

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION



### 1.1 Rationale

On Sunday November 6th, 2005, the Myanmar military government or SPDC (State Peace and Development Council) officially relocated the national capital from Yangon to **Pyinmana** in a rural mountainous valley in Mandalay Division around 320 kilometers north of Yangon. The next day, Myanmar's Information Minister, Brigadier General Kyaw Hsan, announced that the country's capital would be a newly established city in Pyinmana District. The minister further explained, "The reason we are moving is because Pyinmana, which is in the centre of Myanmar, is geographically and strategically located for the development of the country"<sup>1</sup>.



Map 1 The New Capital of Myanmar

Source: [data.schq.mi.th/.../images/news/PyinmanaMap.jpg](http://data.schq.mi.th/.../images/news/PyinmanaMap.jpg)

<sup>1</sup> Nanda Kyaw Thu, *Tyranny of the Absurd Assessing the Implications of the Pyinmana Move*, Available from: <http://www.burmaissues.org/En/Newsletter/BINews2006-01-01.html>

On Armed Forces Day on 27 March 2006, the new administrative capital in Kyatpyae Village of Pyinmana District was publicly named “**Naypyidaw** (also spelt **Nay Pyi Taw**)”<sup>2</sup> which etymologically means the “Seat of the King” or “Royal City”. Since then Naypyidaw which is situated just 11 km northwest of Pyinmana District has had a special status as the new national capital instead of Yangon. In this respect, Naypyidaw is the name of the capital that is officially recognized by the current military government while Pyinmana is the name of a district in which the new capital is located. The new capital is also called “**Pyinmana Naypyidaw**”.\*

The rationale for moving the capital to Naypyidaw is still unclear even though the government gave the reason of focusing on the country’s development. There is some speculation concerning this relocation. Naypyidaw is better located strategically than Yangon, in that it is further away from the coast. This is considered desirable in case Myanmar comes under attack by the enemy (US sea-borne invasion). Naypyidaw is also located adjacent to the Shan, Kayah and Kayin states, and it is felt that a stronger military and governmental presence nearby might provide stability to those chronically turbulent regions.

Others suggest that the move was motivated out of paranoia about an urban uprising by democratic movements, or extremely poor and ethnically diverse residents of Yangon against the junta. Others believe that the move was at the suggestion of Senior General Than Shwe’s astrologer who predicted that the present government would collapse at the end of February 2006, unless the capital was moved<sup>3</sup>. Finally, some have suggested that the move was Than Shwe’s attempt to imitate the model of ancient monarchs by transferring the capital to the dry zone which is considered as the historical heartland of the Burmese.

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<sup>2</sup> Naypyidaw. Available from : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naypyidaw>

\* In this thesis, every names of the new capital “Pyinmana”, “Naypyidaw” and “Pyinmana Naypyidaw” will be used in content orientation depending on specific sources and particular context.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

As a result, this particular problem of the reasons for shifting the capital from Yangon to Pyinmana has become the purpose of this research. While this problem remains an important obstacle to understanding the current situation inside Myanmar, there has still been little systematic discussion or and research into the motivations for moving the capital. Therefore, research on the capital relocation from Yangon to Naypyidaw is interesting academic work which can enrich and enhance understanding about contemporary Myanmar.

## **1.2 Objective**

- To evaluate the main factors of capital relocation in Burmese history.
- To evaluate the possible factors of current capital relocation from Yangon to Pyinmana Naypyidaw.
- To survey the location and analyze the urban characteristics of Pyinmana Naypyidaw.

## **1.3 Hypothesis**

The capital relocation from Yangon to Pyinmana Naypyidaw is motivated by three main factors comprising, politico-military security, hinterland economic development and spiritual-cultural unity.

## **1.4 Methodology**

The methodology used in this research relies on an interdisciplinary approach based on the author's analysis. A historical approach will be conducted to evaluate the factors of transferring the capitals in Burmese history while sociological, political, military and economic approaches will be adopted and applied to evaluate and analyze the motives of current capital relocation. More specially, a geographical approach will be used to analyze the location and characteristics of the new capital.

