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Ethnicity without Meaning, Data without Context

The 2014 Census, Identity and Citizenship in Burma/Myanmar

Overview

Ethnic politics and statistics have long been among the most contested issues in Burma/Myanmar.[1] With one of the most diverse populations in Asia, Myanmar has been home to ethnic conflict and intractable political discord through every governmental era since independence from Great Britain in 1948. Most popular, official and international sources have considered the ethnic minority peoples to constitute up to 40 per cent of Myanmar's estimated 60 million people. However, these statistics are based on projections from and assumptions about outdated survey research, and are themselves the subject of much confusion. For example, in December 2013, the National League for Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi told Al Jazeera, "we [ethnic Bamars/Burmans] are actually in the minority in the whole country because the other ethnic nationalities make up about 60 percent."[2]

Under President Thein Sein's post-junta, constitutional government, which assumed office in 2011, a new political system is emerging in which the contours of identity,

Conclusions and Recommendations

The 2014 Population and Housing Census is likely to undertake the most significant ethnic and political boundary making in the country since the last British census in 1931. However, by using flawed designations that date from the colonial era and ignoring the considerable complexity of the present political situation in Myanmar, the census is likely to raise ethnic tensions at precisely the moment that peace negotiations are focused on building trust.

Ethnic politics, democratic reform and conflict resolution are at a critical juncture. If carried out in an inclusive, transparent and ethically implemented fashion, a census could support national reconciliation and momentum towards reform. Instead, many ethnic groups fear that its timing, format and methodology, with an unwarranted array of questions and overseen by law enforcement officers, will further diminish and marginalise the political status of non-Bamar groups. Citizenship rights for some people could even be under threat, based on census results.

The timing of the census in the year before a key general election raises additional concerns. Statistical reports that result from it could have confusing and negative impact on political debate and ethnic representation in the legislatures, as defined by the 2008 constitution. There are many communities and internally-displaced persons in the conflict zones of the ethnic borderlands who will not be properly included as well as others with marginal legal status who would prefer to disappear in an official counting exercise.

Through inclusive dialogue, planning and timing, many of these controversies could have been addressed. The UNFPA and Western government donors, with a projected US$74 million budget, have a special responsibility to ensure accurate research, definitions, data collection and inclusion in any process of this magnitude. Difficulties have been treated purely as technical problems with simple, "one-size-fits-all" solutions, rather than as fundamentally political and ethnic challenges that need resolution. Instead of creating the opportunity to improve inter-ethnic understanding and citizenship rights, the census promises to compound old grievances with a new generation of complexities.

belonging and information are in flux. Many restrictions on freedom of expression and association have been lifted, and hopes are continuing that the country is set on a long-term path towards modernity and political reform. However, many serious tensions remain, including those over identity and ethnic nationality rights, in the countdown to the next general election in 2015.

In particular, despite ceasefire offers by the President Thein Sein government to ethnic armed groups, many groups and organisations that mobilize around identity have expressed concerns that their causes and peoples will, once again, be marginalised during another time of political and economic change. Such perceptions are especially acute among communities where the impact of conflict remains. After decades of warfare and instability, international agencies estimate that a total of 650,000 internally-displaced persons and 120,000 refugees remain in the borderlands, where populations are overwhelmingly ethnic minorities.[3] Substantial numbers of ethnic minority people have also moved to Thailand, Bangladesh, India, Malaysia and the Middle East over the years.

Against this unsettled backdrop, the international community, in collaboration with the post-2011 government, has caused surprise by pushing ahead with a Population and Housing Census (PHC). This will be the first attempt at a countrywide census since 1983 and, very likely, will be the most widely-cited population data collected since the last – and much-criticised – British census in 1931. The new census, funded by Western donors and the government, has been supervised by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) with a budget initially projected at $58 million, but which recently has grown to $74 million.[4] UNFPA's estimate of per capita costs at $1.50 far exceeds the cost of India's 2011 census, which cost only $0.50 per person.[5]

However, rather than use the process as an opportunity for dialogue and reflection on past misconceptions, UNFPA and the government have ensured that the census – however expansive it may appear in its remit – will perpetuate many of the inaccuracies and inconsistencies that have reinforced ethnic grievance and gross inequalities within the country.

Among many concerns, the 2014 census will collect ethnicity and identity information based upon a much disputed list of 135 "national races".[6] The current list is almost identical to one first deployed during the Socialist era (1962-1988) and resurrected during the early years of the previous military government (1988-2011). These, in turn, were derived from a flawed British census in 1931. Furthermore, in the 2014 census each individual may be recorded as one and only one of the highly suspect race categories. As a result, not only will the common experience of mixed ethnic identities not be recorded but leaders of some ethnic political groups also fear that their followers will not be counted by the identities or ethnicities that they self-report. Technical decisions about enumeration procedures like this one could have adverse impact on political representation and, in some cases, citizenship rights.

Equally concerning, the timing of the census will not only have implications for ethnic-defined constituencies in the 2015 general election but it will occur at a time when conflict continues in the ethnic borderlands, with large population numbers of non-Bamar communities displaced and potentially out of reach of the census, and with the question of ethnic political representation still unresolved. Finally, with a complex array of 41 questions, there are widespread doubts about the competence of the 100,000 enumerators, who are young school-teachers with limited survey experience, to accurately complete such a difficult task.

Much can yet depend on the methodology of the census, practices by immigration officials in the field, and proper data analysis that takes contextual sources of unreliability into account. But, for the moment, such issues are far from clear and their importance appears to be underestimated or disregarded by donors, UN agencies and the government. Unless more appropriate analysis, terminology and systems are employed, many non-Bamar leaders fear a weakening of minority political rights as the census outcome.

This briefing, therefore, is intended to provide background on the difficult issues of ethnic identity and citizenship in Myanmar as well as analysis of the 2014 census. It warns that there are many changes still needed in planning,

socio-political understanding and national inclusion if the census is to really support reform and progress for all the country's peoples during a critical time of transition. All these issues could be addressed with time and reflection. The government, UNFPA and Western donors should ensure this before proceeding.

Dilemmas over Identity in a Diverse Landscape

Characterizations of identity and citizenship figure prominently in Myanmar's current political debates, ceasefire negotiations, religious affairs, communal violence, economic affairs, foreign engagement and investment. During a time of political transition, a combination of official and unofficial forces inside the country, as well diasporas and the international community, are engaged in an unprecedented burst of ethnic and political boundary-making – i.e., narrating, counting, classifying, registering, documenting and identifying who belongs in the country and who does not, who is entitled to what, and who represents whom among the different nationalities and peoples. The category of identity known in Burmese as "lu-myo", which literally means "kinds of people", is usually translated as "ethnic" in English. However "lu-myo" is a concept of differentiation rooted in the belief of objective, verifiable, fixed, and blood-borne lineage and is far closer to the English concept of "race" than "ethnicity."

Identity and citizenship are tightly interwoven in Myanmar's ethno-political landscape. Some, but not all, individuals and groups feel deep and moral attachments to lu-myo identities. These attachments play out in public and political settings, including elections, nationalist movements, anti-state conflicts, mob violence and citizenship determination. They are also evident in more nuanced ways in daily interactions where "the bonds of shared ethnicity" are evoked.[7] Ethnic-denominated beauty pageants, culture associations, conversation clubs, social media, movies, popular music, religious celebrations and Union Day festivities, as well as language, idiom, gestures, clothing and fashion, all work to verify, strengthen or change lu-myo attachments and identities.

Currently, Myanmar is undergoing its most important time of political change in a quarter of a century. Following the stepping-down of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) junta, this transition has been underpinned by a series of epoch-shaping events, including the 2008 constitution, the 2010 general election, assumption of office by the Thein Sein government, the chairmanship of ASEAN, and the conclusion of bilateral ceasefires with a majority of the country's armed ethnic opposition groups.

Reforms under the post-junta, constitutional government have therefore increased the stakes of identity politics in one of the most ethnically-contested countries in Asia. It is thus not surprising that different government, ethnic, religious and social actors have been mobilizing to define, expand or contract the boundaries of lu-myo identity in the country. But after decades of political deadlock and armed conflict, such a burst of activities inevitably brings many long-standing and highly disputed controversies and dilemmas to the surface.

On the one hand, successive military-backed governments since 1962, which have been dominated by ethnic Bamar-majority leaders, have viewed the country as an indivisible "unitary state" bound together by a historic family of "national race" relatives, and with power concentrated in the central plain and river valleys. "Thanks to unity and farsightedness of our forefathers, our country has existed as a united and firm Union and not as separate small nations for over 2,000 years," the SPDC chairman Snr-Gen. Than Shwe claimed in 2002.[8] Under this dominant narrative, which is shared by much of the majority Buddhist population, outsiders and their intentions are suspect, a sentiment most recently given voice in the Buddhist monk-led activities of the Committee for the Protection of Religion and Nationality, which seeks to ban marriages between Buddhist women and men of different faiths and national origins.[9]

On the other hand, non-Bamar groups and organisations have generally regarded "ethnic", "nationality" or "national race" identities as the basis for claims to autonomy and political rights, and have long sought a devolved "federal" system of government. They point out that the Bamar kingdoms and British colonial rule never established full control of the surrounding hills and mountainous

regions. Still today, in many parts of the country Bamars are seen as intruders and invaders. This sentiment is reinforced by the ever-increasing presence in ethnic minority regions of Bamars who exercise power, including the national army, missionary Buddhist monks and local administrators. In consequence, as in other developing countries, resistance to oppressive, centralized power is often organized around meaningful ethnic or religious ties and claims, which themselves generate significant stakes in self-policing authenticity inside group boundaries.

In this volatile context, claims about non-Bamar lu-myo identities are often expressions of shared cultural roots and reflect deep reservoirs of injustice, suffering and distrust. As such, they provide hope to marginalized and disenfranchised minorities who have endured over seven decades of militarization and war in a frequent state of "chronic emergency".[10] Minority groups generally consider that the Bamar majority population and governments have shown little regard for their interests and histories. Thus all central government attempts since independence to redefine or regulate non-Bamar identities and rights have been met with suspicion and concern. At the same time, claims of "ethnic" territories by opposition groups have been feared by government officials as the basis for separatism and even the break-up of the Union.

