Myanmar/Burma: The determinants of democratisation and direction of orientation vis-à-vis the West & China

- An examination of Myanmar's internal and external prerequisites for future democratic consolidation, direction of orientation & the susceptibility to the possible threat of a 'Black Knight'.

Master's thesis

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASSK	Aung San Sun Kyi
BSPP	Burma Socialist Programme Party
BTI	The Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)
CAR	Competitive Authoritarian Regime
CFR	Council of Foreign Relations
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EIU	The Economist Intelligence Unit
EU	The European Union
EU EOM	The European Union's Election Observation Mission
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FH	Freedom House
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non Governmental Organisation
NCPO	National Council for Peace and Order
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NLD	National League for Democracy
NTI	Nuclear Threat Initiative
OAS	Organization of American States
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OEC	The Observatory of Economic Complexity
OFAC	Office of Foreign Assets Control
SAARC	South Asian Cooperation for Regional Cooperation
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UEC	Union Election Commission
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	The United States of America
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
WB	The World Bank

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"The bewildering variety of language, culture, and religion in Southeast Asia appears at first glance to defy any attempts at generalizations"

(Anthony Reid 1988 *in* Slater 2010: 7)

"More than any other region, Asia will determine the global fate of democracy in the next to three decades."

(Larry Diamond 2008: 212)

"To depict recent changes in Burma as democratic reforms is not to argue that Burma either has already become or is necessarily in the process of becoming a democratic regime. Far too many features of the Burmese polity remain authoritarian for the country to qualify as even minimally procedurally democratic"

(Bertil Lintner 2013).

Abstract

After nearly five decades of brutal military rule in Myanmar (Burma), the opposition party National League for Democracy (NLD), with Nobel Peace Laureate Aung Sun Suu Kyi in front, won a landslide victory, marking the assumed end of civil abuse and oppression, and the beginning of true democratic development and peace throughout the country. Despite the "opening up" of Myanmar in 2011, in succession of former President Thein Sein's political reforms, causing an array of promptly lifted international sanctions, concerns persist whether the role of the military in domestic as well as foreign affairs have indeed caused any liberating merits to the people of the unfortunate, particularly in regards to the continuous mistreatment of ethnic minorities' freedom, civil liberties and political rights, and the restrictions of which the constitutional framework is susceptible to amendment. Thus, the following thesis draws upon such domestic concerns, as well as it examines the country-specific prerequisites for future democracy consolidation, along with the possible interruptions of external actors undermining the seemingly progressive turn in the denounced "hybrid regime" of Myanmar. Through a comparative political model, the thesis seeks to investigate the external ties (or linkages) that connects Myanmar with the two specific entities of the West and China respectively, i.e. to determine the future direction of orientation vis-à-vis, and proxy for a decisive democratic or autocratic future outcome. Studying the internal and external determinants of democracy, illustrated in study's analytical framework, Myanmar have shown convincingly dominant linkages to that of "Black Knight" China, leaving legitimising ties to that of the West, and correspondingly, geopolitical Chinese-containing ties from a Western perspective. More so, the thesis questions the sheer authenticity of progressiveness amid the otherwise pro-democratic party of Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as the seemingly restrained leeway or margin for "The Lady" to implement legislation and encourage civil society without the presence and attitude of the constitutional quarter of parliament, the Tatmadaw.

1. Chapter one: Introduction

Despite recent and crucial steps towards genuine democratic development in Myanmar[1], largely but not solely, facilitated by the former long-time imprisoned and house-arrested freedom-fighter and activist, Aung San Suu Kyi (abbreviated ASSK), President of the National League for Democracy (NLD), the country still face a manifold of interlinked political, social, cultural and humanitarian issues. These developments have been causing both pressure and expectation amid the society in Myanmar to resist internal as external dangers to its future prosperity and ability to change. Prone to what has become the land and the people of the unfortunate, the civilians of Myanmar have been dealt a disproportionate emphasis relative to the political strife over power, influence and control. Equally important, Western-oriented associations have been increasingly absorbed by the political suppression's impact on human rights, and decreasingly concerned about the human rights agonies ascending from endemic poverty (South 2008: xi). According to long-time Swedish journalist reviewing Myanmar throughout its political developments, Bertil Lintner, notes that "everything is different now but nothing has changed" (Lintner 2015), as he witnesses the recent political and economic reforms ultimo 2015.

Officially coined the "Republic of the Union of Myanmar", the long plagued Southeast Asian country ranks 148 (of 188 countries and territories) on UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) (2015), leaving a long list of development indicators blank, thus a lot of questions unanswered, while, however, suggesting positive developments from 1980-2014 in terms of life expectancy and GNI per capita, indicating almost relative parallel developments to e.g. China, Laos and Cambodia (UNDP 2015: 3-4). What the HDI and indexes alike however fail to grasp, admittedly nor intent to, or by definition and practise seek to, are the contextually reliant rationalisations that inevitably have - and forever will - characterise the wounded and outright complex case of Myanmar and its peoples. 26 % of the population live under the poverty line, 70 % for rural populations (where ethnic minorities characteristically reside) (2014) (UNDP 2015a). According to the Freedom House, Myanmar's

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[1] Etymology of Myanmar: In 1989 the Burmese government officially changed the name of the country from Burma, dating back to the country's colonial times, or earlier. The renaming of the country remains a contested issue up until today, as many political and ethnic opposition groups, and foreign nations, insist to continuously use Burma as they do not recognise the legitimacy of the military government (Houtman 1999: 44; Steinberg 2002: xi). "Myanmar" is used throughout the thesis.

status is still "not free" (2015), scoring critically low on all measures; designated freedom, civil liberties and political rights (Freedom House 2016).

Moreover, since "opening up" the political arena in Myanmar in 2011, after five decades of authoritarian military rule of General U Ne Win's military coup in 1962, the country turned into a single-party state led by the Burmese Social Program Party (BSPP). With complementing draconian laws, CSOs, NGOs and foreign aid bodies have been keen to increase their interventions and activities in Myanmar (Morgan 2015). The militarisation of society along with the strongly delimited ability for people to freely organise, have caused a highly wounded environment for individual liberty, the thrive of civil society and democratic development (Kramer 2011: 2; ADB 2015: 2).

What further constitutes Myanmar as an interesting object for academic scrutiny is its incredibly diverse ethnic environment that, besides causing countrywide strife and confrontations, may be the starting point to understanding the country's complex *domestic* and *international* position. Embracing more than 135 different ethnic groups in a total of seven divisions, seven states, one union territory – and six (to a modest degree) self-administered zones, according to the 2008 constitution[2], Myanmar is one of the greatest multi-ethnic countries in the world, housing a wide range of cultural, linguistic and historical differences amid their estimated 53.4 million citizens (World Bank 2014; Steinberg 2013: xxiv-xxv). In regards to the civil society sector, such ethnic diversity in Myanmar make up for a notable contest for power within the country, while creating both reactionary and progressive oppositions to the half a century authoritarian regime keen to suppress social grouping, rights to assembly, and generally "carve out" every sphere of autonomy among groups providing services and promoting democracy (Petrie & South 2014: 88).

As demonstrated in Myanmar, and seemingly contrary to the fully-fledged bottom-up grassroots belief per se, present-day democratisation from the very below must be supplemented and assisted by actions at the national/elite level in a synergic relationship. Through civil society networks, actors are

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[2] In 2008 the government adopted a *new constitution* based on a highly criticised and fraudulent referendum, creating the "discipline-flourishing democracy". Notable changes include i) assigning the military *one quarter* (110 of 440) of all parliamentary seats - *continued following page*
 ii) assigning The Ministry of Home Affairs to fall exclusively under military control, and iii) barring anyone married to a non-Burmese citizen the right to running for office (as coincidentally the case of ASSK) (The Economist 2014).

able to gradually change the structures of local and national government by creating patterns of genuine empowerment. In the case of Myanmar, however, the majority of local NGOs have not been driven by explicit political agendas, but often simply reacted upon humanitarian relief through e.g. welfare-related, local development activities, post-Cyclone Nargis devastation and shattering armed conflicts in the country, thus tying true bottom-up attributions to civil society and generating models for assembling citizens as a whole, that is, given the organisations' ability to avoid government suppression of activities (South 2013: x). Succeeding in developing such structures on a local level, according to Steinberg (2013: 128), may result in some degree of pluralism and democratisation in the unitary state of Myanmar – in theory that is, and only considering the *internal* determinants of democratisation. As the study later unfolds, democratisation processes cannot be isolated or limited to the effects of civil society and domestic/internal mechanisms solely, but must be studied in a much broader, more international/external sense to understand the prerequisites necessary for democratic development.

Due to the opening up in Myanmar, causing a shift from domestic to mere international political and economic orientation, Myanmar remains relatively isolated, though, not to neglect, yet again progressively open towards to the West (lifted sanctions) and various powers in Asia, such as China and through the membership of the ASEAN[3] integration (since 1997) (Rasiah & Schmidt 2010: 2; Lintner 2015a: 175). Such regional integration, according to Tisdall (2016), may cause stronger (natural) ties to authoritarian regimes such as China (later termed as a possible "Black Knight" effect). Accordingly, external developments seem rather important to study alongside the concrete Burmese country-specific occurrences when investigating Myanmar's future democratic development, whether influences are produced by strong domestic civil societal environments, inherited by *linkages* to the West - or challenged by opposing powers in the region. Despite such emphasis on domestic relations and civic activism *internally* present in Myanmar, the aforementioned *external* factors are equally vital - if not superior - to understand the recent transition of "hybrid regime" Myanmar. Economic and political linkages to and affiliations with Europe and North America, along with dependencies inside Asia, are central to the present ambiguity of Myanmar, which is the principal focus of the thesis.

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[3] ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations, consisting of initially Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, and later Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam (ASEAN Member States, asean.org).

1.1. Research questions

Correspondingly, the purpose of the thesis is to i) examine the environment of which democratisation processes occur and have occurred, ii) discover the complexities of the determinants of democratisation, namely the impetus of respectively *domestic/internal* and *international/external* determinants, iii) analyse the *internal* case of Myanmar along with a comparative analysis of the country's *external* ties towards respectively the West and China, hence emphasising the conundrum of the country's future direction, iv) discuss the contemporary state of Myanmar based on the findings and theoretically founded explanations to regime change, and v) briefly problematise Myanmar's development through a perspectival glance at the neighbouring state of Thailand. Thus my research question(s):

> ***"What are the key internal and external determinants for continuous democratic development in Myanmar, and what are the future prospects of its immediate survival?"***

Sub-questions to be addressed during the course of the thesis:

- *"How does the recent developments in Myanmar comply with the recent 'waves of democracy', particularly in Southeast Asia?"*

- *"How is investigating Myanmar's linkage and leverage with the West and China beneficial to predicting the future prospects for continuous democracy in Myanmar?"*

- *"How may China act as a 'dark knight' and hindrance for democratic development in Myanmar?"*

- *"How are we able to compare and apply recent developments in Thailand to the case of Myanmar?"*

1.2. Structure of the thesis

In succession of the outlined introductory section above, **Chapter 2** will include the methodological choices of the study, including the necessary delimitations, methodological application, and central to the structure of the thesis, a slight alteration and operationalisation of L&W's (abbreviated L&W) concepts of 'linkage and leverage', and 'black knights'. Accordingly, the following theoretically concerned **Chapter 3** includes a thorough examination of Huntington's wave analogy, along with competing theorists' views on democratisation/transition processes. Moreover, the aforementioned structuralist approach to democratisation by L&W, and an insight into the domestic, civil societal role in regards to democratisation, altogether emphasises both the internal and external dimensions of democratisation.

Subsequently, **Chapter 4** addresses the essential historic and present contextual composition of Myanmar's prerequisites for democratic transition. **Chapter 5** includes an analytical examination of Myanmar's 'competitive authoritarianism' domestically, and the country's international linkage and leverage vis-à-vis external actors, i.e. the West and China, using the models of L&W. **Chapter 6** consists of a theoretical discussion of findings, effects of the black knight, as well as a perspectival discussion balancing the recent developments in neighbouring Thailand with those of Myanmar. The thesis' final conclusions figures in **Chapter 7.**

2. Chapter two: Methodological considerations

Essentially, the methodological section will draw attention to i) the thesis' initial limitations, ii) the applied research methodology, i.e. the procedures practised and precautions taken to answer the posed research question, and iv) the application of L&W's comparative research model, and the amendments completed in the adoption of the theoretical model, as the thesis seeks to stay as close as possible to the model, although certain exceptions have been necessary.

2.1. Delimitation of the thesis

Limitations are many, for a start. And clearly, there many ways of conducting a study to answer the posed research question above. As such - although delimitations are central – this section will focus more on concrete selections, rather than a lengthy examination of what have not been selected.

First, the theoretical literature study focusing on the concept of democracy and the attempts to study such in comparative politics, altogether demonstrates the extensively diversified ways of analysing democracy, depending on one's view- and vantage point and scope of interest. Although different, "thin" or "thick", minimalistic or complex, the literature and its indexes (e.g. Freedom House, EUI, Slater 2010, Theorell 2010, and others) share a great deal of concepts in respect to democratic consolidation, such as measures of freedom, electoral credibility, foreign influence, civil liberties, political rights etc. - which all are well-represented in L&W's selected comparative models of characterising 'competitive authoritarian regimes' (CAR), i.e. democratic requirements. Moreover, Huntington's cherished wave analogy figures as a fundamental theoretical perspective, as it questions the waves in respect to that of Southeast Asia, as well as the perils of possible reversions. Alternative approaches could have involved more economic-centred theories emphasising e.g. modernisation theory (although criticised for its eurocentrism and westernisation, and disregarding of external sources of change), as well as Wallerstein's World Systems Theory, or the institutional design of Myanmar, role of leadership etc.

Contextually in respect to Myanmar, the emphasis has been fixed on recent domestic milestones in regards to democratic development – of lack hereof - its historical prerequisites, regional influences, and largely a focus on supranational- and governmental level actors, rather than e.g. local-level armed ethnic groups actors, inter-state conflicts and legitimacy among ethnic groups. Thus, the con-

textual chapter seeks to address the present and historic country-specific prerequisites for Myanmar's challenging pursuit and trajectory towards democratic solutions, as well as building a fundamental basis for the analytical chapter analysing various economic and social aspects.

The methodological application of the thesis somewhat reflects the research question per se, as it fundamentally seeks to investigate both *internal* and *external* relations. Additionally, as the external dimension is sometimes depreciated as democratic determinants (Tolstrup 2013: 721), L&W's emphasis of such through the concepts of linkage and leverage towards external actors are well-appointed. Using the direction of orientation (i.e. towards the West or China, democratic or autocratic future) as proxies for democratic consolidation, the concepts are believed to be a useful tool for theoretical and methodological application.

2.2. Research methodology

The applied research methods will be of both quantitative and qualitative character based on a thorough literature study. Quantifiable measures such as economic linkages, measured in export/import relations are collected at reliable online data sources, such as The World Bank, UNDP, IMF data and likewise, as well as e.g. social ties are based on mere qualitative data corresponding to the subject of analysis, using various academic and journalistic data sources[4].

Thus, such heterogeneous sources of data produce certain implications of which the researcher must pay attention to, i.e. official documents, mass-media outputs, private institutions' publications, and virtual documents vastly scattered throughout the internet – all qualitatively analysed. Such document-fixated approach calls for attention to the following four criteria, namely the i) *authenticity* of a study, being the genuineness of sources' origin, its ii) *credibility*, being the level of distortion or bias, its iii) *representativeness* reflecting the characteristic and transmissibility of the sources' kind, and its vi) *meaning,* suggesting the degree of the sources' clarity and compressibility (Scott 1990 in Bryman 2012: 544). Ultimately, careful awareness on such criteria secures the study's overall validity and explanatory power of the deductively approached study per se. The characteristics of a deductive approach is that it allows the researcher to adopt theoretical assumptions in respect to how reality is

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[4] The long-time isolationist period of Myanmar has however caused both scholarly, journalistic and statistical limitations in terms of access to date, due to various foreign institutions' incapability to access socioeconomic relations, as well as the domestic media's (self-)censorship in their pursuit to cover and convey events, hold politicians accountable etc.

perceived, hence to find the empirical evidence necessary to attach the theoretical assumptions to the observed (Ibid: 24-25). As such, the direction is from theory to empiricism, rather than from empirical data to theory, as in the inductive approach.

Moreover, positioning Myanmar in the scholarly debate over liberalism and realism, the following observations are worth considering in regards to Myanmar's position in international relations. Despite liberalism's relatively dominant position in studying the international system, realism is more regularly used to explain intra-state relations within the Southeast Asian region, thus that of Myanmar (Weatherbee 2014: 18-19). By acquiring national capacities, realists claim that national elites are prone to seek national geostrategic interests in an anarchic international environment. These national interests are fixed and defined by government authorities. Realist theorists' thus stresses the idea that sovereign states, being the main actors, are self-interested and mainly focused on the balance of power in a virtual zero-sum game. In opposition to liberalists, who argue that inter-state resolutions are results of attainting collective benefits, realists such as Waltz, hold that nations are concerned with the "relative gains, in which some gain more than others" (Ibid.). Besides, rather than economic securities, realists' centres on security interests, hence defined as national sovereignty and territoriality, and maintenance of the national political system. With these brief reflections in mind, the following section will seek to clarify L&W's methodological approach and the thesis' operationalisational adoption and alteration of 'linkages and leverages'.

2.3. Operationalisational alteration of Levitsky & Way's 'linkages and leverages'

Operationalising the terms linkages and leverages of L&W, a few alterations of the study must be applied. Most importantly, the focus of linkage and leverage will not solely be directed at those of the West, as the original theory, but similarly be applied to the linkages to China for a more diverse analysis of the "dark knight" elements, i.e. the external influences of not only the West, but China as well, in order to determine the direction of which the Burmese "democracy" will take.

The specific alterations of the methodology, therefore, i) varies in ways of retrieving data based on availability, ii) applying the theory of *linkage* to an otherwise categorised 'black knight', which, in the theory remains an element of *leverage*, and iii) using complementary data, news articles, supplementary theoretical standpoints and scholarly contributions to support the various dimensions in the

analysis. Such amalgamation of sources is found necessary due to the currently changing developments in Myanmar as-we-speak, as well as the aforementioned sporadic nature of sources. The measure of organisational power, however, have not been fully applied as the model of L&W, but instead collectively analysed along with Myanmar's characteristics of "competitive authoritarianism". With these few exceptions in mind, the methodology of the thesis attempts to stay as close as possible to the original use of concepts by using a less strict (more nuanced) model with special emphasis on the context-specific prerequisites of Myanmar, and its linkage and leverage to the West and China respectively. The projected validity of the thesis' discoveries, then, rests marginally on the applied model by L&W, which, as with seemingly any model in comparative politics, has its flaws and deficiencies, although applied concepts of competitive authoritarianism, linkage and leverage, and 'black knights' does account for a fairly interesting, perhaps different, method of approaching the on-going developments in Myanmar. Prior to the investigation of theoretical concepts, the immediate operationalising table and the study's research design figures below.

