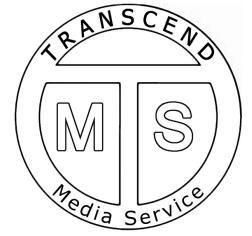


# What Really Explains Their Sein Regime's Current Pursuit of 'Ceasefire' with the Karens while Killing the Kachins



*Maung Zarni - TRANSCEND Media Service*

What is motivating Naypyidaw regime to establish ceasefire with the Karen National Union while waging wars against the Kachin Independence Organization - rather than a comprehensive national and ethnic reconciliation with - is the most crucial question that needs to be raised?

Here is a short list of factors that are at work, according to my friends and colleagues who are on the ground:

1). local commercial interests organically tied to or a part of the regime (cronies and generals' and ex-generals' families) want to secure lion's share of the spoils during the initial phase of free-marketising the country when there is no effective international competition as yet - because big time Western investors are not yet putting the money on the table for fear of huge initial risks in Burma.

No one powerful enough from the powerful Ministry of Defense or the omnipotent National Defense and Security Council is involved in any of the ceasefire - only ministers from the line-ministries which are poised to gain commercial shares/interests (such as railway, electricity, energy, etc) if effective ceasefire holds. Here are some hidden facts: the Thai commercial interests, starting with Thaksin's Foreign Minister Suriakat (spelling?) have been known to take a keen interest in building an Asia rail link (from Thailand to India through Burma's Karen-controlled areas). The Tavoy or Dawei Special Economic Zone projects - considered one of the world's largest construction projects - involving the Italian-Thai Company - is in part located in the Karen-controlled strip of Tenasserim coastal region.

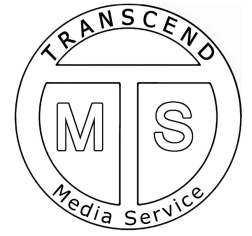
No wonder then that the financial underwriters of all the ceasefire talks are Burmese businessmen. Of course, local Capital never acts alone.

Some German foundations which serve as the front groups for German business interests have been active behind the scenes.

Don't forget West German companies have, both historically and contemporaneously, had no morals, qualms, or principles about supplying arms and dual-use technical hardware, setting up arms factories, mining, oil exploration, etc. during the half-century of Burma's dictatorial regimes, starting with Ne Win's Neanderthal regime in 1962 to Than Shwe's monk-slaughtering SPDC. The Germans have a head start as they have identified, teamed up and supported Free Market-minded local commercial interests such as Myanmar Egress.

The German interests may behave rather crass and crude. Tory or Labor, the British,

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the largest "donor", are not so far behind their EU rivals either; they have created a network of several dozen strategically placed local proxies using a 3-months program called "Chevening Fellowship" who will do Britain's bidding in the former colony.

Former British Ambassador Vicky Bowman in Rangoon is now 2nd in command of External Affairs (international lobby and public relations) at Rio Tinto, the world's 3rd largest and notorious mining company where the Brits are majority shareholders.

The Burmese have an expression for things similar to "development and other types of foreign aid from the West (or the East)": you throw crumbs when chunks are to be gained by doing so (Htaung Myin Yar Swant). "Development" in Burma is in effect what Marx called "primitive accumulation"

-<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vTS9T81b0o>

2). So, the regime offers ceasefire and talk of "codes of conduct" of its troops and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) to be followed by "development".

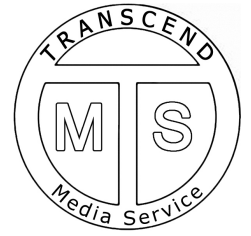
Note "development" is THE CODE word for the commercialization of expendable agricultural land (among other things) most of which, according to a recent survey by the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization, are located in non-Bama ethnic regions as the Delta and the Dry Zone, the historically profitable agri-land, have far less expendable commercially exploitable land;

3). the regime's typical "divide and conquer" strategy which makes them pursue peace (e.g., KNU) with one group while attempting to decimate another (for instance, the KIA/KIO).

The regime is 'managing' ethnic conflicts, for strategic and tactical reasons. The resolution of Burma's armed ethnic conflicts does in fact require a comprehensive nation-wide truth and reconciliation plan. At the moment, despite the right-sounding noises coming from Naypyidaw and its circle of advisers about a peace conference in Burma this is not the idea that will likely be turned into a reality by the ex-generals and generals. (Remember how the regime misled and manipulated the international media by claiming to have resolved the 6-decades of ethnic armed conflict with the world's oldest revolutionary group, namely the Karen National Union, while it was only a tentative ceasefire? Even the New York Times felt compelled to later publish a separate article which refuted the regime's claim of having ended this longest war in Burma).

4). ceasefire without a political settlement is profitable in the short and medium terms

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for those with huge commercial stakes in the region; but genuine peace and reconciliation require sharing power (and control of resources, revenues and labor/population) among parties in conflict.

Obviously, the Burmese generals and ex-generals have outsourced the business of "strategic peace" to its commercial elements - Burmese commercial interests.

Investors from Norway, Germany, etc. are licking their lips while the locals do the foreplay with the ethnic virgin lands (and untapped resources).

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