As these experiences show, claims in the name of identity are never based on definitions that are universally accepted and uncontested. They are political assertions on behalf of one "ethnic" group or another that conceal a far more fluid reality in everyday life. It is often assumed, for example, that identity categories are unproblematically singular and natural. In fact, the experience of many individuals reveals that family heritages can span different cultural, linguistic, religious and national boundaries. Moreover, ethnic tensions in Myanmar have not simply pitted Bamar majority against ethnic minorities. Over the years there have also been conflicts, for example, between Buddhist and Muslim populations in the Rakhine state or ethnic Shan and Wa organisations in the Shan state.

Complicating the picture, the populations of many of Myanmar's villages, towns, districts, regions and states are ethnic mosaics, with varying degrees of diversity in settlement patterns. Domestic and international migration over the past two decades, as well as civilian displacement and refugee flight, have added to this fluidity as many people have moved away from the traditions and languages of family homes at unprecedented rates. Whether through marriage or relocation, many individuals and families experience complex social lives that are not reducible to singular identity categories. There are a handful of government regulatory mechanisms, such as national identity cards (see below), that embrace the mixed heritage experience of many people, but in both state and society, there are far more widespread interests committed to the narrative of singular identity and racial purity. Furthermore, after decades of warfare and limited state capacity throughout large expanses of territory, there are many citizens without identity cards, and there are still disputes, sometimes violent, over which populations qualify for nationality rights and citizenship in the country.

Despite these ambiguities of lived experiences, few people in Myanmar would question that singular, fixed and bounded labels of ethnic identity are "real" and accurate representations of their society. In power struggles over representation and authority, the notion that any individual's identity belongs to one – and only one – category is rarely questioned, and this perception of unproblematized singularity has only been reinforced by civil strife over the past seven decades. Identity claims that reinforce the singular simplification of ethnicity remain an important mechanism for mobilizing and ordering national politics.

In the next two years, therefore, as the country moves toward the 2015 general election, many existing perceptions and dilemmas in national politics will come under fresh scrutiny. The 2008 constitution created political-administrative units that transcend the seven older single-ethnic-named states and established six additional single-ethnic-labelled "self-administered" units. It also provided for further minority "national race" representation on a population basis in the legislatures. In this context, political parties are likely to continue to mobilize on the basis of exclusionary, singular lu-myo identity claims, and thus embark upon their own campaigns to shore up and police boundaries around particular lu-myo labels.

At the same time, peace initiatives to end Myanmar's long-running civil wars are raising the stakes of contention over ethnic identity and territory even further. Future national stability will very likely depend on the government's ability to transform ceasefire negotiations into eventual political solutions acceptable to both Bamar majority and non-Bamar populations.

Before, however, these peace processes achieve even the most preliminary agreements, the government, Western bilateral donors and the United Nations are collaborating on ambitious and unprecedented programmes to enumerate, categorise and regulate identity and citizenship.

Two focal points by the Ministry of Immigration and Population (MOIP) stand out: a national identity card campaign, which is already underway, and the forthcoming Population and Housing Census, scheduled for late March 2014.

The stage is thus delicately set. Already many groups and parties that are organized around ethnic identity claims are criticizing the timing, structure and detail of these initiatives.[11] At the same time, although an undercount of ethnic non-Bamar numbers is feared, there could – in an ideal world – be benefits to disadvantaged peoples, if national surveys are appropriately conducted.[12] But, as these debates continue, stakeholders of all kinds – both government and opposition – will have to face the reality that the present census procedures and plethora of activities in "counting" populations and policing identity are unlikely to resolve the country's challenges in nationality rights and representation. Under present conditions, new complexities will likely be layered upon old complexities, and many of these difficulties – rooted in Myanmar's troubled history – are yet to be nationally discussed and resolved.

Legal Conceptions of Race and Regulation of Citizenship

There are different ways that ethnic or nationality identity can be defined. It could, for example, be on the basis of language, birthplace, parentage, territory or history. But in Myanmar's case, there has been an evolution of different concepts, enumerations and laws over the past hundred years that make the subject of identity and citizenship unusually complex.

Legally, who belongs in or to post-colonial Myanmar has been defined by 14 different laws since independence. The most important today are the 1982 Citizenship Law and the implementing procedures issued a year later. Departing from earlier citizenship requirements, the 1982 law defines those who "belong" in the country as members of groups of "lu-myo" ("kinds of people" or "race") – that have been designated as "taingyinthar" (literally, "sons/offspring of the geographical division").[13] The 1982 law left determination of which races qualified for taingyinthar status – at that point translated into English as "national races" – to an executive body, the Council of State (which no longer exists), with the only stipulation that such races had to have been present in what came to be mapped into "Burma" before 1823 when the first British annexation began.

As a result, the notion of being "indigenous" became the "primary basis" for citizenship,[14] and access to this categorisation was based upon perceptions of fixed and historic identities, born from ancestry, that are viewed as having been disrupted only by the imposition of colonial rule (1824-1948).[15] Denoting what have become regarded as the eight major races in the country, Section 3 of the 1982 law explained: "Nationals such as the Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin, Burman, Mon, Rakhine or Shan and ethnic (*taingyinthar*) groups as have settled in any of the territories included within the State as their permanent home from a period anterior to 1185 B.E. (1823 A.D.) are Burma citizens." In contrast, any races determined by the State Council not to have been present within the modern boundaries are considered non-taingyinthar (i.e., non-native) and eligible for lesser "associate" or "naturalized" citizenship, but not full citizenship.

The Burmese-language concepts of "lu-myo" and "taingyinthar" are complex and do not translate cleanly into English-language categories associated with "race", "ethnicity", or "nationality". This disconnect is evident when "lu-myo" identity is queried in everyday conversations. Answers depend on how respondents view themselves in relation to various kinds of "others". For example, when people are asked in Burmese, "What lu-myo are you?", different replies are commonly self-reported: "Myanmar" (which is the contemporary designation for citizenship, but is

not one of the 135 taingyinthar lu-myo); one of the major "national races" (e.g. Bamar or Mon) or smaller nationality groups (Pa-O and Wa); by clan, tribe or sub-group names (e.g. Kuki [Chin] or Sgaw [Karen]); and also by a minority religion, such as "Christian" or "Muslim". In addition, assertions of "lu-myo" identity often depend on relationships and context. For example, someone might self-identify as "Kachin" in supporting a nationality cause, but then invoke the "Maru" (Lawngwaw) or "Rawang" sub-groups when choosing a church or seeking election to the legislatures.[16]

Similarly, "taingyinthar" does not translate clearly into English terms such as "indigenous peoples" or "natives", and the national regulation of status has been inconsistent among government agencies since independence. Over the years, central governments have recognized different numbers and labels of "taingyinthar". But these administrative distinctions were never based on systematic research or informed, evidence-driven debate about the content of these categories. In consequence, for much of the post-colonial era, the legal and popular norm was to break the "taingyinthar" category into eight "major" ethnic groups (including the majority-Bamars[17]) and a number of smaller native ethnic groups referred to as "myo-ne-su" (usually translated as "minor races" or "tribes").

Some of these definitional boundaries between kinds of peoples developed out of power struggles for self-determination. Myanmar's constitution at independence enshrined rights, statuses and claims for some non-Bamar groups but not others.[18] But an appearance of ethnic symmetry was formalized for the first time under the 1974 constitution during the military socialist era in which seven "divisions" (renamed "regions" under the 2008 constitution) were demarcated where the Bamar-majority mostly live and seven "states" for non-Bamar groups categorised as major: i.e. Chin, Kachin, Karen, Kayah, Mon, Rakhine and Shan. In contrast, smaller ethnic groups were administratively and popularly considered to be "sub-groups" either culturally related to the eight major nationalities or as native ("taingyinthar") to the fourteen territorial units. Neither the regions nor the states are mono-ethnic.

During the early years of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC; renamed SPDC in 1997), however, Gen. Saw Maung and the military intelligence chief, Lt.Gen. Khin Nyunt, proffered a more complex taxonomy of taingyinthar lu-myo. In a characteristically rambling speech in July 1989, the SLORC chairman Gen. Saw Maung referred to the "Census Department," from which he discovered "135 categories" of "national race groups".[19] At the time, with constitutional government suspended, this was widely perceived as a confusing but tactical attempt to weaken non-Bamar solidarity around identity in a new game of "divide and rule".[20]

Nevertheless, the seven ethnic states were subsequently retained in the 2008 constitution, and new "self-administered zones" and a "self-administered division" were demarcated for six smaller national races that were not previously recognized in territorial-administrative terms: i.e. Danu, Kokang, Naga, Palaung (Ta-ang), Pa-O and Wa. A further constitutional innovation resulted in seven other taingyinthar lu-myo gaining electoral representation, among 29 such reserved seats, in the 2010 election in the legislatures for states and regions where they were smaller minorities. These were Akha, Bamar, Intha, Kayan, Lahu, Lisu and Rawang (see below).[21] In consequence, the implementation of the 2008 constitution has so far given legal status to 20 national race identities for administrative or representative purposes.[22]

Despite this emergence of a more complex legal and bureaucratic landscape of ethnicity, the Ministry of Immigration and Population (MOIP) has fallen back on the SLORC-SPDC's controversial "135" list of ethnic groups for processing identity card applications and coding the 2014 Population and Housing Census. As a result, MOIP activities, with the full support of international donors and UN agencies, are promoting citizenship and identity practices that, over the years, have adversely affected many peoples. At root, identity regulation has always been a matter of law enforcement and security, rather than a neutral, technical procedure.

Government immigration officials have been the main arbiters and enforcers of belonging and citizenship since independence. Every individual present in the territory of Myanmar must apply for and carry some form of

government certificate that legally establishes their citizenship status. Dual citizenship is not allowed, and residents who live in Myanmar can qualify for three kinds of citizenship: full, associate or naturalized. Everyone else must carry a visa in their passport from country of origin and – for longer stays – a "Foreign Registration Card" issued by the MOIP. Anyone who does not hold such documentation is considered a "doubted citizen", who must shoulder the burden of proof in establishing that he or she meets the requirements for citizenship.[23]

In line with these practices, since 1949 immigration law enforcement officers have also been responsible for collecting lists of members of households ("Household Registration Lists") and issuing national identity cards.[24] Pink, or full citizenship, cards go to those certified to be of "taingyinthar" (i.e. indigenous) heritage, among other requirements. These are now called Citizenship Scrutiny Cards (CSCs), but are more commonly known as National Registration Cards (NRCs).

