

NOREF Policy Brief

What has gone wrong with the Norwegian peace initiative in Myanmar and how should it be fixed?

Maung Zarni (January 2013)

Executive summary

The fact that Oslo is increasingly being criticised as assisting Naypyidaw in the latter's attempts to substitute economic development for a peaceful political settlement among Burma's multi-ethnic stakeholders necessitates an honest appraisal of what has gone wrong with the Norwegian Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI). Such an appraisal should involve an empirical understanding of the Tatmadaw, its worldview and inner workings; an appreciation of the role of stakeholder perceptions in peace negotiations; and an honest appraisal of the key personalities involved in and associated with the MPSI. In light of this appraisal, the MPSI should be temporarily halted until adequate steps are taken to assess its status and make it more transparent, inclusive and strategic.

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As Myanmar's most institutionally cohesive, powerful stakeholder, the Tatmadaw or armed forces for almost half a century rejected any outside involvement in the country's armed conflicts in the form of externally facilitated or supported ceasefire or peace negotiations.¹ In light of the military's decades-long intransigence, the Norwegian government's success in persuading President Thein Sein and his government to accept Oslo's involvement as a principled supporter and facilitator of Myanmar's ceasefire/peace negotiations, most specifically through the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI), is commendable, and a major step in the right direction politically. It augurs well for the prospects for lasting peace between the military-led, nominally federal government in Naypyidaw and non-Bama or non-Myanmar ethnic armed resistance organisations, including the Karen National Union (KNU), various factions of the Shan State Army, the Karenni National Progressive Party, and so on. Importantly, after Sri Lanka and Palestine, the initiative confirms the significant soft power Norway continues to possess as the world's leading peacemaker.

Despite this initial success, however, the MPSI, headed by Charles Petri, a capable veteran of the UN with his distinguished service in Myanmar specifically in the field of development, has reportedly come under heavy and sustained criticisms from non-state stakeholders such as war-torn communities and community-based organisations (CBOs) publicly, and the KNU privately.² At the level of popular multi-ethnic Burmese perception, the negative press that the MPSI has received in the Burmese- and English-language media appears to chip away at the foundation of Norway's peacemaking capabilities, i.e. Oslo's soft power. This is especially true when Oslo is seen as an outside power that is, wittingly or unwittingly, assisting Naypyidaw in the latter's attempts to substitute economic development for a peaceful political settlement among Burma's multi-ethnic stakeholders.

Here it is noteworthy that of all the non-state armed organisations in Burma, the KNU, the oldest and best-known ethnic revolutionary organisation, which launched its armed revolt against the Burmese-controlled central state as early as 1949, is historically and symbolically most significant to the military-controlled state. Despite the seeming progress in the negotiations between the KNU and Naypyidaw, there is widespread unhappiness even within the upper echelons of the KNU leadership about the MPSI's push for developmental/proto-commercial initiatives in place of real political negotiations.

All this negative publicity and concomitant growing resentment towards Oslo's role in ceasefire negotiations may come as a total surprise to active MPSI players. After all, key players such as Charles Petri or Ashley South are well-meaning and field-experienced conflict and development experts. But the fact that the very communities that are supposed to reap the tangible benefits of the MPSI's efforts are among the most vocal critics of Oslo's initiative necessitates an honest appraisal of what has gone wrong with the Norwegian peace efforts.

¹ Maung Zarni, "An inside view of reconciliation: Burma/Myanmar", in Lex Rieffel, ed., *Burma/Myanmar: Outside Interests and Inside Challenges*, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution, 2010.

² For instance, see *Democratic Voice of Burma*, "Can Norway forge peace in Burma?", July 19th 2012, <http://www.dvb.no/uncategorized/can-norway-forge-peace-in-burma/2295> ; *Mizzima*, "Western 'peace fund' initiative criticized", October 12th 2012, <http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/8218-western-peace-fund-initiative-criticized.html> . Also see Burma Partnership, "The role of peace fund initiatives in Burma", October 2012, <http://www.burmapartnership.org/2012/10/panel-discussion-the-role-of-peace-fund-initiatives-in-burma/>; Burma Partnership, "Concerns and recommendations regarding peace funds", October 2012, <http://www.burmapartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Concerns-and-Recommendations-Regarding-Peace-Funds.pdf>.

