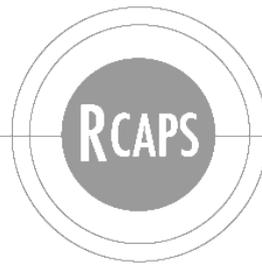


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Introduction

Myanmar's Military, the Myanmar Armed Forces or Tatmadaw, has played an influential role in the national politics for nearly five decades. It has always perceived that national security is the key concern for decision making on domestic and foreign policy matters (Than, 1998; Haacke, 2010). The Tatmadaw has also believed that its role is essential in Myanmar's domestic politics in order to protect national security and serve as the backbone behind the political regime since 1962. During the early years of the country's independence, the Myanmar Armed Forces conducted counterinsurgency operations against communist rebels. Politically, Tatmadaw has aimed at building a unified state without armed struggles, with little regards to its tactics and strategies. Even with the end of the Cold War against communism, the military government has undertaken an ambitious expansion and modernization of the armed forces since 1989 (ICG, 2002 ; Nakanishi, 2013). In this way, Myanmar's Tatmadaw has taken its role in national politics as the most powerful institution.

Involvement of the military in Myanmar politics has oscillated between the praetorian orientation and the revolutionary orientation, together with the different types of developmental ideologies since 1962. Most significantly, the Revolutionary Council (RC) led by General Ne Win directly involved itself in politics till 1974. The RC government adopted the "Burmese Way to Socialism" focused on "the planned proportional development of all the national productive forces" (Von der Mehden, 1963). In 1974, the military backed the Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) regime, which failed to achieve socioeconomic development due to its mismanagement of the planned economy under the Burmese Way to Socialism (Myoe, n.d.). The nature of the military's involvement apparently changed under the State Law and Restoration Council (SLORC) and the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). In 1989, SLORC directly re-intervened in politics, abolished the 1974 constitution, and dissolved the parliament. Moreover, SLORC/SPDC relinquished socialism

and opened a market economy, while seeking modernization and expansion of its armed forces. Since then, SLORC/SPDC had sought a managed transition by drafting a new constitution, which fully guaranteed its own role in politics. On 30 March 2011, the SPDC government transferred power to the newly elected President U Thein Sein, who was a former general and prime minister under the military government (Myoe, n.d. ; Bunte, 2011).

The purpose of this study is to examine domestic political roles of the military and explain why it partially retreats from politics today. Firstly, this study will review theoretical frameworks for the roles of a military in politics. Secondly, it will explore the Myanmar military's perspectives on national security. Thirdly, it will describe the Myanmar military interventions and performance in national politics. Fourthly, it is going to analyze the ongoing partial military withdrawal from Myanmar's domestic politics during the current reform period. Finally, this study will draw conclusions on how the Myanmar military influences national politics and what the implications of its intervention are.

Theoretical Frameworks

Military always gets involved in national politics although there are differences among the states in regard to the degree of its influences. Thus, there is a wide range of interrelationship and interaction between the armed forces and the civil societies in which they coexist and cooperate (Myoe, n.d.). Welch and Smith (1974) point out that "the military's political role is a question not of whether but of how much and what kind." The involvement of the military in politics can range from having influence on policy making to running direct military rule (Myoe, n.d.). In order to understand the changing nature of military in politics, it is necessary to explore the categorical and typological conceptualizations of military intervention in politics, military performance in politics, and military withdrawal from politics.

According to Finer (1962), there are four levels of military intervention: influence, blackmail, displacement of the civilian cabinet, and supplement to the civilian regime. Welch (1993) also classifies military intervention in politics into military influence in politics, military participation in politics, and military control of the government. In this context, both scholars constructed the categories of military intervention ranging from soft influence to strong influence in the political systems. While Finer and Welch's categories are sufficient for making basic distinctions, they did not clearly sort out the scope of military influence to further account for the variations in military's political roles. Lovell (1970) filled this requirement by making distinctions in terms of the scope of influence, in addition to the degree of influence. He categorized six types of military intervention based on the extensive and limited scopes of influence. According to his typologies, while ruling elite, politically dominant bloc, and praetorian army are categorized under the relatively extensive scope, ruling coalition, competitive political bloc, and palace guard are categorized under the relatively limited scope.