Data collection is mainly based on documentary materials. Primary sources used in this thesis are books, articles, and reports of various academic seminars. Secondary sources include pre-existing research materials concerning Myanmar in general, newspaper clippings, media reports, and other publications, particularly online documents. Moreover, in-depth interviews are also conducted to broaden the ideas and perspectives in this thesis. Most interviews are academics, especially historians and political scientists, while some reports come from Thai military officers and ethnic minority groups residing on the Thai-Myanmar border. For safety or professional reasons, some interviewees prefer not to disclose their names. For similar reasons, some dates and places where the interviews were conducted cannot be mentioned.

### **1.5 Usefulness of Research**

- To better understand Myanmar's capital relocation from Yangon to Pyinmana Naypyidaw.
- To provide information beneficial for students, academics and authorities to enable them better to analyze and predict the political situation inside Myanmar.

### **1.6 The Concept of Capital Cities**

There is no theoretically precise explanation in the academic literature of the concept of capital cities and the motivations for shifting a capital in the modern era. The various themes related capitals are fragmented and absorbed by other disciplines. The literature on capital cities consists of a diverse collection of writings by architects, historians, political scientists, urban planners and sociologists, each addressing a different aspect of capital cities, without creating a single, explicit theory of capital city development.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, a clear explanation regarding capital cities can be found in the field of political geography.

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<sup>4</sup> Scott Campbell, *The Changing Role and Identity of Capital Cities in the Global Era*, paper presented at the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting, Pittsburgh, April 4-8, 2000 Draft Version 1, Available from: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~sdcamp/AAG2000.html>

“The capital is by modern definition a seat of power and a place of decision-making processes that affect the lives and the future of the nation ruled, and that may influence trends and events beyond its borders. Capitals differ from other cities: the capital function secures strong and lasting centrality; it calls for a special *hosting* environment to provide what is required for the safe and efficient performance of the functions of government and decision-making characteristics of the place.” (Gottmann and Harper 1990, 63)<sup>5</sup>

By simple definition, a national capital city is the seat of the national government within the country. This role can vary widely across different capital cities, but in general, capitals are unique among other cities because they provide a special site for the concentration, administration and representation of political power. Capital cities perform certain distinct functions. Some are obvious: this is the place for legislative gatherings and the residence of the Chief of state. It is the prime place for the State’s reception of external influence, for embassies and international organizations. In most states the capital city is also the most “cosmopolitan” city.<sup>6</sup>

Capital cities must be a source of power and authority, either to ensure control over outlying and loosely tied districts of the state or to defend the state against undesirable external influences.<sup>7</sup> Capitals are generally considered as the centre of national spiritual unity and a symbol of cultural heritage. Moreover, capital cities can distribute functions to manage various internal affairs, for example, economic performance, political administration, religious consolidation and military strategy.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Ira Glassner, *Political Geography*, Southern Connecticut State University, Connecticut, 1993, p. 95.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Sawat Senenarong, *Principle of Political Geography*, Phrae Pitthaya International Press, Bangkok, 1974, p.91.

There are several distinct types of capitals depending on the criteria of classification. In general terms, most political geographers view capital cities in relation to their position with reference to the state territory. This results in three types of capital cities:

**1. Permanent Capitals.** These might also be called historic capitals; they have functioned as the leading economic and cultural centre for their state over a period of several centuries.<sup>9</sup> Obvious examples are London, Rome and Athens.

**2. Introduced Capitals.** These are established as the centre of political administration and a symbol of national pride. Some developing countries, especially in Africa and Latin America, replaced older capitals in order to symbolize the idea of anti-colonialism and build national identity. Examples are Brasilia (Brazil), Mbabane (Swaziland), Kigali (Rwanda) and Lilongwe (Malawi). In federal states, introduced capitals have also come about by political compromise to form the most appropriate seat of national government, for example, Canberra in Australia and Ottawa in Canada.

