

A map of Vietnam is centered on a black background. The map is white and is heavily splattered with bright red blood. The splatters are most concentrated in the northern and central regions of the map, with some smaller droplets scattered across the southern part. The overall effect is one of violence and tragedy.

The Weaponization of Ultranationalism

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Preface

It is crucial to understand comprehensively the historical background and impact of ultranationalist groups in Myanmar's revolutionary and political landscape. In addition, it is necessary to analytically study the movement of the Pyu Saw Htee militias that emerged from ultranationalist groups after the military coup.

They adequately take many different forms in Myanmar, varying in numbers, allegiances and modes of operation. Though estimates of their numbers vary, Pyu Saw Htee militias have been active throughout resistant parts of the country and can counter revolutionary forces in their respective local operational areas.

This report aims to analyze the historical context and the evolution of Pyu Saw Htee and present their connection with the Myanmar military, as well as the war crimes, atrocities, and human rights violations they committed after the military coup. This report was written to assist the study of the intricacies regarding the military-backed armed groups.

Research Methodology

This report is based on data and information from 53 news media and official statements of the organizations, which were collected and analyzed by Nyan Lin Thit Analytica.

1. Introduction

Pyu Saw Htee is just a hero from the myth that originated from Nanzhao¹ (*Tun, 1969*). However, the Burmese portrayed him as a legendary archer who had slayed the pig, the tiger, the giant bird, and the giant flying squirrel. He is often referred to as a Buddhist hero in the Bagan period. It is believed that he built the "Bu" Pagoda from Bagan. The first armed group, "Pyu Saw Htee," was formed during the AFPFL (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League) government. To suppress the rebellion, the AFPFL government recruited veteran soldiers who were expelled from the modern army due to being unqualified, unemployed people, penal rogues, and robbers to form militia. In 1956, it became a paramilitary organization of the AFPFL government (*ဦးအောင်ခင် & ဉာဏ်ဝင်းအောင်, 2022*).

In the days of SLORC² and SPDC³, they used to form and use mobs named "Swan Arr Shin" (powerful beings) to suppress the revolutionary groups. In March 2015, during the U Thein Sein government, the mobs wearing red armbands participated in a violent crackdown on demonstrations supporting the student strike in front of Yangon City Hall (*Dawei Watch, 2015*). In that case, the authorities recruited the residents of Yangon's poor neighborhoods as "Swan Er Shin" (*ဆွေဝင်း, 2015*).

In 2021, after the coup, pro-military supporters participated in the suppression of non-violent civil disobedience movements and carried out violent attacks. On February 25, 2021, the peaceful protestors were attacked with weapons

¹ It was located in the central part of Yunnan Province, China today and lasted for 200 years from 738 to 937 AD

² State Law and Order Restoration Council

³ State Peace and Development Council

and knives by pro-military supporters (*Myanmar Now, 2021*). One protester was stabbed, some were injured, and some cars were damaged (တင်အောင် နိုင်, 2021). They also gave information collected of the revolutionaries to the military.

Due to the military's brutal crackdown, the Spring Revolution became an armed revolution. On the other side, the armed revolutionaries started giving warnings to the military informants and township administrators and attempted to respond with weapons. The military supporters and ultranationalists not only attacked armed resistance forces but also investigated the information of government staff who joined the civil disobedience movement and non-violent protesters and those who contributed to the revolution; reporting, threats, arrest and murder were carried out. In such various violent activities, the name "Pyu Saw Htee " has been widely used and anti-revolutionary groups were formed in the name of Pyu Saw Htee in many parts of the country. On March 5, 2021, the Pyu Saw Htee Central Committee announced the official statement that the organization was secretly formed in Mandalay City. It was a substantial piece of evidence. In their statements and instructions, they put the logo symbolizing a person with a bow, which referred to Pyu Saw Htee, on a Buddhist religious flag, stamped with a circle and the pretext of The Race and Religion (*BBC News မြန်မာ, 2021*). The name "Pyu Saw Htee" was used to relate with the rise of Buddhism in the Bagan era and the suppression of other ideologies, and to include Mount "Tuying" and "Bu" Pagoda, which related to the Myth of Pyu Saw Htee. By looking at this, it can be seen that the formation of Pyu Saw Htee's core ideology is based on religion and nationalism.

