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Applying the Ethnic Rebellion Model and Risk Assessment Model to Conflict in Myanmar

One of the salient policy recommendations for conflict and genocide prevention is the use of early warning models. This NTS Insight investigates and applies two well-known models used for conflict and genocide risk assessments to test the impact of Myanmar's Border Guard Force (BGF) policy on the ongoing internal ethnic conflict. The two models used are the Ethnic Rebellion Model (ERM) (Harff and Gurr, 1998) and the Risk Assessment Model (RAM) for Genocides or Politicides (Harff, 2003). The application of these models shows that the internal ethnic conflict is likely to continue and there exist trigger or accelerating factors for genocide to occur. While there is utility in applying these models, this NTS Insight also identifies some gaps in and challenges with these models, which need to be addressed if they are to become effective conflict and genocide prevention assessments.

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Kachin Border Guard Force.

Credit: Mizzima News Agency

Introduction

Myanmar is a culturally diverse state with one third of its population classified as ethnic nationalities, minority ethnic groups mainly found in the border areas. According to Minority Rights Group International (MRGI), the largest ethnic groups are the Shan and Karen (Ekeh and Smith, 2007). Myanmar is experiencing protracted internal conflict with its eastern ethnic nationalities, especially the conflict in Karen State which began in 1948 and continues to intensify (HIIK, 2010:52–5, 88; Milner, 2008:2, 6–7). Up to 2007, the conflicts have displaced an estimated 503,000 people in eastern Myanmar (Ekeh and Smith, 2007). Immediately after the 7 November 2010 general elections, over 20,000 fled to Thailand to escape fighting between government troops and armed ethnic groups (20,000 Flee, 2010).

The ongoing internal conflict is reflective of the inability of the government and ethnic nationalities to reach a sustainable political solution over the past 60 years. Ethnic nationalities had administered their own territories from the colonial period to the formation of the Union of Burma following the Panglong Agreement in 1947 (CPCS, 2010:12; Yawnghwe, 2001:2). However, this autonomy began to be reduced following General Ne Win's 1962 coup d'etat, generating further internal instability. However, by 1988 most ethnic groups had made ceasefire agreements. Under these agreements, they were still allowed to develop their territories until a new constitution was formulated and their armies were able to retain their arms (Lall, 2009:5).

Ethnic nationalities' autonomy was further reduced in 2005 with the increased presence of the government's military – the Tatmadaw – in eastern ethnic areas (TBBC, 2009:2). Presently, the government is implementing its Border Guard Force (BGF) policy. The BGF policy is included in Section 337 of Myanmar's 2008 Constitution, which requires that Myanmar have only one national army. The BGF Policy Blueprint gives the Tatmadaw greater control over ethnic armed groups by transferring the governance of security affairs along the border to regional military commanders (ICG, 2010:3; Myanmar: Border Guard, 2010). The ethnic nationalities largely reject the BGF policy as seen in the armed clashes between the Tatmadaw and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army in Shan State (McCartan, 2009; Myanmar: Border Guard, 2010; Saw, 2011). Indeed, previous negotiations have illustrated that ethnic nationalities are not open to bringing their armies under the command of the Tatmadaw as this arrangement is negatively perceived (Carnegie Council, 1997:1; Zin, 2010). The limited success of previous ceasefire negotiations with the government was based on a 'peace-through-development policy of mutual trust building' (Thawnghmung, 2008:31) as such a policy did not undermine their aspiration for federalism. In view of this, the refusal of the military government to maintain this dynamic has consequently led to the current political impasse.

In the following sections, two early warning models are used to assess the effects of the BGF policy on the ongoing internal conflict in Myanmar and the potential for mass atrocities, particularly genocide.