The military's political role has evolved in each country depending on the country's particular historical factors. The military historian Liddell Hart proposed that "the nature of the armies is determined by the nature of civilization in which they exist" (Johnson, 1964). According to the nature and the level of political intervention, a military will undertake a number of responsibilities including consolidation of power, promotion of national integration, building mass support for the government, political institution-building and political brokerage. The performance of the military regime could be judged in these fields: "modernizing ideology and values; maintain political stability; developing technological bases and communication infrastructures; efficiency in administration; bringing economic growth and development; and a policy of social welfare and economic or income redistribution" (Myoe, n.d.).

There are several types of military's political role according to the degree of military influence on the power position of the civilian authorities. According to Janowitz (1964), there are five categories of military's political role or civil-military relations: (1) authoritarian-personal control; (2) authoritarian-mass party control; (3) democratic-competitive; (4) civil-military coalition; and (5) military oligarchy. In the first three categories, the military role in politics is not strong. But in the last two categories, the influence of the military is very strong in politics. Perlmutter (1980) argued that the modern military regimes can be regarded as military-civilian regimes instead of being purely military in composition because they depend on the support of technocratic, bureaucratic, and corporative elites. He also claimed five types of military regime. The first type is "corporative regime" in which "governmental authority resides in a tightly linked coalition of military and civilians." This type of regime can promote economic modernization and industrialization. The second type, "the market-bureaucratic military regime" emphasizes "the state-capitalist type development." Under this type, "the military has taken upon itself the political and administrative task of economic modernization within the framework of a capitalist market economy." But, there is no significant role for political parties in this level. In the third type, "the socialist and oligarchic military regime," the socialist regime emphasizes the role expansion and transformation of the state by adding the socialist ideologies while the oligarchic regime is allied with civilians. The fourth type is the army-party regime, which can be regarded as a relatively successful and stable regime. Finally, "the tyrannical military regime is an arbitrary government in which authority is secured and maintained by fear" (Perlmutter, 1980).

In regard to military's withdrawal from politics, Huntington (1996) explained four possible categories: the military returning power but restricting participation (as in Myanmar); the returning power and expanding participation (as in Thailand 1973); retaining

power and restricting participation (as in Myanmar 1958-1960); and retaining power but expanding participation (as in Thailand in 1978-1971). He also argues that the future development of civil-military relations is going to depend on the actions of the civilian leadership in the new democracies. If the civilian government is successful and legitimate and the new democratic institutions and practices could promote economic development and the maintenance of law and order, there would be no military intervention/involvement. Moreover, he supported that the Western model of civil-military relations largely based on the 'old professionalism' focuses on the separation of civilian and military institutions, non-intervention of the military in domestic politics, and subjection of the military to the civilian governments, thus encouraging the civilian domination of the military. The old professionalism basically makes response to the threat of external security, while its scope of action is limited with socialization of political neutrality and generally nonpolitical attitude. In contrast, Stepan (1974) pointed that the non-Western model based on the new professionalism emphasizes military involvement in domestic politics and role expansion. In this sense, role expansion means that the military shoulders civilian functions and penetrates into various institutional fields, such as economic enterprises, education and training of civilian manpower, fulfilling civilian administrative functions, and engaging in different forms of power politics. Maynard supported role expansion of military regime by quoting Indonesian General Nasution's word, "The army must participate in deciding national policy because national policy is the mother of political policy, economic policy and military policy" (Perlmutter, 1980). While aforementioned frameworks focused on explaining military involvement in politics, Rebecca Schiff's concordance theory of civil-military relations or partnership helps us analyze military withdrawal from the third world politics. The concordance theory illustrates a kind of civil-military relations, in which the military actively plays an influential role of political decision-making process and even participates in the

governmental process by cooperating with civilian and guaranteeing democratic practices. This model encourages mutual cooperation and partnership among the military, the political elite, and the citizenry instead of either civilian domination or military domination (Schiff, 1995).

The Military's Perspectives on Myanmar's National Security

The small group of ruling elites dominated by the military has essentially determined the conceptualization and scope of national security in Myanmar since independence in 1948. Myanmar security has been threatened by armed challenges from a number of ethnic and ideological insurgencies. Successive Myanmar governments have usually applied a state-centric national security approach with much emphasis on national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national unity among all ethnic groups. At the same time, the military leaders have taken into accounts the external interference, because some neighbors such as China and Thailand had ideological and logistic contacts with internal insurgencies. Moreover, the United States and Western countries had called for regime change and tightened sanctions and arms embargoes to punish the military regime for the suppression of the democracy movement and violation of human rights (Than, 2010).