2. Pyu Saw Htee and Pyithusit Militia

Even in the days of the SLOC and SPDC, the military trained and armed the locals and officially formed militias in ethnic areas under the direct command of Directorate of Militia and Border Guard Force, by taking advantage of diverse situations, such as based on races and religions, or based on interests. The military officially gives Pyithusit militia uniforms and rations. On the other hand, as long as they remained loyal to the military, they were granted limited regional powers and legal business rights and allowed illegal business activities to be carried out unceremoniously. After the 2021 military coup, the military started to form Pyithusit militia in areas where there had been no fighting for decades and became new battle fronts. Pyithusit militia perform joint duties with Myanmar soldiers under the military's chain of command. The military council officially declared the formation of Pyithusit militias after the military coup.

After the coup, pro-military supporters and ultranationalists widely used the name "Pyu Saw Htee" in the operation of collecting information, oppression, and assassinations of revolutionaries. They also attack and murder civilians, using other specific names such as Thwe Thout (Blood Sworn), Yangon Castigate Group (YCS), Swin Ye (the Kite Force), Thwe Thitsar, and the Patriotic Coalition. The military has not officially admitted that they supplied weapons to these organizations other than Pyithusit militia. The military avoids taking responsibility for the crimes and human right violations committed by these organizations other than Pyithusit militia by formally saying that they have nothing to do with them. Later, most groups that operated under the name "Pyu Saw Htee" changed the name

to "Pyithusit militia." However, activities such as intimidation and secret killings are still being carried out under other names. Identifying the difference between Pyithusit militia and Pyu Saw Htee on the ground is difficult. However, after 2021, militias supported by the military, military informants, the oppressors of the revolutionaries, and assassins are all generally referred to as Pyu Saw Htee (the Pyus).

3. The Speech and Action by the Military Council

During the press conference in June 2021, Zaw Min Tun (the spokesperson of the Military Council) said that self-defense during life-threatening situations is lawful under Section 100 of the Penal Code regarding counteractions by pro-military supporters towards the People Defense Forces (*Ayeyarwaddy Times, 2021*). "In some villages, at the request of the public, Pyithusit militia groups were formed, which are the defense systems involving the public," said Zaw Min Tun at the press conference in March 2022 (*ဝေသန့်စင်, 2022; Myanmar National Post, 2022*).

"Since the PDF is posing a threat to some villages that do not support them, we have formed Pyithusit militia groups for the security of the villages. As for the monks, we do not provide them with weapons. There is no reason to do so." said Zaw Min Tun, denying the weaponization of the monks. However, the photos of monks taking military training in Sagaing and videos of villagers welcoming gun-wielding monks have gone viral on social media (*RFA, 2022; Tachileik News Agency, 2022*). In April 2022, Zaw Min Tun also stated that the public defense system that involved the people is being implemented, and all the necessary support will be provided (*DVB, 2022*). An instruction dated April 30 that contained information on forming a village-based public defense system was also circulated (*Khith Thit Media, 2022*).

"Neither the government⁴ nor the military formed a paramilitary Pyu Saw Htee to establish a hypocritical democratic dictatorship like AFPFL. The term

⁴ State Administration Council

Pyu Saw Htee did not exist. As the Tatmadaw is acting according to the existing laws, if the people request permission to form their militia for the security of the neighborhoods, we run verification and permit them to form, equip them with necessary weapons, and provide military training. If necessary, there is only Pyithusit militia formation for local defense according to the law. The short-term goal is to destroy domestic armed violence. The long-term goal is to be a part of the Pyithusit militia's strategic planning in national defense. I would like to say that the term Pyu Saw Htee, which the media and opposition organizations use, is just a kind of madness at the end of winter and the beginning of summer that begins near the end of February 2021," said Zaw Min Tun (spokesperson of the Military Council) at a press conference in July 2022 (*Eleven, 2022*).

On February 13, 2022, in Nay Pyi Taw, Myat Kyaw (Minister of Sagaing appointed by the Military Council) reported that 77 Pyithusit militia units had been equipped with more than 2,000 weapons (*စာန့်ဇင်, 2022; ရှေ့ဝတ်, 2022*). On August 10, 2022, at the military council coordination meeting, Soe Win (Vice Chairman of the Military Council) said that public defense groups will be formed and regional stability will be achieved (*ပေဟင်စိုး, 2022*). On January 31, 2023, the Military Council issued a policy on the right to arm. In defining the qualifications of those who are eligible to apply for a gun license, "He must be loyal to the country"; " must not be the one who can interfere with the rule of law and the stability of law and order, national security; regional security " and so on. When applying, "Non-civil servants must have an original certificate obtained within one month from the relevant ward/village administrative body and police station. It is also limited that civil servants must have the approval from the head of the relevant organization (*MLIS, 2023*). By observing that, the military group issued laws to allow their supporters and their closest people to bear arms.