2.4. Operationalising table of linkage indicators in the case of Myanmar[5]

Operationalisation of the linkages between Myanmar and the West/China		
	Defined and measured as	*Scores*
1. Economic ties	1) Percentage of trade on overall import/export 2) Influence of type of trade 3) Investment by Western/Chinese companies or the state (FDI)	Low(0): No substantial economic ties Medium(1): Considerate economic ties, but no dependency High(2): Substantial economic ties and dependency
2. Social ties	1) Level of immigration to and from the West/China 2) Level of diaspora among the West/China	Low(0): No substantial immigration or diaspora Medium(1): Considerate immigration or diaspora, yet no consequence to Burmese domestic policies High(2): Substantial immigration and diaspora, with consequences to Burmese domestic policies
3. Communication ties	1) Level of international voice traffic with the West 2) Level of internet access	Low(0): None or negligible Western/Chinese (foreign) media/communication penetration Medium(1): Considerate Western/Chinese (foreign) media/communication penetration, yet no direct influence High(2): Substantial Western/Chinese (foreign) communication/media penetration with direct influence
4. Intergovernmental ties	1) Bilateral diplomatic and military ties 2) Membership of Western/Chinese organisations	Low(0): No substantial bilateral/diplomatic ties Medium(1): Considerate bilateral/diplomatic ties with the West/China, but alternative is dominating High(2): Substantial bilateral/diplomatic ties and dependency on Western/Chinese institutions
	Total score:	The total aggregated score range from 0-8. The following coding will define the overall linkage: **0-3: *Low*** **4-5: *Medium*** **6-8: *High***

Table 1: Operationalisation of linkage and leverage between Myanmar and the West/China

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[5] Please find the original methodology/operationalisation of linkage and leverage indicators in Appendix II+III for your reference.

2.5. Research design

To grasp the outline of the thesis', the research design appears as follows.
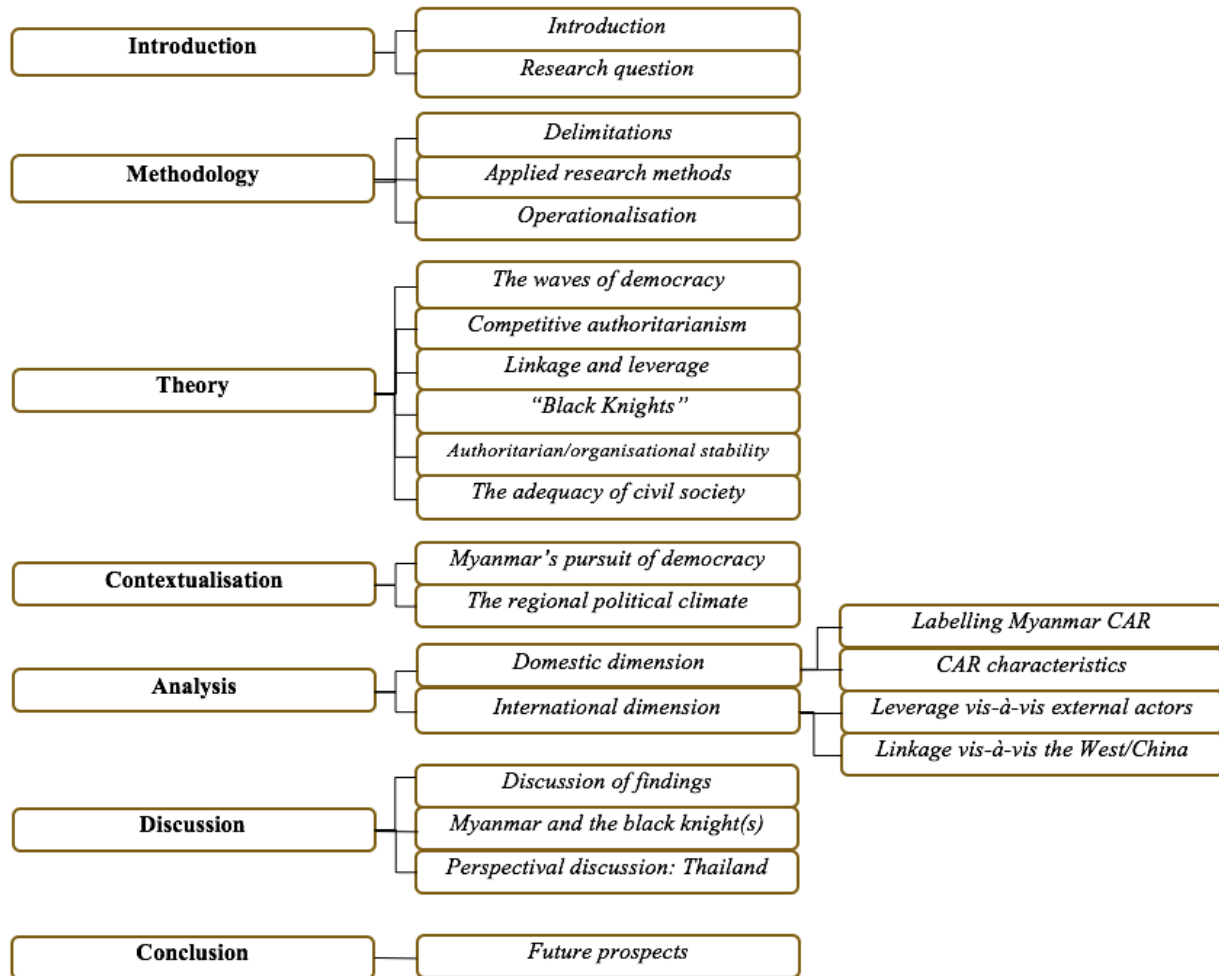
Figure 1: Research design

3. Chapter three: Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework seeks to inspect the following three theoretical concepts and discussions, in order to form a committed piece of groundwork prior to the analysis of Myanmar's democratic future. The chapter will examine Samuel P. Huntington's theory in regards to 'The Third Wave' (1991), as it will include notions on the so-called "Fourth Wave", discursively present in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, and hold the theory against competing scholarly opinion of analysing democracy and democratic transition. 'The Waves of Democratization' is assessed as an introductory theoretical approach to talking democracy, and the patterns and tendencies that have inevitably shaped the pre-requisites of democratic development today.

Moreover, and central to both the theoretical basis and methodological approach, the chapter will investigate L&W's (2010) theories on 'competitive authoritarianism', including their and other contributors' notions on 'hybrid regimes' after the Cold War, their concept of counter-hegemonic regional 'dark knights' undermining the adaptation of democratic transformations, and in particular their theories on 'linkage and leverage' in regards to imposing democratic influence of Western actors to non-democratic states, or in this case, a newly coined "democratic state" of Myanmar. Finally, leaning on the discussion of the link between civil society and democratic transition, the third section will include a theoretical insight to the civil society's adequacy to forge democracy. Before engaging further with the above-mentioned theoretical selections, the following section provides perspectives to the concept of democracy and the scholarly attempts to evaluate such.

3.1. Conceptualising democracy: Attempts and indices

While there are many attempts of conceptualising historic events, and transforming them into patterns and theories of democratic development, and explanations hereof, no single factor, nor method or indicator, seem sufficient to explain regime change. Accordingly, there are many different attempts to measure and evaluate democracy in comparative politics, causing an array of various institutions' proposed indicators for political scientists to measure it quantitatively validly. The following section provides a brief review of prominent literary contributions, and their attempts to comprehend democratic development by conceptualisation and indices on the latter.

Such institutions first and foremost consist of the US-based 'Freedom House' (FH) who, as a self-declared "watchdog" NGO of freedom and democracy, emphasises their two central umbrella terms, namely *political rights* and *civil liberties*, and the three-dimensional denominators of democracy; 'free', 'partly free' and 'not free'. Aggregately, Freedom House, via their annual *Freedom in the World* report, delivers ratings and descriptive text for 195 countries, and is widely seen as one of the most influential and cited reports in international press as well as peer-reviewed academic journals (Freedom House 2016a). Besides Freedom House, other central organisations/institutions are worth mentioning, such as the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)[7], the Economist Intelligence Unit' (EIU) 'Democracy Index'[8], Adam Przeworski's binary Democracy-Dictatorship (or simply 'DD-index')[9], and possibly a long list of supplementary contributors to measuring the contentious and utter complex concept of democracy (Coppedge & Gerring 2014: 248; Munck & Verkuilen 2002:11-14; Park 2015: 31; Freedom House 2016).

Elaborating on different schemes of measuring democracy is vital to examine, not at least due to the West' yearning interest to measure and compare democratic development throughout the world. Either way, there is a key difference in measuring a "thin", a minimalist or a "thick" conceptualisation of democracy (Coppedge & Gerring 2005: 255). The thin concepts (EUI, FH, Przeworski, among others), correspond greatly with that of Robert Dahl two-way definition of democracy, namely *contestation* (competition) and *inclusiveness* (participation) to successfully analyse whether political systems are becoming more or less democratic (Huntington 1991: 7; Munck & Verkuilen 2002: 9).

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[7] 'Bertelsmann Transformation Index' (BTI) consists of a highly multidimensional aggregated score, including key indicators on i.a. democracy (rule of law, political participation, stability of institutions, social/political integration) in a spider-web-like diagram.

[8] EUI's 'Democracy Index' present numeric scores and rankings, and categorises four different regime types; full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid and authoritarian regimes, based on indicators on free and fairness of national elections, security of participants, level of influence of foreign powers on government bodies, ability for civilians to freely implement policies etc.

[9] Adam Przeworski's binary DD-index model consists of a minimalist approach, leaning on Schumpeter and Popper's outright minimalist concept of democracy, consisting of a six-fold regime classification, drawing from the Polity IV series' dataset (Przeworski in Dahl 2003:12-14)

3.2. The waves of democracy: From authoritarianism to democracy and back

Hence, popular said to be the inauguration of democratisation of the modern world in the twentieth century, the 1974 coup d'état in Lisbon, Portugal, ousting the former dictatorial regime led by António Salazar (in office 1932-1970), later by Marcello Caetano (1968-1974), and ending a more than thirty-five-year dictatorship in Portugal, stand as a ground-breaking historical event and commencing 'The Third Wave of Democratization' transitions in the period between 1974 and 1990, including Brazil, Spain and Greece during the very same period (Huntington 1991). During the length of this period, in the wake of the Cold War, Myanmar was merely under military rule during its isolationist socialist period (1962-1988). Moreover, the events in Portugal represent a coup d'état that, unlike most coup d'états, succeeded in installing a democratic led government, and not the opposite, which primarily have shown to be the case.

Defining *democracy* in the modern world, however, consists of complex and diversifying attempts, as opposed to other governmental forms, often typified by producing leaders on behalf of their birth, lot, wealth, violence, co-optation or appointment. Democracy in its finest form, then, according to Huntington, is "the selection of leaders through competitive elections by the people they govern (Huntington 1991: 3-6). Following a Schumpeterian tradition termed the "classical theory of democracy" (1942), normative democracy is defined in terms of "the will of the people" (the source), and the "common good" (the purpose), and essentially the "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote", or simply, the "rule by the people" (Schumpeter 2003: 250) (1942). In short, and not exclusive to the Southern European and the so-called 'Catholic wave', the third democratisation wave reached the military regimes of South America in the late 1970's, before arriving in East, South and Southeast Asia by the mid- to late 1980s (Diamond 1997: 2-3), bringing democratic transitions to the Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan, and later snowballed its way to the former Soviet satellites of Eastern Europe, as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, before it eventually reached South Africa as a succession of the 1990 official processes of the end of Apartheid (Huntington 1991a: 17,20; Diamond 1997:2), failing or avoiding to touch the Arab World (for now) (Plattner & Diamond 2002).

As we know, Myanmar has not seen such genuine electoral competition and voting participation up until its 2010 general election that received mixed and direct negative opinion of being fraudulent by UN and Western nations, hence positioning Myanmar in the category among other nondemocratic regime types, such as absolute monarchies, autocracies and oligarchies (despotisms), bureaucratic empires, aristocracies, constitutional regimes, communist and fascists regimes, military regimes and others. Or 'disciplined democracy' in the case of Myanmar that, according to Bünte, is an *institutionalisation of a military regime* (Bünte 2011: 26; Huntington 1991: 12). According to Finer we can "distinguish between direct military regimes, in which the military forms the government, and quasi-civilian regimes, which are military regimes with a civilian window dressing. The latter are military regimes in substance in the sense that the military holds political hegemony" (in Bünte 2011: 7), which is rather topical in relation to the political climate in Myanmar today. Accordingly, in order for liberal democracies to endure, armed forces must be subordinate to democratically designated civil authorities (Diamond 1999).

As such, the concept of 'waves of democracy' may help to understand the "spread" of democracy – when it does. Most significantly, Huntington (1991: 32-33) in particular points to one mechanism[17], or causation, to democratise, namely the "snowballing effect', representing one or more given nations affecting another. Thus, such causation does not happen simultaneous to another nation, but as a result of one or more, as significant political events, especially in the age of excessive technology and globalisation, is transmitted easily and effectively. Occurrences during the 'Arab Spring' (2011-) figures as example of such, while the snowball effects in Asia have had difficulties to gain momentum, though democratic change in Indonesia (the 'Post-Suharto era', 1988) have shown causal effects in Malaysia, spurring reforms and democratic cognizance (Saikal & Acharya 2014: xii, Huntington 1991: 34).

Amid Huntington's analysis of the waves of democratisation, we discover his parallel concept of 'reverse waves' that contribute to explaining why some waves are followed by reverse mechanisms, i.e. rolling back authoritarianism after democratic conditions have failed to consolidate. Quite inter-

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[17] Huntington's three other explanations include i) *a single cause*, e.g. post WWII, ii) *a parallel development*, i.e. simultaneous passing of e.g. economic developments, and, iii) *a prevailing nostrum,* i.e. illustrates that different causes across different countries create the necessity for national elites to respond using a similar method across countries, to the general belief of its efficiency, which may lead to a democratisation process for completely different reasons (Ibid.).

esting to the topic of the thesis, there are many examples of such reversion; during the 1970s, Asian nations such as the Philippines, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, much of Latin American and Middle Eastern nations went through a reversion to authoritarian rule (Clary in Wiarda 2010: 198); Huntington 1991: 290-291). As Huntington suggests, two thirds of nations characterised alone in the 'third wave' during the 1958-1975 period, had reversed to authoritarianism, causing remarkable trends in reversion of democratic insertion.

The shifts from authoritarian rule to democratic, in the first place, are many, and relates itself to the first and the second wave per se. Secondly, reverse transitions from democracy to authoritarianism have, according to Huntington, in most cases been caused by either those *in power* OR people (or national (former) elites) *close to power* in the democratic system. Remarkably, "(…) the overwhelming majority of transitions from democracy [to authoritarian rule] (…) took the form of either military coup in which military officers (usually the top leadership of the armed services) ousted democratically elected leaders and installed some form of military dictatorship (…), usually by declaring a state of emergency or martial law" (Huntington 1991: 291-292), which, too, was the case during the 'first reverse wave' (between 1922-1942) in Eastern European countries; Greece, Portugal, Argentina and Japan, and during the 'second reverse wave' (1958-1975) Latin America, Indonesia, Nigeria, Greece, Pakistan and Turkey (Ibid.)

Predominantly, Larry Diamond (1996, 1997) has called for the third wave for having passed a decade or two ago. Diamond, quite logically, points to the third reverse wave as being the determinant and catalyst of the end of the third wave – hence the commencement of new. With the increasing number of liberal democracies recently stagnating in the East Asia and the Middle East, and the quality of many third-wave – and Third World – democracies progressively deteriorating, combined with the world's most convincing and powerful authoritarian nations, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia showing very little or no interest or prospects of democratisation in the nearest future, the 1974-inaugurated and post-Cold War liberal democratic tidal wave may be calling for an end. Hence, Diamond stresses that the emergence of *new* electoral democracies seem few, if any, due to the fact that democratisation already by now would have occurred in the countries eligible or favourable to transition in the first place (Diamond 1996: 7). Whether this, however, is adequate for a direct *reverse*

wave or simply an equilibrium, with a merely unchanged, stagnated quantity of liberal democracies worldwide, essentially rests on a question of definition.

Beyond Huntington's aforementioned four causations or explanations of *why* authoritarian regimes during the Third Wave *did* turn democratic, he points to a "reverse" perspective of analysis, by scrutinising the explanations as to why some (hundreds of) authoritarian regimes *did not* see transition, including e.g. Myanmar, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Iraq, Cuba, among others. The regime type of the nation, then, is not the answer, since both one-party systems, military regimes and personal dictatorships was well-represented (Huntington 1991: 41-43).

As such, Huntington identifies *legitimacy* as one of the highly underestimated causes to the lack of transition to democracy (as i.a. Myanmar during the Third Wave). Hence, "The strongest is never enough to be always the master (…), unless he transforms strength into right and obedience into duty" (Rousseau in Huntington 1991: 46). If Rousseau's "right" translates into "rule", and "duty" into the people to obey, the moral of the strongest is, in fact, an act of necessity, and not of will, implying a legitimising element by the strong, as the case of SPDC/SLORC's self-declared connection to the Pagan Kingdom. Tradition, religion, (ethno-) nationalism, ideology and the divine rights of kings (or rulers, in essence), then, provides a legitimising effect for non-democratic rule to persist (Huntington 1991: 47; Steinberg 2013: 17). Legitimacy, however, in the age of enlightenment, globalisation, mobilised populations etc. loses its initial rationale and efficacy. The three (or more) waves of democratisation (in particular the Second Wave post-WWII), then, have existed as an opponent to authoritarian rule, hence expanded the very idea of democracy. Moreover, authoritarian regimes face critical perils when a given nation, population or society have already been …

> "(…) infected with the democratic virus, and (…) the belief remained that a truly legitimate government had to be based on democratic practises. Authoritarian rulers were thus impelled to justify their own regimes by democratic rhetoric and claim that their regimes were truly democratic or would become in the future once they had dealt with the immediate problems confronting regimes varied with the nature of the regime" (Huntington 1991: 47-48).

