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Member Comment:

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When is an advantage not an advantage?

I was prompted to place this comment after three invitations I received, and attended, over the holiday period during December. The guests were mainly academics along with a few authors, media representatives were also present. It opened my eyes as to the level of naivety, combined with some arrogance, among people who regard themselves as intellectuals. I mean no disrespect, but unless the reality of the world is addressed by those with the power to change, with a more hands on approach, and not just left to those struggling humanitarian organisations on the ground, and who constantly scream for help but are blocked by political barriers, then we are all doomed, except for those who are privileged to hide in concrete bunkers deep below the earth when it explodes!

My thoughts beforehand lead me to this: For decades, Burma has been denied basic freedoms; their only voice is that of a few exiled academics, or rather, exiles who became academics, and, regard themselves as intellectuals, and that the advantages given to them are also good for Burma? Many however; are now asking; was it in order to advance their own fortunes or Burma's? A few, who still lie low from publicity, travelled to countries outside Burma to advance their knowledge on how to defeat tyranny, whereas, others wanted fame and fortune. The fortune hunters began by conniving to deceive and confuse the ordinary man/woman inside Burma, as well as the free world, with masses of self praise, diploma waiving, followed by a constant repertoire of meaningless words, and countless pointless, quotes. After conning the free world of its finances, they have managed to achieve precisely nothing, for Burma that is. They have of course, secured their own futures, but at the expense of Burma's suffering, and if allowed too; will continue to plunder Burma once democracy finds its place by demanding special favours from those who take office, and then to deal with those in the west or east, who they befriended. Some, who claim prominence in today's struggle, will conveniently discharge themselves from political life once democracy arrives, giving the excuse that their job is done, and are allowing for others to step in. Of course this will be complete bullshit, because, the real reason for stepping down will be purely business so they cannot be accused of corruption whilst standing in politics. After profiting from Burma's suffering, they will then proceed to profit from its recovery.

There are those however; who believe that a country need cunning and dubious minds, even criminal, to create an economy and to keep the wheels of commerce running, allowing for society to expand. This is possibly true, as it is of no surprise, that people believe for example; that banks and industry, have always been the instrument of power, and quite often it is their power which makes or breaks an economy, followed by the collapse of a government, and can, just as easily, ignite the flames of war because it suits their purpose. But, these are not, the people, Burma

need in its primary struggle. Perhaps, after democracy has been restored, these people can be manipulated by their greed to help Burma grow, but not at the countries expense? (I say restored due to the fact that under U Nu, Burma has already tasted democratic freedom, unfortunately though, it never had long enough to build its defence. It would have been wise if the military aspect had been neutralised before a civil government took office, this is the fault of no one, due to independence being thrust upon Burma after the second world war, leaving no time at all, to lay down the foundations for the building blocks. An important point remembered by those who lived and experienced these times, and to those who only read about it, it is important you listen to them!)

Burma could be on the brink of a new era and it needs leaders to fit the occasion. It does not need people who use the occasion to fit their own needs!!!

Right now, Burma is in need of a storm wall, (an idea perhaps, as suggested in UK.org comment to MAYKHA list under Debate or Action 28/11/05, and men to police it. If the regime implodes, and it is more likely to do so than being over powered, due to its own inadequacies, then anarchy will take over, as thousands of armed soldiers and militia men, desecrate the country, a situation, which could take decades to eradicate. This aspect is in itself, a last line of defence, a vice, created by the regime in a last ditch effort of denial.

As I write, the regime is still forcing people to take military training. The real objective however, is to give otherwise passive individuals the incentive offered by the power of the gun, to accept the temptation of acting on their own when central control no longer functions. It is the basic tactic of all tyrannical regimes, as can be witnessed in numerous locations around the globe. Their ideal is; if they cannot rule, then anarchy will!

Constant rhetoric blurted out from every corner, by inadequate representatives, is not only worthless, it is holding back planning, which is vital to combat situations as mentioned above, and is the major obstacle preventing democracy from taking shape. Whilst the self proclaimed connoisseurs of all which is mighty, are competing, the real issues are going unattended. These people are like children fighting for favour. It is OK while the motor of exhibitionist debate is running, or pages are plentiful, but when it stops, these people have no idea what to do!

Thankfully there are those who do understand the real issues and have been working endlessly in the shadows.

A leader also has to be a classroom teacher, as well as leading by example.