4. The Organizers

When revolutionary forces attacked the military from all fronts, the military tried to use Pyithusit Militia (Phyu Saw Htee) to recruit new soldiers, collect information, and utilize their geographical knowledge. It was seen that the influential local Buddhist monks, veteran military officers, military-backed or pro-military political party leaders, ward/village administrators, and ultranationalists were assigned to organize Pyithusit Militia (Phyu Saw Htee).

The monk, "U War Tha Wa", has encouraged the local people in Kanbalu, Taze, and Kyun Hla townships in Sagaing to join the Pyithusit Militia (Phyu Saw Htee). He boasts himself as a "550 monk" as he could take care of 500 Muslim households and 50 Buddhist households in peaceful coexistence. He also portrays the image of KIA⁵ as the invisible hand that is trying to pose conflicts among Buddhist Burmese people as the majority of KIA is Christian people, saying, "It has been 80 monks that KIA killed so far. None of Christian or Islam monks died. They are trying to make the Buddhist Burmese fight each other". "KIA and PDF⁶ are just demons who slaughter Buddhist monks and teachers; Killing them will give good deeds rather than a sin," U War Tha Wa argued in an interview with Myanmar National Post, which is one of the nationalist media. At the same time, he forces the local people to join the Pyithusit Militia (Pyu Saw Htee) by imposing the doctrine of protecting the land, race and religion. He also threatens that those who don't join will be regarded as supporters of PDF terrorists. "Why won't the State Administration Council destroy those headquarters rather than reciting

⁵ Kachin Independence Army

⁶ People Defence Force

the metta prayers? Crush KIA in Kachin state just as the war breaks out in Sagaing and Magway" are race and religion-focused speeches that he used to encourage the attack on KIA and Kachin people. He constantly threatens local people who support the PDF, saying, "Send the rations and support them if you have an extra life. Villages that support PDF must be erased." He also challenges the PDF to attack him if they can. He also narrates the story narcissistically in a way that people's defense forces in Sagaing are KIA's puppets and terrorists who will destroy Buddhism. At the same time, the military and Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) are the protectors of Buddhism and regional stability.

Not only U War Tha Wa, MaBaTha⁷ ultranationalist monks such as U Wira Raza and U Pandita are also forming Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) (စောဝေ, 2022). U Ariya Wuntha called Pauk monk is trying to form and strengthen the Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) in Pauk township, Magway. Bullet Hla Swe, who is a veteran military officer and Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) member, said on his social media that he helped to form Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) in villages of Gant Gaw township. There are also strongholds of Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) in Mingin which is native of Maung Myint, a veteran officer and USDP member. Besides, the connection between the military-backed political parties and Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) can be seen on the social media posts of a female township leader of the USDP party.

7 The Patriotic Association of Myanmar

Nay Chi
November 7 · 🌐

ဂန့်ဂေါ မြောက်ခြမ်း ၊
ကျနော်တို့က ကျနော်အားကိုးပြီး ပထမဆုံးပြည်သူ့စစ် စ ဖွဲ့တဲ့ရွာဖြစ်တယ် ၊ အဲဒီ
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See Translation



