



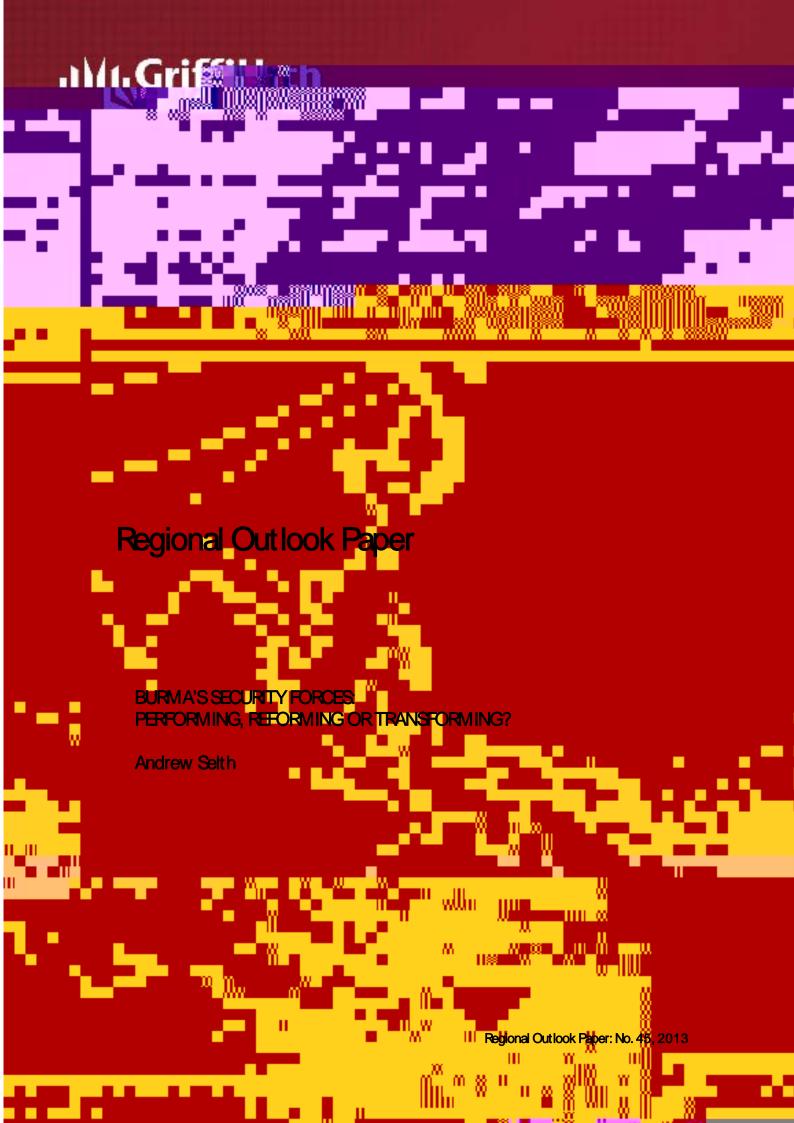
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# Griffith Asia Institute

**Regional Outlook** 

Burma's Security Forces: Performing, Reforming or Transforming?

Andrew Selth

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structure and roles of the intelligence community have remained the same, but there have been rumours suggesting that some attention is being given to questions of intelligence oversight and coordination. Special Branch has formal responsibility for political intelligence but, given the Tatmadaw's self-appointed guardianship role and the power wielded by military intelligence agencies in the past, it is unlikely that the armed forces will give up its ability independently to monitor domestic developments. Attention may also be given to Burma's growing external intelligence collection requirements.

Citing a raft of proposed reforms, particularly in the Myanmar Police Force (MPF), some Burma-watchers are cautiously optimistic that the country's coercive apparatus is becoming more professional and that the abuses of the past are being addressed. The Western democracies have responded to the positive signs by renewing bilateral links and offering assistance, in particular to the armed forces and the MPF. Some international organisations and NGOs are also cooperating with the police force. The risks associated with closer ties to these Burmese institutions have doubtless been considered by donor governments and organisations. Yet, the prevailing view seems to be that 'positive reinforcement for meaningful reforms' is the best policy, and that such an approach is more likely to change the mindset and behaviour of the security forces than a return to the discredited policies of isolation, economic sanctions and other punitive measures.