The success of counterinsurgency operations paved the way for the Tatmadaw to involve itself politically based on the broad national security concerns. This led to adoption of national security doctrine known as the "National Ideology and the Role of Defense Services (NIRDS)." This doctrine is ideologically based on Tatmadaw's political involvement and activism. It also provided the military for undertaking dual functions of internal security and economic development as professional tasks. This new professionalism has pushed Tatmadaw into a forefront of the national politics. As a result, the Tatmadaw has taken the dominant role in shaping the contours of Myanmar and has developed a praetorian

ethos as “the most powerful and enduring institution in Myanmar” (Myoe, n.d.). Seeking for strengthening national security, the Tatmadaw is getting involved with might and main in Myanmar’s national politics. However, there are different forms of military involvement in Myanmar depending on the level of instability and crises in domestic affairs.

The Military Intervention and Performance on Myanmar’s Politics

Myanmar history highlights that the military has deeply taken its political role since its establishment. Indeed, Myanmar Armed Forces was generated from the birth of the Burma Independence Army (BIA); formed by a group of nationalist politicians known as the Thirty Comrades. Myanmar Tatmadaw has rarely experienced indoctrination with the concept of military professionalism and civilian control. The meaning of professional soldier in Myanmar is mercenary soldier (Kyesar Sithar), with derogatory connotation. This view strongly supports Tatmadaw’s involvement in politics as the nationalist or patriotic institution (Myoe, n.d.). General Aung San, father of the present day Tatmadaw, contended that “our Tatmadaw is not a mercenary army and it is unlike the one formed by the British.”¹ General Ne Win also presented in his speech that “the Tatmadaw was formed with hardcore politicians and it was not mercenary army but patriotic one.”²

The political orientation of Tatmadaw was reinforced not only by the social image of being patriotic soldiers and the lack of proper indoctrination of military professionalism and civilian control but also by the political situation at the time of independence. In 1946, the military was assigned to carry out the internal security such as counterinsurgency operations against communist insurrection. The civil war in the late 1940s and early 1950s had paved the way for the military to participate in civilian politics. The

¹ Aung San Speech on 31 January 1944 (Bamarkhit News Paper, 3 February 1944) cited in Sagaing Han Tin. Rare Speeches of Bogyoke Aung San (Yangon. Parabeik and Arts, 1985).

² General Ne Win Speech on 30 July 1982 at the 3rd Central Committee Meeting of the War Veteran Organization, cited in Myoe, M. A. (n.d.). *The Future of the Tatmadaw’s Political Role*. Unpublished Manuscript.

military got initially involved in politics as a caretaker government of 1958-1960 due to the invitation of Prime Minister U Nu, in order to restore peace and stability of the state (Than, 1997). The Tatmadaw had been assigned to involve persistently in Myanmar politics for the reasons of the long term stability and the unity of the military both as an institution and a government (Huang, 2012). Perceiving itself as being the most powerful governor or protector of the state with the historical credentials of anti-colonial and anti-Japanese, the military sought to become an active state builder (Callahan, 2003). It meant that Tatmadaw emphasized “its new professionalism” in which the military was assigned for not only carrying out the tasks of warfare and national defense but also involving in internal security and national politics (Huang, 2012).

In 1962, the disunity among political elites, tension between the ruling party and the ethnic groups, and the quest for internal peace opened an opportunity for the military to intervene again in Myanmar politics (Than, 1997). At the same time, the Tatmadaw found the weak economic performance of the civilian government. The national development plan, commonly known as “Pyidawthar” plan, implemented by U Nu had failed. Besides, the civilian government was not able to initiate and implement the agricultural reforms and industrial development. With regard to national security, the military leadership and officer corps perceived the building of socialism as an embodiment of national security doctrine because they viewed that the abandonment of the socialist goal by Prime Minister U Nu could be a major threat to national security. Consequently, the military government under the name of the Revolutionary Council adopted the “Burmese Way to Socialism” as its nation building program, thus expecting not only to serve as a modernization agent but also to provide the type of bureaucratic efficiency for economic development. Moreover, the external factors were one of the causes of the military intervention in Myanmar politics. Despite applying neutralist foreign policy and maintaining good relations with all countries,

Myanmar experienced foreign interference in domestic affairs, in particular in the case of insurgencies. The military government found the concrete evidence of American support to the Kuomintang (KMT) aggressors and Chinese support for the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) insurgents.³ Some insurgent organizations existing along the areas next to Thailand had been receiving assistance from a Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) military alliance. The Tatmadaw leadership was seriously concerned with the secessionist movements and foreign interferences.

