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Min Aung Hlaing and His Generals: Data on the Military Members of Myanmar's State Administration Council Junta

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Following his 1 February seizure of power in Naypyitaw, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing formed an 11-member junta called the State Administration Council (SAC). In this picture, Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar's armed forces, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends the IX Moscow conference on International Security in Moscow on June 23, 2021. Photo: Alexander Zemlianichenko, AFP.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Following his 1 February seizure of power in Naypyitaw, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing formed an 11-member junta called the State Administration Council (SAC).
- Eight of the original members of the junta were military officers and the remaining three civilians. While six more civilians were later added to its membership, the line-up of military men on the SAC remains unchanged.
- Six of the eight military members of the SAC held the Tatmadaw's top posts at the time of the coup, while the remaining two were appointed secretaries to the junta.
- Though biographical data on those officers are in many cases difficult to secure, preliminary analysis of their educational backgrounds, career trajectories, demographic characteristics, economic roles and interests, and prior involvement in Myanmar's peace process is crucial to any effort to understand the country's new military regime.
- The purpose of this article and of two forthcoming articles, on the civilian members of the SAC and on the SAC-appointed cabinet, is to stimulate further, more comprehensive, efforts to understand that regime — a necessary complement to the intense focus among analysts on the resistance to the 1 February coup in Myanmar.

INTRODUCTION

On 1 February 2021, hours before the newly elected Union Assembly was to convene, Myanmar’s military seized power. Its forces detained President Win Myint, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, and senior members of the government and of the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) party. Announcing a state of emergency, state media declared that executive, legislative, and judiciary powers were in the hands of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. The formation of the State Administration Council (SAC) followed the next day. This junta, chaired by Min Aung Hlaing, became the country’s ruling body.¹

At the time of its formation, the SAC comprised 11 members — eight military officers and three civilians. Six of those officers held the top six posts in the Myanmar military’s or Tatmadaw’s hierarchy on 1 February; the remaining two were appointed to serve as the junta’s secretaries. In contrast to the precedents of the Revolutionary Council that took power in 1962 and the State Law and Order Restoration Council that took power in 1988, no officer appointed to the SAC at the time of its formation was serving as the commander of a Regional Military Command.

Table 1. Military Members of the SAC and their Military Posts.

Rank on the SAC	Romanized Name and Military Rank	Name and Military Rank in the Original Burmese	Position on the SAC	Military Post on 1 February 2021	Current Post
1.	Senior General Min Aung Hlaing	ဗိုလ်ချုပ်မှူးကြီး မင်းအောင်လှိုင်	Chairman	Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services	No change
2.	Vice Senior General Soe Win	ဒုတိယဗိုလ်ချုပ်မှူး ကြီး စိုးဝင်း	Vice Chairman	Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services, Commander-in-Chief of the Army	No change
3.	General Mya Htun Oo	ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး မြထွန်းဦး	Member	Joint Chief of Staff of the Army, Navy, and Air Force	Minister for Defence
4.	Admiral Tin Aung San	ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး တင်အောင်စန်း	Member	Commander-in-Chief of the Navy	Minister for Transport and

					Communications
5.	General Maung Maung Kyaw	ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး မောင်မောင်ကျော်	Member	Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force	No change
6.	Lieutenant General Moe Myint Htun	ဒုတိယဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး မိုးမြင့်ထွန်း	Member	Chief of Staff of the Army, Chief of Bureau of Special Operations – 2	No change
7.	Lieutenant General Aung Lin Dwe	ဒုတိယဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး အောင်လင်းဒွေး	Secretary	Judge Advocate General	No change
8.	Lieutenant General Ye Win Oo	ဒုတိယဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး ရဲဝင်းဦး	Joint Secretary	Chief of Military Security Affairs	No change

In the six weeks following its formation, additional civilians joined the SAC; and at the time of writing, it counts 17 members. The junta thus now includes more civilians than military officers. While power on the SAC surely remains in the hands of soldiers, its composition represents a further divergence from the precedent of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)/State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) junta, which ruled the country from 1988 to 2011 and was comprised exclusively of Tatmadaw officers during the entirety of its existence.²

Soon after the formation of the SAC, Tin Aung San and Mya Htun Oo left their military posts to join the cabinet appointed by the junta.³ While remaining members of the SAC, these men now serve as Minister for Transport and Communications and as Minister for Defence, respectively. Vice Admiral Moe Aung has replaced Tin Aung San as Commander-in-Chief of the Navy.⁴ The latter officer in fact reached retirement age in 2020; Min Aung Hlaing authorized a one-year extension of his military service.⁵ Mya Htun Oo, an officer whose career trajectory resembles that of Min Aung Hlaing himself, had before his transfer to the cabinet appeared to trail only Soe Win in his chances of becoming the next Commander-in-Chief.⁶ His replacement as Joint Chief of Staff is Lieutenant General Maung Maung Aye.⁷

This article lays a foundation for understanding Myanmar’s new military regime through a preliminary survey of the personal and educational backgrounds, career trajectories, demographic characteristics, business interests and affiliations, and record of involvement in the country’s peace process of the military members of the SAC. It takes no position on whether this regime will last one year, two years or even longer.⁸ It is, however, grounded

in a belief that understanding as thoroughly as possible both the composition of the regime and the shared experiences of its leading members is crucial to thinking about its likely internal dynamics. Notwithstanding the difficulty of access to reliable information, this article seeks to present base-line data on the military members of the SAC and to offer tentative analysis of those data.⁹

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUNDS

Graduates of the Defence Services Academy (DSA) — the Tatmadaw’s elite institution for the formation of officers¹⁰ — dominate the junta. (See Table 2.) Seven of its eight military members are DSA graduates.¹¹ Only Lieutenant General Ye Win Oo, Joint Secretary of the SAC, is an Officer Training School (OTS) graduate — a member of the seventy-seventh intake of that school.¹²

Table 2. Educational Backgrounds of Military Members of the SAC.

