by external politicking. About these very -isms, he writes: "At that time, more or less on hearsay and cursory reading, we impetuously loudly claimed [various isms]....We are very remorseful for having made, at one time, such ill-considered and unfounded claims" (1958, p xx).

Aung Thwin (1985) writes that while the Burmese people expected actors at the top to change continually for that was in keeping with the Buddhist law of impermanence, they did not expect the relationships between top and bottom, the principles of that relationship itself, nor the traditional forms of articulating the relationship to change. That the colonial government did not and could not fill the void left by the monarchy, for it did not understand the relationship between state and society in Burma, steeped
in an entirely different tradition with different assumptions concerning statecraft. That some British themselves were well aware of the people's veneration for the throne and to this day it remains uncertain why the British did not preserve the monarchy, even as a titular power as they did with rulers in various parts of India but, instead, removed both the monarch (physically to India) and the monarchy as an institution, thereby creating an ultimate reason for disorder and providing a psychological vacuum "in which...immanent kings would surely appear, and until one did, 'anything goes'" (p. 254-255).

Thus, for my preferred future, I would begin by arguing that perhaps Burma's centuries-old notions of kingship and the relationship between government and the society never really quite disappeared; it simply lay dormant in the hearts and minds of those Burmese, many who reside beyond the reaches of Rangoon and who have managed to remain untouched by foreign definitions of other -isms. That Burma, by 2040, can re-pick and re-choose aspects or even totally ignore whatever it considers appropriate from any of these other -isms to complement its mix of a 21st century version of whatever
it wants its "monarchcracy" to be by then. In other words, Burma can now reassess its future by returning to that point in its past where British colonialism tore asunder a monarchism that had been integral to its origins and essential for its survival for hundreds of years.

In my preferred scenario, I can imagine a scenario where the Burmese people could once again be ruled by an individual who they may choose to call their monarch. But my vision of this individual will not simply be one who resembles monarchs of post-Pagan days. Instead the Burmese monarch of the future will be one who recognizes that other actors on the globe are planning to inhabit Mars, if they are not already there. In other words, she or he will not indulge in backward thinking but would instead be forward looking. Fundamentally, she or he will be one who runs the nation by, first and foremost, taking into consideration the humanistic rights of the entire citizenry. She or he would couple this with also placing importance on a range of issues related to ongoing and ever changing environmental, economical, technological, and other 21st Century concerns.
But, first, some clarification is needed on the pros and cons of governance that even has a hint of a monarchist in the forefront. The issue of a "monarchcracy" could be viewed positively, if the monarch is benevolent, or negatively, if the monarch is a tyrant. But it would matter not whether the monarch is benevolent or despotic. Burma has seen its share of good and bad leaders and will continue to be governed by the Buddhist belief in the principle of impermanence. Additionally, it also is important to bear in mind that a "monarchcracy" does not have to be hereditary. For instance, in Bhutan, following intermittent civil wars and in an attempt to ward off British colonial ambitions, the nation was united by the leadership of Ugyen Wanchuck, who was unanimously elected Bhutan’s first king in 1907 by a Constituent Assembly which had representatives of monks, government officials, and the citizens. The Wanchuck dynasty still remains in place today and stands poised to become a fully-fledged constitutional monarchy with gradually strengthening democratic underpinnings in the near future.

Numerous scenarios for the unfolding of a "monarchcracy" in Burma could occur in the next decades.
An heir of Burma’s ancient monarchy could rise up to reclaim a 21st Century throne, albeit many would consider this unlikely. An ordinary citizen could emerge as a strong leader (because Burmese history does record monarchs taking control who did not come from a royal lineage, for instance Alaungpaya in the 18th century) to eventually becomes Burma’s first 21st Century monarch, preferably guided by Burma’s monks to come to the forefront to be one who would espouse high levels of benevolence, maintain an even-handed administration, and only have the social and economic welfare of her or his subjects in mind. One who wanted Burma to be viewed as a society that valued human dignity and fairness for all and above all. Again, this is not to discount the possibility that an individual could surface who ends up being regarded as a despotic ruler who subject the citizenry to a form of autocracy and absolutism but history has shown that the Burmese people can be resilient and can wait it out until yet another of their futures emerges.

In any case, to support my preferred image, what first follows below is a recap of what the Background on Burma already has set forth. I then utilize this recap
to lay the groundwork, by backcasting, for the preferred futures scenario I next develop.