**3. Divided Capitals.** In certain states, the functions of government are not concentrated in one city, but are divided among two or even more. In the Netherlands the parliament sits in The Hague (the legislative capital), but the royal palace is in Amsterdam (the "official" capital). In Bolivia, intense rivalry between the cities of La Paz and Sucre produced the arrangement existing today whereby the two cities share the functions of government. In South Africa, a union was established in which the Boer capital, Pretoria, retained administrative functions, while the British headquarters, Cape Town, became the legislative headquarters.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Martin Ira Glassner, *Political Geography*, p. 97.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Vaughan Cornish from his "The Great Capitals" - a well known work of political geography - has discussed the origin and evolution of capital cities in many parts of the world<sup>11</sup> and classifies capitals into four types as follows:

**1. Store-house Capitals.** These are situated in the centre of fertile agricultural areas and are a national historical heritage. These areas are also popularly recognized as the core of the state and the hub of transportation.<sup>12</sup> Prominent examples are London (Thames Basin), Paris (Paris Basin), Rome (Latium Plain), Prague (Bohemian Plain), Ayutthaya (Chao Phraya Valley), Mandalay (Irrawaddy Valley) and Phnom Penh (Great Lake Basin).

**2. Forward Defensive Capitals.** The capitals in this type are designed for security and strategic purposes. Cornish elaborates that the forward capital's situation in a strategic position vis-à-vis frontier regions or potential enemies gives it special importance. For instance, Islamabad, Pakistan's capital is established for effective control of the Kashmir mountainous areas and to impose its domination over Himalayan frontier; and Edinburgh, Scotland's capital, was set up as a fortified city during the Anglo-Scottish wars in order to defend its strategic central heartland and command sea routes.

**3. Religious Capitals.** In pre-modern periods, religion played an important role as the centre of spiritual consolidation and civilization. Additionally, religion also greatly influenced political legitimacy and state organization. In this regard, several capitals played a significant role in religious affairs, such as Candy and Pagan which were recognized as capitals of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Burma respectively and Turku used to be the capital of Evangelical Christianity in Finland. Furthermore, some present capitals such as Lhasa (Tibet) and Thimphu (Bhutan) still function as the religious capitals of Mahayana Buddhism.

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<sup>11</sup> V. Cornish, *The Great Capital*, London, Methuen, and New York, Doran, 1923, p. vii.

<sup>12</sup> Manu Walyaphech, *Political Geography*, Thaiwattanapanich, Bangkok, 1980, P.93.

**4. Artificial Capitals.** Capitals of this type have special characteristics in terms of city planning and architectural style. The government generally sets up new networks of transportation and residential settlements systematically in order to provide a new place for effective administration and development. There are examples of artificial capitals in both traditional and modern periods such as Madrid built by King Philip II of Spain, St. Petersburg established by King Peter the Great of Russia, Ankara (Turkey), Canberra (Australia) and Brasilia (Brazil).<sup>13</sup>

### 1.7 The Concept about Capital Location and Relocation

Location is one of the most important factors for the rise and fall of capital cities and state sovereignty. Normally the capital city is located in the core area which is considered as the centre of political power and national history. The German geographer Friedrich Ratzel, who first tried to define this reality in politico-geographical terms, said that states tended to begin as "territorial cells," which would then become larger through the addition of land and people, and eventually evolve into states or even empires. "Derwent Whittlesey elaborated on this theme, emphasizing the role of the core as the area in or about which a state originates."<sup>14</sup>

Core areas may be classified in several ways. The Canadian geographer Andrew Burghardt identified three types based on historical development. The case in which a small territory grows into a larger state, perhaps over a period of centuries, as described by Ratzel and Whittlesey, he calls a **nuclear core**. In some states the **original core** was always the area of greatest importance within an already larger framework. Finally, the **contemporary core** is the area within the state with the greatest current economic and/or political importance although it may have superseded one or more earlier cores.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Manu Walyaphech, *Political Geography*, P.94.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Martin Ira Glassner, *Political Geography*, p. 88.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



Most states around the world emerge and develop from core areas and the concentration of state power and administration is significantly dependent on the relationship between the capital and the core area. The Paris Basin is the core area of France, and Paris is the focus of the Paris Basin. Cairo is situated on the banks of the Nile River which is regarded as the core area of Egyptian cultivation and civilization. Vietnam, since reunification in 1975, has two distinct cores; the lower reaches of the Red River in the north and the Mekong in the south, dominated, respectively, by Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The dry zones of the Irrawaddy and Sittang rivers is the core area of Burma and most traditional capitals such as Toungoo, Ava and Mandalay are situated in this area, while Thai capitals such as Sukhothai, Ayutthaya and Bangkok are established in the core area of the Menam Valley (the Chao Phraya and its tributaries).