After all, should the MPSI succeed in advancing the cause of lasting peace and development, which could not have been dreamed of only a year ago, the communities involved in armed conflicts in the eastern Myanmar states of Shan, Karenni and Karen are the ones who will reap significant benefits in terms of human security and potentially thriving livelihood opportunities.

Three key areas of the ongoing Norwegian peacemaking efforts need to be reflected upon critically against the empirical realities of the country, both in terms of its structural conditions and human players. This process should involve:

- an empirical analysis of the Tatmadaw in terms of its institutional values, interests, inner workings, role in past negotiations and impact on the current negotiations;
- an appreciation of the role of stakeholder perceptions in peace negotiations, irrespective of their “bargaining-power differential”; and
- an honest appraisal of the key personalities involved in and associated with the MPSI.

These are discussed below.

An empirical analysis of the Tatmadaw

By virtue of the fact that the military, a “total institution”,³ is the most powerful stakeholder in Myanmar politics, it holds the key to unlocking the door of peace and harmony there. Therefore, an empirical – as opposed to theoretical and conceptual – analysis of the Tatmadaw institutionally is key to formulating a comprehensive peacemaking strategy. The need to understand the Tatmadaw is more pronounced in the case of Myanmar because of the organisation’s extremely secretive nature and the opaqueness of decision-making and policy formulation processes in Naypyidaw.

To start with, it should be made clear that the author is not privy to the conceptual, strategic and policy discussions that have resulted in the creation, development and field application of the MPSI, nor has he interviewed key designers of the initiative. He is therefore not in a position to assess how empirically grounded in terms of an understanding of Myanmar’s most important stakeholder the MPSI is as an instrument of Norwegian peacemaking in Myanmar, and how accurately informed its designers and key players are in this regard.

That said, given the unmistakable primacy of the military in Myanmar’s political domain, especially in terms of state-ethnic group relations, it is crucial for any internal or external evaluator of the MPSI to ask the following questions in order to gauge the effectiveness and direction of the real-world application of the MPSI:

1. What is the Tatmadaw’s overarching, durable and institutionalised worldview, regardless of which personality occupies decision-making position(s), and with specific respect to the institution’s view towards its armed, non-Bama ethnic opponents, for instance, the Karen National Liberation Army/KNU?
2. How does the Tatmadaw operate in terms of its observable patterns of behaviour, i.e. what is its modus operandi, with special reference to its ceasefire efforts, past and present, since 1962?

³ See Erving Goffmann, “Characteristics of total institutions”, n.d., <http://www.markfoster.net/neurelitism/totalinstitutions.pdf>

3. Regarding the apparently Tatmadaw-supported ceasefire negotiations, who are the ultimate decision-makers within the Tatmadaw's power (as opposed to formal organisational) structures?⁴
4. How does the decision-maker or -makers (if decisions are made collectively, rather than by a single strongman) perceive the ongoing peace efforts conducted by President Thein Sein's point men during the current peace negotiations?

Here it suffices to say that the Tatmadaw has attached a significantly low priority to the ceasefire negotiations led by the MPSI's governmental counterpart. Concrete examples of this abound. Firstly, despite President Thein Sein's conciliatory tone and officially expressed desire for peace in the war-torn ethnic non-Bama regions of northern and eastern Myanmar, where he would like to see ethnic people "swap their guns with laptops", the Tatmadaw's absolute priority – security – remain out of sync with the common mission of interethnic peace shared by the president's peace team and the MPSI, as well as with ethnic armed resistance organisations such as the KNU.⁵ Secondly, and equally importantly, by the president's own admission not only is his team inadequately authorised to negotiate on behalf of Naypyidaw's most important stakeholder – the Tatmadaw – but it is not even privy to basic, but important technical information central to the substantive negotiations, e.g. Myanmar government troop locations.⁶ Thirdly, despite repeated presidential orders that Tatmadaw troops should cease hostilities, skirmishes have reportedly continued in all conflict zones, leading to the widespread belief that the president who is supposedly patronising the ceasefire negotiations does not have sufficient control over what military commanders do on the ground, or conversely, that the troops do not take presidential orders seriously.