Name	Military Educational Background	Intake Number	Year of Graduation/Passing Out
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing	Defence Services Academy	19 ¹³	1977
Vice Senior General Soe Win	Defence Services Academy	22 ¹⁴	1981
General Mya Htun Oo	Defence Services Academy	25 ¹⁵	1984
Admiral Tin Aung San	Defence Services Academy	23 ¹⁶	1982
General Maung Maung Kyaw	Defence Services Academy	26 ¹⁷	1985
Lieutenant General Moe Myint Htun	Defence Services Academy	30 ¹⁸	1989
Lieutenant General Aung Lin Dwe	Defence Services Academy	25 ¹⁹	1984
Lieutenant General Ye Win Oo	Officers Training School	77 ²⁰	1989 ²¹

The senior members of the Tatmadaw hierarchy who now comprise the military members of the SAC come from a range of DSA cohorts;²² Min Aung Hlaing is a member of DSA intake number 19, while Lieutenant General Moe Myint Htun is a member of intake number 30. Only General Mya Htun Oo and Lieutenant General Aung Lin Dwe are both members of the same DSA intake, the academy’s twenty-fifth. Following formation of the junta, the former officer was, as noted, transferred from the military to the cabinet to serve as Minister

for Defence, replaced in the post of Joint Chief of Staff by another member of the same DSA intake.²³

CAREER TRAJECTORIES

The majority of the military members of the SAC are army officers. As that force is the largest and the most important of the Tatmadaw's three branches, its officers traditionally hold the top positions in the armed forces. In fact, the Tatmadaw is in large part an army; Myanmar's navy and air force play small roles in its activities.²⁴ That each of the officers on the SAC with the exceptions of Tin Aung San from the Navy and Maung Maung Kyaw from the Air Force have army backgrounds is thus unsurprising.²⁵

The career trajectories of the officers on the SAC demonstrate a discernible pattern. After graduating from the Defense Services Academy, these officers typically served in light infantry divisions²⁶ or battalions, rising through the ranks to posts as commanders of Regional Military Commands (RMCs).²⁷ (See Table 3.) Difficulties in securing data make tracing the early careers of individual officers impossible here. But the take-off point into senior Tatmadaw leadership roles for the military members of the SAC appears to have been their promotion to the post of regional commander. They were then assigned back and forth every year or two among RMCs, the general staff office or military schools. Promotion to lead Bureaus of Special Operations (BSOs) followed.²⁸ After completing their assignments as regional commanders and BSO chiefs, the officers rose to the top posts in the Tatmadaw.

Table 3. Regional Military Commands (RMCs) Headed by Military Members of the SAC.

Name	Regional Military Command (RMC)	Years of Service	Areas under the Command
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing	Triangle Region Command ²⁹	2002-2003	Eastern Shan State
	Western Command ³⁰	2004-2005	Rakhine State and Chin State
Vice Senior General Soe Win	Northern Command ³¹	2008-2010	Kachin State
General Mya Htun Oo	Eastern Central Command ³²	2011-2012	Central Shan State
Lieutenant General Moe Myint Htun	Naypyitaw Command ³³	2015-2017 ³⁴	Naypyitaw Territory
Lieutenant General Aung Lin Dwe	Western Command ³⁵	2015-2016	Rakhine State and Chin State
Lieutenant General Ye Win Oo	South Western Command ³⁶	2018-2020 ³⁷	Ayeyarwady Region

As regional commanders, most officers who later rose to those top military posts served in ethnic frontier areas where insurgent groups are typically active. Counter-insurgent operations have been the principal activity of the Tatmadaw in the areas of responsibility of the RMCs in ethnic states. As performance in counter-insurgency typically serves as the basis for promotion in Myanmar's armed forces, officers who have proven their abilities in overseeing such operations appear more likely to rise to top positions.³⁸ There are, however, exceptions. Lieutenant General Moe Myint Htun's service as regional commander was at the Naypyitaw Command,³⁹ for example, and Lieutenant General Ye Win Oo headed the South Western Command, overseeing the Ayeyarwady Region.

Table 4. Bureaus of Special Operations (BSOs) Headed by Military Members of the SAC.

Name	Bureau of Special Operations (BSO)	Years of Service	Regional Commands under the Bureau
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing	Bureau of Special Operations - 2 ⁴⁰	2008-2010	North Eastern Command, Eastern Command, Triangle Region Command, and Eastern Central Command
Vice Senior General Soe Win	Bureau of Special Operations - 6 ⁴¹	2010-2011	Naypyitaw Command, Western Command ⁴²
General Mya Htun Oo	Bureau of Special Operations - 6 ⁴³	2015-2017 ⁴⁴	Naypyitaw Command, Western Command
Lieutenant General Moe Myint Htun	Bureau of Special Operations - 5 ⁴⁵	2015-2017 ⁴⁷	Yangon Command
	Bureau of Special Operations - 6 ⁴⁶	2019 (for two months) ⁴⁸	Naypyitaw Command, Western Command
	Bureau of Special Operations - 2 ⁴⁹	2019-2021 ⁵⁰	North Eastern Command, Eastern Command, Triangle Region Command, and Eastern Central Command

After serving in one or two RMCs as commanders, these officers were typically promoted to posts as chiefs of BSOs. (See Table 4.) Three leading military members of the SAC — Soe Win, Mya Htun Oo and Moe Myint Htun — previously helmed BSO-6. The location

of the bureau in Naypyitaw and its operational importance suggest that officers appointed to head BSO-6 had not only demonstrated to the Tatmadaw’s leadership their potential for promotion to even more senior posts but had also earned the trust of that leadership.⁵¹

Between assignments at one RMC or another or before promotion to head BSOs, officers now serving on the SAC assumed positions in the general staff office or at military schools — military intelligence chief, chief of staff of the army, or DSA principal. (See Table 5.) The range of positions that they held gave them staff, command, and instructional experience.

Table 5. Posts in the General Staff Office and Military Schools Held by Military Members of the SAC.

Name	Post in General Staff Office or Military Schools	Previous Post	Following Post
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing	Principal of the Defense Services Academy ⁵²	Commander of Triangle Region Command	Commander of Western Command
Vice Senior General Soe Win	Commandant of Officers Training School ⁵³	Operational Commander at 10th Military Operation Command	Commander of Northern Command
General Mya Htun Oo	Principal of the Defense Services Academy ⁵⁴	(data not available to authors)	Commander of Eastern Central Command
	Chief of Staff of the Army	Commander of Eastern Central Command	Chief of Military Security Affairs and concurrently Chief of Bureau of Special Operations - 6
Lieutenant General Moe Myint Htun	Chief of Staff of the Army ⁵⁵	Chief of Bureau of Special Operations - 6, ⁵⁶ concurrently Chief of Staff of the Army	Chief of Bureau of Special Operations - 2, ⁵⁷ concurrently Chief of Staff of the Army
Lieutenant General Aung Lin Dwe	Principal of the Defence Services Academy ⁵⁸	(data not available to authors)	Commander of Western Command