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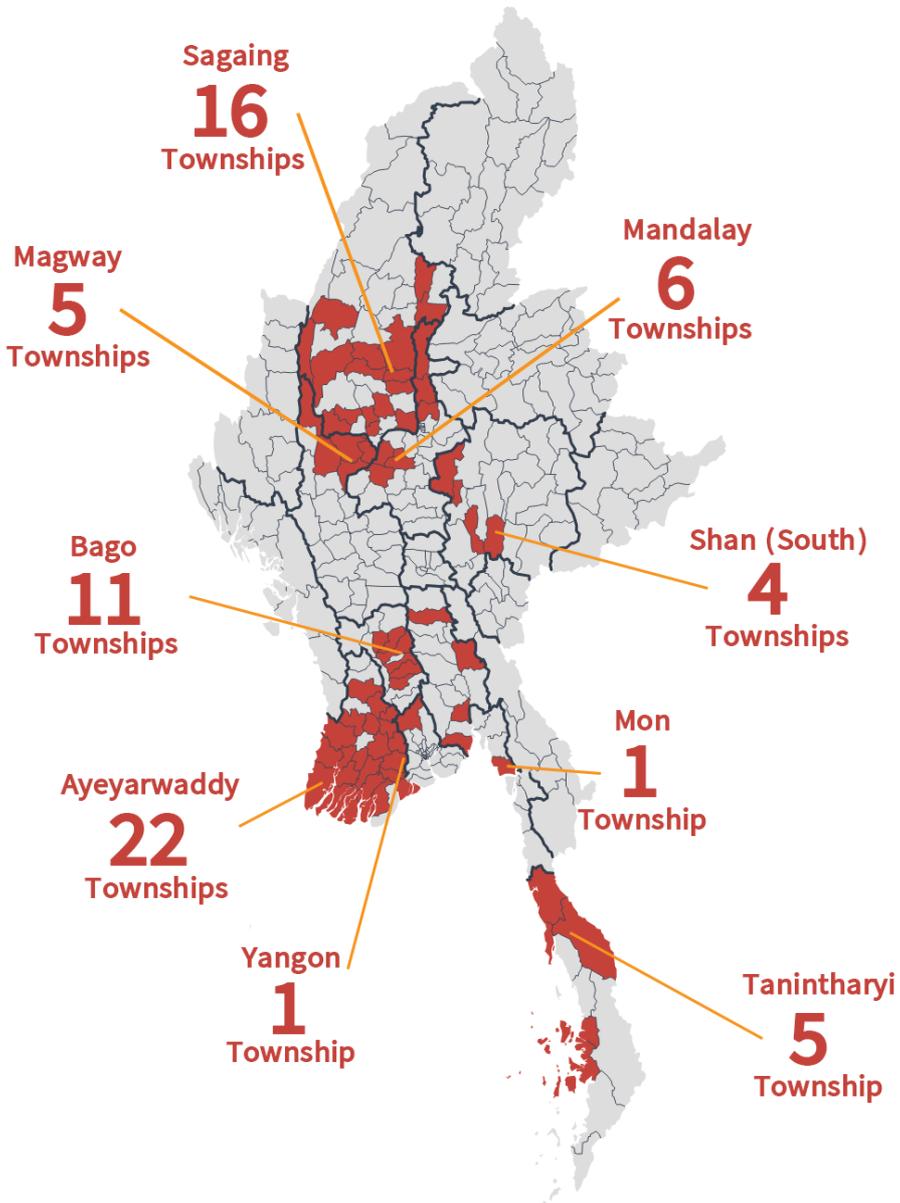
A military veteran and also a member of the USDP Party helped form Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee) in villages in Gangaw Township (Source - Social Media Post from Bullet Hla Swe)



The relation between USDP party and Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) (Source - social media post of a female township leader of the USDP party)

5. Recruitment

The regions which were sources of recruitment of soldiers for the military and where there were no battles for decades and Burmese mostly reside have now become new battlefields due to revolutionary fronts after the coup. The military has been gathering recruits for Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) not only in Sagaing, Magway, Mandalay, Tanintharyi, Bago which are the new battle fronts but also in Ayeyarwaddy, Yangon, Mon, and Southern Shan. Especially villages that support the USDP party become the primary source of Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) recruitment. Local revolutionary forces regard those villages as “Pyu villages.” Veteran soldiers, military supporters, pro-military political party members, and ultranationalists voluntarily enroll in Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee). Besides, former police, firefighters, civil servants, and locals are asked to attend the Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) training. Persuasion with money, ration, incentives, and rights is also done to join the Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee). People are even asked to draw lots to join it. If one refuses to join, they have to pay penalty fees and find a replacement person. They are also forced to join to fulfill the gap of soldiers. There is a quota of people for the Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) for each household and each village and villagers have to comply with the order. When there is no man in the family, women are forced to attend military training. Threats such as burning the village and seizing the property are imposed if they refuse to participate in the training (*CJ Platform, 2022*). The fund is also collected monthly from the local people to support Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee).