Fourthly, the troubling self-admission that the presidential peace negotiation team has been financed with private money from a couple of cronies close to the president and his negotiating team led by the union minister, former Major-General Aung Min,⁷ speaks volumes about how the Tatmadaw really thinks of the ongoing peace negotiations. After all, the Tatmadaw enjoys the lion's share of the national budget and oversees the country's largest business conglomerate – Myanmar Economic Holdings. In terms of the peace negotiations, the small amount of their financial resources that the Tatmadaw leaders have devoted to the pursuit of peace with ethnic armed organisations says a great deal about their lack of interest in genuine peace.

⁴ The formal institutional/power structures do not necessarily reflect the flow and exercise of actual executive power. For instance, regarding Lieutenant-General Thein Htay, who is minister of border affairs and the point man in charge of international relations on the still-unfolding Rakhine-Rohingya violence: despite being only a cabinet member in President Thein Sein's administration, the president needs to heed his input because Thein Htay is close to former military leader Than Shwe's family and believed to be one of the main protectors of the "retired" despot and his family's economic assets. Thein Htay has been on the board of the military's powerful conglomerate – Myanmar Economic Holdings (sources: personal telephonic communications with an internal military source, Rangoon, September 2012 and Skype conversation with a veteran colleague of General Thein Htay, Washington, DC, October 2012).

⁵ Burmese language YouTube clip, chief government peace negotiator Aung Min, KNU-Naypyidaw press conference, Pa-an, Karen State. In his own words: "But I cannot personally make the government troops withdraw. I can only assume responsibility for political and economic issues. The withdrawal is something that the commanders of both armies must agree upon." See also Aung Min's interview: "A minister without borders", *Irrawaddy*, September 19th 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/14402>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Last, but not least, Aung Min, Naypyidaw's chief negotiator, is not authorised to negotiate on political matters. His powerlessness as the government's chief negotiator was pointedly described by one of the country's most important ethnic stakeholders, Kachin Independence Organisation chairman Zawng Hra: "Aung Min has no political mandate. So far, he has always avoided talking about political issues. His duty is only to present and follow his government's policies."⁸ This raises the question of why Naypyidaw, and more specifically the military leadership, has chosen not to empower its point man in the peace talks to negotiate the most important issue: political grievances, as opposed to military and developmental matters.

The consensus view among ethnic stakeholders and leading Burma watchers and specialists is that not even President Thein Sein has the power to bend the military to his widely reported sincere desire for ethnic peace.⁹ His presidential orders to halt military offensives against the Kachin Independence Army have been blatantly ignored by the military commanders and Thein Sein has been forced to defend the attacks on the Kachins as "defensive". A Georgetown University professor and former director on Asia in the U.S. National Security Council in the George W. Bush Administration, Michael Green, recently returned from a visit to Naypyidaw and Rangoon, where he met Burmese military personnel. His insights about the military's interests in Burma are most relevant to the MPSI's peace support efforts in Burma. Green observed rather perceptively:

Thein Sein does not have complete control of the military. The government sits under the watchful eye of a security commission where Thein Sein only has about a half the votes which has the authority to declare martial law and close parliament at any time. The second example is cease-fire agreements. Cease-fire agreements in the Kachin State or the Karen State or the other ethnic minority areas mean the forces have been separated and they're not shooting at each other. But in some cases those are very uneasy ceasefires and the underlying source of dissatisfaction continues. Everyone I talked to in Burma from the government side, military officers, said they are in favor of moving towards democracy and removing the military from politics over time if the security of the nation can be guaranteed. Well, it can't be guaranteed because there are so many powerful interests tied to parts of the military that have an interest in maintaining the current situation where they do not have to share any of the diamonds, the oil, the timber with the ethnic minorities of Kachin that live there.¹⁰