Conceptual Overview of Early Warning Models

An early warning model 'includes data collection, analysis and/or formulation of recommendations, including risk assessment and information sharing' (Austin, cited in Wulf and Debiel, 2010:527). Its purpose is to assist in decision-making so as to enable timely response with the aim of the prevention, reduction, resolution or transformation of a crisis (Wulf and Debiel, 2010:527). In this NTS Insight, an early warning model specifically refers to a system that monitors escalatory developments which occur prior to the onset of genocide stemming from ethnic conflicts. The effectiveness of early warning and response depends not only on the accuracy of the analysis, but also on the communication of the information to an appropriate actor. In the context of genocide prevention, the state is considered the primary actor responding to early warning signals and preventing potential genocide. However, there have been cases where the state itself has committed mass atrocities, such as during the Rwandan genocide in 1994. In such circumstances, the international community needs to be aware of developments in conflict situations, as they bear the responsibility of assisting in the prevention of genocide. This division of responsibility between the state and the international community has been reinforced by the emerging norm of the responsibility to protect (commonly referred to as the RtoP norm).

Early warning models use either quantitative or qualitative methods to evaluate a situation. The qualitative approach is based on expert judgment of information from several sources, including media coverage, open-source data, and embassy and intelligence reports (Goldstone, 2008). Qualitative analysis may be biased as the analyst's prior knowledge and perception of an issue are subjective and can influence the assessment. Supplementary to qualitative analysis is quantitative analysis which assesses situations through statistical analysis. As quantitative models are derived from data analysis of a large number of cases, it is arguably more objective and applicable than qualitative analysis. Moreover, it has been shown that quantitative models can be highly accurate. The Political Instability Task Force (PITF) project, for instance, found that PITF models which do not involve many variables and complex interactions accurately classify 80 per cent of the instability onsets and stables in the historical data (Goldstone et al., 2005:10; for a detailed account of the PITF project, go to http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu/pitf/). One drawback of quantitative models is the time lag between data collection, data analysis and the release of results (Woocher, 2006).

This NTS Insight will use two predictive models based on quantitative analysis – the Ethnic Rebellion Model[1] (ERM) for the Minorities at Risk (MAR) project[2] (Harff and Gurr, 1998) and Harff's 2003 Risk Assessment Model (RAM) which is part of the PITF project (Harff, 2003) – to assess the prospects of continuing ethnic rebellions and the intensified risks of genocide as a result of the adoption of the BGF policy. The two models are selected on the basis of two criteria – their authoritativeness and the hypothesised link between ethnic rebellion and genocide. With regard to their authoritativeness, both models are recommended tools of genocide prevention for the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide (Woocher, 2006). The link between ethnic rebellion and genocide is explained by Moore (2000) and Saxton (2005) in the following way: strong ethnic rebellion will provoke the government to adopt further harsher policies to curb resistance with the potential to ultimately end in genocide. However, it is also important to recognise that conflict situations and genocide can be mutually exclusive; genocide can also occur during peacetime, which poses a significant challenge to these models (Bellamy, 2011:1). Based on the link between ethnic rebellion and genocide, the two models remain applicable to the Myanmar case – the failure of the BGF policy to accommodate the ethnic nationalities further incentivises them to rebel, which in turn leads to harsher retaliation

by the Tatmadaw with the potential for genocide to occur.

In the next section, the ERM is applied to identify factors that have caused and will continue to cause ethnic rebellions in Myanmar, and to examine how the BGF policy will reinforce these factors.

Assessing Myanmar's Internal Ethnic Conflict Using the Ethnic Rebellion Model

Defining Myanmar's Ethnic Conflicts

For this NTS Insight we use the PITF project definition of ethnic war as a proxy for ethnic conflict (see Box 1).

> *Box 1: Definition of Ethnic Conflict.*
>
> Episodes of violent conflict between governments and national, ethnic, religious, or other communal minorities (ethnic challengers) in which the challengers seek major changes in their status ... rioting and warfare between rival communal groups is not coded as [ethnic conflict] unless it involves conflict over political power or government policy (Esty et al., cited in Sambanis, 2001:262).

The cause of the prolonged ethnic conflict in Myanmar has its roots in the tension found between the monopoly of state power by the military government and the aspiration of ethnic nationalities for federalism, greater autonomy and more equality in the exercise of civil rights, as envisioned in the 1947 Panglong Agreement.