From 1958 to 1960, the military directly ruled the government under the name of a caretaker government. Following the military coup of March 1962, the Tatmadaw in the name of the Revolutionary Council served the country till 1974 (Myoe, n.d.). The direct military rule and direct military regime had characterized in Myanmar politics. In 1971, the Revolutionary Council performed the dual role of the Tatmadaw as both government and institution. The retired twenty military senior officials became the civilian officers of the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) state (Huang, 2012). In 1974, the military government adopted a new constitution after abolishing 1947 the constitution and dissolving the parliament. Moreover, the government banned all parties in the country. The military government nationalized the entire economy under the banner of Burmese Way to Socialism and suspended all external relations. Then the Revolutionary Council was transformed into the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) (Bünté, 2011). BSPP operated the country without challenges for over 25 years, and the military and the party leaders effectively controlled the society. General Ne Win, serving as both president and party chairman, placed the military as the backbone of Socialist one-party state. His personal influence was exercised over the party and the military by dividing and controlling his subordinates not to allow

³ The army suppressed the communists and Karen National Union(KNU)insurgencies as well as the remanant U.S. Central Intelligence Agency backed Chinese Nationalists (Kuomintang or KMT) in Shan States.(see in Myanmar: Beyond the politics) The Chinese communist Party provided the Burma Communist Party insurgencies for nearly three decades until Deng Xiopeng. (see in Tatmadaw and Myanmar's Security Challenges by Thin Maung Maung Than).

potential rivals to emerge (Taylor, 2010). The BSPP became the only legal party in Myanmar until its fall in 1988. The BSPP government sought to ensure the influence of the BSPP and the party leadership in Myanmar politics. The form of the political role of Tatmadaw transformed the military regime of the RC government into the military backed regime of the BSPP government as it served as the backbone of the BSPP. In fact, political indoctrination controlled the Tatmadaw throughout the time of the Revolutionary Council and BSPP. The Tatmadaw officially regarded itself as the Pyithu Tatmadaw” or People’s Armed Forces until 1988.

The military regime performed quite well in maintaining political stability, except that a few overt threats to the regime in power remained. The Revolutionary Council not only started a meaningful nation building, but also engaged in extensive state-building exercises. The country was more stable and peaceful than the time between 1950 and 1960. The Tatmadaw relatively achieved the operations of counterinsurgency and by the end of 1970s. Thus the insurgency groups disappeared in the several parts of lower and central Myanmar that became “white area.” The Tatmadaw could win to hold the hearts and minds of local people in attacking the insurgency groups. Joining the Tatmadaw was attractive to many youths of Myanmar due to its prestige, image of being the freedom fighter and the defender of national sovereignty. Many young people joined the military services despite the voluntary military recruitment. The military expenditure during the time of the RC and BSPP was not too much, in terms of the percentage of total government expenditure. Personal expenditures were cut and the concept of austerity and self-sufficiency commenced in the military since the transformation of the “Pyithu Tatmadaw” in 1964. At that time, the Tatmadaw seemed to be free from major corporate interests, class interests, and personal interests. The military leadership was free from corruption, and the majority of them were inclined to socialism. The Tatmadaw’s businesses were nationalized in 1963. The Tatmadaw made a modest expansion

as the size of the population grew from about 22 million in 1964 to about 40 million in 1988. Nevertheless, the Tatmadaw did not achieve the modernization process that promoted economic development and poverty reduction as this period showed the growth of bureaucracy and the failure of the state's economic development. By the end of the 1980s, the economic isolationist policy and reliance on the military brought Myanmar into the ranks of least developed countries, once the most promising country in Asia in terms of economic development and modernization. The general population started questioning the legitimacy of the government and the performance of the military. However, it should be noted that Tatmadaw was mostly impartial to class interests but the largest groups (peasants and workers) were treated favorably. In accordance with the People's Army concept, the Tatmadaw actively participated in annual "Shwe War Myay (golden land)" and "Mya Sein Yaung (green color)" operations in the agricultural production sector under the leadership of BSPP (Myoe, n.d.). In July 1988, the failure of state development and economic mismanagement of the military backed regime paved the way for a massive students' movement which forced General Ne Win to resign from the party chairman. When the demonstrations spread countrywide as a democratic movement, the military cracked down on this movement, thus killing thousands of demonstrators, and staged a coup in September 1988. Following the coup, the military established the State Law and Restoration Council (SLORC) and placed under the direct military rule (Steinberg, 2001). The military abolished the 1974 constitution and dissolved the parliament and held the entire administrative power, such as legislative, executive and judicial powers. The military government under the leadership of General Saw Maung pledged to hand over the power after holding a multiparty national election. However, the military government did not acknowledge the result of the 1990 elections and refused to transfer power to the winning opposition party, the National