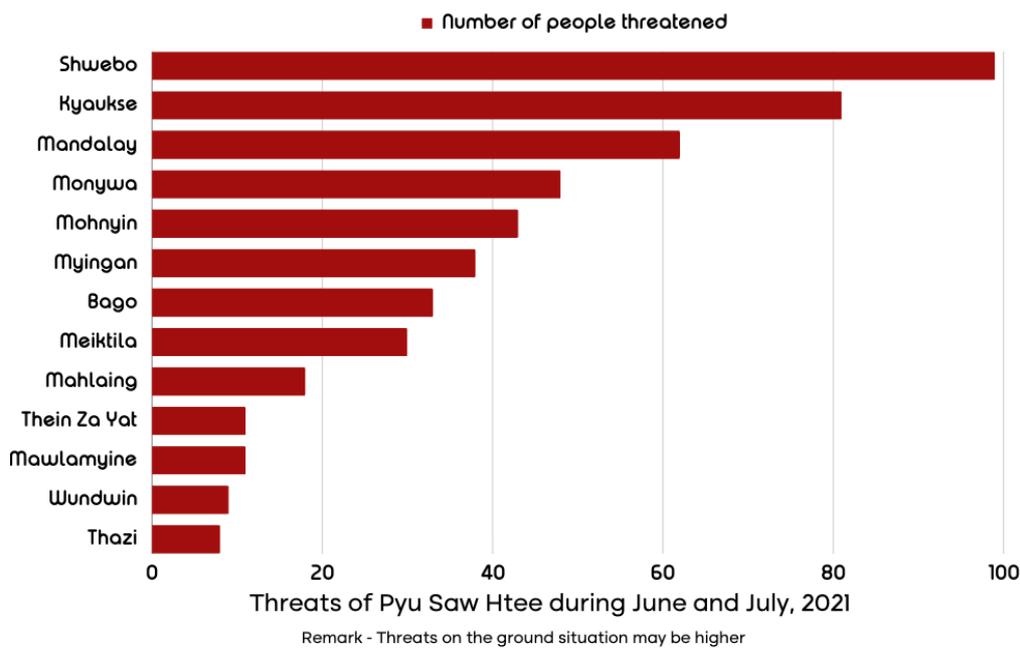


Townships where recruitments are made to form Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) after 2021 coup collected from media news (Remark - there may be discrepancies with the ground situation as it is collected from media news)

6. Activities

The military-backed armed groups monitored and reported on the revolutionaries, the members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) party, and the government employees who quit their jobs for the Civil Disobedience Movement. They also act as town and village guards, patrol and conduct security checks. In villages where Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) are strong, they are often stationed with military council soldiers in camps. In addition, attacks and killings were also carried out in two ways.

The first is threatening not only the participants in the revolution but also the relevant family members; Arrests, killings, and disposal of corpses are most common in urban areas that are not conflict zones. In 2021, after the establishment of the Pyu Saw Htee in March, it issued threatening letters and distributed leaflets in public space. In addition, assassinations have also been committed. In 2021, shortly after the Pyu Saw Htee issued a threatened letter to 38 members of the National League for Democracy in July, two NLD party members were killed in Myingyan township (*Myanmar Now, 2021b*).



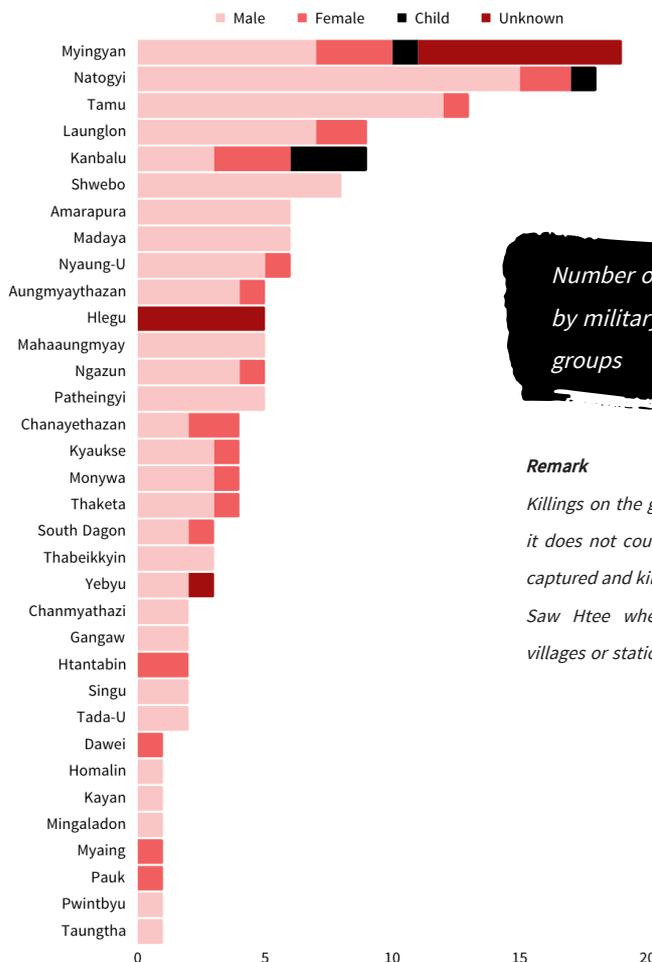
Threats of Pyu Saw Htee during June and July, 2021