Trajectories through these assignments and positions of responsibility led the military members of the SAC to the top military posts that they held at the time of the 1 February coup. For instance, after heading BSO-2, Min Aung Hlaing became Joint Chief of Staff of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, the third highest position in the military hierarchy, in 2010.⁵⁹ He replaced Senior General Than Shwe as Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief in 2011.⁶⁰ In the same year, Soe Win was promoted to Vice Commander-in-Chief from Chief of BSO-6.⁶¹ Following the same trajectory, Mya Htun Oo became Joint Chief of Staff in 2016 after his own stint leading BSO-6.⁶² Moe Myint Htun became the chief of BSO-6 and then of BSO-2 in 2019 while still serving as Chief of Staff of the Army.⁶³

Mya Htun Oo is also a former chief of Military Security Affairs. Ye Win Oo holds that post now. While Myanmar's intelligence apparatus may have diminished in political influence since the downfall of General Khin Nyunt in 2004, officers with strong ties to that apparatus do have a clear and obvious presence among the military members of the SAC.⁶⁴

Myanmar Navy and Air Force personnel seem to have relatively straightforward career trajectories, perhaps because of their forces' small scale and simple command structures. Data indicate that Tin Aung San and Maung Maung Kyaw commanded different naval headquarters and airbases before becoming Chief of Staff of the Navy⁶⁵ and the Air Force,⁶⁶ respectively, and then the Commanders-in-Chief of their services.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Locating information on the birthplaces of the SAC's military members is difficult. An exception relates to Min Aung Hlaing, born in Dawei in the Tanintharyi Region⁶⁷ — the southernmost part of the country. The military members of the SAC members are Buddhists, and all are apparently Bamar.⁶⁸ In a country in which more than 70 per cent of the population are Bamar Buddhists, the Tatmadaw is highly Burmanized. Further, the SLORC/SPDC years saw the entrenchment of a practice whereby non-Bamar officers rarely, if ever, assumed top military positions.

The Tatmadaw and its leadership portray themselves as defenders and patrons of the country's Buddhist establishment. This attitude has its roots in ethno-nationalism centred on Bamar Buddhist identity, which has been deeply rooted in the country's politics since the colonial era. It is likely that the current military leadership shares this ethno-nationalist outlook, while at the same time using Bamar Buddhist ethno-nationalism as a tool to advance its political interests and to rally support from the populace.⁶⁹

ECONOMIC ROLES AND INTERESTS

The Tatmadaw wields economic influence through two military-owned conglomerates — Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL) and the Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC).⁷⁰ While the organization and revenues of these conglomerates remain opaque and removed from civilian oversight, understanding the role of the Tatmadaw in the country, its finances, or its efforts to provide welfare for its troops without reference to them is impossible.⁷¹ Taken together, the two conglomerates own at least 106 businesses and are closely associated with a further 27 businesses.⁷² They span sectors ranging from mining and other extractive industries to manufacturing, construction, tourism, banking and

insurance. MEHL is one of the largest companies in Myanmar, paying the second highest taxes of any entity in 2019.⁷³

Any effort to figure out what the SAC— like in fact the Tatmadaw more generally — is must take into account that seven of its military members hold positions in MEHL or the MEC. Min Aung Hlaing and Soe Win serve as the Chairman and Vice Chairman of MEHL’s Patrons Group,⁷⁴ which oversees the conglomerate’s board of directors.⁷⁵ Mya Htun Oo, Tin Aung San, and Maung Maung Kyaw are also members of the group.⁷⁶ SAC member Aung Lin Dwe is a MEHL director, while Moe Myint Htun is a director of both MEHL and the MEC.⁷⁷

While the matter is not a focus of this article, the families of the SAC’s military members also have considerable business stakes — spanning sectors including real estate, construction, entertainment, hotels and tourism, and telecommunications.⁷⁸

INVOLVEMENT IN THE PEACE PROCESS

In his first television address to the public after the 1 February coup, Min Aung Hlaing expressed the military’s interest in bringing a durable and sustainable peace to the country and in advancing Myanmar’s peace process on the basis of the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) between the Thein Sein government and a number of Myanmar’s ethnic armed organizations (EAOs).⁷⁹ He had in fact emphasized the importance of restarting talks with EAOs since November of last year, when he established the military’s permanent Peace Talks Committee a day after Myanmar’s national elections.⁸⁰

Among military members of the SAC, Min Aung Hlaing, Soe Win and Aung Lin Dwe have the most noteworthy records of previous involvement in the peace process. The first two officers negotiated with EAOs starting in the early 2010s, under the Thein Sein administration. Min Aung Hlaing served on the Union Peace Central Committee (UPCC), and Soe Win was a vice chair of the Union Peace Working Committee (UPWC).⁸¹ Later, as Commander-in-Chief and Vice Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, the two officers were supportive of NCA.⁸² For his part, Aung Lin Dwe served on the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee during the NCA process and joined the Peace Talks Committee formed last November.⁸³

The SAC has abolished the NLD-led National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NRPC) and set up three committees to continue the peace process: the National Solidarity and Peace-making Central Committee (NSPCC), the National Solidarity and Peace-making Working Committee (NSPWC), and the National Unity and Peace Restoration Coordination Committee (NUPRCC).⁸⁴

How the previous involvement of Min Aung Hlaing and several of the other military members of the SAC in Myanmar’s peace process will shape their approach to achieving the “eternal peace” that the Senior General promised last year remains unknown.⁸⁵ Asking whether the SAC views the new committees as means of reducing domestic pressure in the face of nation-wide resistance to its coup or whether it is determined to prove that it can accomplish what a half-decade of NLD efforts could not is, nevertheless, a fair question.⁸⁶

CONCLUSION

The data on the military members of Myanmar's ruling State Administration Council make possible several tentative and preliminary observations.

Unsurprisingly, the roster of officers on the SAC reflects the character of the Tatmadaw. In appointing those officers to the junta, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing adhered strictly to the military hierarchy that obtained at the time of his coup. The first six members of the SAC held the top six posts in the armed forces on 1 February, now ranked on the junta in the order of their positions in the military leadership. This pattern of appointments may reflect not only Min Aung Hlaing's adherence to institutional norms but also his pragmatism or even caution. In the uncertain atmosphere immediately following the coup, securing and retaining the support of fellow senior officers by offering them seats on the new junta according with their standing in the armed forces removed a potential source of distraction and even risk.⁸⁷ By the time of the coup, too, Min Aung Hlaing had served as Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services for a decade. The roster of senior officers in the Tatmadaw was, not least, a product of his preferences and decisions — reflective perhaps of patterns of loyalty about which the data on which this article draws make it impossible to say as much as one would like.