From ancient times, Burma had been ruled by monarchs until the British forcibly dethroned Burma’s last king toward the end of the 19th Century and then were bodacious enough to hold Burma’s governance captive for almost six decades. Since then and in its attempts to break itself once and for all free from this irreparable British bondage, Burma has politically struggled throughout much of the 20th Century to basically revive itself. The remnants of a colonialism depriving it literally overnight of hundreds of year of monarchism led to Burmese leaders flirting with a pseudo democracy that lasted a little over a decade. What followed for about the next two decades was a dictatorship that only helped to further devastate the nation. Militarism then came to stay and has made a strong effort to insulate the nation, but at the expense of isolating it and holding its nation hostage to progress.

Given this political history, I prefer, by 2040, to see Burma return to being a monarchy, not in the 19th or 20th Centuries’ interpretation of the word, but perhaps in some 21st Century Burmese understanding of it, whatever
that may be. I would want for there to be at Burma’s helm a modern, compassionate, and accessible Burmese monarch. One would immediately have to ask what kind of monarchical face would she or he have to wear to be acceptable to some Burmese political framework for 21st Century living.

To answer the above question, I have selected a young Asian kingdom, Bhutan, as a possible prototype that Burma may want to consider copying. Bhutan, in March 2008, peacefully completed its transition from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. Bhutan’s ancient history, like Burma’s, is steeped in mythology and Buddhist practices. And, like Burma, relations between politics and history are innately tied. Bhutan’s monarch in the 20th Century has emphasized decentralization of governance, modern education, and a program of planned development. Its evolvement into a constitutional monarchy means that citizens over 21 can vote by secret ballot for a representative to a 150-member National Assembly. These representatives then elect a Council of Ministers and select a Prime Minister. Separately, a spiritual head of Bhutan is nominated by monastic leaders and appointed by the king. This Monk
Body is heavily involved in advising the government at all levels. Elsewhere in the countryside, there are district officers and village leaders who are locally elected. At the center, the king is considered to be the head of state and the prime minister to be the head of government. And Bhutan has its own defense services and conducts global and regional foreign relations, yet maintains a healthy cultural distance from the rest of the world.

The Bhutan model appears to have many of the trappings that the Burmese would recognize and possibly might accept. The Burmese supposedly have long upheld the "divine" rights of kings that Heine-Geldern (1956) expands on in his anthropological works. The Burmese give credence to the role of monks in their day to day life. And the Burmese people themselves would welcome the opportunity to have a more active role at all levels in their politics.

Thus a monarchy with a benevolent queen or king would be my preferred futures for Burma. I would want her or him to be benevolent and wise and to recognize the value of opening Burma’s doors to other even more advanced futures regionally and globally that may lie
beyond 2040 and that may take it from the rule by a monarch to other new forms of being ruled or governed. Why, I would argue, should there be a presumption of tyranny associated with a monarchy. Why can not a monarchy go hand in hand with selective aspects of a democratic society, especially if the monarch is a benevolent leader who recognizes that she/he rules at the behest of the citizens. In the global world of governances, one repeatedly spots that pomp and ceremony are not just attributable to monarchs, but that presidents and prime ministers of so-called democratic nations only too readily embrace these accouterments, with little protests from the people.

But how could my preferred scenario come about and from where would such a “monarch” appear between now and 2040? Merely as an exercise, and utilizing some backcasting, I have constructed a timeline in eight-year cycles (given the number eight is auspicious to Burmese) of how developments could unfold to support this vision.

2008-2015

- Demonstrations, riots, arrests steadily continue in Burma mostly led by students and...
taking on the pattern of incremental escalations that ensued during the 1930s and the 1980s. Pockets of monks come forward periodically to peacefully protest on behalf of the people's plight.

- Current governance is no longer able to prevent the floodgate of connections to the outside world as technological advances smuggle their way into Burma from neighboring China, India, and Thailand, all of who stand to profit from more modernized and economically enlarged governance at their borders.

- From plains and plateaus, Burmese everywhere now have been awakened to the realization that it is possible to retain traditional symbols of their past even while reaching out to a self-reliant future. They have learned of the Buddhist Kingdom of Bhutan's accession to a constitutional monarchy, its ability to maintain the sanctity of Buddhism, and its willingness to open up to the outside world while attempting to safeguard any one segment
of its society getting unfairly wealthy at the expense of another. The Burmese citizenry stands ready to re-create an almost thousand-year-old political traditional system, namely, a monarchial society.