Either way, this verifiable disconnect between the Tatmadaw's empirical realities, such as its pattern of negotiating behaviour, which is not conducive to confidence-building – specifically, that of excluding multi-ethnic political/communal grievances – is something that needs to be re-examined in light of the growing popular criticisms regarding Norwegian peace efforts. The author is unaware of the existence or emergence of a direct link between the MPSI,

⁸ Bertil Lintner, "More war than peace in Myanmar", *Asia Times*, December 18th 2012, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/NL18Ae01.html.

⁹ This view is shared by experts with radically different professional and political backgrounds, ranging from Michael Green, who is a former national security adviser on Asia in the George W. Bush administration, to the well-known author and journalist Bertil Lintner, not to mention the Kachin and Karen negotiators on the ground. For an interview with Green, see *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, "The future of Burma: an interview with Dr. Michael Green", December 11th 2012, <http://journal.georgetown.edu/2012/12/11/the-future-of-burma-an-interview-with-dr-michael-green/>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

institutionally or via individual MPSI players such as Charles Petri himself, and the military. It is highly doubtful that the Ministry of Defence will allow an external Western peace initiative any serious and direct link with the military on subjects that it considers strictly sovereign matters. The Burmese military, with its institutionalised anti-colonialist worldview, considers certain topics or domains its exclusive prerogatives. Political matters concerning ethnic minorities and their grievances are certainly viewed by Naypyidaw's military stakeholders as sensitive and their sole domain of concern, and they believe that such issues need to be firewalled from any outside "meddling" by the MPSI or anyone else.

The (damaging) perceptions of MPSI-led peace efforts

A grounded – as opposed to conceptual – understanding of the Myanmar military is a crucial foundation on which any peace efforts need to rest in order to bear fruit. But it is not the only foundation, because politics, especially the politics of ceasefire negotiation, is a mass spectacle for most people who are not directly involved in the process.¹¹ Therefore, the general perceptions of Norwegian peace initiative(s), including the various CBOs and individual members of eastern Myanmar communities affected by the unresolved armed conflicts, become extremely important.

A number of organisations and public figures have directed their criticism against the MPSI in the form of articles, editorials, reports, analyses and public panels. Enough ink has been spilt on the issue of perceptions, but it is worth noting that the strongest criticism of the MPSI's role in the KNU-Naypyidaw negotiations process has come not only from grassroots communities whose role has been little more than that of "political spectators" on the margins, but also from key KNU negotiators.¹² In the words of Zora Phan, a prominent Karen dissident in her own right and daughter of slain KNU secretary-general Pado'h Man Sher, perception-relevant issues "include the choice of people involved in running the peace fund, the number of Burmese business people attending peace negotiations, and the concern that internationally funded NGOs are coming into ethnic states and imposing what they think is best".¹³

These perceptions – which are based on the unfolding realities on the ground – need to be taken seriously if the MPSI is to succeed as a politically independent support initiative that inspires confidence, especially among the conflict-affected Karen, Shan and Karenni communities. Consultations with community stakeholders, which unfortunately are often seen as a ritual exercise among international financial institutions such as the World Bank, end up as a public relations smokescreen for imposing the agenda of powerful stakeholders in cases of economic development projects in "virgin" territories. These Myanmar conflict zones are reportedly rich, unexplored and unexploited in terms of their expandable fertile agricultural acreage, forest products and deposits of minerals such as gold.

The MPSI's perceived or real push for development and livelihoods before a mutually agreed-on peaceful political resolution of the vital issues of political, administrative and cultural

¹¹ Larry Arnhart, "Murray Edelman, political symbolism, and the incoherence of political science", *The Political Science Reviewer*, 1985, http://www.mmisi.org/pr/15_01/arnhart.pdf.