In such case, as Huntington notes, the legitimisation of authoritarian regimes evaporate over time, as promises may have been hard to realise, and frustration spreads, causing disintegration and vulnerability over time. As opposed to democratic systems, that continuously renew themselves as a result of new elections and poised promises of future policies, authoritarian regimes, on the other hand, lack of the mechanisms of self-renewal, consequently resulting in a corrosion of such regimes' overall legitimacy (Diamond 1997: 21-22; Huntington 1991: 48-49).

3.2.1. The 'Fourth Wave' of democracy in Southeast Asia

As Diamond already in 1996 noted, the "first two decades of the twenty-first century – as economic development transforms the societies of East Asia in particular – the world will be presented with a "fourth wave of democratisation" (Diamond 1996: 10), which, according to Diamond, will highly depend on the developments in East Asia, China and the Arab world. The aforementioned "Arab exceptionalism", isolationist Myanmar and North Korea in 'socialist Asia', is somehow key to grasp the possible denotation of a decidedly "fourth wave" – inaugurated in the past, present in the now or to be in the future (Schmitter & Karl 1991: 103-104), as Huntington's waves derived solely from rigorous historical analysis, causing notations on a new wave uncertain to label prior to its fully development.

Moreover, as Diamond (2011) notes in the wake of the Arab Spring, many scholars and activists, presumably quite reasonably, imagined a distinctive fourth wave in the making. Criticisms of even grouping whatever new developments and transitions as a "fourth wave" – in succession of the three previous – is emphasised by McFaul, who identifies many of the Eastern European developments during the third wave as transitions of 'decommunization', hence calling for a too universally applied causation of transitions, pointing to the lack of genuine democratic creation in the post-communist nations (McFaul 2002: 213). Highlighting the cases of (Southeast) Asia in particular, embracing the terminology of a possible fourth wave, collectively, the continent provides a number of interesting debates of democratisation, spread of civic rights and democratic enlightenment, offering optimism to the region (Ginsburg 2008: 13-14), depending on their continuous development and, for some, direction of international/regional orientation. The regional uncertainty, however, and the mosaic of different regime types in Southeast Asia (Rasiah & Schmidt 2010: 230), may however trouble the democratic, and nourish the undemocratic, 'snowballing effects' in the region.

Yet again, we arrive at the necessity to grasp both internal and external positions, when investigating the single case of Myanmar in a theoretical perspective. The internal, or domestic, being characterised by resilience of the military junta, the presidency of Thein Sein and government (USDP), the aforementioned civil societal structures of ethical and nationalistic importance, and divergence between the two entities over time – and the external. One point of departure may be Steven Levitsky & Lucan Way's political scientific influential hypothesis that the Third Wave of Democratization has been strongly shaped and highly facilitated by Western *linkage and leverage* (Slater 2014: 176). Although L&W's theories centres on their concept 'competitive authoritarian' (hybrid) regimes, hence rejecting the terminology and inaccuracy of e.g. "illiberal democracies" (Zakaria 1997), "partial democracies" etc., which, Myanmar in many aspects progressively is on their way to becoming. As such, the significance of external linkages and leverages seem increasingly relevant to the profound case of Myanmar's future (L&W 2010: 17). To L&W, the post-Cold War democratisation has been almost inevitable for countries with tight economic and diplomatic links to the West. According to their theory, which will be elaborated and discussed below, countries with weaker *linkages* to the West, and with fragile political establishments, as in the case of Myanmar, Western *leverages* are able to push nations to the point of elections, consequently producing a facade of democracy outwardly and/or superficially, while fully-fledged democracy, even in its minimalist Schumpeterian sense, remains an improbable result. Instead, such fragile nations and poorly institutionalised regimes are disposed to remain in an uncertain limbo between authoritarianism and regulated, on-surface modes of democratised systems. In this regard, L&W's concept of 'black knights' seem appropriate to the case of Myanmar, as strong ties to powerful (regional) authoritarian regimes may cause the slightest liberalising reforms to remain off the political agenda, making it even more difficult than previously to implement and adopt democratic values and beliefs (Slater 2014: 175-177).

3.3. Hybrid regimes and the trajectories of competitive authoritarian regimes

As we have seen, the term 'hybrid regimes' is quite broadly applied. Conceivably, perhaps, too broad. As Cassani (2012) notes, the rapidity of which the literature has been produced to comprehend the relatively recent contests for democracy, ranging from Africa to Asia to Latin America, and more recently the Middle East, has resulted in great confusion, as it has been creating a number different typologies for the same overarching phenomenon, namely the institutional mixture of a na-

tions' democratic and autocratic features, resulting in incomplete variations all-in-all. The vast grey zone, and the conundrum that Huntington since the 1970s labelled the "third wave of democratisation" (Gagné 2015). The implicit dynamism and diversity of the term is what makes it subject to further making of new insights towards a better comprehension of political regimes, regime transition in developing countries, and in particular in Myanmar, in this case. Whereas studies before the widespread democratisation after Cold War have focused scarcely on domestic approaches and variables to investigate regime change, the focus among scholars as shifted to eventually taking the international environment seriously. Hence, according to L&W (2010: 38), the debate has turned from *whether* the international dimension matter, to *how much* it matters when analysing the transition from autocratic to democratic regimes.

As opposed to other scholarly contributors to the importance of international (external) or domestic (internal) factors, L&W offer a different perspective. Rather than asserting the primacy to one or the other, they argue that each case varies *in predictable ways* across nations and regions. Central to the such predictions figures the *ties* from a given country to the West[18]. As they note, the global impacts of the post-Cold War even caused nations - despite unfavourable preconditions to transition - to democratise, due to strong degree of ties/linkages to the West. Nations with weaker ties to the West, and where the impacts of the post-Cold War era were of less significant, consequently, the domestic factors weighed more all-together (L&W 2010: 38-39). Thus, the latter underlines L&W's fundamental theory and analysis that democratisation, since the end of the Cold War, has been tremendously fashioned by the striking dominance of the West; culturally, socially, politically and economically, and increasingly caused by external influences (Slater 2014: 176; L&W 2006: 379).

3.4. Linkages and leverages: External pressures

Within the international dimension of L&W's structuralist conceptualisation of the external factors as determinant for regime change and outcome, the international environment, according to L&W (2006: 283), centres along the two dimensions, or frameworks, namely the *linkages* and *leverages* between a given nation and the West. Western leverage, then, is defined by a nation's *vulnerability* to external pressure, while linkage is characterised by the "density of ties" to the US and EU, i.e. the

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[18] Specifically identified as North America (US) and the European Union. Both entities sharing beliefs and values, such as liberal democracy, and predominantly also cultural and religious beliefs.

"economic, political, diplomatic, social, and organisational" ties (Levitsky & Away 2006: 379), and cross-border flows of trade, investments, people and communication (L&W 2010: 73). Thus, non-Western influence remained largely outside of their arguments, although the idea and theory of existing counter-democratic "dark knights" do stand as an exception to the otherwise Western-focused theory (Chapman 2012).

As a succession of the "post-Communist divide", or the aforementioned "decommunization" wave, a central example of L&W's theories are based on the Central and South-eastern Europe on one side of the post-Cold War democratisation, and the former autocratic Soviet Union nations on the other. Hence, high levels of linkage and leverage to the West in Central and South-eastern Europe produced powerful democratising gravities, contributing to nations otherwise supposed incompatible or unfavourable to democracy, to democratise. Likewise, low levels of linkage and leverage in the former Soviet Union nations has resulted in a significantly more jeopardising environment, causing democratisation to fail due to absence of a 'domestic push' from within (L&W 2007: 48). Consequently, as L&W earlier noted, the "leverage in the absence of linkage has rarely been sufficient to induce democratisation since the end of the Cold War" (L&W 2006: 379).

Prior to clarifying the essentials of the two-way elements of external pressures, L&W emphasises *five mechanisms* of international/external influences across borders that are crucial to influencing nations' inclination to democratic transition, namely i) *diffusion*, ii) *direct democracy promotion*, iii) *multilateral conditionality*, iv) *democracy assistance*, and v) *transnational advocacy networks* (L&W 2010: 38-41). In short, the first mechanism of *diffusion*, as the term suggests, consists of rather neutral transmission of information across borders; demonstrating activities from neighbouring countries, neighbouring success in democratic developments, otherwise popular known as 'spill-over effects'. As such, diffusion lingers on a wave-like analogy, contributing to explaining how democratic transitions may travel with or without people or technology across borders and societies. Secondly, *direct democracy promotion* implicitly seeks a clearer causal effect between entities. A particularly "controlled" way of democratisation (Carothers 1991: 8), where "efforts by the world's most powerful liberal state to promote democracy abroad (…) via democratic persuasion, threats and in few case military force" is the principal dynamism (Peceny in L&W 2010: 39). Thirdly, the *multilateral conditionality* mechanism of international/external influence is emphasised in cases where multilateral,

international organisations, INGOs etc. is somewhat linked to regime transition and value alteration of a given country, including the submission of aid in exchange for the adoption of e.g. economic, political and administrative reforms (Ibid.), inherently cultivating liberal democratic ideals.

The fourth mechanism, external *democratic assistance*, reflects Western governments and party foundations' funding of electoral processes, and support to legal reforms, independent media and civil societal organisations in the "recipient" country. Finally, the last mechanism, *transnational advocacy networks* constitute a mechanism of international, external stimulus, namely the highly increased "third sector" as an intermediate state between two governments, who succeed in drawing attention to e.g. human rights violations, fraud, unsustainable government, civic abuse, and successively lobby Western governments to interfere and take action (L&W 2010: 38-41; Tolstrup 2013: 718-719). However, one or more mechanism does not stand alone in explaining regime transition by external factors, studies have shown. In fact, several mechanisms happen to occur simultaneously/in parallel. Regional differences, political climate and regime type, too, contribute to the complexity of attributing universal mechanisms to one case. However, to integrate the vast assortment of mechanisms into a theoretical framework, and capture the essence of such, L&W, as stated above, have organised the two overarching dimensions of respectively *Western leverage* and *linkage to the West* to identify the external conditions of which democracy is endorsed and regimes are altered. And in this case, applied to both the West *and* China cf. the analytical framework.

As mentioned, leverage is characterised of a governments' vulnerability, or susceptibility, towards the West. L&W's definition of leverage encompasses two overarching matters, namely i) a regime's bargaining power vis-à-vis the West, or facility to evade Western acts designed to punish abuse, or motivate political as economic liberalisation, and ii) the possible effect of economic sanctions, or punitive actions, of the West towards to the target states. As such, leverage does not per definition refer to the *direct* international/external pressure, but more so to a nation's *susceptibility* to such potential pressures, as a recipient to the latter (L&W 2007: 50). Hence, leverage is *high*, where countries lack of bargaining power and are particularly vulnerable to e.g. economic sanctions. Leverage is *low,* on the other hand, where countries have considerable levels of bargaining power, and where sanctions does not harm as bad.

Accordingly, leverage is further embedded in the following three factors. First, the level of leverage depends on the *size and strength* of a given state, hence the ability to resist pressure, bargain and negotiate. Therefore, weak states, such as much of Sub-Saharan Africa, and other aid-dependent nations, have little or no value to bargain with (e.g. oil), whereas e.g. Russia and China have substantial economic and military power (i.a nuclear) to resist pressure through e.g. sanctions, capability of bargaining and therefore avoid or reduce potential damage done. Secondly, competing Western foreign-policy objectives and differentiating interests may also result in limiting the very efficiency of leverage. As such, Western powers may compensate their values – and offer leverage – to e.g. maintain or protect their interests towards major energy producers, or nations/specific regions of strategic importance. Thirdly, initially defined by Hufbauer et al. (1990: 12), the aforementioned assistance of 'black knights' may reduce the level of leverage, as such major counter-hegemonic powers' diplomatic, military and economic presence impairs the impact of Western democratising pressures (Slater 2014: 175; L&W 2010; 50-53, 372). As mentioned, however, leverage has rarely appeared as a sufficient marker without the element of linkages to explain nations' susceptibility to regime change. As the authors found, "(…) leverage was at times sufficient to force transitions from full-scale autocracy to competitive authoritarianism, but - by itself - was rarely sufficient to induce democratization" (L&W 2007: 53). Eventually, the evaluation of leverage is evaluated by determining the given competitive authoritarian regime as having either a low, medium or high degree of leverage.

Next to the dimension of leverage, stand the second dimension, *linkage*. As noted above, linkage consists of the density of ties, i.e. the economic, political, diplomatic, social, and organisational ties, together with the cross-border flows of capital, good and services, and information (L&W 2010: 43). To L&W, linkage is deeply rooted in historical matters and experiences, as with supposedly most theoretical explanations, including the importance of the colonial times, military occupation, and geopolitical alliances, which, in all cases seem rather central to the case of Myanmar. Next to that, the cross-border activity highlights a nations' opportunity to tie one (another), while the geographic proximity is highlighted as the critical explanation to strong linkage (Brinks & Coppedge 2006: 464) as it "induces interdependence among states, and creates opportunity for interaction" (L&W 2007: 54), which, cements the relevance of studying both Thailand and China in respects to the developments in Myanmar, for each of their significant and obvious differences of stimulus.

Nevertheless, L&W points to the following four concrete dimensions of particular importance, namely 1) the *economic linkage,* or flows of trade and investments, 2) *social linkage*, accounting for the amount of individuals flowing across borders, including diaspora networks, migrants and refugees, 3) *communication linkage,* marking the generic flow of information and media across borders, and the 4) *intergovernmental linkage,* being the bilateral diplomatic and military ties[23] (L&W 2010: 43-44; L&W 2007: 55-56). As such, these linkages serve as a "transmission belt" of international influence towards a given nation. The typically articulated "global" or international impacts, are, in fact, often more precisely embedded in quite specific, and sometimes transparent, networks, people, financial flows, societal structures, historical explanations etc. The mechanisms of leverage, as with linkage, therefore, is *material* rather than direct ideational and normative.

3.4.1. The ferocity of 'dark knights'

As earlier cited as an indicator of leverage, the concept of 'black knights' seem particularly interesting to study, and later apply, as a mere independent and somewhat detached theory on its own. The black knight theory, as opposed to the remaining work of competitive authoritarianism, and the theory of linkage and leverage, stand alone as a *non-Western* fixated element of external influence.

What however is adjacent to note, is the redirection away from the dichotomous understanding of a autocratic black knight and that of a democratic promoter. Instead, numerous shades of grey seem evident among the external actors prone to be characterised as black knights, hence calling for a mere sophisticated conceptualisation of the term (Anguelov 2015: 17-21). The leverage by a prominent actor, then, rests on multiple dynamics, and perhaps countries, as opposed to being caused by a single actor, such as China or Russia, thus making it hard to generalise which actor produce certain types of leverage (Chapman 2012: 5-6). Altogether, considering the interpretation of L&W's usage of black knights, the following three features arise; i) black knights contest democratisation efforts per definition, ii) black knights must exist of a hegemonic power, whose degree of the economic, military and diplomatic power is convincing, and iii) black knights are able to alter their role as black knight in international relations subject to their objectives.

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[23] The stated indicators for linkage is presented in the 'Operationalisation of indicators', Table 1.

Initially, the first two stated features seem rather easy to defend, as the sheer definition of a black knight lies in its ability to counter democratic beliefs, while imposing opposing beliefs. Next, the magnitude of a black knight seems fair too, as a lack of magnitude unlikely would cause trembling effects to nations that are more or less prone to anti-democratic influences. The third statement, however, does not immediately strike as aligned with the remaining theoretical framework of L&W. Instead, it rests on the principles that structural factors (i.e. states or institutions – or *linkage*, *leverage*) determine or control the outcome of international relations, and not actors/agents inside a given state. For example, according to their groundwork of the West' convincing promotion of democracy throughout the post-Cold War world, the West is considered to promote such democratic values no matter of their foreign policy. Therefore, the opposite of such instalment figures the black knights' counter-objective democratising efforts. As such, the statement that black knights may sometimes figure as Western democracies too, whereas *they* alter the role in international relations subject to their objectives, however, seem inconsistent to apply. Accordingly, the international world cannot be considered from both a structuralist perspective and a that of a realist. According to Waltz (1991), "International structure emerges from the interaction of states and then constrains them from taking certain actions while propelling them toward others" (in Burchill 2005: 35).
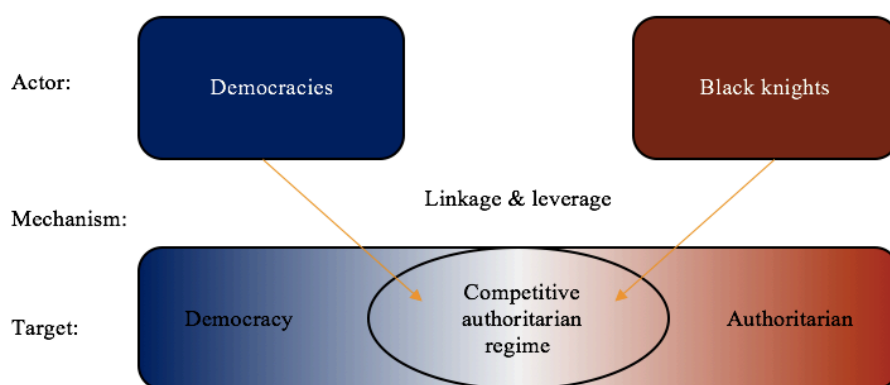
Figure 2: Theoretical basis of the effects of democracies and 'black knights' on CAR.

Additionally, as China may be considered as an "autocratic patron", or promoter (Chou 2016: 7), there seem a fine line between actually promoting autocracy, and having the effects based on indirect circumstances, if at all. According to Daniel Bell (in Mattis 2015), "The China Model", is not strictly evolving around autocratic promotion per se, as it rather centres on the thought that there are several

elements of China's so-called 'meritocratic political system'[24] that the West may in fact learn from, without ever having to jeopardise the sheer values of democracy. Following Bell's theory, the support and participation of China, and the innate autocratic values of which it might hold, may instead help countries (as e.g. Myanmar) to overcome their persistent political difficulties, whether they are aa authoritarian regime, an autocracy, a democracy or something entirely different (Bell in Mattis 2015: 2; Chou 2016: 7).

Thus, L&W's theory combined with theoretical insights from thinkers of democratic and anti-democratic developments, altogether make of an interesting approach of grasping the forces that inevitably imposes themselves on recipient countries of external pressures. Before engaging with the specific contextual case of Myanmar, the following section provides a theoretical (domestic) insight to civil society's ability to forge democratic development by internal pressures.