Map 2 Core Area of Myanmar (Dry Zone)



Map 3 Core Area of Thailand (Menam Valley)

Adapted from Microsoft Encarta Premium 2006 (DVD)

Core areas are also important for national consolidation, state security systems and economic development because the core region is a geographical unit in which the state originates and evolves. Moreover, core areas should be considered as a hub of transportation, the centre of urban development and the heartland of historical pride. For countries with internal problems of ethnic insurgencies and political turmoil, core areas are mostly located in strategic positions to maintain state sovereignty and suppress enemies at the same time. In many countries even today there are significant areas in which the government does not exercise effective control, and/or where the people are

oriented toward a neighboring country rather than toward their own capitals. Among these countries are Colombia, Brazil, Chad, Ethiopia, Myanmar and Papua New Guinea.<sup>16</sup> In order to form an effective political centrality, most of those countries try to relocate their capitals to sites with more geopolitical importance from the point of view of the government.

Throughout traditional and modern history, capital relocation is neither a recent nor an uncommon phenomenon and there are several factors for moving the capital as follows:

### 1.7.1 Security Policy and Military Strategy

One of the main motivations for capital relocation is the importance of state security and the transformation of military strategy. A very early example was the move of China's Zhou capital to Luoyang near the Huanghe River after barbarians destroyed the capital at Hao on the Wei River in 771 B.C.<sup>17</sup> After the fall of the Pagan Empire by the Mongol invasion in 1287 and the penetration of Shan power; Taungoo was established as the new Burmese capital as a military stronghold and for national consolidation. Pakistan replaced Karachi as its capital with Islamabad, in what may still be described as a northern frontier, because Islamabad lies close to areas disputed with India and Afghanistan, and thus the government is in a critical position to determine policy.<sup>18</sup>

Under the pressure of strategic circumstances, moving a capital also aims to adjust and transform military defensive policy and as a result the new location is strategically related to the direction of foreign invasion. According to the framework of geostrategy, if the enemy attacks the country from land, the strategic location of the capital should be in a coastal area but in contrast, if the enemy invades by sea, the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.93.

<sup>17</sup> Scott Campbell, *Chapter Two: Understanding Capital Cities (Draft Version)*, quoted in <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~sdcamp/capitals/Ch2.html>

<sup>18</sup> Martin Ira Glassner, *Political Geography*, p. 94.

strategic position of the capital should be in the hinterland. For example, the destruction of Angkor by Siamese troops strategically forced the Khmer leaders to moving the capital eastward to the core area of Tonle Sap (Great Lake) to prevent danger from the west, or after the fall of Ayutthaya by the Burmese attack in 1767, King Taksin moved the capital southward to Thonburi from which his naval base at Chantaburi was more easily accessed. The communist party of the Soviet Union also relocated the capital from coastal St. Petersburg to Moscow because of maritime threats in the Baltic Sea and the superior inland defensive position at Moscow.

### 1.7.2 Power Manifestation and Political Configuration

In the past, some countries also moved their capitals to mark the victory over their great enemy and manifest kingly political power and legitimacy while some relocations were made on the advice of royal astrologers based on religious concepts to upgrade the ruler's power and charisma. For example, King Clovis established Paris (Lutetia) as the Frankish capital in 508 after a great victory over the Visigoths. Emperor Louis XIV set up his second seat at Versailles outside the larger metropolis of Paris to mark his absolute power, while King Narai of Siam established his second capital at Lopburi north of Ayutthaya in 1665, and King Bodawpaya, who ruled Burma from 1782 to 1819 moved his royal capital from Ava to Amarapura following the advice of an astrologer who told him Amarapura was a better location as suggested in the Buddha's prophesies and that the most powerful king shall leave the old capital and built a new one.