All these developments are encouraging, but a number of events since 2011 have shown that there are still serious problems in Burma. A fundamental transformation of the state, and its coercive apparatus, remains a distant prospect. The proposed reforms are a good start, but there will need to be a tectonic shift at the psychological and societal levels for them to make a real difference. The scope for foreign governments and international organisations to influence this process is limited. They can provide specialist advice, technical assistance and modern equipment. They can also help lift the professionalism of various institutions and encourage the adoption of internationally accepted standards. Such measures may facilitate changes in the character and effectiveness of the country's security forces, but they cannot determine them. Ultimately, the reform of Burma's security sector will depend on the Burmese people themselves.

### Author's Note

After the Burmese armed forces finally crushed a nation-wide pro-democracy uprising in September 1988, Burma's official name (in English) was changed from its post-1974 form, the 'Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma', back to the 'Union of Burma', which had been adopted when Burma regained its independence from the United Kingdom (UK) in January 1948. In July 1989 the new military government changed the country's name once again, this time to the 'Union of Myanmar'. At the same time, a number of other place names were changed to conform more closely to their original pronunciation in the Burmese language. In 2008, after promulgation of a new national constitution, the country's official name was changed yet again, this time to the 'Republic of the Union of Myanmar'.

The new names have now been accepted by most countries, the United Nations and other major international organisations. A few governments and some opposition groups, however, still cling to the old forms, largely as a protest against the former military regime's human rights abuses and its refusal to introduce a genuinely democratic system of government. In this paper the better-known names, for example 'Burma' instead of 'Myanmar', 'Rangoon' instead of 'Yangon', and 'Irrawaddy' instead of 'Ayeyarwady', have been retained for ease of recognition. Quotations and references, however, have been given as they originally appeared. Also, formal titles introduced after 1989 have been cited in their current form, such as 'Myanmar Police Force'. Such usage does not carry any political connotations.

The armed forces have effectively ruled Burma since 1962 but, from 1974 to 1988, they exercised power through an ostensibly elected 'civilian' parliament. On taking back direct control of the country in September 1988, the armed forces abolished the old government structure and created the State Law and Order Restoration Council, which ruled by decree. In November 1997, apparently on the advice of a United States-based public relations firm, the regime changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council. In 2008, it held a constitutional referendum, which was followed by elections in 2010. The resulting national parliament, consisting of both elected officials and non-elected military officers, first met in January 2011. A new government was installed under President Thein Sein in March that year.

After the United Kingdom dispatched troops to the royal capital of Mandalay and completed its three-stage conquest of Burma in 1885, Rangoon was confirmed as the administrative capital of the country. It remains the commercial capital, but in October 2005 the regime formally designated the newly built city of Naypyidaw (or Nay Pyi Taw), 320 kilometres north of Rangoon, as the seat of Burma's government. When they appear in this paper, the terms 'Rangoon regime', or in some cases simply 'Rangoon', are used as shorthand for the central government, including the military government that was created in 1962 and re-invented in 1988. After 2005, the government is referred to as the 'Naypyidaw regime', or simply 'Naypyidaw', to reflect the administrative change that took place that year.

Another term used in this paper is Tatmadaw

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# Glossary

Acronyms

AFP ASEAN	Australian Federal Police Association of South East Asian Nations
ASEANPOL	National Chiefs of Police Organisation of the Association of South East Asian Nations
BP	Burma Police
BMP	Burma Military Police
BSI	Bureau of Special Investigation
BSPP	Burma Socialist Programme Party
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CinC	Commander in Chief
CRPPFMS	Committee for Reform of the People's Police Force Management System
DATC	Department Against Transnational Crime
DDSI	Directorate of Defence Services Intelligence
EU	European Union
GIZ	(German) Agency for International
	Corporation
HQ	Headquarters
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ILEA	International Law Enforcement Academy
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organisation
MА	Kachin Independence Army
КМТ	(Nationalist Chinese) Kuomintang
MIS	Military Intelligence Service
MPF	Myanmar Police Force
NDSC	National Defence and Security Council
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NIB	National Intelligence Bureau
OCMI	Office of the Chief of Military Intelligence
OCMSA	Office of the Chief of Military Security Affairs
OSS	Office of Strategic Studies
P4	People's Property Protection Police
PPF	People's Police Force
SB	Special Branch
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SSA-S	Shan State Army – South
MIS	Military Intelligence Service
NIB	National Intelligence Bureau
	Union Military Police United Nations
UNDP UNICEF	United Nations Development Program United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UK	United Kingdom
US	United Nilgdolf
VIP	Very Important Person
VII	vory important i olion