After passage of the 1982 Citizenship Law, the Immigration Department conducted what it called "citizenship tasks", which included issuing or updating Household Registration Lists and distributing a new round of identity cards to replace old ones or to enforce the stricter rules for certifying citizenship.[25] Once again, however, inconsistencies crept in. On the Household Registration form, the space for "kind of group" or "lu-myo" is quite small, and the usual practice has been for a single category to be recorded for the person identified as "head of household". The rest of the members then tend to be labelled the same.

On the CSCs, in contrast, there is more space available, and some individuals have up to six different "lu-myo" identities listed. For example, a person of mixed heritage may have listed on the "lu-myo" line, "Shan, Kayan", or "Mon, Kayah, Kayin", or "Chinese, Bamar".[26] Except for those grandfathered in from the more liberal pre-1982 citizenship laws, individuals who are classified as "lu-myo" categories other than the indigenous "taingyinthar" groups do not qualify for the full citizenship CSCs that are pink in colour. In particular, despite continuing international criticisms[27], inhabitants who are legally recognized as having Chinese or Indian ancestry have been classified in secondary categories of citizenship, a designation still retained today.

In summary, six decades after the country's independence, Myanmar's ethnic landscape remains characterised by anomalies and controversies – whether in the identification of nationality groups or establishing citizenship rights. The lessons are clear. New evaluations and understandings have long been needed to address the many failings and inconsistencies of the past. These are all deeply political issues that need political solutions. They are not just technical exercises to be carried out by foreign consultants. The question remains whether the reform momentum currently underway in the country will lead to inclusive recognition and just solutions.

Censuses and Boundary-making in the 20th Century

In Myanmar, the status of race as definitive in the distribution of rights and power encounters very little contestation in both state and social circles. In reality, although linguistic, cultural and other forms of group identity pre-date British rule, it was the bureaucratic simplifications of colonial officials that produced the basic ethnic taxonomy upon which post-colonial politics and popular culture have since anchored many perceptions of identity. Indeed the current census list of 135 national races or "taingyinthar lu-myo" is largely derived from the 1931 British census of India, of which Burma was a constituent part until 1937. The colonial-era taxonomy is not identical to the registry presently in circulation for the 2014 census, but many of the category names are similar.[28] Equally important, the assumptions underlying the colonial census classifications – that the identity category of every individual can be captured by a singular, measurable, indivisible race label – underpins the regulatory apparatus of the modern state. In other words, the colonial-era perceptions of race, long since challenged in many other post-colonial settings in Africa and Asia, still endure in Myanmar. Such a legacy becomes particularly problematic in discourses about identity, ethnic politics and citizenship.

The British analyses were by no means consistent or accurate. Informed by ten-yearly census enumerations that began in 1871-72,

British administrators eventually arrived in 1931 at a total of 15 indigenous "race groups"[29] that were comprised of some 135 sub-groups. These distinctions were largely made on the basis of shaky inferences about language usage, erratic reporting from district officials, and unfounded assumptions that territorial units were racially homogenous or mono-ethnic. British censuses also recorded substantial Indian and Chinese populations (of various ethnicities), which consistently grew through immigration during colonial rule.

The labels and numbers of racial categories, however, shifted from one census to another, as did the methodologies for identifying types of people. Heavily influenced by 19th century social Darwinism, colonial officials regarded "race" as a scientific and objectively verifiable category.[30] Differences rather than similarities were sought to distinguish origins and authenticity. Censuses and other population reports advanced many theories of migration, conquest and absorption of races and by 1931 had adopted a "classification system for races [that] is the same as that for languages".[31] However, J.J. Bennison, Superintendent of the 1931 Census and author of the narrative that accompanies the statistical report, admitted the unreliability of the counts. He noted the "extreme instability of language and racial distinctions in Burma", and considered many of the languages coded as distinctive and different were likely to be "only dialects of other languages".[32] Of the entire census report, Bennison wrote: "[A]pologies are due for lack of style, defective arrangement and repetitions. Many of the statistics are unreliable".[33]

These caveats stand in stark contrast to the colonial production of hundreds of precise statistics said to represent Myanmar's population and peoples in census after census, dozens of government reports, regulations and surveys under British rule. On such bases, table after table in the colonial census reports constructed an empirically unverifiable, but stridently overconfident, architecture of exact, indivisible units of British Burma. The narrative texts of censuses and reports implied hierarchies of "superiority" and "inferiority" or "civilization" and "backwardness" of the different ethnic groups. Many "findings" linger to the present, including the 1931 finding that "two-thirds of the population" speak "languages of the Burmese group", a number that aligns almost too neatly with contemporary narratives of national identity.[34]

On the basis of such "facts", the British separated the territory newly mapped into "Burma" into two very different entities. These separate territories were "Ministerial Burma" or "Burma Proper" in the heartland of the Bamar majority where a degree of parliamentary home rule was gradually introduced, and the "Frontier" or "Excluded" areas in the ethnic minority borderlands which were largely left under the control of local rulers, including Shan sawbwas and Kachin duwas.

Inconsistencies abounded. Indeed Burma was not separated from India until 1937. Classifications were subject to arbitrary change; administrative lines arbitrarily cut through many peoples, languages, cultures and territories; and some minority groups complained that their populations were under-represented by counting Burmese speakers or Buddhists as majority Bamars. In particular, leaders of the Karen nationalist movement contended that the Karen population was substantially under-counted during British rule, resulting in subsequent marginalization.[35] Unhelpfully, political sentiments and identity were further racialized during the Second World War, when Kachin, Karen and other nationality groups largely fought on the Allied side, while Aung San and the Burma Independence Army initially supported the Japanese occupation to seek national liberation from the British empire.

As in other post-colonial states, independent Myanmar then inherited the intellectual architecture of race. As armed rebellions swept the country, linguistically-derived racial classifications were continued in the parliamentary era (1948-62) as a fundamental principle in ordering the population. This did not reflect Myanmar's new political map, in which four ethnic "States" were created under the 1947 constitution (Kachin, Karen, Karenni [from 1951 Kayah] and Shan) as well as a Chin "Special Division". But an explanation of "Race" in the 1953 "First Stage Census" confirmed that language-denominated classification styles from the colonial era were regarded as scientific and straightforward.[36] By the time of the 1973 census, under Gen. Ne Win's military socialist government (1962-88), these "objective" criteria for measuring race were replaced with

subjective self-reporting, and three additional ethnic states were created: Chin, Mon and Rakhine. But government classifications of population and identity remained rooted in perceptions of ancestry, genetics, territory and linguistic differentiation. Indeed the 1983 English-language census report considered "race" so self-evident as to merit only a ten-word definition: "Race refers to the ethnic origin of the person enumerated."[37]

Over the years, however, government administrators began to reduce the number of categories of "major races" from the 15 major "indigenous" races delineated in the 1931 census. In the enumeration of the 1953 First Stage Census, an unreported number of "detailed races were recorded", but the final published account was presented in just seven categories: Burmese, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Kayah, Mon and Shan. In 1973, this was increased to eight national races when "Rakhine" was differentiated from "Burmese". In 1983, the population was then enumerated across 143 "officially registered" race categories, but the published reports again grouped them into the same eight categories as in 1973.

As in the colonial era, it is unclear how or why these eight ethnic groupings – and not other categories – obtained the status of "major races". Among Karen-related groups, for example, the Kayah are demarcated by a state on the political map while the more numerous Pa-O are not. In fact, the Kayah are the largest of a number of related Karen sub-groups in the territory historically known as Karenni, and a long-standing nationalist movement continues to press for a return to the collective Karenni ("Red Karen") name which predates the colonial era.

To sum up, the post-colonial carry-over of race classifications has had a deep impact on Myanmar's political landscape and culture. Over the years, the category of "race" has been one of the few unassailable truths shared across the political and ethnic spectrum in the country and naturalized as "fact". In consequence, race and language have become regarded as absolute and measurable markers of identity, and this is frequently manifested as political and partisan claims about "us" versus "them". Not only can this unchallenged racial mindset privilege some identity groups over others but, in some cases, it deprives Myanmar-born inhabitants of many generations of legal protections and status, as well as full citizenship rights.

Fencing Out Some "Kinds of People": The Links Between 1978 and 1823

In Myanmar today, the chronological legal boundary that divides the "taingyinthar" (sons/offspring of the geographical division) or "us" population groups from the "foreign" is viewed widely as natural or self-evident. The selected date of 1823, however, was the product of an explicitly political process aimed at excluding specific populations. The context in which the 1982 Citizenship Law was drafted very much accounts for the particular date chosen to certify belonging and citizenship.

In post-independence Myanmar, anti-Indian and Chinese sentiment carried over from the colonial era, resulting in legal and social discrimination against these non-taingyinthar. Many inhabitants of Indian ancestry had already left the country during the Second World War, and more followed after Gen. Ne Win seized power in 1962 and imposed the isolationist "Burmese Way to Socialism". Governmental xenophobia then increased in the 1970s as the Bangladesh liberation war on the northwest frontier, China's support to the insurgent Communist Party of Burma, and escalating political and ethnic conflict increased instability around many of Myanmar's borders.