2016-2023

- Continued repeated failed attempts by the current governance to produce a set of guidelines that is acceptable to the public, which for decades it has been describing as the road map to democracy that eventually would lead to a constitutional referendum and an election. Numerous versions of this road map had the military controlling major ministries, holding large blocks of unelected seats in all legislative bodies, maintaining the right to declare a state of emergency and seize power at any given time, and limiting the rights of political parties and political activity.

- To avoid the unraveling social disorder and to prevent even the hint of any lingering colonial
aspirations from regional powers such India or China, and to once and for all shake off continued interference and/or isolation from international powers, the current governance engages in a long overdue traditional religious revival. By so doing, it resurrects the power of Buddhist tradition on Burmese political behavior and reestablishes interdependent and strong ties with the sangha. Monks are back in the forefront and slowly, but successfully, encourage a return to ancient or traditional modes of governance, namely, monarchism.

- Most Burmese alive by now have been only exposed to militarism and are easily swayed into preferring a ruler with a crown on his head than one with a gun in his holster. They also have been exposed slowly but steadily to the modernization and technological advances occurring elsewhere in the world and they realize that there is no turning back from moving forward and thus ensues a coupling and a compromise of old and new.
Numerous sub-scenarios for the unfolding of a "monarchcracy" in Burma could occur in the next decades. A descendant from one of Burma's previous monarchical dynasties could emerge to reclaim a 21st Century throne. Or, as with the Bhutan example, an ordinary citizen strongly supported by the monks (to whom the military has turned in desperation to bring order back to the nation) could emerge, eventually becoming Burma's first 21st Century monarch. Burmese history records persons being declared monarchs who did not come from a royal lineage, such as Alaungpaya in the 18th century (Prager, 2003). Far-fetched as this may sound to the non-Burmese ears, throughout the history of Burma, the concept or the expectation of the emergence of "future or imminent kings" (minlaungs) who are expected to restore order in the society has remained plausible.

With most of the past players who were primarily responsible for holding Burma hostage
to a military movement no longer around, a new set of prominent players welcome the emergence of a strong leader who not only declares herself or himself determined to reunify Burma but who is endorsed by the sangha. Such a leader meets with little opposition especially because she or he makes clear it is her or his intention to draw from what occurred in Panglong in February 1947, when Aung San, prior to his assassination, placed emphasis on the rights of ethnic minority and indigenous communities to be able to play a full part in the future of Burma—a promise that may well have taken Burma down a different path if Aung San had lived to keep his word.

• Most Burmese now agree it is in their best interest to reestablish a monarchical framework they can still relate to, given Burma is intrinsically a top-down society, than with a democracy that has long eluded them and a military they can live without.
Military officers who have inherited their elders' unwanted baggage finally see a way out of their quagmire and the long-time castigation of being a "military junta." They utilize the preference of the people and the council of the monks to steadily diminish their ranks and to return to the barracks to transform themselves into being sarong-wearing civilians instead of men in stiff uniforms. Royalty in Burma has never been all hereditary and the crown recognizes it will be permitted to rule only with the support of its subjects and only with the mitigating quality of compassion.

Thus the selected monarch, whether he be one who has set aside his weapon or one who has discarded his robe, works to move Burma forward, accepting all the while, and in the words of James (2005), that the modern nation state exists "to benefit people, serve people in providing goods and service, and protect them against unexpected disaster...[that]
People do not exist for the benefit of the inchoate state" (p. 10). This is not to say that the selected monarch is not capable of turning into a despot or be eventually replaced by someone who is despotic.

2040

- A trilogy of “Monarchocracy,” Monkhood, and Modernization is now Burma’s mantra and my preferred futures for governance in Burma.

Steinberg (1982) writes that Burma, historically, shifted between secular or military rulers and religious ones without any ideological trauma (p. 107). I would add to this that perhaps the Burmese also are quite capable of shifting between the present and their past to get to their futures. Taylor (2001) provides reassurance that my scenario of a “monarchocracy” is not beyond the pale. He says that new thinking, new approaches, and new ideas are required and that through a better understanding of the past and the present, it is hoped that these new ideas can emerge (p. xx). Perhaps the bottom line here is that democracy—as described by the west—is not and

240
never has been and never will be a part of the Burma concept. Perhaps for the Burmese it has not been the question of whether all Burmese really want to participate fully in the all too often complicated game of politics or whether they just want to have a say about how the game should be played and who the main players should be. In my preferred futures for governance for Burma for 2040, the Burmese have chosen regality over rigidity and have asked that their ruler don a crown and discard the khakis and the cap. They care not that he once may have been soldier or even a sage. They only ask that he democratically keep their interests in mind and that he rules for the people.