On April 21, 2022, Thwe Thout(Mandalay) issued a Red Operation Announcement. On April 25, it also declared that they will attack not only the members of People Defense Forces (PDF), but also those who support the revolution, the media, and their respective family members. In addition to Thwe Thout Group, many groups also emerged such as Yangon Castigate Group (YCS) in Yangon, The Kite Force in Tanintharyi, Thwe Thitsar in Nay Pyi Taw and The Patriotic Coalition in Pyay. Just like Pyu Saw Htee, these groups also include veterans, military supporters, ultranationalists and party members of military-backed political parties. Thwe Thout, YCS, Kite Force, Thwe Thitsar and Patriotic Coalition have targeted assassinations in urban areas. Although the attacks and killings were carried out under separate names, the term "Pyu Saw Htee" was more widespread among the public. From 2021 to June 2023, at least 162⁸ civilians have been killed by these

⁸ It does not count the number of civilians captured and killed by the military and Pyu Saw Htee when their column entered villages or stationed in villages.

groups all over the country. On the target's corpse, they left the logo of their group.

On April 28 2022, the grandfather of the actor Hein Htet, who was in the armed revolution was assassinated by the Thwe Thout at his home in Mingaladon Township (MPA, 2022). On September 11 2022, 3 dead bodies of men with cut throats and logo tag of Thwe Thout were found near the “White Bridge”, Mandalay-Sagaing Road in Amarapura Township, Mandalay (Mizzima, 2022). On 2023 June 6, the sister and mother of Ko Kaung Zarni Hein, were tortured and murdered at their own home in Yoe Gyi village, Htantabin township, Yangon. Ko Hein Zarni Htet has been accused of the murder of the famous ultranationalist “Li Li Naing Kyaw” and arrested by the military council (*Khit Thit Media, 2023*).



Number of civilians killed by military-backed armed groups

Remark
Killings on the ground could be more and it does not count the number of civilians captured and killed by the military and Pyu Saw Htee when their column entered villages or stationed in villages.

The second type is that local Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) together with the Military Council Army fight the revolutionary forces. They marched into villages and burned houses and property, confiscate and arrest civilians either to use as a human shield or torture and murder. Such drills are found in the upper central region (dry zone) which is the new armed conflict zone.

On July 28, 2021, when the joint forces of the People's Defense Forces (PDF) attacked Pan Set village, Mingin township, Sagaing, the village's Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) defended using 20 rifles and RPGs provided by the Military. Maung Myint, Minin USDP candidate and former military officer, requested reinforcements. Due to the reinforcements of the Military and Pyu Saw Htee from Mingin, the People's Defense Forces had to retreat. During that retreat, Pyu Saw Htee from Taung Phyu village fraudulently brought PDF into the village and arrested more than 50 members. Among those arrested, four were tortured and killed by Pyu Saw Htee and military troops (*BBC News မြန်မာ, 2021a; ရော့ဂီ, 2021*).

On March 5, 2022, a column of 70 soldiers from the Military's 88 Infantry Division and the Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee), attacked Inn Nge Daung village, Pauk Township, Magway. They murdered and burned five members of the People's Defense Forces with their hands tied at the back, and a 3-year-old infant and a mother. Twenty-four houses were burned, and the property of the residents was also looted. Twenty-nine village residents, including children and the elderly, were abducted to Won Chone and Ping Taung villages, which were strongholds of the Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) (*BBC News မြန်မာ, 2022*).

On April 16, 2022, 9 villagers from Peking Taung village, Ywar Ngan Township, Southern Shan, Danu Autonomous Region, were arrested and killed by the military and Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee), accusing them of being PDF members. These victims were not members of the PDF according to their

relatives, and Ywar Ngan PDF coalition. Zaw Min Tun (spokesperson of the Military Council) denied to the media that he was unaware of the incident *(RFA, 2022b)*.