In response, Gen. Ne Win's Burma Socialist Programme Party government sought to bolster border security by deploying uniformed immigration officers to villages and towns to round up those who did not belong in these areas. In 1977, the Immigration Department police launched identity-card checks in the Kachin and Chin states, as well as Yangon, and expanded the coverage in February 1978 to the Rakhine state (historically known as Arakan), which had been recently given "state" status and named after its major ethnic population, the Rakhine (or Arakanese). This "Operation Naga Min" targeted settlements of minority Muslims (many of whom self-identify as "Rohingya") in the north of Rakhine state. This is the same area where small groups of Mujahid insurgents had been fighting for autonomy from their Buddhist Rakhine neighbours since independence.[38]

There are few independent analyses of the Naga

Min operation, but the academic and diplomat Moshe Yegar described it as a "systematic search throughout the problematic regions intended to update the government's demographic data: to register and classify all the residents as to whether they were Burmese citizens."[39] However, as was the case in much of rural Myanmar at that time (and still today), many residents lacked proper documentation, which Yegar concluded was taken by the government as prima facie evidence that they "were either illegal immigrants from Bangladesh or criminals running from justice who were afraid to face legal action." Amid allegations of brutality, perhaps as many as 6,000 local civilians were arrested and 200,000 residents fled across the border into Bangladesh. But when their return was negotiated by the UNHCR in late 1978, Yegar reports that they were offered only "Foreigner Registration Certificates" and some who had held full NRCs prior to Naga Min could not receive them back.[40]

It was in this highly charged context that Gen. Ne Win established a Law Commission to draft a new citizenship law. The late Dr. Aye Kyaw, a historian who self-identified as "Arakanese", is often credited or blamed for the 1823 endpoint to "authenticity". In a 2009 interview about Rakhine-Rohingya dynamics, he explained how the date was determined. He recounted a 1978 conversation in which he debated possible cut-off dates of racial origin in the country with the jurist, Dr. Maung Maung, chair of the Law Review Commission and who later briefly became Myanmar President:

> I said that for recognizing an ethnic nationality in Burma, there was a census record during the Bodaw Phaya reign, made in the 18th century. It listed all nationalities living in Burma, and it mentioned Arakans, Karens and Mons (Talaings) in the survey. The document can be taken as a base, I suggested. Dr. Maung Maung said that survey was too early. Then I suggested the year of 1824, a turning point in Burmese history when the British annexed lower Burma. Dr. Maung Maung agreed on that date, and we drafted a law that people living in Burma during 1824 were recognized as ethnic nationalities. We found no such word as Rohingya in that survey.[41]

There was, however, no survey conducted during 1823-24, nor has a public record emerged to document the process by which the lists of pre-1823 "ethnic nationalities" were compiled. Instead, the historical evidence suggests that the 1982 Citizenship Law and its implementation were driven as much by a political campaign to exclude the "alien" from the country as to define the "citizen", and the interruption of British colonial rule, which was widely detested, was chosen as a legal closing date. Thus, in addition to those who self-identified as "Rohingyas", individuals of Chinese and Indian heritage also found themselves excluded from full citizenship.

Such citizenship restrictions have affected millions of vulnerable inhabitants in modern-day Myanmar. Their rights and entitlements have been limited ever since, including university enrolment, land ownership, inheritance and security. In contrast, citizenship regulations favour those who can demonstrate a heritage category that has been designated "taingyinthar" or national race. Equally stark, the second major exodus of 260,000 Muslims from the northern Rakhine state into Bangladesh amidst government security operations in 1991-92 and another cycle of violence there since 2012 suggests that identity and citizenship struggles are anything but resolved. These are not technical questions, but instead profoundly political ones.

Today, few domestic leaders in Myanmar voice any doubts about the requirement that citizens must be descendants of pre-colonial "sons", born of the land that is now the sovereign nation-state. Indeed, as communal violence and loss of life have flared during the past two years, the question of who does and especially who does not belong in Myanmar has returned as a major national crisis.[42] However this time, unlike in 1978 and 1992, anti-Muslim violence has spread into several parts of the country, including Meiktila and Lashio. In addition, heavy fighting in the Kachin borderlands with China, in which 100,000 people have been internally displaced, warns of the continuing volatility and diversity of identity-based tensions in the country since President Thein Sein assumed office – despite the spread of government ceasefires.

A main flash-point, however, continues to be the Rakhine state where self-identifying "Rohingya" leaders seek legal recognition for their people as full citizens. In contrast, no

ethnic Bamar or Rakhine political elite, and few among the Buddhist-dominant population in general, appears prepared to consider them as anything except "Bengalis" and "illegal immigrants". Currently, UN agencies estimate that over 140,000 people[43], mostly Muslims, are internally displaced in the Rakhine state after the violence of the past two years, and a majority of those identifying themselves as Rohingya have no accepted nationality status or legal rights in either Myanmar or Bangladesh. Indeed in January 2014 a patriotic campaign was started by Buddhist monks in a new "Nationality and Religion Safeguarding Association" to restrict inter-faith marriage, ban MPs who are not "Myanmar ethnics", and prevent Rohingyas from using any kind of refugee or temporary identification card to secure a right to vote in future elections.[44]

A battle of historical narratives thus continues by all sides in the Rakhine-Rohingya clash, all rooted in claims about ethnic origins, presence (or absence) in British-delineated Burma before 1823 and ancestral pedigree. Even in this debate, however, all views converge in their perception of "lu-myo" or "kinds of persons" as a verifiable, fixed and blood-borne lineage tied to ancestral territory.

In this respect, the pattern of arguments over rights and identity in Rakhine State is replicated in other struggles taking place elsewhere in the country over land, resources, culture and political rights today.

Against this backdrop, long-running identity-related disputes will shape government activities such as the MOIP's citizenship registration initiatives and the 2014 Population and Housing Census. In the first such attempts at a national enumeration in many decades, the results will be closely watched. As with the 1982 Citizenship Law, the stakes could be very high over which people they appear to favour and those they disadvantage.

Moving Targets: Race, Rights and Territory

The challenges of democratization and provision for minority rights are complex everywhere. From politics and economics to culture and education, non-Bamar groups feel a considerable sense of grievance that they have been marginalised and never enjoyed equal rights or opportunity with the Bamar majority. Few identity-based groups, however, live in completely homogenous or self-contained territories on the present political map – whether Bamar, Chin, Karen, Kachin, Mon, Shan or other major nationalities. For example, less than half the Karen population lives in the present-day Karen state, while substantial Kachin and Shan populations live on both sides of the Kachin and Shan state borders. In such a diverse country, therefore, the needs and challenges of nationality rights cannot be simply inferred from territorial location.

At the same time, the past century clearly shows that Myanmar's political map has enshrined identity according to imprecise and inaccurate claims about inhabitation of land. This arbitrary, yet enduring, connection between land and identity has had important impact on national politics. In particular, the present delineation of seven Bamar-majority "regions" and seven ethnic "states" has evolved out of long and hard-fought struggles between political movements and central governments led by the Bamar majority in the centre of the country, on the one hand, and non-Bamar groups defined by singular identity claims in the borderlands, on the other. Although all sides, in theory, concede that the population in their area is multi-ethnic, the salience of territory, identity and ancestry narratives has remained an unchallenged focal point in claims for both legitimacy and authority.

National regulatory bodies, too, such as the Ministry of Immigration and Population and the Ministry for the Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs (founded in 1993), have further naturalized the terms of "belonging" to a geographic area. As a result, race, rights and territory are conflated, including by those claiming to speak for the ethnic group after which a state is named. For example, in November 2013, in a parliamentary discussion of a "Protection of Ethnic Rights" bill, an MP from the Rakhine state equated race and state-ness:

> Ethnic nationalities badly need a law for the protection of their rights whether the constitution is amended or not. Under this new law, the needs of states and regions can harmonize and the rights of the people can develop.[45]

As the Rakhine-Rohingya crisis has shown, the conflation of race and territory reduces the likelihood that identity-based representation will evolve in ways that any communities would deem just or acceptable. Over the years, there have been further cultural, religious and ethnic groups seeking political recognition, but who have been excluded from the constitutional framework or their rights and identity claims have not been accepted by either the majority of the population or government officials.

The 2008 constitution, therefore, while reserving 25 percent of all seats in the legislatures for armed forces' (Tatmadaw) appointees, appeared to accept some of these historical omissions and expanded the formulation of ethno-political stratification by, first, affirming the seven "ethnic" states and seven Bamar-majority "regions" and, then, adding two further categories of ethnic representation.

First, Sections 49-56 and Sections 274-283 created ethnically-defined "self-administered zones", which were allotted in territory comprised of at least two contiguous townships where a taingyinthar group's numbers are estimated to tally more than half the population. Zones were allotted to Danu, Kokang, Palaung and Pa-O in the Shan state and Naga in the Sagaing region. A larger "self-administered division" was created for the Wa in Shan state.

In a second innovation, Sections 161 (b) and (c) of the new constitution provided for guaranteed representation in all of the new state and region parliaments of "lu-myo" minority ethnic groups in these territories whose population constitutes at least 0.1 percent of the national populace. Both the Burmese and English wording of the provision is confusing. But, in the 2010 general election, the Union Election Commission (UEC) seems to have interpreted that "lu-myo" populations inside a state or region's borders that amounted to about 57,000 (a plausible estimate of 0.1 percent of the national population) received electoral seats for representation.

For the moment, it is not known how the UEC calculated population totals to implement either of these provisions. For the Section 161 provisions, it authorized 29 constituencies for "ethnic" or "taingyinthar" participation in state and region legislative bodies. These included such previously "undemarcated" groups as the Akha, Kayan and Lahu, as well as Bamar.[46] Although there were probably variations from one polling place to another, it appears that candidates for Section 161 "ethnic" seats were listed on a separate ballot, and only those voters whose identity papers marked them as the same "taingyinthar lu-myo" were allowed to fill out that ballot.[47] Once elected, these "lu-myo" representatives were then named "national races affairs ministers" in the state and region parliaments.

It needs to be stressed that the power of these officials is limited by the discretion of the chief ministers of states and regions (who are appointed by the President), and – like that of other legislative representatives – their political authority is for the most part quite marginal at present.[48] Nevertheless, the creation of additional "self-administered" areas and reserved legislative seats for constituencies based upon tallies of "taingyinthar lu-myo" populations marks a further development in identity politics, adding to the sensitivities of identity-based classifications in the country.

One additional innovation from the 2008 constitution bears pointing out. It lays out a process to redraw and rename the administrative boundaries of states, regions, and self-administered zones and divisions. This is only raising ethnic concerns about the forthcoming census more. What if the existing enumeration procedures produce statistics in which Kachins, Mons, Rakhines or Kayah are not the majority populations in their states? Perceptions of race, rights and territory continue to be inextricably linked and deeply political.

Government Management of Identity in Everyday Life

In the past three years, Myanmar's reform process has included identity documentation initiatives that have been mistaken for each other by the media, activists and even government staff themselves. Terms such as "verification", "scrutiny", "registration" and "census" are used interchangeably to describe very different programmes. All, however, involve governmental review of individual legal status with the purpose of distinguishing those

who do from those who do not belong in the modern nation-state of Myanmar.

In practice, two of the most important documents in a resident's life are the Household Registration List and the Citizenship Scrutiny Card. They present, however, some basic contradictions. Without the former, it is difficult to obtain the latter. And those who lack the latter face obstacles to free movement, enrolment in higher education, and access to banking, health care and many other everyday services and liberties. At the same time, both record "lu-myo". But, as described above, the Household Registration forms tend to assign a singular "lu-myo" category, while – although there is inconsistency in application – the Ministry of Immigration and Population appears to allow multiple "lu-myo" identities on the CSCs.