When I was at school in the mid 1940s & 50s, our teachers, most of them anyway, had spent periods from one to six years fighting a world war, one of them in Burma, two of them went on to fight in Korea also. It was my good fortune, to be taught by scholars whom, also lived in the real world, and it changed their way of thinking quite drastically. Their teaching, influenced by their living experiences of war, as opposed to their teacher training days, paved the way I was to choose in life. I can clearly remember our geography and history teacher, who after fighting the war, found that many books he had studied during his teacher training days, were actually

misleading, and in some cases completely fabricated to suit those who wanted us taught in a particular way!

The teachers who found reason not to go to war, became alienated by those who did, not from anger because of their stay at home approach, after all the young had to be schooled, it was due to attitudes changing, brought about by the horrors of war, which non-combatants had, and still do not today, any co-comprehension of, and therefore could not understand why their now veteran colleagues changed their teaching techniques, partly of which, was to teach the horrors of war, instead of glorifying past battles of old.

Our class master continued to teach with fascinated interest steaming from all his class. He mingled war stories with facts of the world which he had actually experienced. By the age of ten, most of us could draw from memory, a rough outline of all the continents and name the countries within their boundaries, together with all the seas and oceans. We could stand and name most if not all, of the world's capital cities, and give a good account of their history and social structure. I must have been part of the first classes to be taught about other cultures from a teacher who either fought with them, or faced them as their countries enemy. He gave us an image not described in past books written by academics or explorers, who had the terrible habit of making sure that everyone not British was described as inferior. I personally, was captivated by his teaching. As he introduced us to each country, he would vividly describe how he fought his way through it, the experiences he had of meeting the people, friends and foe alike, learning to understand their thoughts and fears. Coming across government buildings, churches of all denominations, destroyed by war, but were able to study during the lulls that every battle has, any documents or records of the countries social infrastructure that survived. At no time did he display malice or disrespect for the ordinary fighting man who was conditioned to kill him, nor did he condemn the country they were fighting for. He allowed the war to be his teacher, and in the process became an invaluable teacher. His words to us were simple; never believe the words in any book, he said, or, the words spoken by those who study them. Life is less complicated than anything which is written, for it is the writer who adds drama which then complicates it, and future readers who believe they have unravelled its mystery, yet again cause controversy, and in many cases create conflict, even if unintentional. Conflict among academics is based on opinions and not facts. It is therefore; far more rewarding, intellectually, and beneficial to mankind, to listen to the voice of someone who has lived, and not simply past though a particular experience taken from a book. History is knowledge to satisfy; it is not a solution to the future because it has been interpreted by so many, and becomes more controversial than factual in order to feed the thirst of intrigue of academics. History then becomes a subject of debate, rather than a catalogue of lessons to learn from!

A person cannot judge life's successes or its failures; neither, can they pose questions nor offer answers purely by studying what others have written in the past. All they can do is surmise. Pain cannot be understood by those who have never experienced it, green fields cannot be appreciated by a blind person, and the songs of birds cannot memorise the profoundly deaf. But, all these examples can be described with words, where even the blind can read with brail. Just a few examples where all

can read from books, but none would know how to remedy the absence of the subjects without having first hand knowledge of what it is they are repairing and how they are meant to fit into their natural surroundings.

Every new day brings a different challenge which will dispute similarities of the past, making solutions for today as highly improbable, which is why so many academics are at a loss when confronted with facts of today, simply because no one has yet written a book on the subject! The world has been flooded with conflict caused by what is said in books. These books have added complications to what is an uncomplicated life. A book should be written at a time relevant to it, and left in its original state, word for word, instead of being re-written over & over again, until it finally loses all touch with its origin! I have read books written in the 1940s, about 40s London, (I was born in 1939) and again read the same titled book in the 90s. What originated as a book of facts and real life statements became a dramatised version which had no relation to its origin other than the words; first published in 1940s. Had my children, not had the opportunity to know their grandparents, or to have read the original book, their understanding of war time London would have been completely different from reality! How could that possible have helped future generations, indeed we are witnessing the repercussions in society today?

Please do not judge me by this comment as that too would be a prime example of assessing without knowing. My experiences come from 60+ years of living life at the sharp end. I have travelled extensively, and my experiences have been varied as well as dangerous, eventful as well as joyous. I speak of my living observations and not from fleeting visits, or, from what others write. I have every respect for those who spend years studying what others have written. My concern emerges when that reader, then writes his/her interpretation of what they in turn, have read, simply by applying by what they surmise as today's needs, and so it goes on, in the end, fact has all but disappeared and fiction takes centre stage, therefore remedies become fantasy, allowing suffering to continue!