3.5. Civil society and its adequacy to forge democracy

As a succession of the post-Cold War fascination of civil society, together with the state and the market as the driving factors for democratisation to occur, one may observe such neoliberal denominators for change as only part of the democratisation processes, at least in Southeast Asia. Despite the fact that, according to Schmitter (1993: 104), "Citizens are the most distinctive element in democracies", implicitly, it is not the only one, though it may be a central one, depending on the domestic (and international) environment surrounding such civil engagements. Similarly, scholars have relatively recently assumed that "democracy arises as a direct result of the strength of civil society" (Anek *in* Rasiah & Schmidt: 230), which, in its somewhat linear, one-dimensional, normative and mainstream logic of argument, may or may not hold relative signs of truth in the case of Myanmar, except for its lack of emphasis on the specific cultural context. The context-specific approach, namely the culturally and socially dependent prerequisites for democratisation based on a mere conservative emphasis on traditions and norms (e.g. Buddhist), and human, social and cultural capital (Indo-/Sino-Burmese culture) (Ganesan & Hlaing 2007: 12-13; Putnam *in* Rotberg 2001: 273). The latter of which theoretically stand in opposition to the aforementioned neoliberal approach to civil society. A mainstream ideology of which INGOs similarly adhere to by normatively supposing that the lack

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[24] The term 'meritocracy' is a political philosophy emphasising that power should be directly and almost entirely assigned to individuals' abilities and talents.

of presence by foreign (Western) aiding organisations would result in deterioration of society in e.g. Myanmar (Petrie & South *in* Gravers & Ytzen: 87-88). Quite contrarily, a strong and genuine bottom-up civil societal environment must occur *without* such presence, due to the foreign – in particular Western-based – organisations' inherent risks of imposing divergent values, instead of enriching the initial. The neoliberal argument becomes evident in respect to e.g. CIVICUS' lack of accentuating local and true grassroots organisations, such as women's organisations, different union movements, worker's organisations etc. (CIVICUS 2001: 11, 22-23).

Broadly speaking, civil society and democratisation are sometimes presented as liberal parallels opposing authoritarianism and protectionist markets, although a such distinction seem too simple, as a strict separation between the state, the market and civil society is unlikely, or direct impossible – and the fact that civil society actors may possess reactionary/conservative political objectives as well. This line of thought can be viewed in a gramscian perspective by stressing the amalgamation of the three sectors by having endless of intersects amid them (Rasiah & Schmidt 2010: 232). As such, civil society is both formed and defined by the state and the market, and vice-versa, which inevitably means that civil uprisings *do* bring about social change, although not alone, as the state's political and capitalistic interests serves as a bottleneck for the flourishing of civil society, i.e. civil society being legally sanctioned by the state. Hence, the state controls what Hewison and Rodan (in Ibid.: 235) notes as the "ebb and flow" of political oppositions in Southeast Asia, pointing to repressive governments' or military's ability to control, or amend, the social levelling of Leftist movements in accordance to their tolerance and cost/benefit estimation of such, which, quite frankly show its relevance in the case of Myanmar. Accordingly, the following chapter will elaborate on the country-specific, historic and socioeconomic prerequisites necessary to grasp the Burmese domestic dimension at best.

4. Chapter four: Contextual framework: A country-specific perspective to the social and cultural determinants of democracy in Myanmar

To contextualise the democratic developments in Myanmar, the following section will examine the central concerns and developments, historically and currently present in Myanmar. Country-specific perspectives that Theorell (2010: 39-42), among others, terms the "social determinants" of democratisation, i.e. the "shadow of the past", or cultural legacies of a given nation.

4.1. Myanmar uprising: A historical insight to the pursuit of democracy

Perhaps some of the Burmese pride may be found already in the precolonial period in Myanmar. At several occasions, the former Burmese hegemony of the region (Pagan Kingdom 849-1297) has been used as a legitimisation of actions by the military-regime, i.e. the 'State Peace and Development Council' (SPDC) (1988-2011), later known as the 'State Law and Order Restoration Restoration Council' (SLORC) (1988-1997). Using the past to justify the present (Steinberg 2013: 16-17), the military regime has been claiming themselves true to nationalistic values of early origin, being in direct congruence with the old Burmese Kings who unified the state of Burma/Myanmar. Attributing the Burmese cultural hegemony at an early stage, through generations and (Buddhist) traditions, it seems rather stress-free to identify the pride that is inherited by the present-day civilians of Myanmar, and likewise just as terrifying to grasp the military regimes' exclusive adoption of such privilege. Ironically, Steinberg (2013: 18) notes, the North Korean government in Pyongyang have acquired similar prehistoric and legitimising positions in claiming authenticity on the Korean Peninsula. Besides showing a direct link to prehistoric Burmese ancestry, the legitimisation, too, lies in overcoming the shame of having been colonised (Ibid.).

Even the etymology of the state, "Burma" or "Myanmar", suggests the underlying (if not quite literate) idea of *legitimacy* and *illegitimacy,* depending on one's vantage point, but also stresses the sensibility tied to ethnic diversity and contradictions in the country (Lintner 2015a: 178; Ganesan & Hlaing 2007: 109). Relating past events to today's, the military regime, since Ne Win's 1962 coup d'état, has quite consistently adopted and practised the prehistoric understanding that *power is finite*, which stands in contrast to the modern and essentially *infinite* understanding of power, where power can be shared or assigned to the potential advantage of all entities involved (Steinberg 2013: 19-20).

Later, the British colonial period (1824-1948), too, figures as an era contributing to nationalistic behaviour, just as it leaves behind ethno-political divides in the coming early days of independent Myanmar (Rasiah & Schmidt 2010: 3) and later Burmese quest to "move on" from subordinate times. Despite the inherently oppressive condition of colonisation, most existing literature, according to Ganesan & Hlaing (2007: 143-144), points to a flourishing civil society and associational life in Myanmar, rich on religious and faith-based organisation along with their role in socio-political developments of the country. Features that in the '8888 Uprising' in 1988 showed imperative in terms of, not necessarily constituted formal civil organisation, but nevertheless a foundation for *association.* A community organisation parallel to the 'neighbourhood organisation' that Western civilisation has practised for decades before the colonial times (Ibid.). Equally, as the British colony in Myanmar and their introduction of Western capitalism and education awakened, the Burmese (and ethnic groups; Buddhist as Muslim) acquired knowledge of and insight to Western schemes of achieving political and social objectives by forming associations, though they may have had their difficulties of penetrating, i.a. as a succession of Christian missionaries, Chinese/Indian/European business people and their facility of associational life (Ganesan & Hlaing 2007: 147). All such intermediate contextual balances aggregately contribute to understanding the 'full picture'.

Despite the very forces of the British colonial rule, Myanmar (with Aung San[25]) resisted to join the Commonwealth as a succession of their independence in 1948, implicitly caused by the Burmese left wing, and explicitly stated in their 1947 Constituent Assembly, assigning Burma as an "independent sovereign republic". Some scholars point out the 1947 constitution, or post-independence Myanmar, of being the key to which democratic model Myanmar will need in the future, while others point to its limitation and inadequacy (Steinberg 2013:41-43). Interestingly though, the word "democracy" did not appear in the 1947 Constitution, insinuating Aung San's merely socialist and anti-liberal prominence, showing the prominent independence leaders' none to little interest in the promotion of an actual liberal democracy (Callahan in Rotberg 1998: 52). Dominated by Buddhist locals, the government of independent Burma allowed Buddhist as non-Buddhists civil organisations to prosper. At the time prime minister, U Nu, representing the 'Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League' (AFPFL)

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[25] Aung San (1911-1947) is considered a key figure in the development of Burmese independence; the terms for the Union of Burma of which he dictated. Father of NLD's pro-democracy activist, Aung Sun Suu Kyi.

(in office 1948-1958), positively encouraged social and business organisations to mature, causing liberalising environments, while forming prominent organisations, such as 'All Burma Peasants' Organisation (APBO)', the 'Federal of Trades Organisations Burma (FTOB), the 'Trade Union Congress Burma' (TUCB, the 'Youth League' and the 'All Burma Women's Organisation' (Ibid.). This, however, does not mean that the Burmese military (the *Tatmadaw*) was not present.

Quite contrarily, the Tatmadaw has been deep into the politics of the Burmese independence after 1948. Formed in 1942, the nationalistic Tatmadaw was politicalised as a liberating unit throughout the battle for national independence, hence assuming the guardian role of the Burmese state (as the "Caretaker Government") - progressively taking over administrative and civilian functions, claiming almost half of the national budget for "internal security" and expanding business activities, the banking sector etc., turning the military into the most potent business in the country at the time, while equality of rights and choice was guaranteed for all people in the "democratic era" of Myanmar (Callahan in Rotberg 1998: 50; Taylor in Bünte 2011: 12-13). Adopting a legitimising role, the Tatmadaw introduced their "new professionalism", including new objectives such as 'peace and the rule of law', 'socialist economy' and "democracy", while naming Buddhism the "state religion", and consequently pawing the way for Ne Win's staged coup d'état in 1962 and his well-known slogan the "Burmese Way to Socialism" (Bünte 2011: 13). "Because it was socialist it was good, and because it was Burmese it was even better" (Steinberg 2013: 65).

The 1962 coup d'état stand as the self-imposed landmark of Burmese isolation, thus disconnecting the country from international interaction for merely five decades. The BSPP's 'Burmese Way to Socialism' then illustrated a combination of Buddhist doctrine, socialism and humanism, stressing the distance to Marxist ideology, and emphasising the intellectual connection with Buddhist philosophical concepts (Steinberg 2013: 65). Crucial to the civil society environment, the BSPP introduced the 1964 National Security Act disallowing all other political organisations and activities, and forbidding new formations of political groups without permission from the government. Likewise disallowing civilians to be part of political controversial organisations, and extensively limiting freedom of expression, while nationalising all industries, cutting ties to foreign aid and trade, and implementing Soviet-style central planning, causing businesses to flee the country, hence turning Myanmar into one of the most impoverished countries in the World (Ganesan & Hlaing 2007: 159-160).

4.1.1. The '8888' Nationwide Popular Pro-Democracy Protests

Yet, on the 8th of August 1988 (hence '8888'), tens of thousands of pro-democracy protesters demonstrated in the streets of Yangon (or Rangoon), mobilised by students and followed by monks, Muslims, children, housewives and academics, all longing for liberty and prosperity. The protests in 1988, as oppose to a range of sporadic protests during the years causing bloody crackdowns, affirmed the people's vigour and genuine need for change (McCarthy 2012: 6). Followed by the governments crackdown on protesters, killing thousands (Taylor 2001: 15-16), and taking control over the country, as they restricted the civil societal space to demonstrate and assemble. This milestone led civil society and pro-democracy actors to either i) disband, or to ii) transform themselves into political parties – of which they did – forming ASSK's National League of Democracy the following September 1988, along with various pro-democracy exodus organisations formed abroad (mainly Thailand), consequently leading them to engage with EU member state actors, the United States and other anti-government entities. As ways of resistance, the junta created organisations themselves to counter, manipulate, and devastate social movement, with military leaders as front figures that is (Ganesan & Hlang 2007: 161). These events confidently aggravated the relationship between the West and Myanmar, as the Reagan administration gradually initiated sanctions towards Myanmar, suspending all U.S. aid, counternarcotic programs, and stopping all sale of arms (Martin 2012: 12), placing pressure on the Burmese government and altering the external agenda of Myanmar.

4.1.2. The 'Saffron Revolution' and the consequences of Cyclone Nargis

The colourful Saffron Revolution[27] in 2007 figures also figures as a milestone for the civil insurgency in Myanmar, as Buddhist monks, protected by the students and highly encouraged by ASSK, took the streets of Yangon to show their discontent over the government's decision to remove subsidies on gas and oil, thus deteriorating livelihoods even further as prices rose in effect of this (Steinberg 2013: 137). Due to the political opposition of such marches, at least thirty-one persons were killed and many more injured, detained and imprisoned. Considering the brutal crackdown in 1988 killing thousands and imprisoning even more, the Saffron Revolution shows the despair the protesters must have faced during the protests' inauguration – and the resilient desire for change (Kingston 2008: 6).

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[27] Although not saffron, nor a revolution, as the monks' maroons where neither saffron-coloured, but rather reddish-brown, and nor a revolution as the monkhood's accomplishments neither are recognised as a revolution (Houtman 2009; Steinberg 2013: 138).

Underneath the seemingly one-sided conviction, however, Myanmar's Saffron Revolution, externally sold as an ultra-liberal pro-democratic, progressive movement, with one of the West's utmost afflu- ent neo-colonial individuals to date, ASSK, depicted as a modern-day, secular "saint" of neoliberal- ism (Cartalucci 2015), and promoter of Western democratic values, we may find a mere far-right, highly reactionary, conservative behaviour, that if ever fully reported on, may end the ASSK's Saf- fron-wave, and forever question the sincerity of both ASSK's political career and legacy. According- ly, and quite ironically, the one and same Buddhist "mobsters" encouraged by ASSK to call for free- dom and human rights, where the same conservative Buddhist movement that recently condemned the government's move towards giving providing tens of thousands of displaced Rohingya refugees a legal citizenship (Gravers & Ytzen 2014: 307-310; Steinberg 2013: 140).

Nevertheless, the purportedly "revolution" caused obvious flaws in the junta's structure and legiti- macy, as well as Cyclone Nargis in 2008 evoked international attention and spread the need for change and humanitarian relief, thus empowering the third sector, internally as externally, as the government eventually gave in to accepting (huge amounts of) external humanitarian relief. Alto- gether, Cyclone Nargis unveiled the systemic complications of the military's leadership, i.e. its fear of foreign interference, nationalism, and the low priority it assigned to the well-being of the people (Cartalucci 2015; Steinberg 2013: 140-141).

4.1.3. Political reforms 2011-2015 & Myanmar 2016: Democratic optimism and ambiguity

In succession of the constitutional changes in 2008 and prior to the multifaceted reforms 2011-2012, initially, the earlier mentioned general election in 2010, and SPDC's so-called "roadmap to democ- racy", was internationally recognised as fraudulent, hence disapproved by both the NLD and West- ern institutions such as the UN. Interestingly, the result was a sweeping 80 % victory for the USDP, thus securing them continuous power (McCarthy 2012: 6-7). Moreover, the later debated, and broad- ly criticised establishment of the new election commission, the Union Election Commission (UEC), represents one of the essential partial concerns of the supposedly democratic development.

According to Lintner, however, the reforms were simple. "Make some reforms – and the West would reciprocate by welcoming Myanmar into the internationally community, (…) and the military strate- gy: remain in power, improve the country's image and end strained relations with the West" (Lintner

2015b). As such, one may consider the plausible case that the somewhat prompt U.S. lifting of sanctions in succession of the 2011 reforms, hence sequences of Thein Sein's visit to Washington in 2013, and visits by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (2011) and U.S. President Barack Obama (2012) to Myanmar, exponents of the U.S. Foreign Policy, was in fact a reaction to the increasing concern of the spread of Chinese influence, as well as a chance for Washington to normalise relations with the establishment of Myanmar, and get "on track" with Myanmar desirably distancing themselves from China (Lintner 2015b).

The broadly acknowledged, although still troubled and questioned by organisations such as the Human Rights Watch, UNDP and others, elections of 2015 resulted in a landslide victory, providing the NLD with almost 80 % of the vote, as the military have ensured themselves 25 % and other safeguards in the constitution[28] (Myanmar Times 2016). As of March 2016, the parliament elected longtime confidant of ASSK, Htin Kyaw, as president, allowing a Prime Minister-like position for AASK, i.e. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Education and Energy, describing herself as "the President's boss" (Al Jazeera 2016), leaving the military veto rights against constitutional change, and the final say in the ministry of defence, home and border affairs – the three ministries overseeing security. Even more importantly, "the armed forces answer to the commander in chief, and not the elected government or parliament" (Lintner 2015), thus illustrating the ambiguity of the new developments in Burmese politics per se. The following section seeks to briefly position the ambiguity of Myanmar geographically and regionally politically.

4.2. Mapping Myanmar in the regional political climate in Southeast Asia

Democratisation in the post-colonial world, and especially since the end of the Cold War, have seen great progress throughout the world. Yet, authoritarianism persists an enduring story in global politics, while the "third wave" of democratisation has been seemingly more uneven in its effect than the metaphor possibly implies. While recognising the metaphor in some regions (e.g. Latin America, Southern Europe, Eastern Europe), it has looked like a relatively weak wave in others (e.g. Central Asia, North Africa and The Middle East), and indeed a complex case for that of Southeast Asia (Slater 2010a: 4).

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[28] A further examination of country-specific politics follows in the domestic analysis below.

Geographically positioned literally in the midst of bordering Bangladesh and India in the (North) West, Tibet and Yunnan Province, China in the (North) East, and Laos and Thailand to the (South) East, Myanmar plays a present and historically vital role in tying the Indian Subcontinent (South Asia) with East Asia – economically in terms of trade routes, and certainly demographically (Steinberg 2013: 177). Moreover, the broader regional political climate is increasingly characterised by dispute and uncertainty. As such, Southeast Asian's four most democratic states, Singapore, Indonesia, East Timor, and the Philippines, have generally continued to demonstrate their political strengths, as e.g. Singapore's 2015 elections proved a landslide win for the ruling party, although critics on the electoral framework were many and the future uncertain, causing its democracy to be "flawed" (FH) (Asia Mandala 2015). Indonesia's first-ever president, Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's has begun trying to strengthen Indonesia's democratic fundamentals, such as

Figure 3: Map of Myanmar and surroundings
Photo: © Rainer Lesniewski

by removing some of his ministers linked to the old authoritarian methods of PDI-P[29] (and regime of Suharto), thus enhancing the prerequisites for future stability, although Jokowi's coalition only controls just 204 of the 560 seats in parliament, less than his ex-Suharto successor of the Gerindra coalition, led by Prabowo Subianto – providing him with great competition (The Diplomat 2014). Subsequently, the hybrid regimes/quasi-democratic nations of neighbouring Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand have suffered vastly in freedom during 2015. The reconciliation of Cambodia's "culture of dialogue" have been broken, and opposition politicians and leaders persecuted, and civil society activists suppressed. Likewise, Prime Minister of Malaysia, Najib tun Razak, has allegedly struggled to silence colleagues within the party who demands a more thorough examination of the scandal concerning great amounts of state funds flowing to his own bank account, as well as new reports of limiting criticism and criminalising free expression by jailing oppositions leaders and activists, too (HRW 2015b) – while in Thailand, there seems to be no end to the rule of the junta, although new

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[29] The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, centre-left ideology

elections have been promised in 2017, which seem somewhat unlikely considering the relatively recent Royal Thai Armed Forces' coup d'état in 2014 (The Diplomat 2014).