¹² Personal phone communications with a key KNU negotiator directly involved in the MPSI-facilitated process, September 2012.

¹³ Zora Phan, "Peace funds should be based on local needs", *Mizzima*, October 26th 2012, <http://www.mizzima.com/edop/commentary/8301-peace-funds-should-be-based-on-local-needs.html>.

autonomy, which is the widely shared policy objective of all ceasefire groups, in effect leads to the perception that Norwegian peace efforts may be playing into Naypyidaw's development-focused strategy towards peacebuilding, which is perceived as a way of dodging the ethnic ceasefire groups' ultimate concern: political and administrative autonomy.

These perceptions about the peace-supporting country's national interests, real or perceived, are also compounded by the fact that key individuals involved in or associated with the MPSI carry public relations and political baggage.

Key personalities in MPSI-led peacemaking attempts

Three sets of domestic and international players who are centrally and proactively involved need to be understood in the proper political and historical context – and in terms of the “baggage” they carry. On the one hand, their long years of involvement in Myanmar affairs means that they are part of the human capital helping to address the country's challenges as it emerges from a half century of isolation and oppression. On the other hand, their political footprints are discernible to both stakeholders and “spectator communities”, i.e. politically aware grassroots organisations and individual advocates for ethnic autonomy, countrywide peace, and ethnic and national reconciliation.

Firstly, the most important players within the limited context of peace negotiations are the members of the presidential team of negotiators, i.e. ex-Major General Aung Min and ex-Commodore Soe Than (and ex-Major General Tin Naing Thein). Naypyidaw's current peace efforts have been patronised, organised, strategised and directed from President Thein Sein's office. All the key officials in the Presidential Office are highly trained military intelligence officers who as young captains survived the first large-scale purge of the dreaded military intelligence network in 1983.

In the Burmese domestic context, military intelligence officers have over the past 50 years since 1962 been widely unpopular, and they are the type of military officers whom the public love to hate because of their excessive abuses of power and use of blackmail tactics, intimidation and torture. They are perceived by the domestic public as cunning, manipulative and untrustworthy. Through the eyes of their fellow Tatmadaw officers they are seen as an opportunistic elite who are more politicians than soldiers.¹⁴

Perhaps the most pertinent fact about them is that they have no sway with military commanders and strategists, without whose support no ceasefire, let alone lasting peace, is conceivable. Naypyidaw's chief peace negotiator, Aung Min, has already confessed his inability to influence the Tatmadaw or the military when asked recently about a crucial condition/demand that the Tatmadaw troops begin to withdraw from the territories controlled by the KNU. Worse still, it is widely reported that Myanmar military commanders and strategists are using the ceasefire period for troop reinforcements, the restocking of supplies and munitions, and intelligence gathering and scouting of the terrain in ceasefire areas that have suddenly become accessible to infantry intelligence units thanks to the negotiations.

¹⁴ Source: numerous personal communications, including formal interviews and informal conversations with scores of intelligence and infantry military officers between 2003 and 2012. The most recent personal communication was with a decorated ex-brigadier-general, Thiha Thet Oo Maung, in Brunei, October 23rd 2012. A former ambassador to Brunei Darussalam, he was recently appointed ambassador to Egypt, Turkey, Jordan and two other Arab countries.

Secondly, a key player, Myanmar Egress,¹⁵ and some of its founders and executive officers (e.g., U Hla Maung Shwe, older brother of the commandant of the National Defence University, Major-General Hla Myint Swe; and Dr Kyaw Yin Hlaing, secretary of the Presidential Inquiry Commission on the Rakhine-Rohingya/"Bangali" sectarian violence) are widely perceived in the eyes of both the Bama mainstream public and ethnic minority leaders as being in a strategic symbiotic relationship with Naypyidaw at best or pawns in the generals' game of policy and political chess that is played out primarily in the world of the media, business and diplomacy.