### Foreign Language Terms

### 1. Introduction

To put it in simple terms: a state can use violence against another state and organised groups (warfare), it can use violence against its citizens (state violence), or it can wield its monopoly of the legitimate use of force to reduce the use of violence within society (public order).

Keith Krause, War Violence and the State (2009)

For more than half a century, whenever reference has been made to Burma's coercive apparatus, its army has usually sprung to mind. This is hardly surprising. The country has boasted the modern world's most durable military dictatorship and, since the abortive 1988 pro-democracy uprising, one of Southeast Asia's largest armed forces. However, there are two other arms of government that, in different ways and to different degrees, have helped the regime to enforce its will over the Burmese people and underpinned continued military rule. Since General Ne Win67 Td (f)5 (p)-3 (r)6 (di7 Tdeta)7 (itn.rntrule. Oue)6

# 2. Burma's Security Forces before 2011

There are many ways in which a government can exercise power over its citizens and, at one time or another, successive military regimes in Burma have probably employed most of them. In terms of the state's formal coercive apparatus, however, there are three institutions of note, namely the armed forces, the national police (currently organised as the Myanmar Police Force) and the intelligence community. Broadly speaking, the Tatmadaw has dominated the rural and border areas, while the police have been most active in the population centres.<sup>3</sup> The intelligence presence has varied from one part of the country to another, but is widely believed to be ubiquitous. The character, roles and influence of these institutions, however, have differed in a number of important ways and changed over time.

### The Armed Forces

For over 50 years, the Tatmadaw has been the primary coercive arm of Burma's central government. While the navy and air force have also played a part, the lead has been taken by the army. Troops have been deployed not only to protect the country's frontiers, combat insurgents and oppose dacoits and narcotics warlords in the countryside, but also to enforce the regime's edicts, maintain order and, when it has been deemed necessary, crush civil unrest in the urban centres.

Even before Burma regained its independence from the United Kingdom (UK) in 1948, the armed forces were a major factor in the country's internal affairs. During and after the Second World War, military figures played an important role in the anti-colonial struggle. Later, and despite a number of debilitating mutinies, the small, poorly armed and inexperienced Tatmadaw helped protect the fragile new state against repeated challenges from ethnic and ideological insurgent groups. During the 1950s, the Tatmadaw fought a difficult campaign against remnants of Nationalist China's *Kuomintang* (KMT) army which, with foreign help, had established strongholds in northern Burma.<sup>4</sup> These efforts helped justify the armed forces' claim that they 'saved' the Union from disintegration. While not without their critics, they were also considered to have done a good job of governing Burma during the 'caretaker period', between 1958 and 1960.<sup>5</sup> The Tatmadaw's prestige was enhanced by the fact that, for many years, it constituted an important channel for social mobility.<sup>6</sup>

After the 1962 coup, and 12 years of rule by a small Revolutionary Council, Ne Win launched a highly bureaucratic socialist state that was controlled by Burma's only legal political grouping, the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP). From 1974, it governed through an ostensibly 'elected' People's Assembly (*Pyitthu Hluttaw*) and a hierarchy of party organs that reached down to village level. In theory at least, the armed forces played a subordinate role to the BSPP and civil authorities. After it took back direct control in 1988, the exclusively military State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) diluted the socialist economic model, abolished the parliament and restored the Tatmadaw to the peak of the political structure. The SLORC, and after 1997 its nominal successor the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), governed largely by executive fiat. In addition to the nine (later increased to 14) regional military commands there was a cascade of administrative councils to enforce the regime's dictates. Many army officers concurrently exercised both military and civilian responsibilities.