Altogether, considering the sheer uncertainty in the region, scholar Joshua Kurlantzick points to a potential rollback - or "democracy in retreat" – in the Southeast Asian region, pointing to e.g. Thailand and Malaysia as the most noteworthy cases of democracy in retreat, Cambodia and Myanmar's reluctance to fully implement democratic political reforms, as well as Vietnam, Brunei and Laos' halted, and even rollback, of otherwise introduced reforms (Kurlantzick 2014). Additionally, ASEAN's obligation to human rights has lacked of momentum, and China's cultivating economic, political and social ties with, or linkages to, nations in the region have worked against democratisation, as implied through the 'dark knight' theory. Coherent with Huntington's wave analogy, Kurlantzick points to the democracy's withdrawal in Southeast Asia as mirroring a larger global trend as they, like waves, tend to come and go. According to Kurlantzick, the consequences of such trends may "(…) seriously endanger American security cooperation in East Asia, undermine the region's growth and economic interdependence, and cause serious political unrest, even insurgencies, in many Southeast Asian nations" (Keck *in* The Diplomat 2014).

5. Chapter five: Analytical framework

The domestic dimension of the analysis characterises the *internal* pressures via theoretically founded classifications of what constitutes a competitive authoritarian regime, or a "disciplined democracy". Subsequently, the international dimension consists of the *external* pressures using L&W's framework of Myanmar's existing level of leverage, i.e. bargaining power, and linkage between Myanmar and the West/China respectively.

5.1. The domestic dimension: Competitive authoritarianism of Myanmar

In succession and despite of the newly appointed Htin Kyaw as new president of Myanmar, proxy to NLD's constitutionally barred ASSK, consequently symbolically and factually ending decades of repressive rule, national and international observers of the developments are continuously questioning the authenticity and legitimacy of the current situation. Seemingly for a good reason, using L&W's criteria for terming a country as a democracy, an authoritarian rule – or the in-between stage (or plateau) of 'competitive authoritarianism'.

5.1.1. Labelling Myanmar 'competitive authoritarian': Not authoritarian, nor democratic

According to the methodology of L&W, nations are categorised in three subordinations, i.e. i) full authoritarianism, ii) competitive authoritarianism, and iii) democracy. Before specifying why Myanmar belong in the competitive authoritarian column, the following argues why it is not fully authoritarian, and more interestingly, nor a democracy (See Appendix I for a detailed description of criteria; L&W 2010: 365-369).

Most notably, Myanmar disqualify as a full authoritarian regime due to the 'national-level multiparty elections' that took place in November 2015, and this time around, also acknowledged by the international community and endorsed by the watchdogs in the White House (et al.). This provided NLD with a recognised win of more than half of seats in the parliament without direct falsification of the results. That said, the most forceful ministerial positions, such as home, defence and border affairs, are reserved for Myanmar's armed forces, the Tatmadaw, allowing them a quarter of the seats in parliament, which sure complicates the democratic composition of the system in the country.

Moreover, Myanmar basically disqualifies as a democracy as it *does* meet the criteria for competitive authoritarianism (Appendix I, pt. 3,2). Another central concern to its democratic development is the government' and far-right, conservative Buddhist groups' prosecution of the country's approximately 1 million Muslim ethnic minorities in the Rohingya community, Rakhine state, West Myanmar. Such Apartheid-like ethnic-cleansing, according to the Human Rights Watch (HRW 2015), leaves the Rohingya people under constant threat, with very few legal rights. Even recently, ASSK stated that the "Rohingya are not our priority", but "Bangladesh' problem", pointing to seemingly little or no change of course from the newly-placed government thus undermining the legitimacy of democratisation and democracy in Myanmar. Hence, what L&W terms "basic civil liberties" (free media, press, and association) are not universally met either (Johnson 2016; Siddiqui 2015), as well as *actual* "near-universal adult suffrage" seem fairly questionable too, and "tutelary powers", i.e. the Tatmadaw/former military-charged government, inflicts the NLD-government indirectly as directly.

As such, L&W points to the three main sub-categories denominating a country as competitive authoritarian; i) Unfair elections, ii) Violation of civil liberties, and an iii) Uneven playing field. First and foremost, despite the West' eagerness to pay their tribute to the recent developments in Myanmar, the first criteria that must be obeyed under 'unfair elections', is "*At least one major candidate is barred for political reasons*". This arguably entails the destiny of "The Lady", ASSK, as the electoral landslide victory still barred her from holding presidency herself due to the military-drafted 2008 constitution cleverly disallowing candidates to take office if he or she have children of foreign citizenship (Cranston 2015). Mending the constitution, however, is impossible without the provision of the unelected army representatives. Accordingly, the democratic transition is sometimes referred to as "elections without democracy", stating the at times flawed democratic composition that in practise leaves out civil liberties and equal playing fields (Diamond 2002; Slater 2014).

Hence, secondly, 'violation of civil liberties' in a Burmese context, refers to the aforementioned ethnic conflicts that are not eradicated by the government, as well as the new government's continuous struggle to free political prisoners and reconcile Burmese citizens in exile. According the Freedom House, the *civil liberties* of Myanmar equals 6 on a scale of 1 to 7 (7 being worst) (Freedom House 2016a), stressing the remaining limited freedom of expression, and especially, *belief,* as Buddhism more or less remains the only "game in town", to use the term of Linz and Stepan. Additionally, the

rights to associate, personal autonomy, and women's rights, as well as an independent rule of law further impede the civil liberties of individuals (Ibid.), hence the sheer democratic genuineness of the Burmese establishment. To make sense of the total of competitive authoritarianism of Myanmar, the following table consists of a summary based on the specific criteria in L&W (2010: 365-368).

5.1.1.1. Overall competitive authoritarian characteristics

Total 'Competitive Authoritarian' Regime Scores of Myanmar*

	Unfair elections	Violations of civil liberties	Uneven playing Field	Regime Type
Myanmar	**X**** (1***,4)	**X** (1,3)	**X** (1,2,3)	**CAR**

Table 2: Total Regime Scores of Myanmar
* The outcome of the table is considered in respect to L&W's full set of criteria for 'competitive authoritarian regimes' pp. 365-369 (2010).
** Each X indicates the existence of *abuse* in the particular dimension (e.g. uneven playing field)
*** Each specified number in parentheses refer to the subcategory of violation within in each dimension (e.g. 'uneven media press' *within* 'uneven playing field') (Appendix I).

Considered in respect the theory of L&W (2010: 365-369), and specified in Appendix I, the three sub-criteria for CARs; i) *elections, ii) civil liberties,* and *iii) playing field*, are based on the following observations. Initially, Myanmar's *electoral process* of November 2015, although recognised as the fairest election in Myanmar by (Western) international institutions (e.g. Freedom House), offers a sense of hesitation, as well as it disqualifies L&W's (substantial) criteria for a fair election. In short, barring a "major candidate for political reasons" (Ibid: 366), is central in respect to the 2008 constitutions' implementation of barring candidates' children with foreign passports the right to pursue presidency (Unfair elections, (1), Table 2).

Moreover, the electoral playing field is considered uneven (4), as the opposition's "highly uneven access to media and resources" were skewed in comparison with the incumbent, i.e. the governments' control over the public media, and systemically use of state resources (HRW 2015a). Additionally, the disenfranchisement of approx. 750,000 people who had formerly held registration cards to vote, now did not (causing the aforementioned migration crisis in 2015). First and foremost, they include residents of Chinese and Indian descent, but mainly Rohingya Muslims in the Rakhine state, who have been deprived of their right to vote, as the government denies their citizenship (Ibid.). Bias caused by the governments' monitoring and managing electoral entity 'Union Election Commission"

(UEC), chaired by a former military leader, have been believed to intimidate the NLD, and successively to exclude the participation of ethnic minority parties, a supposedly "Women's Party", and generally controlling the ebb and flow of the political arena from within (NBR 2015; HRW 2015a).

Next, another much debated domestic issue of the Burmese establishment is the *civil liberties* in the country. Institutions such as UNDP, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International (and certainly others) have especially offered their concern on this issue, as civil harassment, discretionary use of concessions to exclude media, media censorship on various "hot" issues, and the government's imposed threats to political rights and association (L&W 2010: 366-367). Although the 2008 constitution allegedly provides freedom of religion, state officials as late as 2015 have removed thousands of Christians and Muslims, restricted gatherings of minority groups, controlled the Buddhist clergy (Bhikkhus), and excluded non-Buddhist religious groups the rights to receive education and establish new houses of worship (3) (Freedom House 2016b). Moreover, the media have played a key role in respect to the 2015 election campaign, as domestic newspapers, online channels, and foreign or expatriate-based broadcasters have been providing robust coverage of the competing parties, candidates, and issues at state. However, the domestic television and radio, being the main sources of information for the majority of the population, have remained in the control of the military, the USDP government, or their allies, causing the state-media coverage to highly favouring the incumbents (1) (Ibid.). As late as July 2015, the most critical media "Eleven Media Group" was attacked by hardline nationalists – allegedly connected to the government - with slingshots and metal projectiles, thus causing great threat to the political and civil rights of citizens, and their chances of engaging in a free and fair election before and after the ballot (CPJ 2015). Given an upwards arrow of democratic progression by the Freedom House, the civil liberties in Myanmar remain fractious, scoring 6 out of 7, thus sharing the relative score with e.g. China (Freedom House 2016a).

Finally, the *uneven playing field* becomes evident in various dimensions, i.e. through i) the former government's ability to limit the opposition's ability to compete on reasonably fair grounds (1), ii) the disproportionate access to the media, where the state-owned media is the primary source of news for the population, hence offering relative partiality in favour of the incumbent (2), and iii) uneven access to resources, including the aforementioned improper use of state resources, and manipulation with private financing, limiting the chances of competing on an equal footing (3). As such, the me-

dia's ability to freely operate, and the present (self-)censorship in regards to the military's interests proves relevant in this matter too, as it creates dimensions that undermines the freedom of press, and ultimately the self-determination of the population.

As Franck La Rue, Former UN Special Rapporteur, observes, "(…) it is during times of political change that the right to freedom of expression is most essential, ensuring that a well-informed and empowered public is free to exercise its civil and political rights." (Amnesty 2015: 16). Yet, several reports on media intimidation, journalistic constrains, cyber-attacks on journalists' computers etc., have led to severe criminal punishment and personal persecution, even lately. Accordingly, the constitutions' "Electronic Transactions Law" even consists of a law criminalising any political activism on the internet for "any act detrimental to state security, law and order, community peace and tranquillity, national solidarity, the national economy, or national culture, (…) including receiving or sending related information" (HRW 2015a), which may result in extensive fines or prison terms from 3 to 7 years (Ibid.). Consequently, the military's effects in limiting the media sector, and continuously empowering or sustaining the influence of the military, hence jeopardising the principal rights of the peoples remain troubled and alive (Lintner 2015; Kempel & Nyien 2014: 33). The wide-spread self-censorship is evident in the fearsome environment, in which journalists censor themselves by not reporting on issues what may be deemed too sensitive or detrimental by the authorities, which totally undermines the sometimes normative role of the media, namely indicting to societal injustices and holding politicians accountable. "At the moment self-censorship is about not going to prison.", according to Cherry Thein, journalist of The Myanmar Times (Amnesty 2015: 10).

Ultimately, the totality of the abovementioned domestic insufficiencies in terms of fair and even elections, civil and media liberties, and the continuity of the military's effect on society, all contributes to *undermining* the credibility of the recent democratic supposed transitions, as well as its immediate strength, persistency and chances of survival, as it fails to permeate genuine democratic values across the country. While the domestic dimension does not stand alone as the only danger to sustainable democratic consolidation, the following the analysis consists of the international dimension, analysing the leverage towards external actors, and comparing the linkages vis-à-vis the West and China.

5.2. The international dimension: A comparative analysis of Myanmar vs. the West/China

Initially, the international dimension will analyse the leverage. i.e. bargaining power of Myanmar towards external actors. As such, it is not eligible for a direct comparative approach, nonetheless making it in the international dimension, as it is the internally prerequisites for external, international pressures. And since the comparative element is attached to the external actors of the West and China, the linkages vis-à-vis the West and China follows in the succeeding subchapter.

5.2.1. The leverage of Myanmar

First, Myanmar (cf. Appendix II) fails the criteria of *Low leverage,* i.e. Myanmar's significant possession of bargaining power vis-à-vis the West/China, hence ability to avoid Western/Chinese actions aimed at punishing abuse, or more generally, it's vulnerability to external pressures.

The criteria of which *one* must be met to qualify, requires i) a large economy with a total GDP of more than $100 billion USD (1995) ($156 billion, inflation-adjusted for 2014[30]), ii) being a major oil producer, producing an annual production of more than $1 million barrels of crude oil per day average, and iii) being in possession of/or have the capacity to use nuclear weapons (L&W 2010: 372). Clarification as follows.

Initially, although seeing annual GDP growth rates at astonishing 8,5 % (2015) and promising levels of FDIs, especially from the ASEAN countries (see 'Economic ties', next chapter), yet, Myanmar's 'lower middle income' economy amounts to $64 billion GDP (Thailand $405B, Malaysia $338B, Vietnam $186B, for comparison), consequently disqualifying as a major economy. Secondly, exporting its first crude oil by the British Burma in 1853, largely supplying British India with supplies, Myanmar's oil industry, second to its primary exports of natural gas, is still underdeveloped considering its potentials (UK gov. 2015: 3-7). As such, Myanmar disqualifies as a major oil producer with its limited and inadequate 20,000 barrels of crude oil per day average, hence insufficiency to meet domestic consumption for crude oil, making the country a net oil importer (World Bank 2016b). Thirdly, the possession of/access to nuclear weapons, or rather the lack hereof, finally denominates Myanmar as having scarce bargaining power vis-à-vis external actors. Despite allegations of the jun-

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[30] All following figures have been adjusted to match those of current $US 2014; i.e. $100 equals $156.

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ta's nuclear affiliations with both Russia (2007) and North Korea (2009), along with persistent accusations of using chemical weapons, "there is no evidence to suggest that Myanmar has a chemical weapon program" (NTI 2014), and likewise no indication of nuclear possessions. As succession of Barack Obama's visit to Myanmar in 2012, Myanmar signed an 'Additional Protocol', granting the Atomic Energy Agency legal rights to inspectorate possible undeclared nuclear activities (NTI 2014a).

To qualify as *medium leverage* country, representing the middle ground of vulnerability to external pressures, a given country must meet one of the following four indicators; i) a medium-sized economy ($77,8 - $156 billion USD), ii) being a secondary oil producer, producing an annual production between 200,000 and 1 million barrels of crude oil per day average, iii) having 'competing security issues' with the West/China respectively, or iv) being a beneficiary of "Black Knight Assistance", hence receiving significant bilateral aid (at least 1 percent of GDP) with a dominant share coming from a major non-Western high-income power (with GDP per capita of $15,600 or higher), or being a major military power (annual military spending in excess of $15,6 billion USD. To qualify as a *high leverage* country, none of the low- and medium leverage indicators must be met. As such, Myanmar's $64 billion GDP is not sufficient in respect to the first criteria of being a medium-sized economy. Nor does Myanmar qualify as a medium-sized oil producer, as there is still a long way from 20,000 to 200,000 barrels. More so, Myanmar does not have any 'competing security issues', i.e. Myanmar is of no threat to the security of neither the West or China.

The last criteria, 'Black Knight Assistance', however, enlists Myanmar as a *medium leverage* country, based on the high amounts of bilateral aid, grants and loans (ODAs) delivered from a "major non-Western economic/military power", China. Development aid projects such as pipelines, dams and other energy project exceeding billions of USD, pledged humanitarian aid in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in 2008 exceeding $6 million USD – along with earthquakes in e.g. Northern Burma in 2013 (Renwick 2014: 74-75), and presumably very recent earthquake (April 2016). As such China delivers far more tied and untied aid to Myanmar than 1 percent of GDP ($640 million USD). While China's GDP per capita only exceeds to $7,600 USD (Myanmar $1200, U.S. $54,600) (World Bank 2016c), it's military spending equals 1,9 percent ($207 billion USD) of its total GDP ($10,355 billion USD, 2014) (Trading Economics 2016a), hence exceeding the criteria of $10 billion USD by far.

Further examination of China as black knight, and its possible (or dreaded, depending on perspective) hindrance of deepening democratisation in Myanmar, follows in the thesis' discussion. Based on the outlined estimates of the Burmese leverage towards external actors, the total leverage remain as follows.

5.2.1.1. Total leverage score

Total leverage score between Myanmar and the West

Case	Major economy	Nuclear Power	Major Oil Producer	Medium Economy	Medium Oil Producer	Competing Security Issues	Black Knight Support	Leverage Score
Myanmar	No	No	No	No	No	No	**Yes***	*Medium*

Table 3: Total leverage score between Myanmar and The West
* The use of colours throughout the remaining part of the thesis resembles the following: Green = general highlighting, Blue = highlighting the West, and Red = highlighting China.

As we have seen, Myanmar figure as *close-to-high leverage* towards external pressures, with only one of seven medium criteria met. Therefore, it is rather fair to say that the susceptibility and vulnerabilities to foreign pressures are relatively high, especially considering China's highly economic-centred interests in Myanmar, thus bolstering the element of dependency (Slater 2014: 7). Essentially, external actors can utilise solid influence if an asymmetrical power-relationship and a high degree of interdependence are in place, i.e. if leverage is high, as predominantly the case of Myanmar, and linkages are somewhat dense. However, as L&W theoretically suggest, all things are not as straightforward. According to Tolstrup (2009: 23), "(…) Raw power definitely has a lot to say in these matters [too]. But, the asymmetrical power-relationship cannot be exploited to its full potential without the "glue" of linkages". As such, the following comparative segments will consist of the linkages between Myanmar and the West/China respectively to glue the identified levels of leverage to the various ties beyond.

5.2.2. Comparative analysis I: Myanmar vs. the West

Accordingly, linkages simply work as binding, consolidating effects of external pressures. Hence, the closer ties, the more powerful external pressure. As leverage may be rather constant over time, linkages, on the other hand, may fluctuate over time, as governing bodies may accelerate, or constrain, such ties over time (Tolstrup 2010: 7-8, 23). Thus, the following analytical part will examine the ties between Myanmar and the West in accordance with L&W's linkage indicators (cf. Appendix III) of determining a country's susceptibility to democratic consolidation.

5.2.2.1. The linkage between Myanmar and the West

5.2.2.1.1 Economic ties

The economic ties between the Myanmar and the West can be seen in continuation of the economic reforms introduced by Thein Sein that substantially opened up the long-isolated economy towards Western (and Eastern) economic powers, hence easing, not solving, the economic situation and high-degree of poverty in the country. Likewise, the economic ties between the two entities have eased due to the lifting of sanctions mainly in 2012-2013 after effect of the "discipline-flourishing democracy" initiatives. Sanctions initially implemented towards the 1997 military ruled Burma due to the junta's repression of the democratic opposition in the country (OFAC 2015: 3-4). The following table shows the economic ties through imports/exports between Myanmar and US/EU 2008-2014.