Min Aung Hlaing was due to retire from his position as Commander-in-Chief and from active military service on turning 65 in July 2021.⁸⁸ While after seizing power he quickly moved to postpone his retirement indefinitely,⁸⁹ there is nevertheless reason to believe that he sought at the time of the SAC's formation in February to send reassuring signals to members of the next generation of the Tatmadaw's leadership. Reshuffles in recent years had seen the rise of officers such as Moe Myint Htun and Maung Maung Kyaw into the military's higher echelons, in an apparent indication both of the senior general's intentions to oversee generational transition in the Tatmadaw and of his personal ties to these officers.⁹⁰ The noteworthy transfer of Mya Htun Oo from his senior military post to the cabinet may also reveal much about SAC and Tatmadaw dynamics, and about the regime's future. These important matters merit closer scrutiny than the present article is able to offer.

The military membership of the SAC reflects characteristics of the Tatmadaw in other ways. All of the officers on the junta are Buddhists and apparently Barmars. The majority of them have served in the army, the dominant military branch. Their career trajectories typify those of senior Tatmadaw officers, especially in that they have in most cases included important counter-insurgency roles in ethnic states. All but one of the officers on the SAC have records of close involvement with the military's two sprawling conglomerates; their ties to Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited are particularly noteworthy.

These multi-stranded, shared ties lead to two observations. One concerns the need to view common experiences not only of ethnicity and religion, professional formation, counter-insurgency and political outlook but also of oversight of business interests as possible sources of SAC cohesion. The second observation concerns the value of understanding the SAC, like the Tatmadaw more generally, as an economic actor — perhaps at least as much as a military or political actor.⁹¹

Five months after the 1 February coup, Min Aung Hlaing’s SAC regime may still be in its early days, seeking to assert and consolidate a credible level of control of the country that it may never achieve. The military officers who dominate the junta remain the same people who led the Tatmadaw before the coup. However, in the months ahead and perhaps beyond, and as already exemplified by the transfer of two officers on the SAC from senior military posts, dynamics between Min Aung Hlaing and his generals will play no small part in determining Myanmar’s future. Time will tell whether the unity and cohesion of the military members of the SAC, their fear of the consequences of failure, and their willingness to play continuing roles in their Commander-in-Chief’s project will hold up when confronted both by internal tensions and stresses among members of the junta and by pressures from within and beyond Myanmar’s borders.

¹ “Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services – Order No (9/2021)”, *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 3 February 2021 (<https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/GNLM2021-02-03-red.pdf>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

² The former junta changed its name from State Law and Order Restoration Council to State Peace and Development Council in 1997. The efforts of the SAC’s leadership to assert the new junta’s control and legitimacy bear strong similarity to the approach of the SLORC and SPDC. Further, the SLORC offered a rationale to justify its 1988 seizure of power similar to that offered at the time of Ne Win’s 1962 coup. While the stated objective of Ne Win’s Revolutionary Council was to prevent disintegration of the country, the SLORC claimed to intervene to re-establish “law and order” in the wake of a nation-wide democracy uprising that had halted the functioning of the state. In contrast to the SAC, however, the 17 founding members of the Revolutionary Council in 1962 were all military officers, though they included two non-Bamar soldiers: Brigadier-General Thomas Cliff and Colonel Tan Yu Sai. Three civilians, including one non-Bamar, would join the junta nine years later. The durability of Myanmar’s earlier junta certainly helps account for popular skepticism about the SAC’s promise to hold elections — whether in one year or in two years; see Allegra Mendelson, “Myanmar’s military may extend emergency rule by up to two years”, *Al Jazeera*, 7 April 2021 (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/7/myanmar-military-may-extend-emergency-rule-by-up-to-two-years>, downloaded 24 June 2021).

³ That cabinet is the subject of a further *ISEAS Perspective* piece, now in preparation.

⁴ Htet Naing Zaw, “ဒုတိယဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး မောင်မောင်အေး ကြည်း၊ ရေ၊ လေ ညှိနှိုင်းကွပ်ကဲရေးမှူး ဖြစ်လာ” [Lieutenant General Maung Maung Aye Becomes Joint Chief of Staff of the Army, Navy and Air Force], *The Irrawaddy*, 4 February 2021 (<https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2021/02/04/237628.html>, 18 June 2021). Moe Aung is the son of Aung Thaung — a leading figure in the Tatmadaw’s electoral vehicle, the Union Solidarity and Development Party; personal communication, former Myanmar civil servant and long-time Tatmadaw observer, 1 July 2021.

⁵ Personal communication, former Tatmadaw officer and DSA graduate, 29 June 2021.

⁶ Htet Naing Zaw, “NLD Election Win Raises New Questions over Myanmar Military Chief’s Future”, *The Irrawaddy*, 24 November 2020 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/analysis/nld-election-win-raises-new-questions-myanmar-military-chiefs-future.html>, downloaded 18 June 2021).

⁷ Htet Naing Zaw, “ဒုတိယဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး မောင်မောင်အေး ကြည်း”. Maung Maung Aye became the commander of the Naypyitaw Command in 2010 and Chief of Armed Forces Training in 2015. He also previously headed Bureau of Special Operations-6, located in Naypyitaw.

⁸ At the same time, implicit in the article’s approach is a belief in the heuristic value of taking seriously the SAC as a regime. While few observers of the Indonesian scene in the late 1960s could, for example, have predicted that General Soeharto’s nascent New Order regime would last a further three decades, attention to the formative period of that regime certainly paid rich dividends to Indonesia-watchers over the long term.