Despite the differences in their specific claims, most of the ethnic nationalities share the common aspiration for greater autonomy rather than independence (Carnegie Council, 1997:1). The Karen National Union (KNU) officials assert that their ultimate goal is to achieve the right to self-determination of the Karen people with the guarantee of ethnic equality within 'a genuine union of Burma' (Saw et al., n.d.). The Shan militant organisations desire the right to self-determination, or at the very least, widespread autonomy in Shan State. They are also concerned with economic development and protecting their culture (MAR Project, 2006). Similarly, the Chin National Front (CNF) has been committed to the aspirations of militant groups of other ethnic nationalities (PHR, 2011:15).

The Government's Solution – Reification of the Ethnic Political Identity

The military government adopted two major policies to resolve the protracted ethnic conflicts – ceasefire agreements and border guard forces. However, it has not been able to reach an agreement with every ethnic militant group with regard to the two policies. This has led to increased ethnic conflicts. In December 2003, the KNU brokered a 'gentleman's agreement' with the military government to cease the fighting but little progress has been made subsequently. Since early 2006, the military government has launched major operations against the KNU and its civilian support base, displacing at least 20,000 people in northern Karen State (South, 2008:61–5). In addition, between 2009 and 2010, the conflict between the government forces and the KNU escalated to level 4[3] in conflict intensity, indicating a severe crisis (HIIK, 2010:54). With regard to the BGF policy, only the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) and the National Democratic Army-Kachin (NDA-K) have joined the BGF. In November 2010, there was an outbreak of violence between the Tatmadaw and a breakaway faction of the DKBA that opposed the group's decision to join the BGF (Myanmar: Border Guard, 2010). It is clear that these policies have failed to yield substantial progress on the peace process because they did not make sufficient concessions to meet the claims of these groups, particularly on the political front.

MAR Ethnic Rebellion Model

The ERM assesses the risk of future ethnic conflict. It hypothesises that ethnic rebellion is a joint function of variables that are categorised into three groups – group incentives, group capacity and group opportunities (Woocher, 2006). This section will apply group-level data from the 2009 MAR dataset[4] to the ERM to assess the likelihood of continuing ethnic rebellion against the Myanmar military government. The BGF policy and its impact will be incorporated into the analysis. Ethnic nationalities evaluated in this analysis include the Mon, Shan, Rohingya, Chin, Kachin and Karen.

Group incentives

'Group incentives' are higher if members are, or perceive themselves to be, more disadvantaged compared to other groups (Harff and Gurr, 1998).The four variables in this group include: lost autonomy, as well as economic, political and cultural discrimination. The performance of each ethnic nationality on these variables is displayed in Table 1.

> *Table 1: Group incentives for rebellion in 2006.*

Ethnic nationalities	Lost autonomy (0–5)*	Economic discrimination (0–4)**	Political discrimination (0–4)**	Cultural discrimination	
				Restrictions on religion (0–3)***	Restrictions on use of language (0–3)***
Shan	3	4	4	0	2
Karen	0	4	4	2	2
Chin	1	4	4	3	2
Kachin	1	4	3	2	2
Rohingya	0	4	4	3	3
Mon	1	4	4	0	3

*: 0= no loss of autonomy, 5= complete loss of autonomy
**: 0= no discrimination, 4= exclusion/repressive policy
***: 0= no restrictions, 3= activity sharply restricted
Source: Compiled from MAR Project (2009a, 2009b).

Despite the relatively low scores of these groups on 'lost autonomy', all groups are still considered to have strong incentives for rebellion as they have suffered severe economic, political and cultural discrimination. According to a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) analysis on women and children, between 1997 and 2000 most of the border regions fell significantly below the national average on socioeconomic indicators (Pedersen, 2008:55). In addition to economic insecurity, ethnic nationalities are also politically underprivileged. Most recently, refusals by ethnic nationalities to join the government's BGF led to the cancellation of voting in ethnic areas (Myanmar Cancels Voting, 2010). Therefore, the BGF policy has increased rather than decreased the incentives for rebellion.

Group capacity

'Group capacity' for collective action depends on, first, the sense of cultural identity and the extent to which that identity is shared, and second, the existence of organisations that give expression to group aspirations and objectives (Harff and Gurr, 1998:559).