League for Democracy (NLD).⁴ The NLD and the ethnic political parties had demanded a swift transfer of power and subsequently mobilized the international community to provide support for their demands. The military was not ready to hand over the power to the new government, citing the lack of a new constitution. As a result, the military came under the heavy criticism from the Western states, international NGOs, and human rights advocates since then (Bünthe, 2011). The Tatmadaw's reputation was downgraded due to the 1988 heavy handed manner of the intervention in 1988 and the refusal of 1990 election results. However, the Tatmadaw addressed a wide range of activities in order to consolidate and expand its political position within the existing political structure and to prepare a managed political transition in Myanmar, thus leaving a long-term legacy for the future of civil-military relations and the role of the Tatmadaw in Myanmar politics. Indeed, the Tatmadaw started to view its role as a revolutionary force against the colonists and the insurgencies, leading a political transition in Myanmar. The SLORC made a decision for guiding a new draft constitution in order to secure the active participation of the Tatmadaw in the future national politics. In 1992, General Than Shwe replaced General Saw Maung's position and he addressed a series of measures aiming at political transition in Myanmar. In October 1992, the National Convention Commission was established with 10 military officers and 8 civilians (Myoe, n.d.). In 1993, the SLORC government called a National Convention (NC) by inviting political parties in order to issue a draft constitution. But the NC came to halt in 1996 when NLD withdrew from the convention due to a lack of debate and undemocratic principles. As a de facto government, the military junta ruled the country by suppressing all ways of dissents and controlling the society. The NLD leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other leading figures of her party were put under house arrests. There were many political prisoners for the two decades.

⁴ The National League for Democracy gained 59.87 per cent of the votes and 81 per cent of the seats in the elections. The successor party of the BSPP, which was close to the military, the National Unity Party (NUP) was heavily defeated, securing only 25.12 per cent of the votes. See Taylor 2010: 409.

Following 1990, the military launched a wide range of state-building programs which focused on modernizing the weak infrastructure (constructions of roads, bridges, dams, hospitals, etc.) and negotiating a number of ceasefire agreements with ethnic insurgent groups. The Tatmadaw was able to reach peace agreements with some ethnic groups and reduced the internal armed threats. In 1997, the SLORC was rebranded as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in order to change from restoring order to fostering peace and development (Bünté, 2011). In so doing, modernization and expansion of the army have become the heart of the state-building program. The size of the Tatmadaw increased from around 200,000 personnel in 1988 to 400,000 by 1999. This growth in manpower was accompanied by an army modernization (Nakanishi, 2013). The Tatmadaw has subsequently increased its territorial representation of the country. It also enhanced its surveillance capabilities. The Tatmadaw expended a huge amount of on defense throughout the 1990s. The military government purchased 150 new combat aircraft, 30 new vessels, 170 tanks, 2500 armored personnel carriers, as well as rocket launching infantry weapons and other hardware at an estimated cost of over US \$ 1 billion (Callahan, 2001). The military had sought to inspire nationalism in order to achieve “a rally-around-the-flag effect” by pointing out its historical role as the nation and state builder (Bünté, 2011).

In terms of economic performance under the leadership of SLORC/SPDC, the Tatmadaw formally opened a market oriented economy after 1990. However, the economy of the country has remained completely unchanged as the state-led economy over the last two decades. In addition, after 1988 the Tatmadaw further expanded its business activities and economic bases. It created the most important conglomerates in the country, the Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (UMEH) and the Myanmar Economic Cooperation (MEC), which were given licenses in different businesses such as

construction, hotels, tourism, transport, gem and jade extraction and agriculture. As a result, the Tatmadaw became the most important business actor in the country (Selth, 2002).