A commonly reported CBO concern regarding the central role Myanmar Egress has played is that it is run by commercially minded regime cronies and technocrats. Aside from the commercial and personal motives of the organisation's leaders, perceived or real, at the level of its values and ideologies, non-Bama CBOs and activists view these key MPSI associates as ethnonationalists who talk the talk of ethnic reconciliation and equality, but do not walk it. Several ethnic non-Bama political activists and politicians have complained to the author that Myanmar Egress talks to them about "the need for ethnic equality" while quietly stoking its military contacts' Bama nationalism vis-à-vis the other multi-ethnic communities.

Although this is not directly pertinent to the Norwegian peace efforts in eastern Myanmar, it is crucial to point out that a highly respected Presidential Inquiry Commission member, the comedian and artist Zarganar, has accused Dr Kyaw Yin Hlaing, the secretary of the Rohingya-Rakhine riot inquiry committee, of attempting to derail the commission's attempts to get to the bottom of the first wave of ethno-religious violence in western Burma.¹⁶ Equally importantly, Myanmar Egress's news publication in Burmese, *The Voice Weekly*, has been active in promoting anti-Muslim racist messages among its readership, while prominent Myanmar Egress alumni are extremely active in social media, echoing *The Voice Weekly's* myopic ethnonationalism anchored in Bama-Buddhist chauvinism. It is hardly surprising that non-Bama stakeholders – not only grassroots communities and political spectators, but also those non-Bama ethnic leaders directly involved in ceasefire and peace negotiations – are exceedingly uncomfortable about the instrumental role Myanmar Egress leaders are playing in the Norwegian peace initiative, in light of the fact that a very important civil society organisation like Egress and its leaders are not only too close to Naypyidaw's ex-generals and generals, but are also promoting the Tatmadaw's worldview – a well-documented racist, state-centred ethnonationalism of the Bama-Buddhist majority.

It is vitally important to rigorously and continuously triangulate the policy and strategy input from Egress into the Norwegian peacemaking initiative for two reasons: (1) Myanmar Egress-supplied raw data about the inner workings of the military and how to most effectively work Naypyidaw's key players is filtered through Egress's personal and organisational lens; and (2) Egress, since its inception around the time of Cyclone Nargis, has been used by Naypyidaw's

¹⁵ According to its website (<http://www.myanmaregress.org/about.html> , accessed December 29th 2012), Myanmar Egress "is a non profit Organization founded by Myanmar scholars and social workers who have been actively involved in various civil society activities in Myanmar in the last fifteen years. Myanmar Egress was set up in 2006 by a group of Myanmar nationalists committed to state building through positive change in a progressive yet constructive collaboration and working relationship with the government and all interest groups, both local and foreign".

¹⁶ Personal phone communication with Maung Thura, aka Zarganar, Grand Hotel, Oslo, October 26th 2012.

security/intelligence network as a two-way conduit.¹⁷ Egress uses *The Voice Weekly* to project pro-government spin while at the same time collecting information about various international players, which it is expected to pass on to the regime.

Thirdly, foreign consultants instrumental in the establishment of the MPSI and other peace support initiatives also have their own individual and professional histories of political involvement in Myanmar's political affairs. Their collective reputational baggage gives rise to a serious perception problem that is especially relevant to Ashley South, formerly of the Thailand Burma Border Consortium,¹⁸ and Richard Horsey, former International Labour Organisation liaison officer in Rangoon and sometime consultant to the International Crisis Group (ICG).¹⁹ Since official, scathing criticism from the KNU, South seems to have stopped his unsubstantiated accusations against the KNU and several border-based ethnic CBOs, but the damage to his own professional and personal reputation among Karen ethnic communities in the KNU territories has already been done. The author sat on a panel with South at a subcommittee meeting at the British House of Commons in 2010 that discussed the issues of internally displaced persons in Burma and other war refugees. Even the government official from Britain's Department of International Development was visibly taken aback by South's characterisation of the KNU as the interest group that was trying to keep the war in the Karen areas alive for its own power, glory and wealth.