Despite the importance of these documents, the MOIP has never developed a comprehensive central registry of how many residents carry what kind of citizenship cards at any given time. There appear many reasons. In remote and war-torn areas, it is common not to possess CSCs; it has been historically difficult to replace a lost card; many residents gave up when the bureaucratic red tape proved costly or risky; and, at various times in history, the counterfeiting of CSCs has been widespread, particularly during initiatives to update cards.

To try and fill in such gaps, from April 2007 immigration officials under the former SPDC regime began the attempt to expand coverage into rural and under-served areas. At that time, local township officers formed "scrutinization committees … to promptly issue citizenship scrutiny cards to those with the characteristics of a citizen in line with the 1982 Myanmar citizen law."[49] Then, after the 2011 inauguration of President Thein Sein, the MOIP expanded and accelerated the updating of both household registration and citizenship identity. In a parliamentary session in March 2011, a former Minister for Immigration and Population described the requirements for a CSC (whether a first one or a replacement):

(1) Applicant must apply in person

(2) Original census certificate[50] that includes the applicant and its copy [sic]

(3) The application form for citizenship scrutiny card and the original letter of endorsement issued by Ward PDC[51] concerned proving that the applicant lives in the ward concerned

(4) A copy each of parents' citizenship scrutiny cards / national registration cards

(5) The original birth certificate (or) the school endorsement and its copy

(6) The blood test

(7) Four photos measuring 0.8 x 0.8 inches without spectacles.[52]

In July 2011, the MOIP formally expanded such registration efforts, launching its "Moe Pwint" ("droplet of rain") operation. The latter, now in a third stage of implementation, introduced more flexibility into the application process. The updating of Household Registration lists also appears to be part of the same process, although this is not entirely clear. With funding from Norway, Switzerland, Australia and the European Commission, the Moe Pwint operation supports mobile units to villages in former conflict areas in the Karen state and is looking to move into the Kayah and southern Shan states. According to the international Peace Donor Support Group, a multi-donor platform that has funded registration card distribution, the approach sets up "a temporary 'one-stop shop' which covers, free of charge, all the steps involved in issuing the Citizen Scrutiny Cards on the same day."[53] Applicants who do not have all the needed documentation are vetted by a 3-5 member committee that includes, at a minimum, the village head and the township Immigration and National Registration Department officer. The committee then rules on whether the applicant and his/her ancestors lived in the village and whether the individual is the "taingyinthar lu-myo" stated on the application. On such bases, "487,000 household registration certificates and about 3.5 million National Registration Cards were issued" under Moe Pwint between July 2011 and May 2013.[54]

As always, any attempt to document Myanmar's population has been controversial. In part, the MOIP's drive has been a result of around a dozen ceasefire agreements with different ethnic armed groups, in which the Thein Sein government promised (and in some

cases has delivered) full-citizenship status via CSC distribution to internally-displaced populations in combat zones or to those who had never received them before. However, because this process unfolded at the same time that the Thein Sein government undertook certification of Myanmar migrants in Thailand and a "verification" review of residents' documentation in the Rakhine state, further confusions arose.

In particular, Muslim community leaders have expressed concern that the MOIP's attempts to "verify" the documentation of residents in the Rakhine state is the same as Operation Naga Min in 1978 – to target "illegal immigrants" especially those who self-identify as "Rohingya – for punitive action. The communal and anti-Muslim violence of the past two years has only deepened such anxieties.

Popular responses to CSC distribution and revision are therefore mixed. Recipients of the citizenship cards report a sense of relief and gratitude, and yet rumours abound about alleged hidden motives behind the National Registration campaign. Despite government assurances that "[i]ssuing national scrutiny card[s] is not based on race and religion",[55] some ethnic nationality groups suspect that the registration campaigns will result in the undercounting of their identities and populations.[56] In response, Chin, Karen, Mon and Shan activists have activated community networks over the past two years to examine the "lu-myo" designation recorded on the CSCs of these communities; smaller groups such as the Kaman, another Muslim minority in the Rakhine state, have also been counting their populations.[57]

A particular concern is what they view as the under or mis-reporting of their nationalities for the country's new political system under the 2008 constitution. In their own surveys, their findings have suggested that the issuance of new CSCs may be categorizing more people as majority Bamars and as Buddhists than would so self-identify. Thus, for example, Karen News reported that incorrect information in the "lu-myo" section of the CSCs had resulted in inaccurate counts of Mons in several states and deprived them of opportunities for political representation.[58] Concerns have also been raised by an account of a township in Sagaing where residents applying for CSCs were instead given Union Solidarity and Development Party membership cards.[59] This only furthers doubts about the impartiality of government departments and staff.

For the moment, it is not clear how accurate or representative these reports are, or what is behind the irregularities in different parts of the country: for example, incompetence or honest mistakes on the part of government staff, deliberate policies, or personal choices by individual applicants hoping to simplify their lives by indicating majority Bamar identity. Whatever the reasons, such operations harden both government and popular conceptual boundaries of ethnic identity, citizenship and populations. Thus, the 2014 census stands ready to accelerate boundary-making during this transitional time.

Who Counts, How and Why? The 2014 Census

The 2014 Population and Housing Census (PHC) will collect data on many aspects of life in contemporary Myanmar, including some categories also documented on the Household Registration lists and Citizenship Scrutiny Cards. Under the guidance of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Department of Population (DOP) in the MOIP will carry out the first official census since 1983.[60] According to the UNFPA's Chief Technical Advisor, "The 2014 census is going to be the first true snapshot of the population of Myanmar."[61] To achieve this "snapshot", the aim will be an ambitious 100-percent headcount which, if successful, would be the first time in Myanmar's history.

The 2014 PHC is now expected to cost US$74 million, a 20 percent increase over the total projected several months back. The United Kingdom, Australia, Switzerland and Norway are the principal foreign donors to UNFPA, which has the personal endorsement of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Germany, Italy and Finland have also contributed unknown amounts.[62]

For its part, the Thein Sein government brings significant capabilities to the process, despite no serving DOP staff having worked on a census before. The vertically and centrally organized chains of command inherited from

previous military governments have facilitated large-scale administrative operations in the past, including the 2008 referendum and general elections in 1990 and 2010. U Khin Yi, Minister of Immigration and Population and former chief of the Myanmar Police Force, has publicly stated his commitment to carrying out the census to international standards,[63] while President Thein Sein has characterised the project as a "national duty" for all to participate in, to be carried out "under the leadership of the government and Tatmadaw", in order to gain "exact data for the country's development".[64]

Conduct of the census, however, will be a complicated and difficult task. The counting of the population will be carried out by 100,000 junior school-teachers between 30 March and 10 April 2014. They will collect data on 41 question categories, including "lu-myo", which is translated as "ethnicity" under UNFPA. These enumerators are being instructed in the Burmese language via at least four levels of cascading "training-of-trainers" around the country. Township Immigration and National Registration Department officials, who are law enforcement officers, will then be responsible for ensuring the enumeration is completed. The official census form has been printed in Burmese and will be filled out by enumerators – not respondents themselves – based on interviews with residents. Most answers will be recorded by filling in a bubble on a large, machine-readable paper form produced by a UK-based printing company. However, other questions will require the enumerator to write an answer in Burmese script and still others must be completed with Arabic numerals.

The timing of both the enumeration and publication of census results is very sensitive. In all likelihood, the enumeration will occur before a nationwide ceasefire is signed or the much-anticipated political dialogue is underway. Instead, some leaders of non-Bamar groups believe that a census should only have been considered and started after these events, so as to help – not risk – the process of national reconciliation.[65] "It should not be done in a rushed manner, as this is the first time in 30 years", said Cherry Zahau, a Chin human rights activist.[66] Some ethnic political parties and civil society organizations have received briefings by UNFPA on the census process, but the agency has produced no evidence that changes were made to the census process based on feedback in those sessions.

As a result, many organizations that mobilize around identity claims complain that they have had no input and little information about the census preparation and conduct – a perception that only deepened when census forms were made public.[67] There remain significant logistical barriers – including continuing violence, vast stretches of landmine-laden territory and a lack of agreed processes for choosing and protecting enumerators – to accurately count and assess populations in conflict areas. In addition, with international organizations estimating that Myanmar has 650,000 IDPs, the census claim of a 100 percent headcount is widely rejected.[68]

In December 2013, U Khin Yi, Minister of Immigration and Population, and Janet Jackson, UNFPA Myanmar Representative, met for the first time with leaders of armed ethnic opposition groups, including the umbrella United Nationalities Federal Council, to brief them on census preparations and allay their anxieties.[69] But the meeting revealed more concerns than it allayed, and it seemed impossible that fundamental problems could be addressed in time, with some ethnic leaders insisting that no census could be conducted in their areas without reform and stable ceasefires. It is difficult to dispel "mistrust after decades of living under a military regime", according to recent media coverage of a Ta-ang National Liberation Army meeting. [70] In consequence, although some ceasefire groups said that they might cooperate with the census, others consider it premature. Hence, it is very likely that the map of census coverage will look much like the map of the 2010 elections, with large expanses of ethnic minority areas along the borders once again left out of the national process.

Census results, or delays in their release, likewise could be controversial, as they will coincide with what is promising to be a hard-fought 2015 general election campaign. The July 2014 release of preliminary results (aggregate population by sex, age and township) will set expectations of how many voters should be on the rolls for the next election. The "Final Results" of the census – which include reports on religion, race, and citizenship status – are then due in March 2015 as the campaign season

escalates and as contesting candidates and parties debate minority rights, populations, territories, politics and representation. Any deviation from this schedule will very likely cause different partisan groups to cry foul.

When results are first made public, many of the likely controversies over and irregularities of the conduct of census conduct will take centre stage in national politics. No matter how reliable the data collected, the "snapshot" of the country that emerges in the 2014 PHC will not align with the different opinions of vested interests in the country, and the heightened tensions of election year will only add to the significance of the census. In particular, many activists are already complaining that the government's 135 "taingyinthar lu-myo" formulations do not fit with the lived experience of identity in the country. Rather, many fear the census is intended to water down non-Bamar identities and thus minority rights to political status, recognition and representation.[71]

Major race	No. categories
Chin	53
Shan	33
Kachin	12
Kayin	11
Kayah	9
Bamar	9
Rakhine	7
Mon	1

The question of identity – "lu-myo" – is only one of 41 highly complex questions on the census. The process will be fraught with inconsistencies and ambiguities. Canvassers, who are young teachers (almost all women), will be directed to ask interviewees what "lu-myo" they are and then enter a code from a list of 135 "taingyinthar lu-myo" or an additional 14 categories of non-native, foreign races.[72] They will then record one – and only one – "lu-myo" identity for each member of the household.