'Cultural identity' is a variable that is assessed primarily through four indicators as shown in Table 2. The higher the score, the more distinct the group is. The scores of the ethnic nationalities vary from one indicator to another, but overall, the indicators show that these nationalities have distinct cultural identities. Furthermore, the persistence of the military government in imposing the notion of nationhood has created a sustained sense of alienation among ethnic nationalities (Yawnghwe, 2001:7).

Table 2: Cultural identity in 2006.

Ethnic nationalities	Different language group (0–2)*	Different group customs (0/1)**	Different group religion (0–2)***	Different physical appearance (0–3)****
Shan	1	1	0	0
Karen	1	1	0	0
Chin	1	1	2	1
Kachin	1	1	2	1
Rohingya	2	1	2	3
Mon	1	1	0	0

*: 0= linguistic assimilation with plurality group, 2= group speaks primarily one language different from plurality group
**: 0= same social customs as plurality, 1= different social customs
***: 0= same religion as plurality, 2= different religion
****: 0= no physical differences in appearance, 3= different racial stock, little or no intermixture
Source: Compiled from MAR Project (2009a, 2009b).

'Militant mobilisation' is a variable that reveals the number of militant organisations pursuing group interests. The level of 'militant mobilisation' is very high among all the ethnic nationalities, with the Karen and Rohingya scoring the highest (Table 3). The KNU was noted to be the 'largest, most powerful and influential, most visible and best-organized ethnic political/military organization in Burma' (Petry, cited in Thawnghmung, 2008:25). In addition, several other breakaway factions of the KNU, such as the DKBA, have also claimed to speak for the Karen constituency. Nevertheless, despite the KNU being debilitated by the loss of its stronghold to the government and its breakaway factions, it remains the primary organisation representing Karen interests.

With regard to the Rohingya, which has been severely discriminated against, the main militant groups include the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) and the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF), which formed the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) in 1999 (Selth, 2003:15). Although there are other political organisations that have claimed to represent the interests of the Rohingya, the RSO and the ARIF are the most influential.

The BGF policy is an attempt by the military government to disarm militant groups, but it has been unsuccessful. Only the DKBA and the NDA-K have accepted the deal; andthe DKBA has since experienced a split between those who are pro-engagement and those who are not.

Group opportunities

'Group opportunities' refers to political environments that shape the chances of successful rebellion (Harff and Gurr, 1998:560). In order to assess 'group opportunities', two variables are analysed. The first is whether there has been any 'recent changes in regime structure'.[5] This analysis determines that there has not been any major political change in Myanmar since 2009 (Polity IV, 2009). Although the country conducted a general election in 2010 and convened its first meeting of parliament in January 2011, its political space is limited. The reason for this is that 25 per cent of seats in parliament and in key ministries (home, defence and border affairs) are reserved for the military, and the largest party in parliament – the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) – was established, and is still heavily influenced, by the military. In view of this, 'group opportunities' remain slim.

Table 3: Militant mobilisation in 2006.

Ethnic nationalities	Militant Mobilisation (0–5)*
Shan	4
Karen	5
Chin	4
Kachin	3
Rohingya	5
Mon	3

*: 0= no political movements or organisations that represent group interests, 5= group interests promoted only by militant organisations.
Source: Compiled from MAR Project (2009a, 2009b).

The second variable in analysing 'group opportunities' is whether 'support from kindred groups' exists. It measures the extent of support for the ethnic nationalities from the Myanmarese diaspora and kindred groups in neighbouring states. Support can be political, military and non-military in nature. All six ethnic nationalities scored a figure of 0 on this, indicating that these groups are not receiving substantial support from kindred groups.

Assessment by the ERM

The assessment of the future of ethnic conflict based on the ERM reveals that the ethnic nationalities are very likely to continue their rebellion against the military government – they registered high scores for most of the variables under 'group incentives', with slim 'group opportunities' for successful rebellion. 'Group capacity' varies among the militant groups of all ethnic nationalities. Large militant groups such as the KNU are capable of continuing their rebellion against the government. As of 2006, the Shan and Karen are rated as the ethnic nationalities most likely to rebel based on the 2009 MAR dataset, scoring 5 out of 7 on the possibility of rebellion, the highest among the investigated ethnic nationalities. Therefore, the BGF policy has fuelled rather than defused the incentives for rebellion. The cancellation of voting in the national election in ethnic areas due to their resistance to the BGF policy triggered waves of fighting in November 2010.