⁹ The authors thank five long-time observers of the Tatmadaw for their enlightening and valuable comments on, and corrections to, a draft version of this article. Those observers will find many of their ideas reflected in the present version. All errors of fact and interpretation remain the authors’ own, and they look forward to work on the part of others to develop a more detailed and better-informed understanding of the SAC and its dynamics. Two further articles, presenting data on civilian members of the SAC and on the cabinet appointed by the junta, will follow the publication of this one. The general inspiration for the approach taken in these articles is a series of pieces prepared by scholars associated with the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project and published in the journal *Indonesia* between 1969 and 2014 — under the title, first, of “Current Data on the Indonesian Army Elite” and then of “Current Data on the Indonesian Military Elite”; see [https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/52499/discover?query="current+data"&submit=](https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/52499/discover?query=) (downloaded 22 June 2021). The original purpose of these pieces was to give readers a means of understanding General Soeharto’s emerging New Order regime in Indonesia and some of the dynamics that shaped it — a purpose to which the present article also aspires in the case of Myanmar’s emergent State Administration Council regime. The authors thank Douglas Kammen, a veteran analyst of the Indonesian armed forces, for his guidance as they designed the research on which this article draws. The specific inspiration for the title of the present piece is, of course, David Jenkins, *Suharto and His Generals: Indonesian Military Politics, 1975-1983* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, 1984).

¹⁰ Wei Yan Aung, “The Day Japan Founded a Military Training School in Wartime Myanmar”, *The Irrawaddy*, 20 August 2020 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/specials/on-this-day/day-japan-founded-military-training-school-wartime-myanmar.html>, downloaded 16 June 2021).

¹¹ This is unsurprising as the DSA, a four-year degree-granting programme, is regarded as the most prestigious military school in the country, one whose curriculum aims to mold its officer cadets into soldier-intellectuals. The DSA usually recruits fresh secondary-school graduates who are directly commissioned into the military after their graduation from the academy. Its graduates are generally considered to be those in the Tatmadaw with the highest academic qualifications. Personnel who start their military careers as non-commissioned officers are recruited by the OTS, where they follow six- to nine-month training programmes to become commissioned officers. In fact, the latter school was the country’s first military training school. Its notable alumni include NLD patron U Tin Oo, who rose through the ranks to serve as Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief before being forced to retire on trumped up corruption charges in 1976, as well as 17 of the 19 founding members of the SLORC in 1988 — among them Generals Saw Maung and Than Shwe and then Brigadier General Khin Nyunt. On the DSA and the OTS, see *ibid.* and Maung Aung Myoe, *Building the Tatmadaw: Myanmar Armed Forces since 1948* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2009).

¹² The Tatmadaw established other distinguished military schools, such as the Defence Services Technological Academy (DSTA), or upgraded existing institutions, such as the National Defence College (NDC, later elevated to university level), in the 1990s and the early 2000s; *ibid.*, pp. 148, 157. Nevertheless, graduates of these institutions have not yet risen to the top of the military hierarchy, which DSA graduates continue to dominate. In this regard, even in a notoriously closed

force, the shared educational background of the military members of the SAC makes them an in-group within an in-group.

¹³ Htet Naing Zaw, “NLD Election Win Raises New Questions”.

¹⁴ Htet Naing Zaw, “တပ်ချုပ်ဖြစ်လာနိုင်သူ စစ်သားကောင်း ဒုတိယ ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီးစိုးဝင်း” [Vice Senior General Soe Win: A Good Soldier Who Could Become the Next Commander-in-Chief], *The Irrawaddy*, 5 December, 2020 (<https://burma.irrawaddy.com/article/2020/12/05/234398.html>, downloaded 18 June 2021).

¹⁵ “Lt-Gen Mya Tun Oo Appointed Burmese Military’s Chief of General Staff”, *The Irrawaddy*, 29 August 2016 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/lt-gen-mya-tun-oo-appointed-burmese-militarys-chief-of-general-staff.html>, downloaded 18 June 2021).

¹⁶ Personal communication, former Tatmadaw officer and DSA graduate, 17 June 2021.

¹⁷ “Min Aung Hlaing Makes Himself Military Supremo for Life”, *Myanmar Now*, 22 May 2021 (<https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/min-aung-hlaing-makes-himself-military-supremo-for-life>, downloaded 18 June 2021), and personal communication, former Tatmadaw officer and DSA graduate, 29 June 2021. Note that Sai Wanna,

“ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်(လေ)တာဝန်အားဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီးမောင်မောင်ကျော်ခန့်အပ်” [General Maung

Maung Kyaw Appointed as Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force], *Myanmar Times*, 3 January 2018 (<https://myanmar.mmtimes.com/news/105533.html>, downloaded 2 July 2021), states that [Maung Muang Kyaw is a member of DSA intake 23, but, as the officer was born in 1964, that datum is hard to credit.](#)

¹⁸ Htet Naing Zaw, “NLD Election Win Raises New Questions”.

¹⁹ Personal communication, former Tatmadaw officer and DSA graduate, 17 June 2021. As a captain, Aung Lin Dwe was personal staff officer to Major General Nyan Lynn, a member of the SLORC and commander of the South Eastern Command.

²⁰ “Myanmar Military Chief Expected to Appoint Loyalists as Reshuffle Looms”, *The Irrawaddy*, 13 February 2020 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/analysis/myanmar-military-chief-expected-appoint-loyalists-reshuffle-loom.html>, downloaded 18 June 2021).

²¹ Personal communications, academic expert on the Tatmadaw-a, 30 June 2021, and regional military analyst, 1 July 2021.

²² As the cases of other Southeast Asian armed forces demonstrate, officers’ shared experiences as cadets, with the hierarchies and bonds resulting from those experiences, can prove a ready basis for military factionalism. Parcelling senior posts out among officers from different military-academy classes thus offers one means of preventing its emergence among members of the military leadership. One leading student of the 1962-1988 Ne Win regime and of the Tatmadaw’s history cites “an informal rule that came into effect from the end of the 1970s of not having officers from the same [DSA] graduating class occupy important posts at the same time”; see Nakanishi Yoshihiro, *Strong Soldiers, Failed Revolution: The State and Military in Burma, 1962–88* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2013), p. 264.

²³ Htet Naing Zaw, “ဒုတိယဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး မောင်မောင်အေး ကြည်း”.

²⁴ Generally accepted figures put the strength of Myanmar’s military in 2002 at about 400,000 soldiers — some 370,000 soldiers in the Army, 16,000 in the Navy and 15,000 in the Air Force. The three forces’ relative shares in the total are believed to have remained basically unchanged; see Andrew Selth, “Known Knowns and Known Unknowns: Measuring Myanmar’s Military Capabilities”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 31, 2 (August 2009): 272-295. Access to trustworthy data on total force levels in 2021 remains a challenge, but one careful estimate puts them at 300-350,000 troops; academic expert on the Tatmadaw-b, 30 June 2021.