As previously mentioned; history is knowledge to satisfy; it is not a solution to the future. By failing to act while facts are real, will allow others to interpret events, which will complicate issues to the point of becoming just another debate! (Burma, today!)

Today's thinking, together with the appropriate first hand knowledge of events, is the key to the future. The world is slow to act toward any present day crisis because too much rhetoric is exchanged, which only confuses the issue even more and make situations appear either worse or less so, than they really are. This could be blamed on governments who have no wish to advance faster than the pace they dictate, and allows them to inflict what ever rules they like?

We can witness the problems first hand if we have the courage to tread the ground, and in some cases, pacify them, as more and more people are doing. We have private individuals who travel to Iraq for example, whose only intention is to feel the problem first hand, and try to calm those who fear us because certain writings dictate it as such. These brave but naive people only want to bring peace and calm, but risk

their lives in the attempt, and who bothers to listen to them if they are lucky enough to return, and more important what action is taken in accordance with their findings?

It would be unheard of, for an architect to draw up plans for a building complex without first surveying the land, but instead chose to simply accept a map drawn up decades before? Why then do people still blurt out what they believe to be similarities in conflict areas, and suggest similar remedies, without having first hand knowledge? This type of debate has lingered on for decades with Burma, and produces nothing on its behalf!

Conflicts are man made, and complicated by man's desire to hold power over others, that will never change, as even Burma's pro-democracy groups are but another example. Methods will change as the world progresses, so too, must the remedies transpire!

I have witnessed more truces brought about by sitting round a camp fire than any UN debate has ever achieved with its labyrinth of articles. It may not have involved nations, but it sure as hell involved those a nation employs to do its killing, who without, has no sting!!!

The UN is a political tool, in this case on behalf of France, nothing more. In the Ivory Coast, Africa, where the French have stakes, **(and are in fear of losing them, made worse when President Laurent Gbagbo decided that English and not French is to become the national language, ouch!)** Where does the UN get its right to decide the mandate of president Gbagbo, of the Ivory Coast, a Nation State, is ended, just because France wants to flex its muscle, yet it sends out signals, although I think, wrongly interpreted, that the NLD should be allowed to take office after 15 plus years since an election, where they never even took office. Now, is that a similarity, or just a contradiction in terms to suit a political agenda?

The history of the world has been built around what others have written, not necessarily what happened, and the next generation read. Those who lived on life's shop floor, and made major contributions to it, most probably could not read or write, their experiences, therefore; was written by the few who could, and then, mainly from the religious sector, and they in turn would interpret events as they saw fit to serve their own cause, as would the more privileged classes in later years who learned the art, and in turn, applied it to suit their cause. The famous saying; 'nothing is mightier than the pen' does of course originate from its use to confuse, frighten and to spread propaganda among the illiterate masses, resulting in control over them. The pen was and is still, the barrier between classes, although the internet is fast closing the gap where the media, intellectuals and dictators, try in vain to uphold the status quo on what information is offered and how it portrays events, and more important, how they, want today to appear in tomorrow's history books! If the internet grows, as it surely will and the common man/women can 'blog' their way into peoples homes where real life can be discussed from real events as they happen, we will no longer require reporters or writers, who dramatise and exaggerate, or, who ignore the more serious and controversial issues so as not to reveal them to the public for reasons of power control!

The more we utilise the internet, where government cannot clamp our tongues, the quicker we can act on today's facts, and cure the planet's ills before the writers of history, distort and dramatise what they consider as ideal, and the ills become more complicated and destructive.

In Burma's case, it should have acted when facts ruled it so back in 1990, but due to the lack of preparedness and organised unity, it failed to do so. The result of that is clear as different interpretations of events over the years have flooded the minds of those who take interest, created mainly by those who wanted to either, become famous, or to deliberately deceive for political gain? These varied interpretations have created an encyclopaedia of comparisons and supposed solutions, none of which have worked, but for an academic, it's considered good debate!

Burma has to find the right leader with all the courage and experience of a fighter, but also the cunning, and flare of an acute politician who knows that only Burma can help Burma, and who will seek help where it's needed without losing its self respect, unless it wants to become a puppet to those it submits to! Burma as a country has much more to offer the world both in minerals and culture. It does not have to crawl to other countries, because they will crawl to Burma!

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A UK.org. Member.