Some could argue that my above envisioning of a preferred future for governance in Burma, while it does not include outright the street translations of democracy, may not be so creative after all, and is folklorist in that it simply returns to a reacceptance of a governance in Burma that was destroyed by colonialism and marginalized by many a westernized Burma-thinker, viz., monarchism. But my envisioning of a 21st Century "monarchcracy" is laden with caveats. The Burmese sovereign who emerges would be someone willing to embrace
democratic, representative, and cybernetic strains of governance that allow for more citizenry participation. The sovereign would be one who is willing to open Burma to the rest of the world insofar as he or she recognizes that doing so would permit Burma to embrace direly needed political, economical, social, environmental, and technological developments, yet he or she does not fail to uphold that which is intrinsically Burmese. That the monarch is not only aware that other inhabitants of the globe are looking to inhabit Mars, but she or he is willing to make it possible for Burmese citizens to do so too. Were this scenario to occur by the 2040s, the road to Rangoon should long have rid itself of the illegitimacy of disorder that the British left behind in the 1940s. Does my preferred futures for governance in Burma for 2040 sound ridiculous? Perhaps to the cynics it does. But I would remind these cynics that history is made up of what was previously unimaginable and Burma’s history need be no different.

In the end, however, I grant that my imagining what Burma could become is only an academic exercise. In real life, it will be up to the Burmese people to stop attending only to the present and to begin reclaiming
their nation's futures. And, regardless of whether anything like the scenarios described in this chapter emerge, for any of this to be a reality, the Burma of today would do well to heed the words of Silverstein (1990), who already has expressed concern that what is currently absent in Burma is that no one seems to have a well thought-out plan for execution of how to translate any existing proposal for democracy (and I would add any other type of governance other than the status quo) into reality, how to institutionalize it, how to achieve national unity, how to improve the economy, and how to rectify Burma's human rights violations (p. 43). Some would counter Silverstein's concern by arguing that the current government already has worked at formulating plans for Burma's future by drafting and recently releasing the contents of a new constitution.

So perhaps what first is needed for Burma to get from here to anywhere is for there to be a change in the hearts and minds of a rising generation of educated military officers to begin rethinking whether how Burma was ruled in the 20th Century can and should be how they want to see it ruled in the 21st Century and to be more willing to hear the voices of the people.
But it also is important to heed the words of Aung-Thwin (2000) who reminds that most Burmese are cut from the same cloth whether they are those who are currently governing, those who wish to govern, and those who may come to govern. In other words, one Burmese can be as authoritarian and intolerant as the next (and I would add as benevolent or despotic as the next). Aung-Thwin is impatient with the existence of a secular crusade, a "democracy jihad" that is attempting to force upon nations, such as Burma, a western yardstick that does not appear to be meaningful, at best is impractical, and almost certainly is unlikely to bear the expected western results. He scorns the assumption that the electoral process is the sole criterion for determining legitimate authority and cautions against overemphasis on the quantification of legitimacy. He reminds that there is no equivalent indigenous Burmese term for a concept such as western system democracy. Why, he asks, is it intrinsically more desirable for Burma to shed overnight seven hundred years of what it has been simply to become a copy of what the west or the Other thinks it should be. Burma is far too complex to be regarded so simplistically. To this I would add, why is it so
important to think of Burma in the vernacular of the international community, which mostly is bounded and boxed in by concerns related to the economy, the environment, technological advancement, and a range of other buzzwords of today. While I do not argue that most of these issues should be broadly applied to futuristic thinking about the world at large, perhaps for the Burmese what will be more important to measure between now and 2040 is not their Gross National Product, but their “Gross National Happiness.” The latter term, coined by Bhutan’s King Wangchuck in 1972, is an attempt to measure life in a more holistic and psychological term than does the Gross National Product. There still are no exact quantitative definitions of “Gross National Happiness,” and “happiness” in itself can be a loaded and relative term. Nevertheless, I expect by 2040 the measurement would have been better defined and redefined, not just by Bhutan but by numerous other nations including Burma.