²⁵ Maung Maung Kyaw rose rapidly to the top ranks of the Tatmadaw in recent years, and he is seen as close to the senior general. His military pedigree also appears unimpeachable; his father General Thura Kyaw Htin, a close aide to Ne Win, served as Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief in

1976-1985 following the ouster of U Tin Oo from that post, as Deputy Prime Minister, and subsequently as Minister for Defence. For a discussion of the history of generational change in the Tatmadaw, see Nay Yan Oo, “A New Tatmadaw with Old Characteristics”, pp. 30-69 in Montesano, Chong and Prajak, *Praetorians, Profiteers or Professionals?*, pp. 32-35. Maung Maung Kyaw also has links to diplomatic circles, as his elder brother Thant Kyaw was Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs during the 2011-2016 Thein Sein administration; see “New Air Force Chief Has Risen Rapidly Through the Ranks”, *The Irrawaddy*, 19 March 2018 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/new-air-force-chief-risen-rapidly-ranks.html>, downloaded 18 June 2021).

²⁶ Myanmar’s light infantry divisions (မြေမြန်တပ်မ) are mobile units trained for counter-

insurgency and jungle warfare that proved effective in countering Communist insurgents in the 1970s. The Tatmadaw has ten such divisions, each composed of ten light infantry battalions.

²⁷ The Tatmadaw currently operates 14 Regional Military Commands (RMCs, တိုင်းစစ်ဌာနချုပ်):

the Northern Command, the North Eastern Command, the Eastern Command, the South Eastern Command, the Southern Command, the Western Command, the South Western Command, the North Western Command, the Yangon Command, the Coastal Region Command, the Triangle Region Command, the Central Command, the Naypyitaw Command, and the Eastern Central Command.

²⁸ Bureaus of Special Operations (BSOs, စစ်ဆင်ရေး အထူးအဖွဲ့) are high-level field units in the

Army formed with the original purpose of coordinating regional military commands in counter-insurgency operations. There are currently six bureaus: BSO-1 (formed in 1978), BSO-2 (1979), BSO-3 (2002), BSO-4 (2002), BSO-5 (2005), and BSO-6 (2007).

²⁹ “Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief”, *ALTSEAN-Burma*, n.d. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180112154939/http://www.altsean.org/Research/Regime%20Watch/Executive/CIC.php>, downloaded 18 June 2021).

³⁰ Htet Naing Zaw, “NLD Election Win Raises New Questions”. Note that this command is responsible for military operations in Rakhine State; Wa Lone, “Command Structure of the Myanmar Army’s Operation in Rakhine”, *Reuters*, 25 April 2017 (www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-crisis-army-idUSKBN17R18E, downloaded 1 July 2021).

³¹ Htet Naing Zaw, “တပ်ချုပ်ဖြစ်လာနိုင်သူ စစ်သားကောင်း ဒုတိယ ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီးစိုးဝင်း”.

³² “Lt-Gen Mya Tun Oo Appointed Burmese Military’s Chief of General Staff”.

³³ Aung Zaw, “What the Recent Military Shake-Ups Really Mean”, *The Irrawaddy*, 15 July 2019 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/commentary/recent-military-shake-ups-really-mean.html>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

³⁴ Personal communication, former Tatmadaw officer and DSA graduate, 29 June 2021.

³⁵ United Nations Human Rights Council, “The Economic Interests of the Myanmar Military (16 September 2019)”

(<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/EconomicInterestsMyanmarMilitary.aspx>, downloaded 14 June 2021), p. 70.

³⁶ “Myanmar Military Chief Expected to Appoint Loyalists as Reshuffle Looms”.

³⁷ Personal communication, former Tatmadaw officer and DSA graduate, 29 June 2021.

³⁸ On the centrality of counter-insurgency to the history and identity of the Tatmadaw, see the brief discussion in Michael J. Montesano, Terence Chong and Prajak Kongkirati, “Introduction: Two Mainland Southeast Asian Militaries in Comparative Perspective”, pp. 1-29 in Michael J. Montesano, Terence Chong and Prajak Kongkirati, eds., *Praetorians, Profiteers or Professionals? Studies on the Militaries of Myanmar and Thailand* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2020), pp. 18-20.

³⁹ It is also important to note that, while holding the rank of captain and serving under Myanmar’s previous junta during the 1990s, Moe Myint Htun was a personal staff officer to Vice Senior

General Maung Aye; see Nanda, “Min Aung Hlaing Reshuffles Senior Military Ranks Ahead of Election”, *Frontier Myanmar*, 19 May 2020 (<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/min-aung-hlaing-reshuffles-senior-military-ranks-ahead-of-election/>, downloaded 23 June 2020).

⁴⁰ “Myanmar Coup: Min Aung Hlaing, the General Who Seized Power”, *BBC News*, 1 February 2021 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55892489>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

⁴¹ Htet Naing Zaw, “NLD Election Win Raises New Questions”.

⁴² “Lt-Gen Mya Tun Oo Appointed Burmese Military’s Chief of General Staff”.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Personal communication, former Tatmadaw officer and DSA graduate, 29 June 2021.

⁴⁵ “New Air Force Chief Has Risen Rapidly Through the Ranks”.

⁴⁶ Htet Naing Zaw, “NLD Election Win Raises New Questions”.

⁴⁷ “အငယ်ဆုံးတိုင်းမှူး စစ်ဦးစီးအရာရှိချုပ်ဖြစ်လာ” [Youngest Regional Commander Becomes Army

Chief of Staff], *BBC Burmese*, 9 January 2017

(<https://www.bbc.com/burmese/burma-38562418>, downloaded 5 July 2021),

and “Burma Army Reshuffles Senior Positions”, *The Irrawaddy*, 11 May 2017

(www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/burma-army-reshuffles-senior-positions.html, downloaded 1 July 2021).

⁴⁸ Personal communication, former Tatmadaw officer and DSA graduate, 29 June 2021.

⁴⁹ Htet Naing Zaw, “Younger Myanmar Military Officers Promoted to Key Roles in Reshuffle”, *The Irrawaddy*, 11 May 2020 (www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/younger-myanmar-military-officers-promoted-key-roles-reshuffle.html, downloaded 1 July 2021).

⁵⁰ Personal communication, former Tatmadaw officer and DSA graduate, 29 June 2021.

