

DVB Debate is produced by DVB Multimedia Group Ltd. Co. The debate is recorded every Saturday morning in Yangon with a live audience, which is invited to join the discussion as well.



DVB TV timetable

Sun	19:15	21:00	night repeat
Mon	10:15	15:15	21:00
Wed	10:15	15:15	21:00
Fri	10:15	15:15	21:00

DVB Debate aims to contribute to a new culture of open debate, in which anyone can participate and agree to disagree, in order to exchange ideas, create better mutual understanding and find solutions for societal issues to improve the future of Myanmar.

The team invites fellow media and debating clubs to join this initiative for open debate. A weekly press release, press picture and cartoon are available shortly after the recording. DVB Debate also has a modest budget to support local debating initiatives.

For any inquiries, remarks or questions, please call 01292743 (office hours), leave a comment on facebook.com/dvb.debate or email debate@dvb.no.

DVB DEBATE



Welcome to DVB Debate, Myanmar's 1st open debate program. This week's debate question is:

"Can federalism be a solution?"

If you have any remarks, suggestions or questions, please ask a team member,

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This week's topic is FEDERALISM

Historical context:

From the moment Burma became an independent nation in 1948 the country has been divided on how to structure the country. In the lead up to independence from British rule, the first Panglong agreement was negotiated by General Aung San and other ethnic leaders in early 1947. It promised ethnic minorities "Full autonomy in internal administration for the Frontier Areas" and the creation of a separate Kachin state. However, after independence in 1948 the government disregarded the agreement and these promises were not implemented. In the same year civil war began in Burma as ethnic Karen began fighting against the government to create an autonomous Karen state. In 1962, a military coup led to the implementation of the Military Council headed by Ne Win who strongly opted against power sharing and declared that the coup had taken place because of the ethnic secessionist idea or federalism, which he said, could lead to the disintegration of the nation. When the military refused to allow any federal governance other ethnic groups began armed rebellions against the government. After decades or fighting many armed groups signed ceasefire agreements with the government in the 90s. However, the political rights they had been promised by the government never emerged. As recently as 2012, despite the new government and the beginnings of the peace process federalism remained a taboo subject, as for many federalism was still equated with the disintegration of the nation. However, now for the first time, President U Thein Sein and others have spoken openly about their acceptance of federalism and it seems, at last, to be a possible prospect.

Facts & figures:

- The first Panglong agreement was negotiated in 1947 and promised ethnic minorities federalism with autonomy and right to secession but these promises were never implemented.
- The Civil War in Burma began in 1948 and has lasted over 66 years.
- After the military coup in 1962, military ruler Ne Win strongly opposed power sharing with ethnic groups and supported a unitary state.
- Although still federal in name at the time, Burma institutionalised the country's unitary state in the 1974 constitution.

- Section 337 of the 2008 constitution states "All the armed forces in the union shall be under the command of the Defence Services" implying a central military command over ethnic armed forces.
- The UNFC (United Nationalities Federal Council) was founded on February 16, 2011.

Points of view:

"Everybody wants a federal union, but if you look at it realistically this government has a mandate only until 2015... There is no way you can get agreement on a complete federal union before 2015, but there are steps you can begin to take in that direction."

Harn Yawnghwe, (Director of the Euro Burma Office)

"Without a federal union, our country cannot have peace. All our ethnic armed groups and ethnic political parties want a federal union system."

Saw Than Myint (Founder of the Federal Union Party)

"If ethnic nationalities' fundamental rights and birth rights are fully assured, we will never separate from this country... If we can build a genuine federal union based on equality and self-determination, then no one need worry about us breaking away."

Nai Hongsa (Mon leader and former UNFC General-Secretary)

"If Burma becomes a federal union ... we will have a federal constitution and an armed forces that is in conformity with the federal union... This is acknowledged as the main principle of federalism, so there will be no challenge to it nor will there be anything to be worried about."

Aung Min(President's Office Minister)

Information links:

www.mmpeacemonitor.org

www.myanmarpeace.org

www.euro-burma.eu

www.mod.gov.mm

www.facebook.com/burma.unfc

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