There is, however, much confusion about the draft of the code list which, without any participatory input from stakeholders outside the donor and UN agency community, has resurrected the disputed 135 categories from the SLORC-SPDC era. Existing ethnic anomalies from colonial era population calculations have only been added to. In particular, the number of ethnic groups among such peoples as the Chin, Kachin, Karen and Shan have been conflated – and confused – by including local dialect labels and, in some cases, identity terms that are not accurate or do not reflect daily lives and perceptions. For example, the Kachin nationalist movement has always considered that there are six or seven ethnic Kachin sub-groups, and even the lavish new "National Landmarks Garden" in Nay Pyi Taw counts only six, but the census demarcates eleven (codes 102-112).[73] Equally confusing, the eight major races (see chart) are also given separate codes for identity on the census form. But given that enumerators will record only one "lu-myo" code for each member of a household, this means that ethnic identities will appear diffused; for example, someone of the majority Kachin sub-group will have to choose between Jinghpaw (code 104) and Kachin (code 101) but cannot assert both. It will, in fact, be the enumerator who writes down any answer.

As a result, as news of the census plan belatedly circulated, 30 ethnic organisations – including armed groups with ceasefire agreements – deemed the list "unacceptable" in a December 2013 letter to the UNFPA.[74] Meetings were hurriedly held at which different ethnic organisations, including Chin, Kachin, Karen, and Shan, called on their peoples to only self-identify by their collective name (e.g. Kachin, code 101) rather than sub-group, dialect or clan identities that the census code lists. A conference of 400 Kachin representatives in December called for the postponement of the census so that the content and process could be reviewed, while a similar Karen forum in January concluded: "The 'Code Numbers', designating the ethnic sub-groups, used in the 2014-Population Census Enumeration Plan, cause, in addition to contradiction, more divisiveness among the ethnic nationalities."[75] Illustrating the census confusion further, smaller groups like the Kayan and Palaung (Ta-ang) remain eager to be counted as separate races and reject their placement under Kayah and Shan "major races", respectively.[76]

In response, both government and UNFPA officials assured that such concerns would be respected. But there still remains no clarity as

to how enumerators will interrogate and record ethnicity. The difficulty is acute among non-Burmese speaking peoples, whose information will be recorded on Burmese-language questionnaires according to an enumerator instruction manual also in Burmese only. Census personnel appear to believe that they can define the "8 main ethnic groups" from data collected on the "135 ethnic groups".[77] But this does not assuage doubts. Adding to the challenge, mixed-race lineage will not be recorded except in the case of "Myanmar + Foreigner (Mixture)" (code 900). Respondents can only choose a single identity from one parent, or if the parent is also of mixed heritage, from one grandparent – a problem Minister U Khin Yi acknowledged but did not offer any solutions, except for offering that individuals may apply to change their "lu-myo" designation on their national registration card "after the census".[78] Similarly incongruous, any respondents whose "lu-myo" is not on the 135 list will be coded as one of 13 foreign races (codes 901-913) or as a catch-all "Other" category that is worded (in English), "other Ethnicities in Myanmar and other Foreigners". This will be especially contentious in the case of the Muslim population in the northern Rakhine state, where many self-identify as "Rohingya". Against the stated wishes of representatives of two Rohingya parties, the most likely scenario is that enumerators will record "Rohingya" as "Bangladesh" (910) or "Other" (914).[79]

To the degree that there is an identifiable logic in the lu-myo list of 135 categories, it appears that smaller ethnic groups (e.g. Lahu, Wa) are listed under the name of the state that they mostly inhabit (e.g. Shan state), while others are categorized by language or dialect putatively spoken (e.g. Dawei [Tavoyan], who are placed under "Bamar"). This variability increases the many irregularities in the PHC code list and double-counts some groups by using different names. The result only confuses the picture of Myanmar's diverse landscape.

Just as perplexing is variation across "major races." Three major races (Kachin, Karen and Chin) include culturally and linguistically related sub-groups under the same ethnic band of codes (e.g. 101-112, 301-11, 401-453). This would be logical for a language-based survey. But in the case of the Rakhine and Shan categories, culturally unrelated groups are recorded under the major "lu-myo" headings, such as Mro and Thet under Rakhine, and Ko Kant (Kokang), Palaung (Ta-ang) and Pa-O under Shan. Similarly inconsistent, the Kayah sub-group among the people collectively known as Karenni is given the coding for an entire race (code 201), while related peoples are broken down into eight categories under the Kayah name (202-209).[80] Indeed only the Mon (code 601) have a singular code among all the major "taingyinthar lu-myo" delineated for the census.

This means that the census template for recording lu-myo identities is analytically and informationally inconsistent, and many citizens are concerned as to how their ethnicities will be recorded on a countrywide scale. As U San Pyae, an MP from Mogaung in the Kachin state, warned of likely confusions: "I don't know what Shan groups live in Sagaing region but in Kachin state there are five major Shan groups – Tai-Leng is the one of these… But the [same] group goes by different names in Kachin state, including Tai-Hlan, Red Shan, Shan Lay, Shan Myanmar and Tai-Tai."[81]

Finally, also looming in the background for controversy is the volatile issue of religion. It is still unclear how census enumerators will ensure nationwide consistency in eliciting religious identity responses, given the inter-communal violence that has plagued parts of the country. The last census in 1983 reported the national population to be 89.4 percent Buddhist, 4.9 percent Christian, and 4.4 percent Islamic. But against a backdrop of continuing Buddhist-Muslim violence, any divergence from the 1983 distribution could inflame communal tensions, particularly in the lead-up to a highly contested election. Christian and other faith leaders have already expressed concerns. "We are not foreigners," Archbishop Charles Bo recently stated. "We are sons and daughters of this great nation and we wish to contribute…in the nation building."[82]

It is, however, the Rakhine state that presently holds the greatest threat for community-based violence around the time of census enumeration. Early warning indicators have already appeared. Following allegations of "illegal immigrants" entering "before the national census" and occupying "parts of the state", Union Parliament Speaker Thura Shwe Mann met with Buddhist

Rakhine representatives to hear their calls for establishing local "people's militia", and he publicly praised them for "safeguarding Myanmar's western border".[83]

As reports of Rakhine-Rohingya violence appeared again in January[84], many minority Muslims feared that their troubles in 2014 could just be beginning. Violence appears increasingly likely. Rakhine residents of Maungdaw, for example, are seeking to establish armed militias in every village. Eleven Media quotes a Rakhine resident as saying, "Every minister and departmental head who has visited the Maungdaw border area has said that they have a plan to form militias for regional security and will arrange the weapons that can be taken through respective police stations and outposts."[85] And throughout Myanmar, there are widespread rumours that extremist Islamic groups are flooding the country with followers, to inflate the numbers of Muslims tallied.

For perspective, it is important to stress that Myanmar is not unique as a multi-ethnic state nor is it the only modern state to have challenges that result from ethnic and religious diversity. As experiences around the world have shown, contention over coding and labelling is not unusual in censuses and should always be acknowledged as a potential risk to data reliability. As David Kertzer and Dominique Arel have pointed out: "[T]he categorization of subjective categories [like ethnicity] by census-makers is more often than not a matter of *political negotiation*, rather than *objective assessment*."[86]

What, however, is very striking and unusual in Myanmar's case is the absence of any recognition on the part of the UNFPA and international governmental donors that the census ethnicity list is politically problematic, culturally sensitive and informationally flawed. As of February 2014, no significant public participation in census preparation, planning and management had been invited to deal with these issues, and it was difficult to detect any mechanism for inclusive input, discussion or negotiation on the categories to be recorded or reported – nor for real consultation, feedback and procedural change afterwards. Rather, greater concern appears to have been shown over public relations than addressing the many obvious inconsistencies in ethnic labelling.

Data Unreliability and the Overreach of the Census Questionnaire

Finally, when forecasting the census outcome, it needs to be stressed that there are significant challenges to the goal of "everyone" being counted, as the 2014 PHC advocacy materials promise. Fielding 100,000 enumerators across an ethnic and geographical terrain as complex and contested as Myanmar for the first time in 30 years increases the likelihood that the census will not be completed and that the data will be of questionable validity. Unreliability has long characterized other areas of government statistics, such as health and education, where national coverage is also claimed. Information and analysis of issues that involve ethnic identity claims are among the most difficult challenges in the country. This does not mean initiatives should not be started; in fact, the opposite. But it does mean that due care and attention are taken to understand human needs and realities, working within the difficult country context.

At present, the difficulties of 100 percent access and appropriate ethnic coding are receiving the most publicity over the reliability of the census results. But, as the enumeration continues, a number of further issues are also likely to challenge the census accuracy.

Firstly, a fundamental barrier to data reliability lies in the overreach of the census questionnaire. The 41 question categories have been in place since September 2012. Against international standards, no systematic pre-tests of the questionnaire were conducted prior to the 2013 pilot of the census, save for informal ones among government staff. And in the 2013 pilot, enumerators struggled to sort out all the different code lists, possible answers, and misunderstandings. As a result, MOIP and UNFPA officials changed some of the wording after the pilot, but no question categories were eliminated.

The length of the questionnaire also means that enumerators will be tasked with assembling a great diversity of data. The questions range from basic demographic data to maternal and child welfare information to occupation and questions about sanitation, electricity and migration. At least five questions query issues that could risk the legal status of the respondent; nine interrogate culturally or

politically sensitive topics; and another seven involve taxable items or activities. Such complexity in a census questionnaire is not unusual in many developing countries, but it is without precedent in Myanmar. It is also decidedly at odds with the last census in 1983, in which just seven questions were asked of 80% of those enumerated, and only another eleven in a long form administered to a random sample of 20%. As David Coleman, Professor of Demography at Oxford University, has warned: "The longer the questionnaire, the higher the level of non-response and the greater the trouble and expense."[87]

1983 Census Questions	
Short form, 80 percent	Name Relationship to head of household Sex Age Marital status Race Religion
Long form, 20 percent	all of the above, plus School attendance Highest standard passed Literacy Occupation Industry Employment status Reason for not working Working during last 12 months Children ever born alive Children still living Date of birth of last child

The range of questions in the 2014 census then compounds a second major barrier to accurate enumeration of the long questionnaire: that of language diversity. The DOP and UNFPA have promised communities populated by speakers of languages other than Burmese that "(e)numerators … will conduct the interview and ask questions in your local language."[88] However, no details are available on the selection process for these "local language" enumerators, which of the languages and dialects spoken in Myanmar will be covered, how that decision was or will be made, and what process will be followed to translate the complex and nuanced concepts in the questionnaire. Implicit in this promise is an assumption that language usage can be mapped to discrete "local" territories, which is probably rare. Many rural areas, villages and quarters of towns and cities are characterized by ethno-linguistic diversity, not homogeneity. There may be a shared lingua franca that can be used for basic social and market transactions, but the complexity of census questions is very likely to exhaust the capacity of those whose mother tongues are different. Hence, it seems likely that the enumeration interviews will be complicated by the presence of translators, who are not trained to use standardized practices for ensuring data reliability. Concerns are also high that, given the pressures of time and difficulties in communication, enumerators will simply fill in the questionnaires according to their own opinions and assumptions.