At the same time, the Tatmadaw sought to build up the bases for its political influence. Firstly, the Tatmadaw established the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) as the most important organization for gathering public support and keeping a grip on the society. Although the USDA is registered as a non-governmental organization, “with a set of proclaiming objectives of non-disintegration of the Union; non-disintegration of national unity; perpetuation of sovereignty; promotion and vitalization of normal pride; and the emergence of a prosperous, peaceful and modern union, it appeared to be the Tatmadaw’s strategy to institutionalize its dominance in Myanmar polity and society” (Myoe, n.d.). But, the principles of USDA did not allow its members to be a member of a political party at the same time. Most members were government servants and students, so as to limit the transformation of the organization into a political party because the existing laws did not allow the government servants to be a member of a political party (Myoe, n.d.). Nonetheless, the Tatmadaw later transformed USDA into USDP (Union Solidarity and Development Party) as a military backed and strongest party in Myanmar. The Tatmadaw initiated to implement a managed political transition to some types of a disciplined or guided democracy. In 2003, the Depayin incident cracked down by the government and the Union Solidarity and development Association (USDA) killed a few dozen of Aung San Suu Kyi’s supporters. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the rest of several others were also arrested. This Depayin incident outbreak made Myanmar’s domestic political situation worse. As a result, the United States and Western countries imposed tighter sanctions on Myanmar (Storey, 2011). ASEAN sought to pressure the Myanmar government to solve the political deadlock and make political reforms by undertaking an unusual diplomatic initiative. The US government and Western countries imposed tighter sanctions against Myanmar. This incident

was greatly condemned by the international community and led to the hearing of the Myanmar case at the United Nation Security Council (UNSCR). On 30 August 2003, in order to head off international criticism, Myanmar newly appointed Prime Minister and Myanmar Intelligence, General Khin Nyunt, declared “the seven-step road map” to democracy and the reconvention of the National Convention that was halted in 1996. This seven-step road map is as follows;

1. “Reconvening of the National Convention that has been adjourned since 1996.
2. After the successful holding of the National Convention, step by step implementation of the process necessary for the emergence of a genuine and disciplined democratic system.
3. Drafting of a new constitution in accordance with the basic principles and detailed basic principles laid down by the National Convention.
4. Adoption of the constitution through national referendum.
5. Holding of free and fair elections for Pyithu Hluttaws (Legislative bodies) according to the new constitution.
6. Convening of Hluttaws attended by Hluttaw members in accordance with the new constitution
7. Building a modern, developed and democratic nation by the state leaders elected by the Hluttaw; and the government and other central organs formed by the Hluttaw” (The New Light of Myanmar, 2003).

When the National Convention was restarted, the two main opposition parties, NLD and the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA- the coalition of ethnic nationality party) did not join in the NC (South, 2004). In 2007, the Saffron Revolution grew out of protest against the unannounced decision of the SPDC government to increase the prices of diesel

and petrol. However, this movement was cruelly suppressed by the junta. Having cracked down demonstrations by Buddhist monks, the junta accomplished the first step of the road-map to finalize the principles for new constitution in 2007. In the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in 2008, the military government held the popular referendum for a new 194-page constitution. According to SPDC No. 12/2008 and the state owned Newspapers, the new constitution was supported by 92.48% of the whole country (The New Light of Myanmar, 2008). One of the basic principles of the constitution is that the military should “be able to participate in the national political leadership” (Pedersen, 2011; Dukalskis, 2009). According to Article 20 (b) of the Constitution (see Appendix I), the military holds absolute authority over the ministries of defense, interior and border affairs as it appoints all three ministers. In the same way, the military reserves 25 percent of parliamentary seats under Article 109 (b) and 141 (b). It is meant that the Tatmadaw is empowered with a veto over any attempt to amend the Constitution because 75% votes in the national parliament are needed for revision. The needs of Article 60 indicate that the military’s parliamentary presence virtually assures that the president or one of the vice-presidents is from the military. Furthermore, the Tatmadaw has in effect governed the new National Defense and Security Council (NDSC), formed as the most important and powerful executive body. According to Chapter XI of the Constitution, the NDSC is capable of imposing martial law, disbanding Parliament and ruling directly if a state of emergency is declared. Moreover, the president can provide the Commander in Chief of the Tatmadaw complete power over state resources. Actually, the Tatmadaw has established the system that embeds its independence, maintains its influence over the Cabinet and Parliament, and forms the legal channels for a reversal to direct military rule if desired. Hence, the Tatmadaw has become the veto player in the new polity apart from a political hegemony (MacDonald, 2013). In short, under Janowitz’s typologies of civil-military relations, the military of Myanmar falls into the fifth type, military oligarchy. But the

effort of this military regime in Myanmar did not succeed in economic development. The post-1988 military regime falls into the second type of the military regime, the market-bureaucratic regime. Additionally, the post-1988 military of Myanmar has more favored the new professionalism than the RC and BSPP military regime.

In this way, the Tatmadaw has retained the control over the presidency and the security matters, thus attaining its privileged position. The role of the Tatmadaw has legally been consolidated in Myanmar under the new political system with tightened by the Constitution. To shape the civil–military relations, the role of the Tatmadaw will be very critical in the future politics of Myanmar given the privileges guaranteed by the constitution. The Tatmadaw is going to play the dominant role in the future politics of Myanmar, while seeking democratic legitimacy. In fact, the SPDC has skillfully manipulated the planned transition in order to secure the role of the military in Myanmar politics.