At the same time, the Tatmadaw was expanded and modernised. Its reach was extended across almost the entire country and its coercive power greatly increased.<sup>7</sup> Estimates of its size have varied widely, from over 500,000 to less than 300,000.<sup>8</sup> Yet,

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security from dacoit gangs, communist insurgents and armed ethnic groups.<sup>19</sup> As Mary Callahan has described, however, after Burma regained its independence in 1948 the fledgling armed forces steadily became stronger, better organized and more influential in the management of the country's domestic affairs.<sup>20</sup> The 1962 coup saw the police completely eclipsed as an independent institution. In fact, General Ne Win initially planned to abolish the BP and create a People's Security Force, which he felt was more befitting the new socialist era.<sup>21</sup> This plan was soon abandoned as unworkable, but the Union Military Police (UMP) was absorbed into the army and in 1964 the BP was reformed as the People's Police Force (PPF). By then, responsibility for law and order in Burma had effectively passed to the Tatmadaw.

During the caretaker period the police force had been lightly seeded with servicemen, but after 1962 the numbers increased. Between 1972 and 1987, for example, the regime transferred 155 army officers to the Ministry of Home Affairs, most destined for the police force.<sup>22</sup> This was to permit greater control over its personnel and activities, to increase its operational capabilities and to bring it more into line with the armed forces. Police rank structures and pay scales were adjusted to conform more closely to those of the Tatmadaw. As a rule, however, the military leadership looked down on the PPF, which was still associated with the hated 'British imperialists' and 'foreign capitalists' of the colonial period.<sup>23</sup> Despite formulaic expressions of solidarity and support, the police force was probably the least prestigious and most underresourced branch of the country's 'Defence Services', which came to include border control units, the Fire Brigade and Red Cross. Nor were the police highly regarded by the civil population.

Before 1942, the BP was 'viewed with disdain as a lackey of the colonial power'.<sup>24</sup> The BMP in particular was seen as the merciless enforcer of a complex and alien system of laws and regulations that was heavily weighted in favour of foreigners.<sup>25</sup> The widespread perception before and during the Second World War of the police as inefficient, corrupt and politically partisan was reinforced during the chaotic post-Independence period.<sup>26</sup> Prime Minister U Nu's government was often accused of using the force against its political opponents. In 1958, the Home Affairs Minister even mobilized UMP units after falling out with the Defence Minister, who commanded the army.<sup>27</sup> Following the 1962 coup, the PPF became the willing, albeit junior, partner in an inept and repressive military regime. At that time, the force was widely viewed as 'particularly corrupt, officious, and exploitative'.<sup>28</sup> This reputation was confirmed in the popular mind by the brutality of the *Lon Htein* riot police before and during the 1988 uprising.<sup>29</sup>

#### The Intelligence Community

Under the British, the collection of political and criminal intelligence in Burma was largely the preserve of the Burma Police, notably the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and its Intelligence Branch. Even the Burma Defence Bureau, formed under military command in 1937 to monitor subversion in the new colony, was dominated by police officers.<sup>30</sup> After Independence, a Special Investigation Department (later Special Branch, or SB) was formed in the police force, but the collection and assessment of political intelligence was also conducted by the Tatmadaw. Following the 1962 coup, SB continued to investigate so-called political crimes – defined as almost any challenge to the military regime – but under the watchful eye of the powerful Military Intelligence Service (MIS), which had been formed in 1958. The CID investigated civil crimes but I),

hich had been created by UNu in 1951 to tackle corruption and economic crimes.<sup>31</sup>

peak, it employed tens of thousands of informers and operated several detention centres.<sup>32</sup> Its electronic intercept capabilities contributed to its 'coercive muscle'.<sup>33</sup> From 1992, its field officers reported directly to DDSI headquarters (HQ), bypassing the usual military chain of command. In 1994, an Office of Strategic Studies (OSS) was created under Khin Nyunt, by then a Lieutenant General. This widened DDSI's interests to include policy issues such as narcotics trafficking, ethnic minority affairs and international relations. The Tatmadaw's intelligence machinery changed again in 2001, when the SPDC created the Office of the Chief of Military Intelligence (OCMI).<sup>34</sup>