The economic share of the import and export between Myanmar and the West

	2008	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*
Exports *(US/EU share)*	**3,9 %**	**3,4 %**	**3,0 %**	**2,6 %**	**2,3 %**	**2,6 %**	**2,3 %**
Imports *(US/EU share)*	**2,6 %**	**2,1 %**	**2,0 %**	**1,9 %**	**2,2 %**	**3,0 %**	**2,1 %**
EU export	248	199	195	214	192	243	438
US export	-	1	-	-	1	27	84
EU import	171	140	119	203	302	450	610
US import	12	8	11	54	72	160	102
Total exports	6278	5913	6452	8330	8265	10398	22460
Total imports	6977	7081	9945	13694	17036	20433	24315

Table 4: Economic ties between Myanmar and the West (US/EU) of total import/export in millions USD
* Source: Direction of Trade (DOTS), International Monetary Fund, Yearbook of 2015 (IMF 2015a: 399-402)

As the table convincingly display, the direction of import and export, i.e. the ties, between Myanmar and West certainly lacks of quantity and to some extent progress as well. Though the aforementioned roll-back of sanctions sure have increased the ties between the two countries, or the potentials, there is still a long way for the West to become a main economic trade partner. In fact, as the developments show, there have been little to no progress aggregately, merely resting on the ties between EU and Myanmar, that is. Important to note, however, is the observers' positive forecasts of increased economic ties from both the EU and the West (IMF 2015a: 399; Caixin 2015).

Secondly, the limited goods that are exported to West are more or less restricted to aquaculture (approx. 70 % of total to the US, 2013) and textiles (approx. 65 % of total to the EU, 2013) (OEC 2015)[32]. As we will see later, the two main types of good, namely petroleum gas and crude oil (37 % of total export) and 'rough wood' (10 % of total export) remain on the Asian continent. Imports are quite scattered, though Myanmar's favourite type of import is *refined* crude oil (9,2 % of total import) (plausibly alluding certain dependency patterns), as various types of transportation vehicles come in second (OEC 2015). The third and last sub-dimension of economic ties with the West is evaluated through the extent of Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) towards Myanmar, which are fluctuating but increasing.

According to Petty & Raybould (2015), the increased investments are particularly linked to the so-far rather untapped market for energy, manufacturing and telecom sectors, while the foreign access to the banking, property and tourism sector is livid too. However, the staggering level of FDI towards Myanmar in 2014 does not dominantly come from the West, i.e. only $243 million USD out of $43 billion USD (0,57 %) come from the United States (2013) (Song 2014), and just about 7 % among the top European investors, i.e. UK, The Netherlands and France (as of March, 2015) (ITUC 2015: 10). Recent trade statistics does however a steady increase in FDI towards Myanmar, being the case for both Western and non-Western investors. According to Thein Sein (now former president, as of 30th April 2016) announced back in April last year that the economic expectations for the economic growth of Myanmar could be as much as 9-10 percent. Similar accounts for the Asian Development Bank (ADB) who expects to see the fastest growth rate of 7-8 percent during the coming decade

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[32] OEC (The Observatory of Economic Complexity) Online Visualization Engine for International Trade data. Accessed online via http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/

(ITUC 2015:10-11). Additionally, the Western institutions stresses the importance of "responsible investment" (Song 2014) in their new investment frameworks that may have caused a relative slow beginning from the EU and US respectively.

Altogether the aggregated economic ties score between Myanmar and the West, namely the i) import/export, ii) influence of type of trade, and iii) FDI - is considered as *low* ("No substantial ties")*,* as the relatively limited trade consists of non-raw materials (i.e. high-dependency products), and the overall FDIs from the West up until now remains scarce.

5.2.2.1.2 Social ties

The social ties-dimension rests on the levels of immigration and diaspora to and from the West. As we know, the social dimension in Myanmar is complex. Despite of the reformist Myanmar, the state's civil and social rights and liberties are fragile, as the restrictions of citizenship in regards to socioeconomic background is alive-and-kicking. More specifically, the aforementioned Rohingya Muslims in the West/Northwest of Myanmar (bordering Muslim Bangladesh), are denied citizenship and pushed out, as well as other Muslims in the remaining parts of the country are affected by this disavowal, not to mention the armed conflicts in the country. Similar accounts for various ethnic minorities in the peripheral areas of the country, due to the dominating Bamar majority (68%) (Theravada Buddhists) positioned mainly in the national hubs, who seizes or appropriate their citizenship. The result is growing social tensions that threatens the process of reforms as well as it creates immigrants and increases the Burmese diaspora (Holliday 2014: 409; Lee 2016: 201).

The share of US' total immigrants from Myanmar equals just 128.000 people (2014). Meanwhile, the total of Burmese asylum applicants to EU/EFTA equals just 435 individuals. In comparison, Syrian asylum seekers amounted to 128.000, Eritrea 47.000, and Somalia 18.000. Denmark received just 35 Burmese asylum seekers (2014) (Ibid.). Besides the Burmese refugees and asylum seekers being terrifying results of the ongoing civil wars in the country, the Human Rights department of UN reports an astonishing 1 million 'internally displaced peoples' (IDPs) (1996-2006), many of whom derive from the minority groups (Lintner 2012), and who, if not internally displaced, are mainly displaced to the bordering countries (Thailand, Bangladesh, China, India) (UNHCR 2015). As such, the present Burmese diaspora community in respectively the U.S. and EU are correspondingly limited,

due to the flows of refugees and migrants dominantly seeks the region. The U.S. and EU's diaspora communities in Myanmar, however, are steadily increasing due to the aforementioned rather untapped and newly-opened situation in Myanmar, causing large and small (I)NGOs to offer humanitarian relief, and companies to increasingly settle in the urban hubs of Myanmar. An interesting side note to the element of the Burmese diaspora, however, is the role of political activists across borders, or the present "transnationalism". As Schiller notes (in Guarnizo et al 2003: 18), "the process by which immigrants build socials fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement", hence establishing social fields that surpass geographical, cultural and political borders, as people "literally live their lives across international international borders" (Ibid.).

Altogether the aggregated social ties score between Myanmar and the West, namely the i) level of migration to the West, and the present ii) diaspora in the West – is considered *low* ("no substantial immigration or diaspora"), as the immigrants from Myanmar, as we will see, seek elsewhere than towards the West, and the Burmese diaspora in the West and vice versa is limited relative to the total Burmese diaspora in the (Southeast) Asian region.

5.2.2.1.3 Communication ties

The immediate influence of foreign media proliferation can, as Teorell (2010: 68-69) notes, be one of the "driving factors" to the theoretical notion of the third wave, and to a large degree what has been known as the concept of modernisation, as various newspapers, radios, TV and other sources of spreading information, are vital to *retain* the authoritarian nature of a state – rather than materialise the promotion of democracy per se (Ibid.: 6). However, if media freedom increases, as the case of Myanmar recently, the prospective for broadly distributed communications technologies to uphold and protect the democratic streams of information is unleashed. This may show to be rather central to the preservation of future democratic consolidation in the country, as media and communication technologies may translate into broader adoption of democratic values, at least domestically. In 2012 the government dismantled the media censorship, causing 2013 to be the first year of "free media" for five decades. The sincerity of free press and media, however, remains highly questionable. Nevertheless, as mentioned, the FDIs in the telecom sector has been booming ever since. Intertwining the technologically equipped transnationalism across borders, with an increasing access to e.g. telephone

and internet, all produce great threats to the remaining authoritarian elements of the government (Teorell 2010: 157).

Conclusively, the aggregated communicative ties score between Myanmar and the West is considered *Low ("Low or negligible media or communication penetration"")*, as the increased, although not completely, free media and press are allowing Western actors in the telecom and media sectors to flourish in Myanmar, while there is an increase in the level of access to (international) information sources, partially from the West, although not dominantly.

5.2.2.1.4 Intergovernmental ties

According to the theory of L&W (2010: 374-375), the intergovernmental ties rests on two indicators, namely i) if the country is a member of the Organization of American States (OAS), or ii) a potential member of the EU. To apply the theory to Myanmar and the West/China respectively, however, an aggregated measure is used, as the relationship towards China in the second part of the comparative analysis, surely, does not include ties to the OAS, EU or the like. As such, a broader, more elaborative, variety of considerations are taking into account, including military associations, regional integration and potential diplomatic ties between the units, hence nuancing the total picture. First, in more recent time, the Myanmar-United States relations are vastly characterised by the events following the 1988 military coup d'état and the violent suppression of pro-democracy demonstrations that followed, causing sanctions and strained relations between the two. In fact, as the US showed promising signs of reconciliation due to the democratising effects in Myanmar per 2011, the 2014 first visit by U.S. President Obama, reflected the inauguration of improved relations between the two (U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton in 2011). Moreover, with the U.S. embassy in-place again (2012), a public poll on the 'Approval of U.S. Leadership in Myanmar' show only 30 % approval of U.S. leadership (Thailand and Cambodia 60-62 %), while 67 % do not know or refuse to take stand, which, according to Mendes (Gallup), is natural due to the long-time isolation. In fact, the public are more prone to approve the ties with the U.S. as opposed to disapprove it (Mendes 2012). Altogether, the Myanmar-US intergovernmental ties have been lifted from its otherwise stalled position, as a result of common interests in increased bilateral relationship. Not only does U.S. leaders mark its positive impact on the recent developments in Myanmar, but the symbolic and de facto link between the liberal democratic West and NLD's pro-democracy ASSK inevitably cause enhanced intergov-

ernmental ties too (Kurlantzick 2014). Additionally, U.S. have increased government aid towards Myanmar since the devastation of Cyclone Nargis in 2008, to "promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law", ranking 4 (of 32) recipients of US aid (2014) in East Asia and Oceania (USAID 2016). More so, the 2015 "Trans-Pacific Partnership" may show interesting (perhaps difficult) spill-over effects to the economic and diplomatic ties between the U.S. and Myanmar (Mitton 2015).

The intergovernmental ties between Myanmar and EU have increased in similar ways, thus following the direction of the U.S. More specifically, a "Comprehensive Framework" (2013) have been adopted to promote likewise democratic and civil rights initiatives, as the EU supports nationwide cease-fire agreements towards peace and national reconciliation (The European Council 2015). The inaugural of a full-fledged EU delegation to Myanmar in Yangon in September 2013, opened a new chapter in the bilateral relations (EU 2015), together with the implemented "Election Observation Mission" (EU EOM) (2015), and the recently agreed EU-Myanmar "Multinational Indicative Programme 2014-2020", securing great potentials of investments in peace support, education, rural development and good governance (EU 2015). Jointly, the intergovernmental ties to the West are anchored to the UN General Assembly's resolutions on maintaining democratic developments, urging Myanmar to intensifying efforts against discrimination, civil abuse, and promoting human rights (UN 2015: 3-4), and thereby adhere to the voices of the Western-based institutions in order to continuously legitimise their gained quasi-democratic positions, and avoid potential reoccurring sanctions from the West.

Altogether the aggregated intergovernmental ties between Myanmar and the West, while not tallying the membership of either OAS or EU, however well-connected to Western institutions of diplomatic importance, ties are considered *medium* ("Considerate bilateral/diplomatic ties with the West, but alternative is dominating"). Beside the abovementioned characteristics of intergovernmental ties to the West that are present, the overarching dominant bilateral intergovernmental ties, as we will see, ties elsewhere, leaving relative bleak intergovernmental linkages (although enhanced leverage) towards the West.

5.2.2.1.5 Total linkage score

Linkage between Myanmar and the West

Dimension	Score
1. Economic ties	0
2. Social ties	0
3. Communication ties	0
4. Intergovernmental ties	1
Aggregated score:	**1**
Category	***Low***

Table 5: Estimated total linkages between Myanmar and the West
* See Table 1 (Operationalisation of linkages) for score values

Comparatively low financial flows, low social migration patterns and networks of diaspora, lack of strong communicative ties, together with intergovernmental ties that perhaps are more valuable to the West than Myanmar, based on the all four dimensions, the aggregated linkage score is *low*. Subsequently, the next subchapter includes the linkages vis-à-vis China.

5.2.3. Comparative analysis II: Myanmar vs. China

Bordering China to the North and Northeast, exceeding the border range length towards Thailand by just 80 miles, the otherwise long disputed relationship between Myanmar and China have reached common grounds since Myanmar's admission to ASEAN since 1997 - at least among the governing elite in terms of formal and symbolic ties to big-brother People's Republic of China, and seemingly less popular among civil activists. Due to a series of disputes throughout the history of the relationship, i.e. Myitsone Dam project along the Irrawaddy River, supplying mainly Yunnan-district with hydropower, as well as the 18th century Sino-Burmese Wars when the Qing Dynasty of China invaded Burma at several occasions, the relationship remains asymmetrical, but nonetheless reciprocal and mutually beneficial (Than 2003: 191; Kudo 2006: 6). According to Hong, however, Myanmar has been described as "One of China's few loyal friends", and even a "virtual Chinese satellite", highlighting the complex yet profound ties between the two. Additionally, the Japanese/Chinese rivalry of charming Myanmar show positive signs of the regional significance of the Burmese attention and willingness (Hong 2014: 19-20). Either way, China have gained a head-start on various dimensions.

5.2.3.1. The linkage between Myanmar and China

5.2.3.1.1 Economic ties

Surely, the aforementioned increasing, yet limited, economic trade and political engagement with Western actors, have brought some degree of uncertainty to the Myanmar-China relations. However, the recent Burmese shift in external attitude, and application of new reforms by the government, may as well compliment the relations to China (Shihong 2014: 174).

The economic share of imports and exports between Myanmar and China*

	2008	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*
Exports *of total (China share)*	**9,3 %**	**9,9 %**	**13,5 %**	**18,3 %**	**14,3 %**	**25,6 %**	**18,5 %**
Imports *of total (China share)*	**31,2 %**	**35,4 %**	**38,5 %**	**38,7 %**	**36.6 %**	**44,5 %**	**42,4 %**
Export to China	586	587	874	1524	1181	2554	4162
Import from China	2177	2507	3829	5307	6243	9084	10312
Total exports	6278	5913	6452	8330	8265	10398	22460
Total imports	6977	7081	9945	13694	17036	20433	24315

Table 6: Economic ties between Myanmar and the China of total import/export in millions USD
* Source: Direction of Trade (DOTS), International Monetary Fund, Yearbook of 2015 (IMF 2015a: 399-402)

As visible in Table 6, the share of exports, and in particular imports, between Myanmar and China have increased immensely since 2008, consequently not just retaining the dominant position of trade partnership, but strengthening it. With a total share of imports amounting to as much as 42,4 %, consisting of a strongly diverse selection of goods, including a mixed variety of infrastructure supplies, machinery, fabrics, iron and steel, and pretty much all sorts of material to supply the progressively globalised Burmese people (OEC 2015). Scrutinising the characteristics of exports, Myanmar largely delivers raw materials to China, such as fair shares of rough wood (23 %), tin and iron ores, and petroleum gas (18%), and precious stones and pearls (37 %) (2013) (Ibid.). As the share of exports to China are up to 18,5 % (2014), and largely consisting raw materials, one may trace a certain degree of dependency elements in the patterns of trade.

Surely, there are quite obvious reasons for the direction of trade, due to the dominating element of border trade. Hence, it is of no surprise that the top five countries of export destinations (2013) are Thailand ($3,7 billions), China ($2,4B), India ($962 millions), Japan ($752M), and South Korea ($486M). Nonetheless, the total share is remarkable. Likewise, top imports are highly dominated by neighbouring countries, especially China ($7,0B), Thailand ($3,8B), Singapore ($2,1B), Japan ($1,0B), and India ($752M), consequently resulting in an increasingly negative Trade Balance ($68,8B over $51,7B) (2013) (OEC 2015).

Secondly, the tracked FDI flows from China accounts to as much as 38 % of the total FDI towards Myanmar (2014-2015 fiscal year), showing the clear sign of China taking advantage of the untapped business opportunities in the country next door, including abundant natural materials, cheap labour, infantile tourist industries etc. (ITUC 2015: 10). Recent stalls in the Chinese FDI flows in 2015, however still dominant, are partly due to the Chinese stock market's bump in 2015, and partly due to the unfinished, and politically suspended, China-backed $3,6-billion Myitsone dam project (Mizzima 2015). "Minor" economic uncertainty and political disturbance, however, does not seem to unrest Professor of Economics, Sean Turnell, citing that "In the end, this will always be determined by the numbers" (in Ibid.), thus indicating the prominence of the mutually-beneficial, while perhaps one-way skewed, Chinese investments. "It is mostly about taking stuff out of the ground or taking energy out of Burma and into China, with China as the main consumer", says Turnell (In Song 2014).

Altogether the aggregated economic ties score between Myanmar and the China, namely the i) import/export, ii) influence of type of trade, and iii) FDI - is considered as *high* ("Substantial economic ties and dependency"), as the dominating trade flows between the two are highly superior, type of goods are of dependent character, and the overall FDIs into the mining, gas and electricity sector are strong, many and dominant by far.

5.2.3.1.2 Social ties

As earlier analysed, the social connection, using the model of L&W, rests on the level of migration and diaspora between the two. Accordingly, 3 % of the population in Myanmar are Chinese, amounting to 1,65 million people (CIA 2015). First, the migrant flows between the countries are excessive. Mostly, migrants from China to Myanmar are usually business people searching for new markets, as they bring their own workers with them from China, with little or no interests to integrate. The "New Chinese", as they are sometimes referred to, opposes the well-integrated two- and third generation Sino-Burmese, who migrated in the 1960s, practise Buddhism and adopts the Burmese culture. Instead, the Yunnan-dominated immigrants have no cultural or linguistic interest (Birke 2010). Thus, the public image of the such newly arrived Chinese in Myanmar have grown into a complicated one, creating a double-standard setting of the Chinese in (Northern) Myanmar, as they are hard to live without in terms of investments, providing services, infrastructure projects, energy etc., and yet seemingly hard to get along with, or fully accept the presence of, too (Walker 2014). Though the exact numbers of Chinese immigrants in Myanmar are unknown (and difficult to collect), estimates are anywhere between one and three million, according to Global Witness, a London-based human-rights monitor, noting around 30-40 % of Chinese immigrants in Mandalay alone, the second biggest city relatively North (Global Witness 2014).