The Military Withdrawal from Myanmar's Current Politics

With the holding of general elections in 2010, Myanmar opened the new page of domestic politics. It was not surprising that the military backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) evolved from USDA won a landslide victory in the 2010 elections. The biggest opposition party NLD did not contest in the elections by boycotting the new constitution. The new government structure was led by the newly elected president, U Thein Sein, who was a former general and prime minister under the military government.

It seems that the Tatmadaw may not introduce the true democracy. Myanmar's political system is still loaded with the flaws and undemocratic practices. However, since the formation of the new leadership, a series of political, legislative and economic reforms have been carried out (Taylor, 2012). At the same time, there is a growing distribution of power within the system after the 2012 by-election. Additionally, new political actors are now participating in the system and the political multi-polarity is emerging. The so-called pro-

democracy party or the National Democratic Front (NDF) and National Unity Party (NUP- the reincarnation of the former Burma Socialist Program Party) won some seats in the Parliament. The sixteen ethnic based parties also won 14.4 percent of the seats in the parliament (Than, 2011). Consequently, the Tatmadaw can no longer exist as the exclusive repository of power in Myanmar. There is a close connection between the USDP government and the military. Meanwhile, the military has withdrawn from the controlling every aspect of the political process. According to new Commander-in-Chief General Min Aung Hlaing speech at the military parade of 68th Anniversary Armed Forces Day, “Tatmadaw always safeguards the country while protecting the country from the outbreak of racial and political conflicts. It is Tatmadaw’s national politics” (The New Light of Myanmar, 2013). It means that the Tatmadaw’s national politics is only to protect the stability and security of the country but not interference in the civilian political system. Yet, the new constitution has protected the Tatmadaw as a separate and autonomous entity from the government. Besides, the Tatmadaw has attained the exemption from civilian oversight.

However, the withdrawal of the Tatmadaw from the everyday administrative structure is a crucial aspect of the current reform period. Moreover, this has paved the way for multiple parties to enter the new political sphere of Myanmar with the biggest opposition party contested in the 2012 by-election winning the 43 out of 45 seats. The military backed USDP won only one seat in this election. In contrast, the retreat of the military from the political power of Myanmar does not constitute a full withdrawal from politics. There are still rooms for the Tatmadaw’s economic corporations as the most important business players in the country despite being diminished due to privatization (Bünthe, 2011). In this context, there are three favorable circumstances that will contribute to the military’s retreat itself from the politics. The first one is the full-fledged economic development due to the Western sanctions. The Tatmadaw can no longer survive without the economic development. In order to achieve

economic growth, the military has to transform the political system so that Myanmar will access the lift of the United States and Western sanctions and good relations with the United States and the West. The second one is the need for not only domestic public support and trust but also international recognition and support. The Tatmadaw's prestige has been undermined by the lack of public admiration after 1988 uprising movement. At the same time, the country became a black sheep in the circle of regional and international community. The third one is the demand for mitigating over-reliance on China. The military government heavily relied on China for the sake of its regime survival and China's back up from international criticism. The military regime is cautious about the long term risk of over-reliance on China. Owing to political retreat, the Tatmadaw can take its legitimacy by the constitutional guaranteed position as well as expand further economic opportunities. Additionally, the Tatmadaw has many alternatives to mitigate Chinese influence through the diversified relations with the US, the EU, Japan and other powers.

Conclusion

Since 1962, the Tatmadaw had been involved in Myanmar politics aiming at protection of national security and restoration of peace and stability of the country by conducting counter-insurgency operations. Under Finer and Welch's typologies, the influence of the military in Myanmar has a higher degree than in other South East Asian countries such as Vietnam and Thailand. Under Lovell's categories, the political intervention of the Myanmar military is relatively extensive in terms of the scope of its influence. According to interviewing with Maung Aung Myoe, the development agenda and security concerns have always coexisted in the Tatmadaw's political involvement that initiated to embrace "new professionalism."⁵

⁵ Interviewing with Maung Aung Myoe (Professor, International University of Japan) via Face book, December 2, 2013.