Maybe just recovering appropriate aspects of their traditional and cultural past to carry into their futures may mean more to the Burmese by 2040 than would be playing catch up with the typical concerns that consume
the western world. At the end of the day, perhaps the only way for Burma is the Burmese Way, whatever that may be. Only the Burmese know. And only the Burmese should know.
Chapter 8: Summary

I wrote this dissertation about the futures of Burma by using the filter of futures studies to examine an array of alternative and preferred futures for what governance in Burma could be by the year 2040. The backdrop for how "governance" would be understood in this study came from The British Council’s working definition of this term: ‘Governance refers to a process whereby elements in society wield power, authority and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life.’

I began by reviewing the literature on Burma that I deemed as relevant to this research and, despite the paucity of indigenous resources, I was able to establish a baseline working knowledge of Burma. I designed a survey instrument to help elicit the views of people who are knowledgeable about Burma regarding their images for future governance in Burma for 2040, albeit the vast majority of my respondents were from outside of Burma and many were not of Burmese-origin. I provided respondents with a list of typical governance selections that included anarchy, colonialist, confederacy, cybernetic,
democratic, dictatorship, federative, militaristic, monarchic, oligarchy, parliamentary, representative, theocratic, and totalitarian. Most respondents agreed that an accurate description of the current governance in Burma is militaristic and/or dictatorship and almost all expressed a preference for there to emerge, by 2040, a change in the form of governance, one that would allow for more citizenry participation and one with a ring of democracy to it.

If I were to redesign this survey instrument at some future date, I will be certain to include, among the governance selection options provided to survey participants, a more clearly defined set of creative governance categories or hitherto unheard of hybrid forms of governance. And I would take into account aspects of Burma's most recent constitution enacted in May 2008. I also acknowledge that my survey sample was limited, favored expatriates, and that my results cannot be applied to the larger population inside Burma. Were I to conduct a similar survey in the future, I would consider utilizing an Internet survey to capture the responses of those who have access to computers and cyber cafes within Burma. But I also would remain mindful of the reality
that even this would not include the voices and the visions of a vast majority of Burmese scattered throughout the country who have no such access and with whom contact can be made only in person. While I very much hope it will be possible at a later time for me to conduct on-site interviews in order to widen and deepen my understanding of Burma’s futures, such interviews are not possible at this time. Furthermore, views such as those I solicited in 2006 are a moving target and could and would be reversed in a relatively short period of time were major political changes to occur in Burma’s current governance. Again, and most important, I recognize what should be a high-priority is the need for a similar survey to be conducted inside Burma so that the preferences of citizens living in Burma can be taken into consideration. For spatial-politics clearly are at play here and the views expressed by those who reside outside the borders of Burma and those who conduct their lives within its confines could well constitute a study in itself and speak volumes for the dynamics of political borders.

Nevertheless, bolstered by the knowledge I had gained from the literature review, the data I had
collected from the results of my survey and from my own first-hand observations during brief, but recent, visits to Burma, I forged ahead with envisioning my alternative and preferred futures for governance in Burma for 2040. I filtered the baseline knowledge I had gained from the literature and from the survey results through the lenses of futures studies analytical tools related to the importance of images. Doing this provided me with an avenue to write scenarios for alternative futures for Burma and permitted me to envision my preferred futures for governance in Burma for 2040.

In the course of conducting this research, I was able to go from finding out What Burma Was ("monarchism," "colonialism"), to discovering What Burma Became ("civilianism," "dictatorism"), to acknowledging What Burma Is ("militarism"). I eventually arrived at the point where I could go on to imagine What Burma Could Become. I created four alternative scenarios in which Burma could have continued economic progress or collapse or maintain itself around a set of overarching traditional and religious values or transform itself into a technologically advanced U-Society. I also designed my preferred future in which I was able to imagine a Burma
that chooses to return to a monarchy, but in the 21st Century definition of that word, whatever the Burmese conceive that to be.

This research only broadly brushes the impact that external international and regional actors and institutions and technological advancements of the 21st Century will have on the final emergence of Burma’s futures. Additional research will be needed to more fully examine the alternative futures that simultaneously will be occurring in the rest of the world. Furthermore, this study only mentions in passing internal contentious issues related to Burma’s ethnic minorities, the proliferation of narcotics inside and alongside Burma’s borders, and the impact of HIV and other health issues on its development. Clearly, a more in-depth and independent research will need to be conducted to do justice to how best Burma’s leadership can make the necessary concessions to redress and address such matters that almost certainly will cast a weight on any future governance in Burma. Furthermore, it makes no comparison between the recently adopted May 2008 Constitution (which is to take effect in 2010 once a new parliament convenes following planned elections) with the 1947 and 1974
Constitutions. To undertake such a comparative study would result in a dissertation in itself. However, a review of the 2008 Constitution leads me to believe that it very well could serve as a springboard for two of my alternative scenarios: Scenario 1--Continuation (where economic growth has been achieved and sustained) or Scenario 4--Transformation (where Burma turns into a "Ubiquitous Society." The fundamental principles of the Constitution call for Myanmar (Burma) as a sovereign independent nation whose power is derived from its citizens to be headed by a President, but also require that the Tatmadaw (military) participate in the national political leadership role of the State.