Due to several cases of armed conflicts and ongoing ethnic struggles in Myanmar, including especially the Muslim minorities towards India and Bangladesh, and bordering China (Yunnan province), the Kachin and Shan state, tens of thousands of Burmese (mainly Chinese-Burmese) have either been internally displaced, pushed out as refugees or smuggled out of Myanmar to China (Brown 2015) as a result of the government-backed and non-state armed groups' intensification of conflict towards ethnic "Han Chinese" in the Eastern states of Myanmar (UNHCR 2015). Consequently, there are more than 60,000 Burmese refugees in China, and approximately 80,000 refugees displaced along

the Burmese-Chinese border in Kachin state refugee camps (Oxford Burma Alliance 2013), and supposedly even more migrant workers (some in the sex-industry) in China, though exact figures are both hard to collect and highly unavailable, and seemingly difficult to obtain due to the highly irregular and/or illegal movement of people, nonetheless indicating the magnitude of the problem (The Economist 2015).

As mentioned, there are high levels of Chinese professionals in the various sections in the development sectors, causing great levels of diaspora environments per se. According to McCarthy (in Billo 2012), an American economist based in Southeast Asia, the Burmese diaspora account to millions of people, in particularly located in the neighbouring countries. Moreover, the Burmese diaspora, which has been a long and vocal critic of Myanmar's government for claimed human rights abuses and mishandling of the national economy, has long been marginalised by military-ruled authorities, thus causing apprehensive and distrustful scenarios of the returning of such diaspora (Ibid.). Contrarily, according to Small (in Ibid.), diaspora networks are sometimes welcomed to help raise funds for much-needed initiatives in Myanmar, and efficiently organise and handle overseas funding for projects. Although the Burmese diaspora in China (and Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan) holds approximately 100,00 diasporic populations (2012), accounting for the second largest set of concentrations, Thailand holds a Burmese population of staggering two million people (2015) (UNHCR 2015; Egreteau 2012: 115, 122).

Altogether the aggregated social ties score between Myanmar and China, namely the i) level of migration to China, and the ii) Burmese diaspora in China – is considered *high* ("Substantial immigration and diaspora, with consequences to Burmese domestic policies"), as migrants flow unremittingly across the border, figures are substantial although not primary, and the Burmese diaspora in China and vice versa is significant. As effect of this, such actions are regarded as approvingly and continuously affecting the political climate in Myanmar; socially, culturally and economically.

5.2.3.1.3 Communication ties

Glancing at the developments during the imitation of the Arab Spring, digital media proved its absolute potential. As earlier noted, the communication ties, according to the theory, consists of the level of international voice traffic, and level of internet access. As both sub-dimensions are difficult to collect and highly unavailable, the following section, as the Myanmar-US analysis, will consist of a

contributing insight into the role of the (digital) media, i.e. alternative channels of communicative character in the case of Sino-Myanmar relations.

As Theorell (2010: 68) and L&W (2010: 56-57) notes, the special nature of the media acts as a forceful method of conveying and achieving political objectives, whether it seeks to balance and underpin democratic development and maintenance, or contrarily seeks to counteract such mechanisms. The latter is what L&W notes as an effect of leverages of black knights, which will be discussed later. Yet, according to one of two main pillars of the Chinese government's news press agencies, Xinhau, China have warned Myanmar of the perils of the newly-placed governments' "change and hope" in the coming future (Asia Mandela 2015).

The Chinese news agencies' (i.e. the government's) former (and present) connections to the Communist Party in Myanmar contributes to the complexity of ties, as NLD's ASSK is in a position where she is somehow pinched in a rectangular relationship between the military/former governments' ongoing influence, hence avoiding potential unrest, balancing and continuing a positive relationship with China for numerous economic reasons, maintaining a prosperous legitimate positon towards the West, and avoiding distrust among the people of Myanmar (Times of India 2015). However, as Lin Xixing, a professor at Jinan University in Southern China, told the New York Times (2015), "China does not like her, and there are reasons. Her father helped the Japanese fight the Chinese military in World War II. She has been close to the West, grew up in India and married a foreigner in Europe". As such, prominent flaws remain, as China still gets their way in a seemingly win-win relationship. According to recent commentators' comments on the Sino-Burmese relations, Beijing is most definitely going to continue its major projects in the country, including the controversial Myitsone Dam (Asia Mandela 2015).

Moreover, an observer of the bilateral relations noted that "Myanmar is the prom queen that both China and India want to dance with" (Fraioli 2011: 245-246), emphasising the competition of Myanmar's attention which is evident in the media. To gain such attention, China's influence on the media in relatively straightforward. The Chinese communist media (having exclusive rights to cover important international news), acts as an asset to further the ties between them and the far-left parts of the Burmese government, and the military, hence sustaining and promoting their national/regional

interests. Additionally, Xinhua also distributes pieces to minor news organisations throughout both China and Myanmar to unify the political tone of the press – for China, oppose the West. Myanmar's China-Policy (Xinhau News Agency) newspaper "Puak-Phaw" (meaning 'friendship between Chinese and Burmese people') was published in 2015 to aim for the Burmese workers serving in Yunnan province, as well as the Chinese-Burmese communities in Upper Burma (Kachin and Shan states) (Ibid.; China Daily 2015), hence indicating substantial imposing methods of distributing information (messages and opinion) across the border.

Conclusively, the aggregated communicative ties score between Myanmar and China is considered *high* ("Substantial Chinese communicative/media penetration, with direct influence"), as the increasingly, although not completely, free media and press are allowing Chinese media actors to operate in Myanmar through the remaining communist entities, while the communicative (in combination with the demographic) connection between two countries are considered high compared to alternatives.

5.2.3.1.4 Intergovernmental ties

According to previously familiarised long-time expert in Myanmar's development Bertil Lintner, it is rather naïve to consider the new-fangled political transformations in Myanmar, and the current charm offensive with the West – along with the the West' warm reaction to the advances – as driven by sudden democratic realisations among the Myanmar's influential military elite. Hypocrisy appears on both sides; within the political establishment of Myanmar, and by the West as they, despite their rhetoric and political stance, compromises with both human rights issues and a flawed democratic system. Both the West (mainly U.S.) and Myanmar itself neglects the centre issue of concern, at least publicly, i.e. the Chinese economic and political strategic "push" through Myanmar to the Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN) and to the Indian Ocean/South Asia (Lintner 2014: 95-96). Relations Lintner refers to as "The Great Game East".

The charm offensive, however, is not exclusive to that of the West. Since the suspension of the Myitsone Dam project by Thein Sein in 2011, China has initiated one too, to further the ties between the two, demanding a focused soft-power vis-à-vis the Burmese government, ASSK, as well as the civil society within – altogether to guarantee the Chinese FDIs do not *further* the anti-Chinese sentiments anew, i.e. Myitsone Dam protests and civil turmoil. Likewise, ASSK's frequent emphasis on a 'Chinese friendship' (implicitly recognising the shared economic dependency as vital to the relation-

ship) stresses the mutually agreed continuous ties among the two (Lintner 2014: 107; Hong 2014: 20). Equal for both Myanmar and China, however, is the desire for tranquillity along their shared border, which may have contagion effects to the armed conflicts in the border. Diplomatically, China may accept strengthening relations with the West, as long as it does not include any U.S. military bases, exchange of military intelligence, and that economic ties with the West instead have contagion effects on fuelling Chinese investments (Lintner 2014: 108). Besides, Myanmar's closest ally since independence, China, remains the most influential actor in Myanmar. Neither must one neglect the Chinese care-taking position to protect and support Myanmar in the form of development assistance, military, economic and technical cooperation when the West imposed sanctions upon Myanmar (Steinberg & Fan 2012: 162; Legêne & Ytzen 2014: 109).

Altogether the intergovernmental ties between Myanmar and China, together with the inclusion into ASEAN - tightening the ties to China - and the historic and present diplomatic promises and dependencies, the aggregated ties are considered *high* ("Substantial bilateral/diplomatic ties with China and dependency on Chinese institutions").

5.2.3.1.5 Total linkage score

Linkage between Myanmar and China (in comparison)

Dimension	Score (China)	Score (the West)
1. Economic ties	2	0
2. Social ties	2	0
3. Communication ties	2	0
4. Intergovernmental ties	2	1
Aggregated score:	**8**	**1**
Category	*High*	*Low*

Table 7: Estimated total linkages between Myanmar and China (in comparison)
* See Table 1 (Operationalisation of linkages) for score values

5.2.4. Summarising findings

As we have seen, the estimated Burmese linkages vis-à-vis the West and China represent fairly contrasting ties, in character and in magnitude. Throughout the course of the analysis, the study has comparatively lingered on the strength and/or weaknesses of ties in both directions. Summarising the admittedly highly structuralist method of grasping such external relations, the following deductions can be made.

1. Although recently progressively bound towards the West, the **economic ties** between Myanmar and China remain incredibly strong. They are characterised by heavy-duty natural resources, consequently enhancing/upholding the dependency of the Chinese involvement in Myanmar in terms of both import/export and foreign investments in various development sectors.

2. While the **social ties** between Myanmar and the West likewise are relatively weak compared to those of the Chinese, the evaluation of social ties rests on relatively geographical- (and political-) centred root explanations, resulting in outright close ties between Myanmar and neighbouring China in terms of migration flows, refugees, people in exile, as well as significant Sino-Burmese/Chinese/Burmese populations in Yunnan and Northeast Myanmar exchangeably.

3. Considering the **communication ties** between Myanmar and the West/China, the increased but still very limited access to telecommunication and digital media implicitly confines the outward communicative relations among the Burmese in general; hence affecting the ties towards both the West and China correspondingly. What further constitutes the higher valued links towards China, however, is the higher proliferation of the Chinese media in Myanmar, thus enabling ties of which the two countries communicative on national and local level.

4. In terms of **intergovernmental ties**, Myanmar and the West hold rather constricted ties in terms of "adopting" Western-based values, negotiating with Western institutions on human rights issues, (ethnic) discrimination and civil abuse, and engaging in diplomatic resolutions vis-à-vis the West. Nevertheless, the diplomatic ties towards China remain prominent, mainly due to the indisputable historic, cultural, political and economic ties between the Burmese military and Beijing.

Thus, "gluing" the abovementioned linkages and leverages enable us to recognise the cross-national variation in external pressure and susceptibility to external pressures; i.e. democratising effects vis-à-vis the West, and potential anti-democratising "black knight" effects in the case of China. As Table 8 reflects, different combinations of linkage and leverage generate divergent external environments. Consequently, where linkage and leverage are high (upper left cell), as much of Eastern Europe was in the post-Cold War era, external pressure is "consistent and intense", hence effective, according to the model of L&W (2010: 53), whilst leaving little or no room for autocracies, or in the case of present Myanmar and black knight China, democracies to persist.

	High linkage	*Low linkage*
High leverage	Consistent and intense pressure	Often strong, but sporadic
Low leverage	Consistent but diffuse and indirect pressure	Weak external pressure

Table 8: Linkage/leverage shaping the external pressure for democratisation (adopted from L&W 2010: 53).

Consequently, applying the model interchangeably with *anti*-democratic effects, the *close-to-high leverage* case of Myanmar, with a lack of bargaining power, and evidently strong linkages to China, presents us with equivalent effects. That is the inability to oppose costly punitive action and diplomatic punishment, causing prominent external (Chinese, authoritarian) pressures difficult to resist.

In respect to the West (upper right cell), where the leverage of Myanmar is continuously high, and the linkage low, strong external pressures may be significant, although sporadic and limited, according to the theory. Consequently, such cases demand a "push" to democratise, which, indeed have caused Myanmar to shift from authoritarian to 'competitive authoritarian' recently, inter alia due to the civil societal domestic push, and the long-time efforts of ASSK, combined with the liberation of Western sanctions etc. Even when autocrats do fall, and nations are transformed into various versions of (disciplined/illiberal) democracies, low linkage/high leverage nations, such as Myanmar towards the West, may avoid punitive action based on lack of civil rights etc./violate democratic norms, as the *legitimising effects* of such turnover overshadows the reality.

Rather, such inadequately linked and incapably established regimes are highly prone to drift in an uncertain limbo between hegemonic authoritarian regimes, and various types of democratic competition. And where countries have particularly strong linkages to black knights as China, major or even minor new-fangled liberalising reforms in Myanmar, may remain off the political agenda for quite some time (Slater 2014: 175-176; Kurlantzick 2014). The following chapter provides the thesis' discussion, elaborating on theoretical and contextual assumptions, and findings throughout the course of the study.

6. Chapter six: Discussion of findings and new perspectives

Overall, this chapter will draw attention to the following four discussions, namely the initial i) discussion of findings, offering explanations to the central theoretical insights highlighted in the theoretical framework, i.e. deliberating on Huntington's wave analogy, the element of comparative politics, the linkage and leverage theory by L&W, as well as a look to civil society's sufficiency to forge democratic transitions. As a succession of these fundamental discussions, the chapter will argue and discuss China as a present black knight in Myanmar, based on findings and contending literature, and finally, include a iii) perspectival discussion elaborating on possible resemblances between the developments in Thailand with those of Myanmar.

6.1. Discussion of findings: Waves, linkages & civil society

On the one hand, and in regards to Huntington's theories of democratic waves sweeping across the globe as a succession of the Cold War, one may continuously question the genuineness of a direct third, or fourth wave, of democracy in Asia, and in particularly in Southeast Asia. As only few nations embraced democracy during the 1990s, and even more non-democratic nations dramatically forced its way through during the 21st century, becoming major pulsating forces in running the regional development, politically as economically, the developments have caused democratic nations to either fade, rollback or reverse (Asian Barometer 2015: 100-101).

On the other hand, though, following Diamond's notions of a fourth wave (Diamond 1997: 21-22), not surprisingly, this will depend on the future – now relatively current - developments in Asia. As we have seen in the country-specific elaborations and analysis above, Myanmar's recent development have been permeated with elements of legitimisation towards the West, and continuous, if not strengthened, linkages and dependency towards the East, causing what Slater (2014) notes as Myanmar's "double edge détente". The 2011 reforms, introduced by Thein Sein and the military regime, was an eager result of the necessity to which Myanmar could accomplish to normalise its position towards the West, i.e. lift sanctions, attract investment, and ease relations and controversy in ASEAN, while internationally and altogether overcome its external pariah state status. Although initially estimated to reduce the rising economic dependency and intergovernmental relations with China, cf. Washington's swift decision to guide Myanmar towards the West as opposed to China, signs

of adequate linkage and leverage vis-à-vis the West, as opposed to China, does not seem evident in the findings above, although such ties may take time to accelerate – if given the chance, and if ever fully adequate considering the regional black knight and cultural-specific (and geographic) prerequisites in (Southeast) Asia, that is. Moreover, the sudden outburst during the Arab Spring in 2011 inevitably echoed in Myanmar, thus causing what Huntington notes as *snowball effects*, or what L&W calls *diffusion* (similar to 'neighbour diffusion', Theorell 2010), altogether noting the travel of information with or without people or technology across borders, thus causing globalised trembling effects to the societal dimension, and infecting Myanmar with the "democratic virus", as the ruling authoritarian regimes cannot take the passivity of their repressed populations for granted (Slater 2014: 173).

Moreover, and as a succession of the protests and natural (and "man-made catastrophe" through the junta's failure to act and blockade of aid) devastation of Cyclone Nargis in 2008, L&W's mechanisms *multilateral conditionality,* and *transnational advocacy networks* paved the way for Myanmar's (partial) democratisation, as multilateral INGOs drew international attention to the need for humanitarian relief, and the junta's lack hereof, as well as the third sector's ability to address other social and political violations, such as fraud, civic/ethnic abuse, human rights, detrimental governing etc., causing the need for reforms in Myanmar too obvious to ignore or postpone (L&W 2010: 38-39; Tolstrup 2013: 718). Irrespective of Thein Sein's motivations to pledge democratic reforms, the development of reforms has objectively yielded fruit for the Thein Sein regime (Slater 2014: 174), allowing the regime to legitimise through its connections to ASSK, hence securing relative stability in the political and economic environment.

Mounting a 'disciplined democracy' (or competitive authoritarian regime) and persuading the NLD opposition to do so, despite the rather autocratic nature of the 2008 constitution, as we have seen, must be perceived as a successful achievement by the Thein Sein regime to "civilianise" (though far from civilian) the government in place. Quite notably, too, political liberalisation also paves the way for the rulers to negotiate peace agreements with - and legitimatise one selves to - various ethnic insurgency groups that are susceptible to such, in order to ultimately give them free reign to tackle those insurgent groups that are most disobedient to the terms of the regime, thus causing continuous repression of civil opposition and society (Mizzima 2012; Slater 2014: 175).

In regards to the civil society's adequacy to forge democracy, local NGOs and CBOs seem an outright necessity for Myanmar to continue its democratisation process, to increase political participation, especially among the bourgeoisie. Along with their institutionalised value, such civil engagement may secure the foundation for democratisation at the national level, as well as ensuring that political transitions are continued, and takes root in societies, if allowed to fully do so by Tatmadaw in practice (Aye 2015: 10-11). As earlier noted, democracy may arise as a direct result of the strength of civil society, although the legal framework for civil society, along with the direct and indirect influences of the continuous oppression of the junta, aggregately produce an environment for which civil society is troubled and/or challenged. The limits of the 2008 constitution (and the helplessness of amending it), along with the unceasing repression of the media, as noted above, still offers severe inadequacy of civil and political liberalisation, freedom of speech and the media, offering restraints to the people of Myanmar – in particular the socially/ethnically/religiously marginalised (Kempel & Nyien 2014: 33).

The consequence is a co-opted civil society *internally* in Myanmar, where the remaining part of the junta and the militarised elements of government continues to penetrate, control and manipulate civil society, thus forcing separate autonomous voices underground (McCarthy 2015: 714). Political and civil societies, then, merge when protestors seek protection in civil society to literally survive, and to create counter networks that can be utilised when opportunity arise. An example hereof is evident in ASSK's alliance with the (rather reactionary) sangha (i.e. Buddhist monks) during the release from house arrests in the 1990s and 2000s (Ibid.). Another barrier for civil society in Myanmar may be seen the light of the sheer repetition of religious and ethnical cleavages *within* the civil society sector, as well as that of the national society and politics as a whole. This may result in reactionary, as opposed to progressive, movements' status quo in terms of ethnic cleavages in civil society as well as in the political sphere, as these two, in a gramscian perspective, tend to merge, and reflect what has been noted as the nervy ebb and flow of civil society in Myanmar and Southeast Asia. To reflect one of the thesis' central arguments of Myanmar's prerequisites for democracy, the following section discusses the immediate consequences of black knight China's presence in Myanmar.