Existence of internal armed conflict, primarily due to ethnic rebellion, is a widely recognised risk factor of genocide (Albright and Cohen, 2008:25; Freeman, 2007:11–12). The following section undertakes an assessment of the structural risk factors of genocide in pursuit of the posited link between continuing ethnic rebellion and genocide.

Assessing the Probability of Genocide in Myanmar Using the Risk Assessment Model
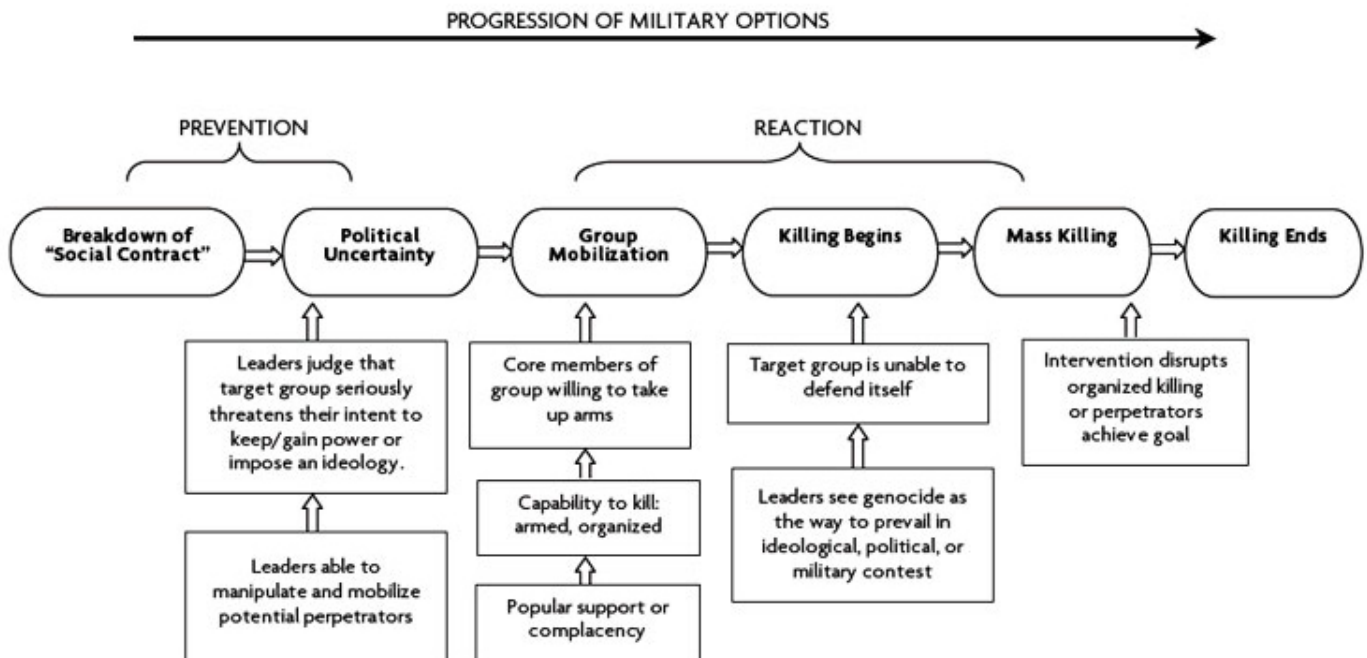
The Risks of Genocide

Box 2: Definition of Genocide

International criminal law recognises the following mass atrocity crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. However, early warning indicators have been developed to monitor only the crime of genocide (for definition, see Box 2). The model used to assess the probability of genocide is Harff's RAM. The RAM uses six risk factors to assess the probability of genocide: (1) existence of political upheaval; (2) prior genocide; (3) ethnic character of the ruling elite; (4) regime type of the ruling elite; (5) nature of ideological orientation of the ruling regime; and (6) trade openness of the country (Harff, 2003:66–7). The RAM is premised on the finding that all episodes of genocide and political mass murder of the last half-century have been carried out in the context of internal conflict and regime instability (Harff, 2003:70). Therefore, the RAM assesses the probable onset of genocide from a situation of escalated political instability by considering a number of factors invoked by the historical and present conditions within the country (see Harff (2003) for further information on the model's methodology). The model has 74 per cent accuracy in identifying prospective genocides (Harff, 2003:66).