Finally, this leads to a third major barrier to enumeration accuracy: the issue of distrust. The promise of confidentiality in the 2014 PHC, in line with international norms, is not one that resonates with much of the population. After decades of war and political repression, most citizens have adapted to the environment of deep-rooted historical structures of surveillance and censorship, which have long made information production, dissemination and consumption, dangerous undertakings. In this context, many citizens are fearful of providing "wrong answers". Information collection has rarely been neutral and frequently has been associated with law enforcement and possible punishment or confiscation of belongings. As a result, respondents are cautious about culturally sensitive questions, such as religion, deaths and marital status. Equally important, they know only too well what is at stake when they answer questions that can invoke legal issues, including citizenship status, names of household members abroad, and possession of taxable goods.

In this context, having lived through decades of military rule, people in Myanmar have developed strategies of survival that include revealing as little as possible to those in power and telling officials what they want to hear. Respondents are likely to fear that accurate answers might increase their tax burden, put them at risk of arrest, or threaten their access to important documents, like Citizenship Scrutiny Cards and Household Lists, or services such as

schooling for their children. Furthermore most citizens under the age of 40 have no memory of participating in a census or even know what one is, much less why it would be in their interests to answer so many intrusive questions with any degree of accuracy.

In short, many challenges in the conduct, enumeration and completion of the census clearly lie ahead.

Conclusion

As the count-down to the census has continued, controversy over its timing and preparation has steadily grown.[89] The need for informative, accurate and relevant social and demographic data has never been in doubt in a country facing serious socio-economic and political challenges after decades of internal conflict. But there are many warnings that the 2014 Population and Housing Census could sustain and even expand the historically prevalent distrust by many of the population of government information in the country.

The risks have been increased because donors and the United Nations have pushed forward on a conflict-insensitive census methodology against a backdrop of unusually rapid political transition within the country. A hard-fought general election is approaching in 2015, while the impact of the census is likely to be an unnecessary contributing cause of tension, albeit probably not a decisive one, among armed combatants negotiating an end to 70 years of civil warfare.

To counter these concerns, the census is being promoted as non-political but, in most political and ethnic circles, it is regarded as anything but. The worry is that the census will transform the social fictions produced by unreliable data into highly problematic "social facts" that set new national parameters and boundaries on ethnicity at just the moment in history when peace-building is starting and when new, inclusive and participatory ways are needed to deal with the state failures of the past. At such a critical juncture, national reconciliation and understanding will not be helped by an unreliable and contested census.

Endnotes

1. In 1989 the then military government changed the official name from Burma to Myanmar. They are alternative forms in the Burmese language, but their use has become a politicised issue. Myanmar is mostly used within the country and in international diplomacy, but it is not always used in the English language abroad. As these differences highlight, there are variations and disagreements over many names in the country. For consistency, this briefing will use the contemporary forms of words used around the census. For example, Bamar (Burman) refers to the majority ethnic group, while Burmese is a general term for the language or is sometimes used as a general adjective: i.e. someone can be of Karen or Shan nationality but a Burmese (Myanmar) citizen.

2. Interview with Stephen Cole, "Talk to Al Jazeera", 28 December 2013, http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/talktojazeera/2013/12/aung-san-suu-kyi-there-no-rule-law-20131225133951643936.html, at around 8 minutes, 45 seconds into the interview.

3. See e.g., UN OCHA, "Myanmar: Countrywide Displacement Snapshot", November 2013; The Border Consortium, "Programme Report: January to June 2013", pp.16-21. The majority of those affected are ethnic Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Mon and Shan as well as Muslim populations in the Rakhine state. There are also estimates of over 100,000 ethnic Chin refugees and migrants in India and Malaysia.

4. UNFPA, "Press Conference on Myanmar Population and Housing Census", 10 February 2014. $45 million has reportedly been invested by eight countries, Australia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK; $15 million by the government; and $5 million by the UNFPA. A further $10 million is said to be required for the "data analysis and dissemination stage".

5. Dr. C. Chandramouli, "Census of India: A Story of Innovations", Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 16 August 2011.

6. Terms to describe ethnicity can be contentious. Race is often used with caution in contemporary English if associated with "racism". But, as this briefing highlights, "national race" has long been used in Myanmar.

7. Andreas Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.4.

8. SPDC, *Information Sheet, Yangon, Myanmar*, No.C-2103 (I), 30 January 2002.

9. Zarni Mann, "Monks Conference Backs Bills to Restrict Interfaith Marriage, Rohingya Voting", The Irrawaddy, 16 January 2014.

10. Mark Duffield, "On the Edge of 'No Man's Land': Chronic Emergency in Myanmar", Centre for Governance and International Affairs, University of Bristol, 2008, p.8.

11. See e.g., Yen Snaing, "Ethnic Groups Voice Concern over Census Classification System", The

Irrawaddy, 10 January 2014; "Burma's Ethnic Minorities Decry Census, Jostle for Advantage", The Irrawaddy, 10 February 2014.

12. IRIN, "Myanmar: Census offers hope to ethnic groups", 16 May 2012.

13. See definitions for components of term at Myanmar-English Dictionary, http://www.myanmar-dictionary.org; see also "Burmese – Amyo, lumyo, taing yin tha lumyo," Languages of Security in the Asia-Pacific, 25 May 2011, available online at http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/blogs/languagesofsecurity/2011/05/25/burmese-nation/#_ftn4. Non-Bamar languages have developed related terminologies. Among the Kachin, for example, "Jinghpaw amyu ni" is the "races/branches of the Jinghpaw". This briefing will focus on Burmese and the 2014 census.

14. This law represented a significant change from Section 11 of the 1947 constitution and Section 5 of the 1948 Union Citizenship Act, which defined citizenship far more flexibly. Nick Cheesman, "The Eliminating of Rights and the Politics of Being Burmese", paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Law & Society Association (Session: International Dimensions of Citizenship and Nation), 2011, p.2.

15. Myanmar is not the only country where a historic connection is claimed between national identity and links to land. Such a formulation, wrote John and Jean Comaroff on South Africa, have a "naturalizing capacity" that makes it "the most authentic, the most essential of all modes of connection". John and Jean Comaroff, "Naturing the Nation: Aliens, Apocalypse and the Postcolonial State", *Journal of South African Studies*, 27:3, 2001, pp.648-9.

16. For a detailed analysis on Kachin ethnicity and identity, see, Mandy Sadan, *Being and Becoming Kachin: Histories Beyond the State in the Borderworlds of Burma* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2013.

17. In popular discourse, "taingyinthar" often refers to non-Bamar peoples, and there is a general sense that Bamars are not "ethnic" so much as they are the norm from which "minorities" diverge.

18. For example, four ethnic-based states were demarcated, Kachin, Karen, Karenni (from 1951 Kayah) and Shan, the last two of which were allowed the theoretical right of secession after 10 years.

19. "State Law and Order Restoration Council Chairman Gen. Saw Maung's Remarks", Working People's Daily, 31 July 1989.

20. The move from eight to 135 races was thought to be a strategy to divide and rule non-Bamar populations. There was also speculation that this number was considered auspicious because the digits (1 + 3 + 5) add up to the number 9, which was thought to be astrologically powerful among leaders of the SLORC government.

21. See note 46.

22. For a recent overview of electoral and armed ethnic parties, see, Transnational Institute, "Burma's Ethnic Challenge: From Aspirations to Solutions", TNI-BCN Burma Policy Briefing Nr 12, October 2013.

23. U Khin Yi, Union Minister for Immigration and Population, in, "Questions raised and answered, proposals discussed and submitted at first Pyithu Hluttaw second regular session", New Light of Myanmar, 2 September 2011.

24. The Burmese term, "ein-taung-su sa-yin," is often translated as "family list". The latter translation belies the administrative purpose of the "Household Registration List," which is fundamentally a law enforcement mechanism.

25. Ministry of Immigration and Population website, http://www.modins.net/myanmarInfo/ministry/population.htm.

26. Of the other identity documents, birth certificates, which are not available in many parts of the country, also record "lu-myo" identities; passports do not.

27. See e.g., Peter James Spielmann, AP writer, "UN Chief Tells Burma to Make Rohingyas Citizens", The Irrawaddy, 11 July 2013.

28. J.J. Bennison, *Census of India,1931, Vol. X1, Burma* (Rangoon: Government Printing and Stationery, 1933), pp.198-204.

29. Sixteen groups were in fact listed; Burma, Lolo-Muhso, Kuki-Chin, Naga, Kachin, Sak (Lui), Mishmi, Mro, Tai, Malay, Mon, Palaung-Wa, Khasi, Karen, Man and Chinese. No inhabitants, however, of the Khasi group were recorded and elsewhere in the census Chinese was recorded as "non-indigenous", despite the Chinese-speaking Kokang population in the Shan state.

30. For purposes of perspective, it is worth noting that around the same time the British began counting up subjects in colonial Burma, "race" appeared for the first time in the US census. The 1890 census categories were: white, black, mulatto, quadroon, octoroon, Chinese, Japanese and Indian.

31. *Census of India*, p.173.

32. Ibid, p.174.

33. Ibid., p.173, ix.

34. Ibid., p.175.

35. Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (London: Zed Books, 1991 and 1999), pp.30, 51-2, 75, 83-4.

36. Union of Burma, *First Stage Census 1953* (Rangoon: Government Printing and Stationery, 1957), p.xvii.

37. Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, Ministry of Home and Religious Affairs, *Burma: 1983 Population Census* (Rangoon: Immigration and Manpower Department, June 1986), pp.1-8.