On December 20, 2021, over 80 members of Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) and 10 soldiers from the military entered Yi Htwe village, Kanbalu Township, Sagaing and burned down nearly 200 houses of NLD supporters and confiscated the harvested rice fields. *(သူရမောင်, 2021)*. On February 4, 2022, the military troops and Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) burned down Kaing Twin village, Pearl Township, Sagaing. On February 20, they looted the food that was donated by nearby villages and the property of the Kaing Twin villagers. *(ဝသုန်ငြိမ်းအေး, 2022)*. On October 19, in Kanni village, Myaing Township, Magway, about 50 Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) fired guns to prevent local farmers from digging up the peanut fields *(မြေလတ်အသံ, 2022)*.

7. Situation of Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee)

စစ်အုပ်စု It is observed that the military provides more support to the regions where there is the stronghold of Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee). On July 28, 2022, the commander of the Northwest Regional command provided 300 million kyats to Kanbalu, Taze and Kyun Hla townships where many Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee) are residing (*အောင်နိုင်သူ, 2022*). In August, 2022, the military donated 120 motorbikes to Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee) in Kale, Sagaing (*DVB, 2022b*). On October 20, 2022, the military utilized the government fund to provide ration for Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee), although the fund was reserved as a budget for regional development and donation for monasteries (*သူရမောင် & စထွန်းအောင်, 2022*). On October 5, 2023, Myat Kyaw (Minister of Sagaing appointed by the military council) and Than Htike (the commander of the Northwest Regional command) sent 50 million kyats to Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee) in Kanbalu twonship (*သူရမောင်, 2023b*).

The military also grants Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee) some rights to do as they wish, such as asking money from the civilians while patrolling the neighborhood, seizing the civilians just to ask for money, collecting fines from gambling houses and distributing the drugs. Money is collected monthly from civilians to fund the Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee). Fines are also collected if civilians refuse to attend the military training.

Ceremonies of providing arms and provisions to Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee) were also held by the military (*Tachileik News Agency, 2022b*). The

most common types of guns that are not used by the military such as carbines, G3, hand-made guns and black powder gun are provided to Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee) (*DVB, 2021; Mizzima, 2022a; သူရမောင်, 2023a*).

8. Counter-measures by Revolutionary Forces

Revolutionary forces persuade the Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee) to surrender and join hands with the public, give warnings to stop supporting the military and assassinate. The Ministry of Defense from the National Unity Government issued a warning announcement on 27 April 2022 that military supporters including Pyu Saw Htee must leave the military immediately and join the PDF forces (*ရှေ့ဝင်, 2022a*).

There were cases that Pyu Saw Htee joined local PDFs. A group of 30 Pyu Saw Htee from Zi Taw village, and Htein Tine village, Hti Lin township, Magway joined YDF (Hti Lin) along with their 25 handmade guns in October 2021 (*Myanmar Now, 2021c*). 27 Pyu Saw Htee trainees from Zee Pyar village, Pauk township, escaped and joined local PDF forces in Myaing in October 2022 (*မောင်ရွှေဝါ, 2022*).

In February 2022, the joint PDF forces from 5 townships issued an announcement that prohibits the trading route of food and rations by local transportation channels and car owners to Tha Le Bar, Ngwe Twin, Sa Par Twin, Seik Phu Kyi and Sin Tale villages, Ayar Daw township (*BAP, 2022*). In December 2022, the villagers who sold food to Kawt village where the Military and Pyu Saw Htee resided were punished with whipping and given warnings not to do so again by Burma Rangers (ShweBo) (*DNA, 2022*). Ayar Daw PDF revolutionary forces declared that they would seize the property of Pyu Saw Htee under public ownership (*BVJ, 2021*).

Revolutionary forces also encouraged local people to leave villages that Pyu Saw Htee controlled. Gangaw PDF announced in March, 2022 that they attacked Myauk Khin Yan village, Gangaw township, Magyway, and evacuated 400 villagers into safe zones (*ရှေ့ဝင်, 2022a*). It is also found that some villagers fled from their villages as they were forced to join Pyu Saw Htee. The military, therefore, control all the passages and routes (*MFP, 2023*). Those escaped villagers face a lack of food, water, and medicine. Though some wish to leave their homeland, they are forced to stay because of oppression and threats. Their properties will also be seized if they leave their villages. Money will also be collected from the remaining family members even if one escapes from the village. Due to the pressure to join Pyu Saw Htee, the number of people who fled from Zee Phyu Kone village, Sagaing, has increased to 400 till February, 2023 (*မြေလတ်အသံ, 2023*). More than 300 people have fled from villages that Pyu Saw Htee controlled in Myaing township, Magway up to February 2023 (*Ayeyarwaddy Times, 2023*). Revolutionary forces have been providing financial support to local people who have left their homes, properties and fields but there is limited capacity to do so.