⁵¹ Demonstrating that potential and earning that trust come not least by way of performance in ethnic-state regional commands. For his part, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing served as the chief of BSO-2, during which he gained credentials in counter-insurgent operations against the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) in the Kokang region bordering China’s Yunnan province in 2009; Dominic Faulder, “Who is Myanmar Junta Chief Min Aung Hlaing? 5 Things to Know”, *Nikkei Asia*, 6 February 2021 (<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Myanmar-Coup/Who-is-Myanmar-junta-chief-Min-Aung-Hlaing-5-things-to-know>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

⁵² Htet Naing Zaw, “NLD Election Win Raises New Questions”.

⁵³ Htet Naing Zaw, “တပ်ချုပ်ဖြစ်လာနိုင်သူ စစ်သားကောင်း ဒုတိယ ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီးစိုးဝင်း”.

⁵⁴ Data on Mya Htun Oo’s career trajectory come from “Lt-Gen Mya Tun Oo Appointed Burmese Military’s Chief of General Staff” and Yan Pai, “Burmese Military Reshuffle Sees New Security Chief Appointed”, *The Irrawaddy*, 9 September 2014 (www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/burmese-military-reshuffle-sees-new-security-chief-appointed.html, downloaded 1 July 2021), corroborated by personal communication, former Tatmadaw officer and DSA graduate, 29 June 2021.

⁵⁵ Htet Naing Zaw, “NLD Election Win Raises New Questions”.

⁵⁶ Personal communication, former Tatmadaw officer and DSA graduate, 29 June 2021.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “Myanmar Coup: Min Aung Hlaing, the General Who Seized Power”.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Htet Naing Zaw, “တပ်ချုပ်ဖြစ်လာနိုင်သူ စစ်သားကောင်း ဒုတိယ ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီးစိုးဝင်း”.

⁶² “Lt-Gen Mya Tun Oo Appointed Burmese Military’s Chief of General Staff”.

⁶³ Htet Naing Zaw, “NLD Election Win Raises New Questions”. Having become BSO-6 chief at the age of 51, Moe Myint Htun is believed to have very good career prospects; also see note 90 below.

⁶⁴ During the SPDC era, Khin Nyunt’s access to information and the political ambitions that he demonstrated while serving as the Tatmadaw’s intelligence chief led to tensions within the military’s leadership. Khin Nyunt had assumed control of the intelligence apparatus in 1983, when it was known as the Directorate of Defence Services Intelligence (DDSI). In 2001, it became the Office of the Chief of Military Intelligence (OCMI) and remained under Khin Nyunt’s leadership until the time of his fall in 2004. He had been a founding member of the SLORC as its Secretary-1, relinquishing that post to become prime minister in 2003. Following Khin Nyunt’s downfall, the OCMI was restructured as the Office of the Chief of Military Security Affairs (OCMSA), with greater oversight from military leaders. Further, regional commanders took control of military intelligence battalions in their areas of responsibility; see Andrew Selth, *Secrets and Power in Myanmar: Intelligence and the Fall of General Khin Nyunt* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2019), p. 91. In a further indication of the place of figures with military intelligence backgrounds in the SAC regime, Lieutenant General (ret.) Myint Swe — who now serves as the regime’s acting president and was vice president under the toppled NLD government — shares with Mya Htun Oo and Ye Win Oo a history of helming the OCMSA.

⁶⁵ “45 Senior Military Officers Retire to Contest Nov. 8 Poll”, *The Irrawaddy*, 11 August 2015 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/45-senior-military-officers-retire-to-contest-nov-8-poll.html>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

⁶⁶ “လေတပ်ဦးစီးချုပ်သစ် ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး မောင်မောင်ကျော်” [The New Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force General Maung Maung Kyaw], *BBC Burmese*, 2 January 2018 (<https://www.bbc.com/burmese/burma-42544888>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

⁶⁷ “Council implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/480 of 22 March 2021 implementing Regulation (EU) No 401/2013 concerning restrictive measures in respect of Myanmar/Burma”, *Official Journal of the European Union*, 22 March 2021 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:2021:099I:FULL&from=EN>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

⁶⁸ Confirmation awaits further research on such aspects of the biographies of SAC members as their family backgrounds, their pre-DSA educations, the early stages of their military careers and their webs of connections within the armed forces.

⁶⁹ On Bamar Buddhist ethno-nationalism and its relationship to Myanmar’s current crisis, see Thant Myint-U, “Myanmar’s Coming Revolution: What Will Emerge from Collapse?”, *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2021) (<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/burma-myanmar/2021-06-11/myanmars-coming-revolution>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

⁷⁰ MEHL was the first private company established in Myanmar after the 1988 military coup that toppled the country’s socialist regime. Its official aim was to ensure the welfare of military personnel, their dependents, and war veterans. A third of MEHL’s share are owned by military units — including regional commands, light infantry divisions, battalions and also war veterans associations. Another two thirds are owned by individual serving or retired military personnel. The MEC was established in 1997. These two conglomerates generate significant revenue not only for individual soldiers but also for the military itself; see United Nations Human Rights Council, “The Economic Interests of the Myanmar Military (16 September 2019)”, p. 19, and Maung Aung Myoe, “The Defence Expenditures and Commercial Interests of the Tatmadaw”, pp. 97-131 in Montesano, Chong and Prajak, *Praetorians, Profiteers or Professionals?*

⁷¹ See Maung Aung Myoe, *ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷³ “Myanmar: Military Ltd: The Company Financing Human Rights Abuses in Myanmar”, *Amnesty International*, 10 September 2020, p. 23 (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/2969/2020/en/>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

⁷⁴ In Myanmar, နာယကအဖွဲ့.

⁷⁵ United Nations Human Rights Council, “The Economic Interests of the Myanmar Military (16 September 2019)”, p. 70.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Even though the precise functions and purposes of the Patrons Group are unclear, observers believe that the senior military leaders among its members have considerable influence and control over MEHL; *ibid.*, p. 19.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 70. All of these officers are believed to have derived significant income from shareholdings in the Tatmadaw conglomerates. In 2010-2011, the year that he became Commander-in-Chief, Min Aung Hlaing owned 5,000 shares in MEHL and received an annual dividend of 1.5 million kyats (US\$250,000). Likewise, Soe Win owned 10,000 shares in MEHL and received dividends of 500,000 kyats (US\$83,333) in the same year, 2010-2011; see “Myanmar: Military Ltd: The Company Financing Human Rights Abuses in Myanmar”, p. 44.

⁷⁸ The following table offers what is likely to be only a partial list of the most apparent such stakes.

Family Business Ties of the Military Members of the SAC.