6.2. China: The 'black knight' in Myanmar

As argued in the analytical part of leverage, China, being the West's greatest counterpart, fairly categorises as a so-called black knight to that of Myanmar. This is particularly evident during the 20 years of imposed sanctions by the West, when China adopted a "good neighbour" policy, as they stepped in and supported the military regime. In turn for protection and deflection of military criticisms and disputes at the UN, China benefitted greatly from exclusive rights to the development of natural resource projects, hence strengthening the ties (and deepening dependency) between the two neighbours (Anguelov 2015: 21). However, as the the initial theory argues, there is no one-sided idea of black knights, nor an exclusive nuance of black – thus nor a single factor alone causing counter-democratic effects to Myanmar and shielding the prospects of democratic development in the country. Instead, the world's most notorious black knight, Russia, also offered their support during the sanctions, as black knights generally understand that sanctions offer a valuable chance to seize treasured market shares, favoured production and political platforms, and consequently capture entire industries (L&W 2010: 41), and more importantly, establish fundamental channels of trade designed to endure and deepen over time.

However, such evidently deep dependency patterns between Myanmar and China does not necessarily nor automatically encourage authoritarian embracement. After all, China has strong good relations with democracies and dictatorships around the world as well (Slater 2014: 177). That said, if Myanmar can balance its linkages towards a broader assortment of external powers, the country may be less susceptible to exercise any leverage with any of them. Moreover, as China's sole interests are economic and geopolitical, rather than isomorphic[35], recent democratic developments in Myanmar are thus allowing the country to "cosy up to" the "White Knights" of the West, without jeopardising its relations with China, and literally allowing Myanmar to "hedge their bets", so to speak. A strategy that has been marked as "omni-balancing", i.e. wavering linkages amid multiple external actors as opposed to one e.g. superpower. All to ensure that no outsiders are able to interfere with the regime's strategy of preserving domestic significance, thus empowering and spreading its leverage in several directions.

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[35] A neo-institutionalist term in sociology focusing on institutions' interaction and how they affect society in non-economic, non-traditional ways. According to Hawley (in DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 149), *isomorphism* is a "(…) constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions".

Generally, however, as the examination of linkages have illustrated, the ties between Myanmar and China – together with the "Grey Knights" (Anguelov 2015) of e.g. Thailand – remain continuously close and overshadowing; socially, economically, geographically, demographically, culturally and religiously/spiritually. Dimensions that in the regards to the West, seem both distant and/or unattainable. Given Myanmar's close-to-high leverage, with the only exception of "Black Knights Assistance", the country remains highly susceptible towards external powers, consequently allowing such powers to utilise solid influence due to the asymmetrical power-relationship and high degree of inter-relations.

The question however remains whether the so-called "autocratic patron" *actually* promotes autocracy, i.e. possess black knight characteristics by simply taking Myanmar under their wings. Such question can be viewed in the aforementioned scope of Daniel Bell's perception of "The China Model". Although Bell's model does not concern autocracy promotion per se, it discusses the idea that China's export of standards and values, and economic support (i.e. solid linkages) may in fact have positive effects on some countries to overcome and/or endure political obstacles (Chou 2016: 6). As such, Bell's theory becomes evident in the case of Myanmar, as his argument is that democratic consolidation only favours those who *do* vote, those who influences the votes and those who finally wins the vote. Referring to Myanmar's prior and seemingly endless segregation and persecution of various ethnic groups (and favouritism/support of others), one may argue that democracy under these circumstances may in fact be exclusionary, competitive and even oppressive (Ibid: 7; Bell et al. 2015). Such "vertical model of democratic meritocracy, with democracy at the bottom, experimentation in the middle, and meritocracy at the top" (Bell in Mattis 2015), epitomised in the aforementioned "meritocratic political system", however, seem relatively optimistic, although applicable to the outward legitimising effects of the both the Burmese government, and that of China. Therefore, Bell's model can be seen as a reconciliation, or amalgamation, of autocracy and democracy, which is the fulcrum of his argument.

Therefore, the key discussion becomes whether China's system is likely to be exported elsewhere, i.e. act as a black knight is assumed to act, and if so, is Myanmar susceptible to such, viz. its bargaining power vis-à-vis external actors (leverage) and in virtue of their external linkages to China.

Despite China's non-inference foreign policy and its lack of ability to "contain" the democratic progressions in Myanmar, Chinese scholars, according to Chou, have recently noted that China *does* show potential to merely undermine democratic consolidation abroad, without necessarily promote or support autocratic features directly. Such indirect autocratic promotion, as evident in the findings of linkages, arguably still exist at the national/elitist level. After all, economic ties, in particular, does suggest an imbalanced relationship, indicating relative signs of economic and political dependency (in regards to the development sector), which, may cause intrinsic limitations for Myanmar's true democratic consolidation in the future (Chou 2016: 8-9). As mentioned, nonetheless, there is no single factor nor mechanism to explain the anti-democratising effects towards a given nation. As such, one may point to Thailand as a possible "grey knight", who, as a literal and figurative stepping-stone between Myanmar and China, and in succession of their recent regression of democracy in 2014, may contribute to the overall obstacle of solid democratisation in Myanmar. Not least due to their shared social, diasporic and cultural history and present.

6.3. Perspectival discussion: The contagion effects of Thailand's military

First, no adequate seem sufficient to interpret Myanmar's political reforms without keeping a wide array of contributing factors – internal as external – in mind. At first sight, Myanmar is sui generis, just like any other country, which furthers the country-specific argument thus questioning the comparative approach to which e.g. neighbouring countries, such as Thailand, make up for any type of generalisation or equation. However, just as recent reforms and democratisation efforts in Myanmar seem surprising in a country-specific context, it may seem just as unsurprising gazing at the closely tied neighbour of Thailand, which may contribute to the conversation and understanding of the unfolding events in Myanmar (Slater 2014: 174).

Beyond the shared and innate cultural and social resemblances, Thailand figures as Myanmar's absolute runner-up trade partner next to that of China – approximately accounting for one third of import from/export to Thailand (OEC 2015). Hence, still following the arguments of L&W, one may address Thailand as a considerable actor when investigating the future prospects of Myanmar, and denote Thailand as a possible 'Grey Knight' to Myanmar, given Thailand's likewise excessive strong ties with China. A such position may in the case of Myanmar cause a mere "reverse diffusion" mechanism, where neighbouring Thailand instead of diffusing democratic consolidation through

emulation or imposition (in the region), may instead be (another) interfering spill-over effect for true democratic deepening in Myanmar (L&W 2010: 38). Similarly, according to Huntington's idea of "what can be done next door, can be done here" referring to pro-democratic diffusion effects, may prove the opposite in this case, if Myanmar fails to endure (Huntington 1991: 101). This due to Thailand's highly strict (economically and intergovernmentalty tied) military regime "National Council for Peace and Order" (NCPO), whose junta exercises likewise restraints on civil liberties, activism, free speech and media etc. in succession of their easily seized power in 2014 to "restore democracy until stability is restored", and the monarchy upheld (Crispin 2016). Moreover, one of the clear characteristics alike in Thailand and Myanmar, is the two governments' usage of *legitimisation* in regards to democratic promises (Kurlantzick 2014: 14,33). Should a disciplined form of democracy be installed and civilians' partially heard in succession of the 2017 election[36], which, according to analysts is highly unlikely to actualise, it most certainly will not consist of outright democratic transition. Instead, it would be steered by the hand of the junta in the foreseeing future (Buchanan 2016; Crispin 2016), not least since the Erawan Shrine bombings August 2015, causing the military forces to take an even firmer grip to its power (Willis 2015), while creating yet another competitive authoritarian regime in Southeast Asia.

As such, the two nations share legitimising intentions directed at Western governments, increasing their overall linkage and leverage vis-à-vis the West, and minimising the alienation of foreign investors as Thailand is a major hub for e.g. U.S. investments in the region (Kurlantzick 2014: 28). As we have seen, too, U.S. have been eager to reinforce economic ties with Southeast Asian nations the past years - and most recently ultimo May 2016 in Vietnam - by dismantling embargos, lifting various sanctions, creating sustainable bilateral trade partnerships, promoting democratic values, and perhaps most importantly, *containing* their hegemonic counter-part China's continual influence in the region. Effectively, Southeast Asian nations' military bodies know the rules of the game, as the Thai-Myanmar (military) relations remain strong, i.e. prone to affect one another's political future by *diffusion,* spill-over effects and black knight implications, altogether producing imposing destabilising effects to the region – and to that of Myanmar. Connecting all previous elaborations and examinations of Myanmar's pending future, the final chapter contains the thesis' final conclusions.

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[36] Elections that have been pushed back from the beginning. Initially sworn for late 2015, then mid 2016, and now late 2017.

7. Chapter seven: Conclusions

In order to answer the posed research question(s) in regards to the internal and external determinants and prerequisites for Myanmar's future prospects of democratic development, the present conclusions will reflect the central arguments throughout the study, based on findings, theoretical frameworks, and contextually relevant observations. However, it must be stressed that these conclusions are not definite nor universally applicable, but merely a conclusion built on the applied theories and choice of methodology.

So, as we have learned thus far, and despite of ASSK's landslide victory in 2015, installed ultimo March 2016, the constitution, translated to the will of the military government, have allocated her a PM position and barred her from obtaining a fully-fledged democracy exclusive of the continuous presence of the military's quarter of seats in parliament, continually controlling vital arrays of the government. Events that have caused U.S. President Obama and the international press to hail the country's transition to a democratically elected, civilian-led government, although it clearly is not that simple or sunny. As we know from the Schumpeterian classical theory of democracy, normative democracy is defined in terms of the 'will of the people' to serve the 'common good'. Yet, we do not seem anywhere close to reach a common good for all peoples in the Burmese society, due to the military's tireless efforts to discriminate certain ethnicities and oppress certain civilians' free line of though and oppose basic civil liberties, and nor do we seem close to a free will of the people, as both media and progressive movements are continuously hold down and hid behind the 'civilian window dressing' (Bünte) of the military. Accordingly, an aforementioned position arises, namely the lack of subordination (Diamond) of armed forces, Tatmadaw, in respect to its staying power in parliament and society, causing a competitive authoritarian regime facilitating 'elections without democracy' (Huntington). This, too, involves inadequate democratic features such as Dahl's notions on genuine multidimensional competition and participation of elections, pinning the defectiveness of the establishment. Likewise, in regards to the adequacy of civil society, and as Dahl notes, there is no genuine democracy, if there is no bourgeoisie present who demands a such, which, in the case of Myanmar, may show limited due to the risk of labour unions undermining the reactionary/conservative (monks) operating in the country.

Moreover, in regards to the initially supposed progressive movements calling for democracy, as we have seen, may not be as progressive after all, considering the revealed ties between ASSK and the conservative movements partaking in discriminating and undermining certain minority groups, thus spurring civic abuse anew, hence retaining the status quo. This may indicate the prediction that ASSK is firmly restricted in her ability to forge true liberating environments by the military entities (Lintner). As such, the reaffirmation that the synergic relationship between civil society and national elites must exist to create sustainable environments for democracy becomes evident.

Relating such internal events to Huntington's wave analogy, besides inability to surrender to democracy during the Third Wave, one may argue whether Diamond's predictions of a distinct Fourth Wave seem evident to the case of Myanmar – and Southeast Asia for that matter. If so, it has had a hard time gaining momentum due to the myriad of different regime types in the region, the ever-changing credibility of possible democratic regimes and even roll-backs, such as Thailand. Consequently, a such wave is either pending somewhere in the Asia Pacific, swept pass or flushed ashore. If anything, various types and qualities of hybrid regimes in the region have reached stages of stalemate, and struggling to deepen sufficiently to categorise as pure democracies. While Myanmar, however, surely accounts for elements of progression, scholars in the country are yet to witness indisputable change, except for the legitimising one surfacing the nation.

Nonetheless, as we thus far *have* witnessed, are the increased, yet limited, economic linkages towards the West since reforms in 2011 to, in theory, honour democratic developments, led the West' attempt to literally contain the counter-hegemonic powers deriving from the East. The U.S. initiated 'pivot to Asia', e.g. the charm offensive in Vietnam lately, show the West' regional efforts to contain and oppose China's assertive ambitions in the disputed waters of South China Sea, which, may be seen in a much broader geopolitical strategy in Southeast Asia and account for the happily lifted sanctions in Myanmar per se. Despite of China's non-interference strategy and relative gains of the reforms too, there seem no holding back by China to continue its well-defined Puak-Phaw relationship with the satellite of Myanmar to bolster and maintain its regional/global influence.

Additionally, as we have seen in the the case of Thailand, where coup was caused by those close to power, as with most cases (Huntington), one may address similar concerns over the development in

Myanmar in the future. Should unions and progressive civil society become too strong, demands and pressure increase, giving the military's embedded powerful position in parliament, it may have worrisome consequences for the recent democratic developments. Likewise, if tensions increase and civil war-like conditions emanate, the military may see their chance to "restore democracy until stability is restored", using the term of the Thai military. Consequently, regional and neighbouring spill-over effects may become evident, and the theory of black knights prove right, if the two most powerfully tied autocratic nations to Myanmar, Thailand and China, intentionally or unintentionally exerts, or diffuse, anti-democratising effects to that of Myanmar, being their shared neighbour, causing its future democratic consolidation troublesome. Nevertheless, the military's gradually vanishingly efficacy of legitimisation may provoke new signs of desperation, although the growth rates since the 2011, and forecasts of deepening economic development, may inspire the military to pull through and avoid punitive action anew after all – possible by all means. After all, the armed forces answer to the commander in chief, held by the military, and not the elected government or parliament, as well as the constitutional right to avoid its mending, and seize power if the appointed president reaches a breaking point. Ultimately, the future prospects of the Burmese democracy remain dubious, as the efforts of NLD - and effectively ASSK – have shown little or no signs of what you would typically determine as an alternative to an establishment, combined with regional uncertainty and external counter-democratic impacts, make up for a contested environment for the future democratic consolidation in Myanmar.

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9. Appendices

9.1. Appendix I: Measuring competitive authoritarianism and authoritarian stability

Measuring 'Competitive authoritarianism'
1. Full authoritarianism (Cases are scored as fully authoritarian if:)

1) National-level multi-party elections for the executive do not exist, **OR**
2) At least one of the following indicators is present:
    a. Major opposition parties and/or candidates are routinely excluded – either formally or effectively – from competing in elections for the national executive
    b. Large-scale falsification of electoral results makes voting effectively meaningless
    c. Repression is so severe that major civic opposition groups cannot operate in the public arena; thus, much of the opposition is under ground, in prison, or in exile.

2. Competitive authoritarianism (Cases are scored as competitive authoritarian if:)

1) The criteria for full authoritarianism are not met
2) There exists broad adult suffrage
3) The authority of elected governments is not seriously restricted by unelected "tutelary" powers
4) At least one of the following criteria is met*:
    a. Unfair Elections
    b. Violation of Civil Liberties
    c. Uneven Playing Field

3. Democracy (Cases are scored as democracy if:)
1) The criteria for full authoritarianism are not met 2) The criteria for competitive authoritarianism are not met 3) There exists near-universal adult suffrage 4) Basic civil liberties (speech, press, association) are systemically protected 5) The authority of elected governments is not seriously restricted by unelected "tutelary" powers or major non-state actors

* A more detailed list of criteria figures in Levitsky & Way's Appendix I (Levitsky & Way 2010: 368)

9.2. Appendix II: Measuring leverage

According to the theory of Levitsky & Way (201), *leverage* is measured using the following three criteria. Within each level of criteria, at least one case must be met to apply.

Low leverage: Cases that meet at least one of the stated criteria		
Criterion	**Explanation**	**Source**
Criteria 1:	**Large economy**: Total GDP more than $100 billion (1995, current US$) (inflation-adjusted for 2016, $156 billion)[37]	World Bank World Development Indicators, online at worldbank.org/data
Criteria 2:	**Major oil producer**: Annual production of more than one million barrels of crude oil per day average	U.S. Energy Information Administration, "International Energy Annual", online at eia.doe.gov/emeu/iae/
Criteria 3:	Possession of/capacity to use **nuclear weapons**	N/A
Medium leverage: Cases that meet none of the criteria for low leverage but meet at least one of the following criteria		
Criteria 1:	**Medium-sized economy**: Total GDP between $50 billion (inflation-adjusted for 2016, $78 billion) and $100 billion ($156 billion)	World Bank World Development Indicators, online at worldbank.org/data
Criteria 2:	**Secondary oil producer**: Annual production of 200,000 – 1 million barrels of crude oil per day average	U.S. Energy Information Administration, "International Energy Annual", online at eia.doe.gov/emeu/iae/
Criteria 3:	Competing security issues: Country where there exists a **major security related foreign-policy issue for the US and/or EU**	U.S. Government webpage, European Union webpage.
Criteria 4:	**Beneficiary of 'Black Knight Assistance'**: Country that receives significant bilateral aid (at least one percent of GDP), the overwhelming dominant share of which comes from a major power that is not EU/US. A major power is defined as a high-income country (per capita of $10,000 or higher) ($15,600 in 2016) **or a major military power** (annual military spending in excess of $10 billion (16$, 2016)	Correlates of War, online at cow2.la.psu.edu. China, France, Japan, and Russia are considered potential Black Knights
High leverage: Cases that meet none of the criteria for low or medium leverage		

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[37] Calculated using the 'CPI Inflation Calculator' from the United States Department of Labor
(http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm)

9.3. Appendix III: Measuring linkage

According to the theory of Levitsky & Way (201), *linkage* is measured using the following four indicators:

Dimensions of **Linkage:**		
Dimension	*Explanation*	*Source*
Dimension 1:	**Economic ties:** Measured by the extent of trade with the US and 15 EU member countries (pre-2004 EU member states), exports and imports over GDP	International Monetary Fund (IMF) Direction of Trade Statistics
Dimension 2:	**Social ties:** Measured by the average annual number of a country's citizens travelling to or living in the U.S and EU (1990-2000), as a share of total country population	U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2003, "Statistical Yearbook", online at dhs.gov, and Eurostat NewCronos database "Immigration, Population Stocks by Citizenship, "MPOPPCTZ Table"
Dimension 3:	**Communication ties**: Measured by per capita average annual international voice traffic (1993-2000) and per capita average annual Internet access (1995-2000), excluding years when a country is democratic (voice traffic and internet access is combined for an aggregated total score)	World Bank World Development Indicators, online at worldbank.org/data
Dimension 4:	**Intergovernmental ties:** Measured by membership in the Organization of American States (OAS) or potential membership in the E.U.	Non membership: Score 0 (Potential) membership: Score 1