

The national vision of the Burmese generals in the seventh and final step of their political “road map” to democracy is to build a modern, developed and democratic nation.

To protect the process from internal and external threats, the generals established a national defense goal built around what it called the “People’s War Strategy.”

The strategy is incorporated into the new Constitution. Section 340 of the chapter called “*Defense Services*

” says: “With the approval of the National Defense and Security Council, the Defense Services has the authority to administer the participation of the entire people in the Security and Defense of the Union. The strategy of the people’s militia shall be carried out under the leadership of the Defense Services.”

We might ask what has been the people's war strategy carried out by military leaders during the past 20 years?

The Burmese military carried out a strategy that attacked the Burmese Communist Party and various ethnic insurgencies during the era of Gen Ne Win. With the rise of the current junta, Snr-Gen Than Shwe has promoted a strategy to oppress the democratic movements of the past 20 years.

In 2001, a book titled “*Manual for Application of People’s War Strategy*” was issued under Than Shwe's instruction.

In Chapter 2, “*People’s War Strategy*,” it says: “Our country’s national vision is to build a peaceful, modern and developed nation. As we set the People’s War Strategy as our national defense goal to protect our vision, we must carry out this strategy practically.”

The strategy outlines 12 basic concepts. The five most interesting are: give political leadership [to the people]; organize [the people] based on the five development actions; utilize four

strengths such as [nationalist] mind, people, time and place; form people's militias; and finally, to unite the people and the military cohesively.

To carry out the concept of fostering "political leadership" under the strategy of the people's militia, the generals believed a mass organization was needed, and it formed the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) to assume that role.

The manual states: "to carry out the formation of the people's militia and to give the people political leadership, the USDA, as the sole national force setting the three main national causes as the organization's goals, will give political leadership."

Other core organizations named as people's militias are: the Myanmar War Veterans Organization, the Myanmar Fire Brigade, the Myanmar Red Cross Service, the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association and the Myanmar Woman's Affair Federation.

Some Burma observers have assumed that the USDA would be transformed into a political party and contest in the 2010 election. But this assumption now appears unlikely, and Than Shwe will probably maintain the USDA as the central mass organization, which he founded in 1993.

The USDA is at the core of the people's war strategy, and, as such, it must participate in the junta's five development actions, which are health, education, transportation, economic development and security. The junta's development action plan during the past 20 years should be viewed as part of the people's war strategy.

The manual states that the people's militia's duties include attacking an enemy by creating instability through psychological warfare, assassinating enemy leaders and organizing systematic single or group terrorist attacks (such as poisoning water sources or destroying fuel pipelines or railroads with explosive devices, and burning electrical power plants).

Burma's state-controlled media often reports on bomb attacks on gas pipelines, railroads and explosions in public area across the country, while blaming the attacks on opposition groups.

The manual describes a five-step “mob warfare” program, which includes mobilizing a mob nucleus, creating a premeditated crisis and agitating a mob to launch a violent attack on the enemy.

The Depayin attack which attempted to assassinate democratic icon Aung San Suu Kyi and killed dozens of her supporters in 2003 was a premeditated mob attack and used the methods detailed in the manual.

Coincidentally, the book, which is classified as a manual for commanding officers, was issued in 2001 under the signature of Brig-Gen Aung Kyi, who was then Director of Military Training. He is now in charge of the Ministry of Labor and the liaison officer between Suu Kyi and Than Shwe.