SAC Member	Name of Family Member	Relationship to SAC Member	Name of Firm
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing	Aung Pyae Sone	Son	A & M Mahar Company Limited (pharmaceuticals)
			Bhone Myat Pyae Sone Trading Company Limited
			Nyein Chan Pyae Sone Manufacturing & Trading Company Limited
			Sky One Construction Company Limited
			Yangon Restaurant and Yangon Gallery
	Myo Yadanar Htike	daughter-in-law	Stellar Seven Company Limited (entertainment)
	Khin Thiri Thet Mon	Daughter	Everfit Company Limited
Seventh Sense Company Limited (entertainment)			
Admiral Tin Aung San	Yin Min Thu	Daughter	Global Icon General Trading Company Limited
General Maung Maung Kyaw	Hein Htet	Son	Paramount Events Myanmar Company Limited

Lieutenant General Aung Lin Dwe	Ohnmar Myint	Wife	Aung Myint Mo Lin Company Limited
			Mingalar Aung Myay Company Limited
	Shwe Ye Phyu Aung	Daughter	Shwe Yee Phyo Pyae Company Limited

The data in this table come from “Myanmar Military SAC Members, Their Businesses and Associates that Require Targeted Sanctions”, *Justice for Myanmar*, 9 April 2021 (<https://justiceformyanmar.github.io/justiceformyanmar.org/stories/myanmar-military-sac-members-their-businesses-and-associates-that-require-targeted-sanctions.html>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

⁷⁹ Joe Kumbun, “Do the Myanmar Junta’s New ‘Peace-Making Committees’ Stand Any Chance of Success?”, *The Diplomat*, 4 March 2021 (<https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/do-the-myanmar-juntas-new-peace-making-committees-stand-any-chance-of-success/>, downloaded 14 June 2021). Eight EAOs signed the NCA in 2015, while two more joined the process in 2018, all under the NLD government; see Yuichi Nitta and Thurein Hlahtway, “Two Ethnic Groups in Myanmar Sign Ceasefire”, *Nikkei Asia*, 13 February 2018 (<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Two-ethnic-groups-in-Myanmar-sign-ceasefire>, downloaded 16 June 2021).

⁸⁰ Nay Myo Win, “Military Calls for Prompt Continuation of Peace Talks”, *Eleven*, 10 November 2020 (<https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/military-calls-for-prompt-continuation-of-peace-talks>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

⁸¹ “Peace Process under Thein Sein Government”, *Myanmar Peace Monitor* (<https://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/government-peace-plan>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

⁸² Dominic Faulder, “Who is Myanmar Junta Chief Min Aung Hlaing? 5 Things to Know”.

⁸³ Nyein Nyein, “Myanmar Military Sets Up New Committee for Peace Talks”, *The Irrawaddy*, 10 November 2020 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20201111073521/https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-military-sets-new-committee-peace-talks.html>, downloaded 14 June 2021).

⁸⁴ Joe Kumbun, “Do the Myanmar Junta’s New ‘Peace-Making Committees’ Stand Any Chance of Success?” Min Aung Hlaing chairs the 17-member NSPCC, on which Soe Win serves as vice chair. Additional SAC members sit alongside these officers on that committee; *ibid.* Soe Win chairs the NSPWC, whose 33 members include Union ministers in the SAC-appointed cabinet, regional commanders, and chairmen of junta-installed state and regional administrative councils, *ibid.* While not an SAC member, Lieutenant General Yar Pyae chairs the 14-member NURPRCC. He was also selected last November to head the Tatmadaw’s Peace Talks Committee, to which Aung Lin Dwe was appointed to serve as secretary; Nyein Nyein, “Myanmar Military Sets Up New Committee for Peace Talks”.

⁸⁵ Roseanne Gerin, “Myanmar Military Launches Body for Talks With Ethnic Armies as Vote Count Goes On”, *Radio Free Asia*, 10 November 2020 (<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/peace-talks-committee-11102020202224.html>, downloaded 16 June 2021).

⁸⁶ While recent months have seen intense combat between Tatmadaw forces and EAOs in many parts of the country, peace committees formed by the military have nonetheless been in talks with several ethnic organizations and armed groups, such as the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army (Peace Council) - KNU/KNLA (PC), and the Arakan Liberation Party (ALP); see “National Unity and Peace

Coordination Committee Meets Officials of DKBA, KNU/KNLA-PC Separately”, *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 27 April 2021

(<https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/GNLM2021-04-27-red.pdf>,

downloaded 14 June 2021), and “NSPNC Meets ALP Officials”, *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 14 May 2021

(<https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/GNLM2021-05-14-red.pdf>,

downloaded 14 June 2021).

⁸⁷ For some parallels in Soeharto’s approach in the early years of the long-lasting New Order regime in Indonesia, see Jenkins, *Suharto and His Generals*, pp. 41-42. Jenkins’s ongoing work on Indonesia’s durable dictator has most recently resulted in David Jenkins, *Young Soeharto: The Making of a Soldier, 1921-1945* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2021) — the first volume in a planned trilogy on Soeharto’s life up to 1966.

⁸⁸ On 4 February, just three days after the coup, Min Aung Hlaing extended his term as Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services indefinitely; see “Min Aung Hlaing Makes Himself Military Supremo for Life”.

⁸⁹ Ibid. “Myanmar Junta Scraps Retirement Age for Its Leaders”, *The Irrawaddy*, 20 May 2021

(<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-scraps-retirement-age-for-its-leaders.html>, downloaded 6 July 2017), notes that this postponement also applies to Vice Commander in Chief Soe Win.

⁹⁰ On Maung Maung Kyaw, see note 25 above. As for the relatively young and junior Moe Myint Htun, the belief in well-informed circles in Yangon is that his prior service under Min Aung Hlaing has created a strong bond of loyalty between the two officers; personal communication, former Myanmar civil servant and long-time Tatmadaw observer, 1 July 2021; also see note 63 above.

⁹¹ See Maung Aung Myoe, “The Defence Expenditures and Commercial Interests of the Tatmadaw”, pp. 108 ff. Complementing these considerations is what the business ties of SAC members’ families may suggest about the revival of the “crony capitalism” of the SLORC/SPDC era — not least in a Myanmar facing international economic sanctions. A further *ISEAS Perspective* piece in this three-installment series on the SAC, focused on the junta-appointed cabinet, will address the place of Tatmadaw business interests in the SAC’s apparent vision for the Myanmar economy.

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