Since a capital city is a political construction, the decision to relocate the capital is arguably always political, particularly in national movements and political negotiation. An obvious example was when Lopez de Legazpe moved the Philippine capital from Cebu to the new city of Manila to be used as a base for colonization efforts.<sup>19</sup> Intense inter-state rivalries among Australia's individual states made it impossible to select one of that country's several large cities as the permanent national capital, and a compromise was the new capital of Canberra, built on federal territory

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

carved out the State of New South Wales.<sup>20</sup> Such a move can also reflect a symbolic effort to start fresh: distancing the new government from the old capital represents distancing the country from the old government (such as Bonn's selection in 1949, representing a break with the Nazi-Prussian past in Berlin).<sup>21</sup>

One result of these capital relocations is to transform the relationship between the capital and the nation. For powerful older capital cities that were the seat of royal power during the period of nation-building, the nation developed from the centre out. The capital pulled the nation together, gave it legitimacy, and remains the historical-symbolic centre of national power. This seems especially true in cases where a city-state formed the core of an emerging nation-state. By contrast, the relocated capital, established after the period of nation-building, is merely an administrative extension and product of the nation-state. Simply stated, the powerful older capital cities built the nation, while the nation in turn built the newer, relocated capitals.<sup>22</sup>

### 1.7.3 International Relations and Anti-Colonialism

Sometimes the importance of international relations, particularly in trade and commerce plays a crucial role for capital relocation. King Peter the Great of Russia relocated the capital in 1703 from Moscow to St. Petersburg near the Baltic Sea to increase commercial and cultural contacts with Europeans. King Tabin Shwethi (1530-1551) of Burma perceived Toungoo was too far from the sea and discovered a better location at Pegu or Hamtavati. India under British colonial rule transferred its capital from Delhi, which was situated in the historical Hindu heartland between the Ganges and Yamuna basins, to Calcutta, near the Bay of Bengal, for international trade. Rangoon or Yangon was established by the British as the new Burmese capital for commercial purposes to replace Mandalay, a former royal capital.

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<sup>20</sup> Martin Ira Glassner, *Political Geography*, p. 96.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

In contrast, fear of cultural exploitation by external powers or xenophobia, especially in coastal areas, and the necessary of keeping national identity are also important factors for capital relocation to the interior. For instance, in 1923, after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Atatürk relocated the capital from İstanbul to Ankara in the hinterland, a move not only intended to break with tradition and to establish a central location for the capital, but from paranoia of foreign cultural hybridization in coastal İstanbul. Brazil moved its capital to Brasilia in 1960 because an inland location was thought better, and because of the fear of foreign influence at Rio de Janeiro.



Map 4 Pakistan's Capital Relocation from Coastal Karachi to Inland Islamabad  
Adapted from [www.globalfirepower.com](http://www.globalfirepower.com)



Map 5 Turkey's Capital Relocation from Coastal Istanbul to Inland Ankara  
Adapted from [www.askasia.org](http://www.askasia.org)

“Formerly colonial States have at times decided to replace their European-developed capitals with other towns having either traditional importance or a more favorable location from the point of view of the government.”<sup>23</sup> Those countries which have made the decision to move their capital cities, however, have invariably felt that although such programs are very expensive, they have been justified for several reasons.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Scott Campbell, *Chapter Two: Understanding Capital Cities (Draft Version)*, quoted at <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~sdcamp/capitals/Ch2.html>

<sup>24</sup> Deborah Potts, *Capital Relocation in Africa: The Case of Lilongwe in Malawi*, *The Geographical Journal*, Vol.151, No.2 (Jul., 1985), p. 182.

One is that existing "colonial" capitals are usually peripherally located, often on the coast - logical for an outward-looking, export-oriented colonial administration. Secondly, the former capitals have a "regional" rather than a "national" character, being so located that they tend to be identified with particular sections of the population (Hamdan, 1964). A third reason is that the colonial capitals tend to be centers of foreign investment and form the nodes of regions which benefited from the infrastructure and "development" associated with concentrations of European settlements. Fourthly, the strong colonial associations attached to such towns were sometimes felt to be galling to independent governments for whom the capital city is necessarily perceived as a symbol of independent national pride.<sup>25</sup>

In this respect, there are many capital relocation programs in former colonial countries, especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America. For example, Malawi decided in 1964 to move its capital from the town of Zomba to more centrally located Lilongwe; Tanzania in 1973 announced it would move its capital from coastal Dar es Salaam to more central Dodoma;<sup>26</sup> Nigeria, led by General Murtala Muhammed, moved its capital from the British colonial capital at Lagos to more nationally and centrally located Abuja; Argentina also plans to replace Buenos Aires as the country's capital with the small Patagonian town of Viedma; Sri Lanka began in 1988 to transfer its capital from Colombo to Sri-Jayewardenepura-Kotte<sup>27</sup>; India officially relocated its colonial capital at Calcutta back to more traditional and central New Delhi in 1911.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Martin Ira Glassner, *Political Geography*, p. 94.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