The RAM risk factors are widely recognised structural risk factors of genocide (USAID, 2005; Albright and Cohen, 2008:25; Stanton, n.d.:3). Structural factors refer to the underlying incompatibilities, whereas triggers or accelerators are more proximate factors that can cause a conflict to escalate into genocide. Structural factors need to be addressed to eradicate the possibility of genocide in the longer term because monitoring and tackling these factors allow for a reversal of the development of trigger or accelerating events of genocide (Albright and Cohen, 2008:60–3). As shown in figure 1, the risk assessment undertaken in table 4 addresses the early stages of genocide prevention – the overall assessment of the risk factors for genocide in Myanmar considers the government's attempts at internal democratisation in recent years, examining in particular its BGF policy. As discussed above, the government's continued insistence on implementing the BGF policy is worsening Myanmar's internal security and political instability. The purpose of the assessment in this section is the prevention of genocide or mass atrocities in the future by highlighting signs of preparation for genocide to enable more detailed monitoring and analysis of fault lines along which genocide and mass atrocities could develop (Albright and Cohen, 2008:19).

Figure 1: Process of Violence: A Military Planning Tool.

Myanmar's performance on six risk factors – political upheaval excluding genocide, prior genocide, ethnic character of the ruling elite, regime type of the ruling elite, ideological orientation of the ruling elite, trade openness – between 1955 and 2009 is shown in table 4. These factors will then be further assessed by drawing on the current research and the latest information on developments in Myanmar.

Table 4: Myanmar's performance on the risk factors for genocide based on PITF coding method, 1995–2009.

Risk factor	Score*	Note
(1) Political upheaval excluding genocide	25 (2009)	1–9= low 10–20= medium 21–34= high 35–60= very high
(2) Prior genocide	1 (2008)	Dummy variable: 0= no prior genocide 1= prior genocide exists
(3) Ethnic character of ruling elite	1 (2008)	0= elite ethnicity is not salient 1= elite ethnicity is very salient
(4) Regime type of ruling elite	-6 (2009)	-10–0= autocracy 1–7= partial democracies 8–10= democracies
(5) Ideological orientation of ruling elite	1 (2008)	0= no exclusionary ideology 1= exclusionary ideology
(6) Trade openness	37.4 (2009)	<20= very low 21–40= low 41–70= medium 71–100= high >100= very high

*: year in bracket represents the most recent available data.
The data are collected from multiple sources but coded in accordance with the PITF coding method.
Source: Compiled from PITF (2009b), Harff and Gurr (2008), Polity IV (2009), EU Trade Statistics (2011).

Political upheaval and prior genocides

This section discusses Myanmar's experience of over 60 years of internal political instability and instances of prior genocide. The factor of 'political upheaval' is closely linked to the effect of the BGF policy in exacerbating the political stability within Myanmar. According to the RAM, the greater the magnitude of previous internal political upheavals, the more likely a new state failure will lead to genocide (Harff, 2003:66). Myanmar's internal political instability dates back to its independence in 1948 (Egreteau, 2009). Between 1961 and 2009, this instability was mostly due to ethnic conflicts (PITF, 2009b). Table 4 shows that the existence of political upheaval in Myanmar was high in 2009. In 2010, as a consequence of the implementation of the BGF policy, tensions with ethnic militant groups that had previously agreed to a ceasefire with the government – such as the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the United Wa State Army (UWSA) – increased. This has caused the fear that ethnic conflict would resume in 2011 in ethnic areas (Human Rights Watch, 2011:288–9). Therefore, the persistent internal political instability could mean that current clashes over the BGF policy could act as a trigger event, and lead to genocide. In any case, the above suggests that the variable 'political upheaval' remains high in Myanmar.