Ultimately, I realized that the envisioning of alternative futures for governance in Burma in 2040 cannot be force-fitted into any one theory or methodology, be it futures studies or otherwise. And that I can only use the essence of any such tools to channel my attempt to think out of the box or to steer away from the status quo. Indeed, it took great effort for me shy away from the status quo expectations for what this governance should be and to set aside the preconceived notions that I had brought to the table at 252
the outset of this undertaking. I too started off by too readily echoing the sentiments of the non-Burmese masses that a Burma that did not become a "democracy" would be a Burma that could be "doomed." And I had to work overtime to not lose sight of Schattechneider's (1983) words that "The thesis is that we shall never understand politics unless we know what the struggle is about" (p. v). I still will not deign to know what Burma's struggle is about, but what I do fully accept now is that, if there is struggle, it is up to the Burmese people to find their freedom from this struggle.

And, at the end of the day, the ground truth is that it is for the Burmese people living inside Burma to know what their visions for their governance is, how they envisage what roles they must play in propelling their nation toward this destiny, and how they can make all these images they have become the reality they live in. But the average Burmese is presently often preoccupied with eking out a living. As recently as September 2007, thousands of Burmese protested on the streets of Yangon and elsewhere to seek a respite from their inability to procure even the basic necessities to conduct their day-to-day lives. And, in May 2008, thousands of Burmese
lives and homes were destroyed and devastated by cyclone Nargis. Unarguably, there are momentous political, social, and economic problems that need speedy resolution by the current governance for the Burma of today. For the Burma of 2040, what is needed is for the views, voices, and visions of Burma's younger generation in the present to be empowered in the arena of governance because they will be Burma's adult generation who will take primary residence in Burma's futures.

On a final note, and in the words of the daughter of Burma's founding father Aung San, "If Burma is indeed concerned with the betterment of its people, power needs to be returned to the people" (Aung San Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 361). She writes,

The true development of human beings involves much more than mere economic growth. At its heart there must be a sense of empowerment and inner fulfillment. This alone will ensure that human and cultural values remain paramount in a world where political leadership is often synonymous with tyranny and the rule of the narrow elite. People's participation in social and political transformation is the central issue of our time. This can only be achieved through the establishment of societies which place human worth above power and liberation above control...to create an environment in which all are valued and every kind of human potential can be realized....Mere material assistance is not enough; the poor must have
the sense that they themselves can shape their own future (pp. 269-270).

Again, I echo her confidence that "the future of Burma is assured" (p. 207). But I would take this confidence a step further by encouraging all those who have a stake in the future governance of Burma to take note of the words of Futurist Polak (1973) and to recognize that they have the capacity to dream finer dreams than they have ever succeeded in dreaming and to build a finer society than they have ever succeeded in building. And I would boldly suggest that, perhaps, the first step for the Burmese to take to realize their dreams, whatever these dreams may be, is for the Burmese to agree to walk down the Road to Dialogue together so they can eventually unite in paving their nation's destiny for what governance in 2040 will be.
Appendix A: Questionnaire on Burma

ALTERNATIVE FUTURES FOR GOVERNANCE IN BURMA: 2040

Q1. Are you?
   1. Male  
   2. Female

Q2. What year were you born?
   19

Q3. What country were you born in?

Q4. What is your country of citizenship?

Q5. What country do you live in?