Sometimes nature itself prompts relocation.<sup>28</sup> Natural disasters, geographical deviations or even epidemics in the capital city lead to its eventual rebuilding, but it can also lead to relocation: For instance, after an earthquake destroyed the city of Antigua in 1773, the Spanish moved the Guatemalan capital to Guatemala City.<sup>29</sup> Thailand relocated its capital from Thonburi to Bangkok because the western shore of Chao Phraya River where Thonburi situated was dramatically eroded by river currents. So in 1782, King Rama I relocated the capital to Bangkok on the eastern bank of the river to decrease riverbank erosion.

### **1.7.5 Hinterland and Agricultural Development**

Some developing states also relocate their capital for national development in the hinterland region. "The new site in the country's geometric centre is expected to bring a long-dormant region into effective settlement by spurring a central migration that will open new agricultural frontiers, create a more equitable distribution of population and above all foster the growth of a core region in and around which the state idea could develop."<sup>30</sup> The transportation network starting from a newly relocated capital can harmoniously unite fragmented areas under the unique control of the government while the new capital can function as the centre of agricultural logistics in a core region. For example, the Turkey relocated its capital from Constantinople to Ankara on the Anatolian plateau, which is the traditional and agricultural heartland of the Turkish race and the continental centre for inland development. Nigeria relocated its capital from Lagos to Abuja, which is geographically situated in a central position, for political administration and agricultural development.

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<sup>28</sup> Scott Campbell, Chapter Two: Understanding Capital Cities, Available from: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~sdcamp/capitals/Ch2.html>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Available from: Department of Geography, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria, available from: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/f51hx07h27250687/>



Map 6 Nigeria's Capital Relocation from Coastal Lagos to Inland Abuja  
Adapted from [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)



Map 7 Brazil's Capital Relocation from Coastal Rio de Janeiro to Inland Brasilia  
Adapted from [www.arkfamily.org](http://www.arkfamily.org)

### 1.7.6 Complicated Problems in Metropolitan Capitals

In the context of globalization, a relatively modern motivation for relocating the capital is to relieve congestion in an overcrowded metropolis, to decentralize population growth, or to decentralize economic development within the nation. Relocating the capital to a less developed region of the country can create a new metropolitan hub that counterbalances the dominant metropolitan region, and thus links back to the larger idea of growth poles.<sup>31</sup> Tokyo and Seoul, for example, have been the subjects of discussion regarding possible relocation while the Malaysian government recently established a new administrative capital at Putrajaya to reduce the congestion of Kuala Lumpur.

Decentralization-relocation efforts can also arise from anti-big city motivations: planners and governments often disdain the messy uncontrolled metropolis of historic capital cities, preferring relocation to a more planned, controlled location. This can reflect a mistrust of the large merchant cities with their foreign influences. For example, the Brazilian President Kubitschek's mistrust of Rio de Janeiro was a powerful influence in the relocation to Brasilia in 1960 (Gottmann and Harper 1990, 70-6). Thailand has set up an official discussion about capital relocation to a more planned and ordered city because of the problems of city planning and urban settlements inside Bangkok.

<sup>31</sup>Scott Campbell, *Chapter Two: Understanding Capital Cities*, Available from : <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~sdcamp/capitals/Ch2.html>



### 1.7.7 Trends of Capital Relocation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Although capital cities are generally recognized as the centers of political concentration and the representation of the nation-state, globalization in the post-Cold War period has had a continuous impact on the roles and functions of capital cities. Rapid transformation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has extensively influenced state power and authority and moreover, has led to the decline of the capital's traditional centrality and dominance.<sup>32</sup> This phenomenon also has changed the geopolitical power of a capital city from the concrete to the abstract and threatens the monopoly of power exercised by leaders and the state bureaucracy. The emergence of globalization and modernization also extends the overlapping of power between public and private sectors in terms of national policy formulation and implementation which causes confusion for the policy decision making in the capitals.