38. See e.g., Smith, *Burma; Insurgency*, passim.

39. Moshe Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*

(Lexington Books, 2002), pp.55-59.

40. Ibid.

41. Ba Saw Tin, "An Historian Looks at Rohingya", The Irrawaddy, 7 October 2009. Dr. Aye Kyaw's mention of 1824 (rather than 1823, which is the date used in the 1982 Citizenship Law) is likely an error of recall.

42. See e.g., International Crisis Group, "The Dark Side of Transition: Violence Against Muslims in Myanmar", Asia Report Nr 2511, October 2013.

43. See note 3.

44. Zarni Mann, "Monk Conference Backs Bills to Restrict Interfaith Marriage, Rohingya Voting", The Irrawaddy, 16 January 2014; Aung Kyaw Kyaw, "Buddhist monks form new association to safeguard religion", Eleven Myanmar, 16 January 2014.

45. Nan Lwin Hnin Pwint, "Ethnic Rights Bill Will Not Affect Constitution", Mizzima News, 7 October 2013.

46. The full list: Bamar (5), Karen (5), Chin (3), Shan (3), Pa-O (2), Rakhine (2), Lisu (2), Akha, Intha, Kachin, Kayan, Lahu, Mon, Rawang (1). For locations, see, Transnational Institute, "Unlevel Playing Field: Burma's Election Landscape", TNI-BCN Burma Policy Briefing Nr 3, October 2010, p.8.

47. There is no record of how polling station officials dealt with voters with multiple "lu-myo" identities on their CSCs. Additionally, some voters reported that they were denied the national race constituency ballot based on arbitrary markers of identity (e.g., whether one was wearing a longyi (sarong) associated with the national race on the ballot). Interviews, Yangon, January 2014.

48. Khin Oo Thar, "Ethnic Affairs Ministers Get Cold Shoulder", The Irrawaddy, 8 July 2011.

49. Under Instruction No.435/3(8)2/NaYaKa, 29-4-2007, as reported in government-backed media: http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/PYIDH-NLM2011-03-29scrutiny_cards.pdf

50. There is no such thing as a "census certificate". The original exchange took place in the Burmese language. It is likely that either the Minister's office or New Light of Myanmar mis-translated "household list" to "census certificate."

51. The Ward "Peace and Development Council" was the name of the lowest-level administrative unit during the rule of the SPDC.

52. http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/PYIDH-NLM2011-03-29scrutiny_cards.pdf.

53. http://www.peacedonorsupportgroup.com/identity-card-programme.html.

54. San Yamin Aung, "'Smarter' National ID Cards in the Pipeline", The Irrawaddy, 20 September 2013.

55. http://www.myanmargeneva.org/11nlm/sep/n110902.htm.

56. Saw Lindsay and Saw Mort, "National ID Scheme Met With Confusion, Indifference, Fears," Karen News, 4 February 2014.

57. "Ethnic party to scrutinize Kaman population in Burma", Narinjara News, 29 November 2013.

58 Nan Yin, "Wrong ID Card Data Meant Mon Denied Electoral Representation", Karen News, 25 June 2012.

59. See e.g., "USDP accused of forcibly recruiting members in Sagaing", DVB, 16 January 2014.

60. In 1991-92, the DOP prepared to carry out a nationwide census in 1993. Like 1983, this census would have been conducted on a similar 80/20 basis (i.e. 80 percent of respondents would be asked a standard eight questions and 20 percent an additional seven). But the plan was rejected by the cabinet. The official reason for scuttling the census was that the government's priority was to facilitate the National Convention to draft a new constitution. There was later some discussion of conducting a census in 2003, but it never came to fruition.

61. Quoted in http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/myanmar/2013/09/17/7958/unfpa_addresses_preparations_on_myanmar_rsquo_s_upcoming_census_in_2014/

62. UNFPA, Press Conference on Myanmar Population and Housing Census, 10 February 2014. See also note 4.

63. See e.g., Feng Yingqiu / Xinhua , "Myanmar calls on stake holders to cooperate in census", Mizzima News, 18 September 2013.

64. "President U Thein Sein attends the meeting to clarify country-wide census-taking (2014) process", New Light of Myanmar, 2 August 2013. http://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/?q=briefing-room/news/2013/08/02/id-2497

65. This view has been consistently put to TNI by ethnic nationality representatives and citizens.

66. Yen Snaing, "Ethnic Groups Voice Concern Over Ethnic Classification System", The Irrawaddy, 10 January 2014.

67. Census questionnaires are available on the Department of Population website, http://www.dop.gov.mm/?page_id=1167.

68. See note 3; Yen Snaing, "Wary of Official Census, Burma's Ethnic Minorities Count Their Own", The Irrawaddy, 4 December 2013.

69. Kevin Mcleod, "Govt Reaches Out to Rebel Groups on Upcoming Census", The Irrawaddy, 31 December 2013.

70. Tun Tun Min, "PSLF/TNLA refuses to cooperate in census without truce", Myanma Freedom Daily, 16 January 2014.

71. See e.g., "Kachin state day celebrated as concern with census mounts", Kachin News Group, 13 January 2014; Yen Snaing, "Burma's Ethnic Minorities Decry Census, Jostle for Advantage", The Irrawaddy, 10

February 2014.

72. Yen Snaing, "Wary of Official Census, Burma's Ethnic Minorities Count Their Own", The Irrawaddy, 4 December 2013.

73. See note 16.

74. Joint Letter from 30 ethnic groups to Ms. Janet Jackson, UNFPA Representative, Yangon, Myanmar, 16 December 2013.

75. Forum of 270 Karen representatives, "Ethnic Karen National's Position Statement on 2014-Population Census Enumeration in Burma/Myanmar", 10 January 2014.

76. See e.g., Kyal Pyar, "Kayan object to designation in planned census", Mizzima News, 13 January 2014; Yen Snaing, "Burma's Ethnic Minorities Decry Census, Jostle for Advantage", The Irrawaddy, 10 February 2014.

77. In response to questions about "lu-myo" enumeration, UNFPA's chief technical advisor wrote: "The instructions contained in Field Instructions Manual is that enumerators record three digit code for the 135 sub-ethnic groups derived from the 8 main ethnic group in the country and nationalities of some neighbouring countries. There is a code list for ethnicity (or country of origin for non-Myanmar counted in the census) which will be used by each enumerator. For those whose answers are not contained on the Code List, the enumerator would record code for 'other' then write down the self-identified ethnicity/nationality in the space provided on the questionnaire. Once data is collected from the 135 ethnic groups it can easily be presented by 8 main ethnic groups. The list of codes used for 2014 Census is what is available from the government and used in previous census." Email, 18 November 2013.

78. "Ministers call for armed groups' participation for 2014 census", S.H.A.N., 3 January 2014; Kevin Mcleod, "Govt Reaches Out to Rebel Groups on Upcoming Census", 31 December 2013.

79. Note: the English-language code list labels code 914 as "Other: [Other Ethnicities in Myanmar and Other Foreigners]", while the Burmese code list labels the same code simply by the Burmese word, "A-cha" (or "Other"). On the position of Rohingya parties, see Tim McLaughlin, "Rohingya Parties Call for Change to Census Categories," Myanmar Times, 11 January 2014; Nururl Islam, "Verification of Rohingya in Arakan", Kaladan News, 15 February 2014.

80. This has led to criticisms from the Kayan (Padaung) minority. Kayan representatives also complained that their own identity is spread into four groups. Kyal Pyar, "Kayan object to designation in planned census", Mizzima News, 13 January 2014.

81. Khin Su Wai, "Red Shan Seek to Build Unity Ahead of Next Year's Census", Myanmar Times, 4 August 2013.

82. See e.g., "Emmanuel in Myanmar: the Enduring Message of Hope: Christmas Message of Charles Bo", Archdiocese of Yangon, Myanmar, 24 December 2013.

83. Ei Ei Toe Lwin, "Speaker pledges 'support' for Rakhine people", Myanmar Times, 4 October 2013.

84. Robin McDowell, "UN: Myanmar Buddhists killed more than 40 Muslims", Associated Press, 23 January 2014.

85. "Maungdaw Residents Call for Militias in Every Village," Eleven (online), 15 January 2015, http://elevenmyanmar.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4724:maungdaw-residents-call-for-militias-in-every-village&catid=44&Itemid=384

86. David Kertzer, and Dominique Arel, "Census, Identity Formation and the Struggle for Political Power", in Kertzer and Arel (eds.), *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Language in National Census* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.20.

87. David Coleman, "Twilight of the Census", *Population and Development Review,* 38:1, February 2013, pp.334-351, 338.

88. Myanmar Department of Population and UNFPA, "The 2014 Population and Housing Census: What You Need to Know", 2013, http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/myanmar/drive/Handbook_English_14Nov_WEB.pdf.

89. See e.g., International Crisis Group, "Myanmar conflict alert: A risky census", 12 February 2014.

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TNI - BCN Project on Ethnic Conflict in Burma

Burma has been afflicted by ethnic conflict and civil war since independence in 1948, exposing it to some of the longest running armed conflicts in the world. Ethnic nationality peoples have long felt marginalised and discriminated against. The situation worsened after the military coup in 1962, when minority rights were further curtailed. The main grievances of ethnic nationality groups in Burma are the lack of influence in the political decision-making processes; the absence of economic and social development in their areas; and what they see as Burmanisation policies by governments since independence that have translated into repression of their cultural rights and religious freedom.

This joint TNI-BCN project aims to stimulate strategic thinking on addressing ethnic conflict in Burma and to give a voice to ethnic nationality groups who have until now been ignored and isolated in the international debate on the country. In order to respond to the challenges of political changes since 2010 and for the future, TNI and BCN believe it is crucial to formulate practical and concrete policy options and define concrete benchmarks on progress that national and international actors can support. The project will aim to achieve greater support for a different Burma policy, which is pragmatic, engaged and grounded in reality.

The Transnational Institute (TNI) was founded in 1974 as an independent, international research and policy advocacy institute, with strong connections to transnational social movements, and intellectuals concerned to steer the world in a democratic, equitable, environmentally sustainable and peaceful direction. Its point of departure is a belief that solutions to global problems require global co-operation.

BCN was founded in 1993. It works towards democratization, respect for human rights and a solution to the ethnic crises in Burma. BCN does this through facilitating public and informal debates on Burma, information dissemination, advocacy work, and the strengthening of the role of Burmese civil society organisations.

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