Before 1988, the Tatmadaw as the People's Armed Forces played an influential role in Myanmar politics with public support and admiration. At that time, the Tatmadaw was free from the corporate interests, class interests and personal interests as well as corruption. However, the involvement of the Tatmadaw in politics brought the country into the ranks of the least developed countries and the bad legacy of isolationism under the "Burmese Way to Socialism." With regard to Perlmutter's classification of the military performance, the military of Myanmar (Revolutionary Council and Burmese Socialist Program Party government) (1962-1988) can be regarded as the socialist and the oligarchic regime which greatly emphasizes the role expansion and transformation by adding the socialist ideologies (Perlmutter, 1980). Yet, as a socialist and oligarchic regime, the RC and the BSPP regime did not make efforts to expand the role of the military in the modernization process compared to SLORC/SPDC regime. Since 1988, the Tatmadaw attentively favored the new professionalism, thus taking its role in political activities and socioeconomic development. Within Perlmutter's typologies, as a market-bureaucratic military regime, the SLORC/SPDC regime opened a market economy and promoted the country's economic growth and poverty reduction. However, the regime's efforts for economic modernization had not reached full-fledged development due to tight economic sanctions by the Western countries. At the same time, the military has achieved domestic stability and security, economic dominance and political control. Finally, the Tatmadaw had well planned a managed political transition by implementing a new constitution, retaining its role in the future politics and corporate interests. Under the current reform period, the Tatmadaw has constitutionally retained its mandate power despite the current lack of its direct political involvement. In fact, both Western and Non-Western models of professionalism fail to explain the ongoing domestic transitions. Concurrently, it does not appear that Rebecca Schiff's concordance theory can contribute to fully explaining the current retreat of the

Tatmadaw from Myanmar's politics. As a result, whether the involvement of the Tatmadaw will ascend in the future politics of Myanmar depends on the degree of challenges by the new political actors against the entrenched oligarchic interests.

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Appendix I

Article (20) of 2008 Constitution

- (a) The Defence Services is the sole patriotic defence force which is strong, competent and modern.
- (b) The Defence Services has the right to independently administer and adjudicate all affairs of the armed forces.
- (c) The Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services is the Supreme Commander of all armed forces.
- (d) The Defence Services has the right to administer for participation of the entire people in Union security and defence.
- (e) The Defence Services is mainly responsible for safeguarding the no disintegration of the Union, the non-disintegration of National solidarity and the perpetuation of sovereignty.
- (f) The Defence Services is mainly responsible for safeguarding the Constitution.

Article (109)

The Pyithu Hluttaw shall be formed with a maximum of 440 Hluttaw representatives as follows :

- (a) not more than 330 Pyithu Hluttaw representatives elected prescribing electorate in accord with law on the basis of township as well as population or combining with an appropriate township which is contiguous to the newly-formed township if it is more than 330 townships;
- (b) not more than 110 Pyithu Hluttaw representatives who are the Defence Services personnel nominated by the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services in accord with the law.

Article (141)

141. The Amyotha Hluttaw shall be formed with a maximum of 224 Hluttaw representatives as follows:

- (a) 168 Amyotha Hluttaw representatives elected in an equal number of 12 representatives from each Region or State inclusive of relevant Union territories and including one representative from each Self-Administered Division or Self-Administered Zone;
- (b) 56 Amyotha Hluttaw representatives who are the Defence Services personnel nominated by the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services in accord with the law, four representatives from each Region or State inclusive of relevant Union territories;
- (c) in forming the Amyotha Hluttaw as mentioned in Sub-Sections (a) and (b), the relevant Union Territory means the Union Territories, prescribed under the Constitution, or prescribed by law of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, which are inclusive in State or Division, Region or State for the purpose of electing the Amyotha Hluttaw representative.

Article (60)

- (a) The President shall be elected by the Presidential Electoral College.
- (b) The Presidential Electoral College shall be formed with three groups of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw representatives as follows:
 - (i) group formed with elected Hluttaw representatives in the Hluttaw with an equal number of representatives elected from Regions and States;
 - (ii) group formed with elected Hluttaw representatives in the Hluttaw elected on the basis of township and population;
 - (iii) group formed with the Defence Services personnel Hluttaw representatives nominated by the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services for the said two Hluttaws.
- (c) Each group shall elect a Vice-President from among the Hluttaw representatives or from among persons who are not Hluttaw representatives.
- (d) The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and a Body comprising the Heads and Deputy Heads of the two Hluttaws in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw shall scrutinize whether or not the Vice-Presidents possess the qualifications prescribed for the President.

(e) The Presidential Electoral College comprising all the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw representatives shall elect by vote one of the three Vice-Presidents who are Presidential candidates, as the President.

(f) Necessary law shall be enacted for the election of President and Vice-Presidents.