Most countries which have fully or partly adopted the concept of capitalism, liberalization and a free-trade economic orientation have been impacted by rapid economic transformation. Economic changes have supported the rise of global cities and also threaten the traditional role of capital cities. International economic markets now make global cities a command and control centre for a kind of financial capital empire building that both supplements and undermines the traditional role of capital cities in nation building.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, capital relocation in the modern era results from the adjustment and adaptation of states' behavior during the fluctuation of current global conditions. In this regard, the trend of capital relocation in the post-colonial period can be analyzed into two dimensions relating to the background and policies of each state.

1. Most states which can adapt rapidly and automatically to a complicated environment have not actively paid much attention to capital relocation. For some countries this is because they already have an attractive landscape, orderly urban planning and effective transportation networks inside their capitals. National

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

governments can distribute state policies to other provinces and cities beyond the capitals efficiently, for example, extending the network of metropolitan settlements and systematically promoting local governments to take responsibility for their localities. In addition, such countries, especially in western world and some developing countries, were never colonized or have no bitter experiences of imperialism. Thus, there is no necessity to relocate the capital to build national pride or isolate it from external influences. Nevertheless, problems of pollution, traffic congestion and population distribution can still have some effect on capital relocation in these countries.

2. For countries which have internal problems about military security, state integration, nation-building and paranoia of the colonial legacy in the old capitals, capital relocation is sometimes necessary and makes sense. Even though these states must adapt and adjust to a changing global situation, some states still stick to traditional concepts and inward-looking policies in order to maintain state security and a cultural identity. Hence, moving the capital is perceived as an attempt of such states to symbolize centralism, isolationism, nationalism and anti-colonialism. Since the end of World War II to the present, the some capitals have been relocated to core areas such as the cases of Pakistan, Brazil, Malawi and Angola.<sup>34</sup>

Such relocation aims to establish a capital in a better central position for building national unity and to form a balanced distribution of population and open new agricultural frontiers, particularly in the core region for hinterland development. The aim is also to set up a new beautiful and architecturally magnificent capital for national pride and to improve transportation flexibility by having a capital as the centre of logistics.<sup>35</sup> So, there are several reasons for capital relocation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century depending on the background and situation in each country.

In conclusion, we can say that a capital has a special status in a geopolitical network and not only functions as the centre of administration, but also as the seat of political power and the symbol of nationalism. As a result moving a capital is

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<sup>34</sup>Manu Walyaphech, *Political Geography*, P.95.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

undoubtedly a shift of power which can affect political integration, national development and the state power of each country. Moreover, despite globalization and the integration of economic activity, the capital city remains the centre of national government affairs and if there remain significant areas inside the effective national territory in which the government does not exercise effective control, capital relocation is sometimes important and perceptive, particularly for states which have chronically and continuously faced turbulent problems about cultural identity, political integration and strategic security.

### **1.8 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of seven chapters as follows:

Chapter One introduces the purpose, hypothesis and methodology. It presents the conceptual framework for capital cities and capital relocation. It also gives a brief understanding of the relevance of the issues and the contribution of the thesis.

Chapter Two concerns itself with an overview of the historical background of Burmese capital relocation, looking at causes and motives.

Chapter Three evaluates and analyzes the possible factors for the current capital relocation in the context of politico-military security. The chapter concludes that military concepts are the core of current regime's point of view, and the ruling government's perceptions of threats are the main driving force for the relocation to Pyinmana.

Chapter Four evaluates and analyzes the possible factors for the relocation to Pyinmana in terms of hinterland economic development. It concludes that economic factors are integrated with political and military factors to ensure the regime's ability to control the whole country.

Chapter Five evaluates and analyzes possible factors for the establishment of Pyinmana in the context of spiritual-cultural unity. The chapter concludes that socio-cultural strategies are an additional factor to build historical and national pride and enhance the image of the current government as comparable to Burmese monarchical institutions in the past.

Chapter Six surveys and investigates the location, evolution and urban characteristics of the new capital; Pyinmana Naypyidaw. This chapter analyzes the motives of current capital relocation through the pattern of city planning and urban settlement and concludes that Pyinmana is geographically appropriate to function as a new capital, especially for security and military strategies.

Chapter Seven summarizes the concepts of Myanmar capital relocation from Yangon to Pyinmana and then discusses outstanding issues and suggests further studies based on the thesis.