Q6. If you live in Burma (if you live outside of Burma, please skip to Q7):
   a. When was the last time you traveled outside of Burma?
      Year: ______
   b. Where did you go? Please list up to three countries.
      (i) ____________________________
      (ii) ____________________________
      (iii) ____________________________
   c. How many months were you away from Burma?
      Months: ______

Q7. If you live outside of Burma:
   a. When was the last time you traveled to Burma?
      Year: ______
   b. How many months did you stay in Burma?
      Months: ______
Q8. What are your religious affiliations? (Check all that apply.)
   a. Buddhist ___
   b. Christian ___
   c. Muslim ___
   d. Animist ___
   e. Other ___

Q9. What ethnic groups do you belong to? (Check all that apply.)
   a. Burman ___
   b. Shan ___
   c. Karen ___
   d. Rakhine ___
   e. Chinese ___
   f. Indian ___
   g. Mon ___
   h. Other ___

Q10. What is the highest level of education you have achieved? (Check one answer only.)
   1. Primary ___
   2. Middle school ___
   3. High school ___
   4. College or university ___
   5. Graduate school ___

Q11. What is your marital status? (Check one answer only.)
   1. Married ___
   2. Single ___
   3. Widowed or divorced ___

Q12. What is your primary occupation?

Q13. What languages do you speak? (Please list up to three.)
   1. ______________
   2. ______________
   3. ______________

Q14. What languages do/did your parents speak? (Please list up to five.)
   1. ______________
   2. ______________
   3. ______________
   4. ______________
   5. ______________

Q15. How many children do you have?
   a. Total number of children: ___
   b. Total number of boys: ___
   c. Total number of girls: ___

Q16. What is/are the age(s) of your children?
Q17. Given a working definition of governance as “the process whereby elements in society wield power, authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life,” to what degree do the following terms accurately describe the current governance in Burma? Are they very accurate, somewhat accurate, not very accurate, or not at all accurate? (Check the answer that best applies.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Anarchy (absence of governance resulting in political disorder)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Colonialist (governance primarily exercised by foreign power)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Confederacy (governance shared by states/divisions with limited powers at center)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Cybernetic (governance primarily dependent on electronic-governing)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Democratic (governance with direct citizen participation in making policy)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Dictatorship (governance primarily exercised by ruler with absolute power)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Federative (governance shared by central authority and states/provinces)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
H. Militaristic (governance primarily exercised by military)
   1. Very Accurately
   2. Somewhat Accurately
   3. Not Very Accurately
   4. Not At All Accurately

I. Monarchic (governance primarily exercised by hereditary ruler)
   1. Very Accurately
   2. Somewhat Accurately
   3. Not Very Accurately
   4. Not At All Accurately

J. Oligarchy (governance exercised by small wealthy or powerful group)
   1. Very Accurately
   2. Somewhat Accurately
   3. Not Very Accurately
   4. Not At All Accurately

K. Parliamentary (governance in which members of an executive branch are nominated to their positions by a legislature, are directly responsible to it, and can be dissolved by it)
   1. Very Accurately
   2. Somewhat Accurately
   3. Not Very Accurately
   4. Not At All Accurately

L. Representative (governance in which citizens choose representatives who then are supposed to act on their behalf)
   1. Very Accurately
   2. Somewhat Accurately
   3. Not Very Accurately
   4. Not At All Accurately

M. Theocratic (governance primarily subject to religious authority)
   1. Very Accurately
   2. Somewhat Accurately
   3. Not Very Accurately
   4. Not At All Accurately

N. Totalitarian (governance that subordinates individuals to the state by controlling political/economic matters and also people's attitudes, values, and beliefs)
   1. Very Accurately
   2. Somewhat Accurately
   3. Not Very Accurately
   4. Not At All Accurately
Q18. While all of the following factors are important for shaping future governance in Burma, please rank beginning with "1", the issue you consider to be most important. Also, if there are other factors that you think are important, please include them in your ranking.

A. Influence of a sound economy on future governance
B. Influence of a solid educational system on future governance
C. Influence of resolution of ethnic issues on future governance
D. Influence of a politically involved Buddhist sangha on future governance
E. Influence of student movements and activities on future governance
F. Influence of technological advancement on future governance
G. Influence of the views of regional nations on future governance
H. Influence of the views of other nations on future governance
I. Influence of the impact of globalization on future governance
J. Other (Describe)
K. Other (Describe)
L. Other (Describe)
M. Other (Describe)
N. Other (Describe)

Q19. Given a working definition of governance as "the process whereby elements in society wield power, authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life," by 2020, do you believe that Burma will have any of the following type(s) of governance? (Check all that apply and add any others you feel should be on the list.)