9. The Complications

There were incidents where the names of PDF were misused. In November 2021, Pyu Saw Htee group pretended to be PDF and raided the local people in Kabe village, Taze township, Sagaing (*The 74 Media, 2021*). On 26 August 2021, PDF (Pekon) announced that Pyu Saw Htee group in disguise as PDF, tried to bomb the neighborhood to scare the people (*သျှမ်းသံတော်ဆင့်, 2021*). During August, 2022, the robbery was committed more than ten times in some villages, Thayet Chaung Twonship by Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee) and in most cases, PDF identities were used (*Mizzima, 2022b*). On 4 December 2022, one NLD party member was murdered by Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee) but the military propaganda channel on Telegram spread fake news that PDF did the deed (*Than Lwin Times, 2022*). In 2023, the incidents of raiding the local people using PDF's identity increased in Kale township (*Ayeyarwaddy Times, 2023b*).

However, there were also complications and controversial cases of attacking Pyithusit militias (Pyu Saw Htee) by PDFs.

On August 21, 2022, Yaw People Defense Force (YDF) wrongly killed 6 local civilians and other people defense forces in Yaw condemned YDF and asked to take responsibility (*RFA, 2022c*). In Pauk township, Magway, U Pauk Kyaw was murdered by SPGF, a guerrilla force from southern Pauk, as he was considered Pyu Saw Htee. However, the victim was not Pyu Saw Htee and his daughter and nephew had been supporting PDF from Japan, which was confirmed by revolutionary forces in Japan (*BVJ, 2023*).

There were also murder and robbery cases and the culprits' whereabouts are unknown. In Nyaung Shin Kone village, Palaw township, 7 family members of SAC appointed village administrator, including 2-year infant were shot and murdered. However, no one knew about which organization committed the crimes (*Dawei Watch, 2023*). On June 25, 2022, an unknown armed group raided a household in Owa village, Kha Yan township, Yangon and took 7 million Kyats and 6 Kyat Thar of gold (*DNA, 2022a*).

10. Conclusion

Ultrationalists have organized pro-military rallies and demonstrations based on ultrationalism with the support of the military. Violent attacks, especially against Muslims, have been carried out during the riots, as well as inciting ethnic/religious conflicts. Besides, after 2020 election and in earlier times after the coup, peaceful demonstrators and journalists were attacked with weapons by ultrationalists. These incidents demonstrate that ultrationalists not only hold onto ideologies based on race and religion but also engage in actual violence since earlier times. After the coup in 2021, the military regime had to face armed resistance on all fronts across the country, which led to arming their supporters and ultrationalists to fill the needs of new recruits. Hence, nationalists were promoted from the stage of leading the rallies to the stage of representing their extreme ideology in the form of a political party, creating propaganda media widely filling the vacuum of local news agencies that emerged after the coup and in the end, attacking and killing using guns.

Armed militias were formed from the ideology based on race and religion such as “Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) are scheming to make Burmese people kill each other to advance politically and in warfare. Christian revolutionary forces made Burmese Buddhists murder Buddhist monks”. Those who turn against the military are portrayed as terrorists and destroyers of Buddhism and the nation, while the military backed armed forces are praised as those who protect the country and religion and protector of regional peace.

Those military backed armed militias, in cooperation with the military, commit war crimes and human rights violations across the country. To further spread the insecurity and fear among the public, not only those participating in the revolution but also their respective family members are being targeted and killed by military backed armed militias. The ability of committing such crimes by ultranationalists themselves will threaten the freedom and security of individuals not only during the revolution but also after the revolution. In the present situation, military-backed local Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) expertise in geographical knowledge and gathering ground information. Thus, they become the obstacle for revolutionary forces in attempting to get ground control.

On the other hand, some volunteers wish to willingly join the Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee) while some have to join because of abuse and threats. If the man escapes from a household to avoid training, the military oppresses the remaining family members. If the whole family flees from their home, their properties are destroyed and confiscated. Supporting and giving shelter to those displaced people has also become a challenge for revolutionary forces who have been fighting against the military that seizes control of the state's resources. It is a challenge to help escape the people forced to become the Pyithusit militia (Pyu Saw Htee).

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