A prior instance of genocide increases the risks of genocide recurring by more than three times (Harff, 2003:66). As noted in table 4, genocide had previously occurred in Myanmar, in 1978, claiming an estimated 5,000 victims (Harff, 2003:60).

It is clear that Myanmar ranks high on the risk factor of 'political upheaval', and performs positively on the factor of 'prior genocide' in the RAM. In the following, the factors of 'ethnic character', 'regime type' and 'ideological orientation' of the ruling elite are considered.

Ethnic character, regime type and ideological orientation of the ruling elite

The RAM predicts that an ethnically salient ruling elite and an autocratic regime increase the probability of genocide, but when accompanied

by an exclusionary ideology, increase the probability of genocide by two and a half times (Harff, 2003:66–7). As far as analysing the regime type, while there is evidence of a positive shift – Myanmar held elections in 2010 – the political space available is still limited (Lall, 2011). The military secured 25 per cent of the total parliamentary seats through direct appointment and the USDP (the military-backed dominant political party in Myanmar) won 80 per cent of the contested parliamentary seats, retaining the military's dominant influence in internal politics (Shwe, 2011; Pierce, 2010:3). As voting was not conducted in some ethnic border areas, ethnic nationalities comprise a very small number among the parliamentarians (Shwe, 2011).

As far as analysing the ethnic saliency of the ruling elite and its exclusionary ideology, a study by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies revealed shared experiences of ideological exclusion among ethnic nationalities that reinforced feelings of discrimination by the government (CPCS, 2010:9,11). Ethnic groups deemed the government unsupportive of the development of ethnic national identities, culture and language. Indeed, education in ethnic states is heavily 'burmanised' and publication of non-Burmese language newspapers and books has been banned since 1995 (Pedersen, 2008:56; CPCS, 2010:9,11). Since independence, all main national political institutions including the army have been dominated by the Burmans and traditional ethnic nationality leaders have been excluded from positions of power in local areas (Pedersen, 2008:54). Freedom House (2010:1, 3–6) reports in 2010 that political rights and civil liberties in Myanmar were ranked at the lowest levels. As there are few ethnic nationality parliamentarians, it is unlikely that the ethnic character and ideological orientation of the ruling elites will undergo substantive changes towards these groups after the 2010 election and further into 2011.

This analysis reveals that Myanmar has not moved significantly away from the indicators reflected in table 4. There remains a prevalence of ideological exclusion of non-Burman ethnic nationalities, and a high degree of polarisation between the ruling elite and the ethnic nationalities.

Trade openness

According to the RAM, countries with low openness to trade are two and a half times more at risk of genocide. The RAM further suggests that although international economic linkages inhibit gross human rights violations, political linkages increase the prospects of countries responding to pressures to minimise violations (Harff, 2003:68). Although Myanmar has been assessed to score at 8.15 on trade openness in 1989 which is very low according to the PITF coding method, this has changed in recent years as seen by the elevation of the score to 37.1 in 2009 (see table 4). Myanmar is economically dependent on its neighbours as revealed by the junta's engagement over the last two years with India, China and ASEAN, as the military government transitioned to a civilian one as part of the 2008 Constitution (Wilson et al., 2010:133–50). While such interactions do increase prospects of the country responding to external pressure to minimise violations, the fact that foreign policies in the region are premised on the principle of non-interference in internal affairs and constructive engagement could lessen the impact of any pressure (Zaw and Win, 2007; Arendshorst, 2009). As there is limited interaction on human rights in the region, current political linkages may not be strong enough to significantly pressure Myanmar.

Assessment by the RAM

This section demonstrates that all six risk factors of the RAM are present in Myanmar, with political upheaval remaining high under present conditions, triggered by the BGF policy. The RAM indicates that there are genocide-conducive conditions present in Myanmar, also as a result of the BGF policy. The Genocide Prevention Project's Mass Atrocity Watch List 2008–2009[6] ranked Myanmar in Tier 1. Tier 1 countries have the highest risk of suffering mass atrocity crimes and require immediate diplomacy as well as increased civilian protection (GPP, 2008:9–10). In 2010, Myanmar, with its ethnic nationalities, particularly, the Kachin, Karenni, Karen, Mon, Rakhine, Rohingya, Shan, Chin and Wa, was ranked the country that is fifth highest at risk of mass atrocity crimes (MRGI, 2010: Table 1).