A. Anarchy (absence of governance resulting in political disorder)
B. Colonialist (governance primarily exercised by foreign power)
C. Confederacy (governance shared by states with limited powers at center)
D. Cybernetic (governance primarily dependent on electronic-governing)
E. Democratic (governance with direct citizen participation in making policy)
F. Dictatorship (governance primarily exercised by ruler with absolute power)
G. Federative (governance shared by central authority and states/provinces)
H. Militaristic (governance primarily exercised by military)
I. Monarchic (governance primarily exercised by hereditary ruler)
J. Oligarchy (governance exercised by small wealthy or powerful group)
K. Parliamentary (governance in which executive branch members are nominated to positions by a legislature, are directly responsible to it, and can be dissolved by it)
L. Representative (governance in which citizens choose representatives who then are supposed to act on their behalf)
M. Theocratic (governance primarily subject to religious authority)
N. Totalitarian (governance that subordinates individuals to the state by controlling political/economic matters and also people's attitudes, values, and beliefs)
O. Other (Describe)
Q20. Given a working definition of governance as “the process whereby elements in society wield power, authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life,” by 2040, do you believe that Burma will have any of the following type(s) of governance? (Check all that apply and add any others you feel should be on the list.)

A. Anarchy (absence of governance resulting in political disorder)  
B. Colonialist (governance primarily exercised by foreign power)  
C. Confederacy (governance shared by states with limited powers at center)  
D. Cybernetic (governance primarily dependent on electronic-governing)  
E. Democratic (governance with direct citizen participation in making policy)  
F. Dictatorship (governance primarily exercised by ruler with absolute power)  
G. Federative (governance shared by central authority and states/provinces)  
H. Militaristic (governance primarily exercised by military)  
I. Monarchic (governance primarily exercised by hereditary ruler)  
J. Oligarchy (governance exercised by small wealthy or powerful group)  
K. Parliamentary (governance in which executive branch members are nominated to positions by a legislature, are directly responsible to it, and can be dissolved by it)  
L. Representative (governance in which citizens choose representatives who then are supposed to act on their behalf)  
M. Theocratic (governance primarily subject to religious authority)  
N. Totalitarian (governance that subordinates individuals to the state by controlling political/economic matters and also people’s attitudes, values, and beliefs)  
O. Other (Describe)

Q21. Given a working definition of governance as “the process whereby elements in society wield power, authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life,” by 2040, what type of governance would you PREFER that Burma should have? (Check all that apply and describe any others you feel should be on the list.)

A. Anarchy (absence of governance resulting in political disorder)  
B. Colonialist (governance primarily exercised by foreign power)  
C. Confederacy (governance shared by states with limited powers at center)  
D. Cybernetic (governance primarily dependent on electronic-governing)  
E. Democratic (governance with direct citizen participation in making policy)  
F. Dictatorship (governance primarily exercised by ruler with absolute power)  
G. Federative (governance shared by central authority and states/provinces)  
H. Militaristic (governance primarily exercised by military)  
I. Monarchic (governance primarily exercised by hereditary ruler)  
J. Oligarchy (governance exercised by small wealthy or powerful group)  
K. Parliamentary (governance in which executive branch members are nominated to positions by a legislature, are directly responsible to it, and can be dissolved by it)  
L. Representative (governance in which citizens choose representatives who then are supposed to act on their behalf)  
M. Theocratic (governance primarily subject to religious authority)  
N. Totalitarian (governance that subordinates individuals to the state by controlling political/economic matters and also people’s attitudes, values, and beliefs)  
O. Other (Describe)

Please feel free to provide additional comments in the space provided:
Appendix B: Selected Data on Burma

Land Area: 676,600 sq.km (2006)*

Population: 57.6 million (2007 est)**

Population Growth Rate: 1.1% (2006 est)***

Percent of Population in Urban Areas: 31% (2005)***

Life Expectancy at Birth: 62.49 years****

Infant Mortality: 50.68 per 1000 live births****

Median Age: 27.4 years****

Adult Literacy: 85.3 percent****

GDP Per Capita at current market prices: 239 USD (2007 est)**

Unemployment Rate: 10.2% (2006 est)****

Inflation based on consumer price index: 36.9% (2007 est)**

Telephone Lines per 100 inhabitants: 0.8 (2005)***

Motor Vehicles per 1000 inhabitants: 6.4 (2005)***

Television Receivers per 1000 inhabitants: 7 (2006)***

Internet Users: 31,500 (2005)***

* World Bank 2007
** International Monetary Fund 2007
*** United Nations 2007
**** World Fact Book 2007

262
Appendix C: Map of Burma

(Source: World Fact Book)
Bibliography