Regarding Horsey, while his commissioned reports by and association with the ICG may have made him appear to be a highly qualified Burma expert, two issues arise concerning his reputation among grassroots stakeholders and ethnic elite peace negotiators from the Kachin Independence Army and the KNU. The ICG is widely seen as a credible think-tank that enjoys financial support from most Western governments. However, in the eyes of these stakeholders – i.e. civil society leaders from the minority ethnic war zones – the ICG, with its avowed aim of turning war zones into free markets, is somewhat suspect. The ICG's recent act of conferring on President Thein Sein, along with Brazilian President Lula da Silva, its new In Pursuit of World Peace award came just a week or so after Burma's security troops firebombed Buddhist monks protesting against the copper mine jointly operated by a Chinese mining company and Burmese military conglomerate Myanmar Economic Holding. With no exceptions, all ICG reports on Burma that Horsey has written over the past few years have been verifiably elite-centred and

¹⁷ Source: personal communications with the then Brigadier Mya Tun Oo, then-chief of negotiations with armed resistance groups within the Military Affairs Security (MAS) or post-Khin Nyunt military intelligence bureau. Mya Tun Oo was then the right-hand man of the head of the MAS and he is now a lieutenant-general, ranked fifth in the Ministry of Defence chain of command; personal communications with Yin Yin Oo, the Foreign Ministry official who was instrumental in setting up Track II negotiations between military intelligence and foreign diplomatic missions.

¹⁸ "Not only is South's work dishonest and does a great disservice to Karen people and the pro-democracy movement, he also fails to declare that he hired and paid for Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldiers to be his 'security' for his 'fact-finding' forays into Karen State. In his past works he brags about his friendship with former Karen leader General Bo Mya. If South is so concerned that the camps prolong the conflict, why didn't he raise the issue during his many years working for the Thailand Burma Border Consortium? Why did he wait until he was being paid more handsomely by the United Nations and living far away in England to change his mind?" (Naw Htoo Paw, "Lies, damned lies and statistics", *Karen News*, August 22nd 2012, <http://karennews.org/2011/08/lies-damned-lies-and-statistics.html/>).

¹⁹ See my analysis in "Outrageously optimistic", *Himal*, May 2011, <http://www.himalmag.com/component/content/article/4434-outrageously-optimistic.html>.

selective in their choice of evidence and voices.²⁰ One of the commissioned ICG reports on Myanmar's 2010 elections that Horsey authored caused an uproar among not only Burmese activists and exiles, especially non-Bama ethnic activists, but also in highly respectable academic circles.²¹

Recommendations

In light of the above discussion, I wish to offer the following recommendations:

1. Suspend – not just scale down – the MPSI for a short period in order to first facilitate an internal critical assessment of both it and other Norwegian peace efforts in Myanmar. Such an assessment should be conducted jointly by civil society stakeholders from Burma's active and dormant war zones.
2. Using a politically independent facilitator in professional communications, hold a series of closed-door, comprehensive, invitation-only consultation meetings, first in Thailand and subsequently in Oslo, with key non-Naypyidaw stakeholders, including both ceasefire negotiators from the KNU and other CBO leaders with critical views of the MPSI, in order to take stock of the concerns and complaints of the primary stakeholders. These consultations should take place without the presence of either Naypyidaw representatives and advisers or MPSI consultants and players.
3. Review critically the MPSI and other peace support instruments with both the MPSI and other donor-support group's programmes in order to reconceptualise and revise the role and approach of the international/donor community towards peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, on the basis of input from all stakeholders, including the current MPSI consultants and Naypyidaw's presidential peace negotiators.
4. Relaunch the MPSI and other broader peace support initiatives after the necessary changes have been made to these instruments.
5. Hold press conferences in relevant places stressing the more transparent, inclusive and strategic nature of Norwegian peacemaking efforts in Myanmar.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Personal email communications with James C. Scott, Sterling Professor of Political Science, Yale University, 2011.