In the following section, the paper identifies some links between the two models that reinforce their combined use in the analysis undertaken in this NTS Insight. The challenges faced by these models are also highlighted.

Challenges and Ways Forward for the ERM and the RAM

The ERM and the RAM are both risk assessment models that highlight potentials and probabilities of continuing ethnic rebellions and the onset of genocide in Myanmar (Gurr, 1998:15). As such, they do not adequately provide incremental early warning signals, inhibiting policymakers from recognising early warning signs and implementing counter-measures at each stage of the escalation of ethnic rebellions and genocidal situations (Stanton, 2008:284).

However these models can establish a baseline for the assessment of tension if used in conjunction with one another. Firstly, there is an overlap in the risk factors identified by the ERM and the RAM. For instance, the ERM's 'economic, political, and cultural discrimination' overlaps with the RAM's 'exclusionary ideology of the ruling elite'. In essence, both models highlight the role of state-led discrimination against ethnic nationalities in intensifying ethnic tensions which could lead to ethnic rebellion. These create unstable political environments

that spur on the risk factors for genocide. Secondly, the assessment of the continuation of ethnic conflict sets the baseline for the subsequent analysis on the prospect of genocide using the RAM. The difference between them is that they look at the state-ethnic group relationship from different levels. The ERM model adopts a bottom-up approach that identifies ethnic groups that are likely to initiate rebellions against the government. The RAM is a top-down approach that examines the existence of risk factors of genocide against these groups against the backdrop of ethnic rebellions. While this combination establishes a baseline for tension in a country, it does not provide incremental early warning signals and this remains a significant challenge to the effectiveness of these two models in providing early warning.

Conclusion

By using the ERM, this NTS Insight tests the BGF policy to see whether it will fuel incentives for ethnic nationalities to rebel rather than reduce their militant activities; the analysis shows that the BGF policy has heightened Myanmar's internal ethnic conflict. The ERM also shows that this ethnic rebellion will in turn create domestic conditions conducive to the genocide risk factors specified by the RAM. Due to the time lag in the availability of the data, the application of the two models in the analysis is complemented by qualitative analysis based on the latest available news articles and reports. It is argued that while the two models can establish a baseline for assessing the continuation of conflict and the existence of conditions conducive to the occurrence of genocide, there is a need for these and other models to develop the capacity to identify incremental early warning signs if these models are to be effective in providing policymakers with useful signals.

Notes

1. 'Ethnic rebellion' is a concerted campaign of violent action used by organisations claiming to represent an ethnic group to make claims against the state (Gurr and Moore, 1997:1083). It is discussed as one form of 'ethnic conflict' in this NTS Insight, and will be used interchangeably with 'ethnic conflict'.
2. For details of the project, please go to http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/.
3. The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK) classifies conflict intensities into five levels, labelling levels 1 and 2 as respectively latent conflict and manifest conflict without visible violence, and levels 3, 4 and 5 as respectively crisis, severe crisis and war (HIIK, 2010:88).
4. The dataset was released in 2009, but the data was collected in 2006.
5. The polity project codes the authority characteristics of states in the world system for purposes of comparative, quantitative analysis. For details, please refer to http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm
6. The Genocide Prevention Project's Mass Atrocity Watch List 2008–2009 aggregates the findings of five indices or watch lists. The five indices or watch lists include *Countries at Risk of Genocide and Politicide in 2008*, prepared by Barbara Harff and Ted R. Gurr; *Peoples under Threat 2008*, prepared by Minority Rights Group International; *The Failed States Index* prepared by The Fund for Peace with the support of The Ploughshares Fund and published in collaboration with *Foreign Policy Magazine*; *Genocides, Politicides and Other Mass Murder since 1945, with Stages in 2008* prepared by Genocide Watch; and the list of eight countries tracked as 'areas of concern' as well as the list of countries on its 'radar list' prepared by Genocide Intervention Network.

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