The power and relative autonomy of military intelligence officers, and their privileged access to off-budget revenues, led to widespread resentment within the Tatmadaw. In 2004, these factors contributed to Khin Nyunt's arrest by the SPDC and a wholesale purge of DDS.<sup>35</sup> Under the Home Affairs Minister, Special Branch was expanded and given increased responsibilities for the maintenance of internal security.<sup>36</sup> The BSI's jurisdiction was reportedly expanded to include a range of political crimes. These were only temporary measures, as the Defence Ministry soon replaced OCMI with an Office of the Chief of Military Security Affairs (OCMSA), and created new MSA units under the regional military commanders.<sup>37</sup> Lacking experienced personnel, the OCMSA endured a shaky start. Despite diminished capabilities and reduced powers, however, it helped maintain the intelligence community's support for the regime 'through surveillance, harassment of political activists, intimidation, arrest, detention, physical abuse, and restrictions on citizens' contacts with foreigners'.<sup>38</sup>

For much of this period, the intelligence community was overseen by a National Intelligence Bureau (NIB). Created by Ne Win in 1964, it was made subject to its own law in 1974 after power was formally transferred to the BSPP government. The Bureau coordinated the activities of the DDSI, CID, SB, BSI and, where relevant, those of other ministries, such as Foreign Affairs.<sup>39</sup> The NIB was revamped in 1983, after an international terrorist attack against a visiting head of state in Rangoon prompted a comprehensive review of Burma's intelligence apparatus. The NIB chairman's position was filled by different agency heads on rotation, but it was still dominated by the chief of military intelligence. From 1988, the NIB reported directly to the SLORC and, after 1997, to the SPDC. After Khin Nyunt's arrest in 2004 the NIB was dissolved, on the grounds that it was 'no longer suitable for the welfare of the public to be in conformity with the changing situations and with a view to ensuring security and peace' [sic].<sup>40</sup>

## 3. To 2011 and Beyond

Since the inauguration of the Thein Sein government in 2011, Burma has undergone a remarkable transformation, in appearance if not always in substance.<sup>41</sup> The former military regime did not intend to introduce a genuine democracy when it promulgated its new constitution in 2008, but since then there has been a dramatic increase in the number of political actors and a gradual diffusion of power within a multilayered political system.<sup>42</sup> State institutions are developing in ways probably unforeseen by the SPDC. There has even been scope for some independent decision making. Restrictions have been eased on political and economic activity, and on civil society. Hundreds of political prisoners have been released, among them Aung San Suu Kyi. In 2012, the National League for Democracy competed in free and fair by- elections that gave it 43 of the 46 vacant seats in the national parliament. Opinion is divided on the government's motives and ultimate goals, but most informed observers accept that significant changes are taking place.<sup>43</sup>

One reason for lingering scepticism is that much has also remained the same. Thein Sein's ambitious reform program is still in its early stages and faces formidable obstacles. Those legal and policy reCo ay 4ia4iaw 13.204 0anges are

Burma, the CinC has ultimate control over not only the Tatmadaw but also the MPF, Border Guard Forces, other paramilitary organisations and civil defence forces.<sup>48</sup>

That said, there is still some debate over the power of the CinC, and by extension that of the armed forces. It has been argued equally strongly that 'the Commander- in- Chief is subordinate to the president', and the CinC is 'perhaps the single most important power holder in Myanmar politics'.<sup>49</sup> Most of the time, such differing interpretations of

It is also worth noting that, under the provisions of the 2008 constitution, the Tatmadaw has the legal means to return the country to full military control, if deemed necessary. Given certain triggers, it could simply mount another coup. Some observers have put the likelihood of that happening over the next five years as high as 20 per cent.<sup>79</sup> The Tatmadaw is no longer the institution it once was, however, and there are significant constraints on action of that kind. There would inevitably be a very strong reaction, both within the country and outside it. Even Burma's traditional friends are unlikely to welcome such a step back into the past. That could lead to precisely the kind of 'chaos' that the military leadership has tried hard to prevent. The generals would also need carefully to weigh the benefits of such a step against the possibility that it might spark a serious breakdown in military discipline. That has always been one of their greatest fears, and a reason for some of the measures taken by Burma's coercive apparatus over the past 50 years.<sup>80</sup>

### The Police Force

Even before President Thein Sein came to office, an effort had been made to expand the police force's capabilities, improve its performance and reform its culture. This initiative appears to have been driven mainly by Khin Nyunt when he was SPDC Secretary One, and later Prime Minister. In 1994, he became chairman of the Committee for Reform of the People's Police Force Management System (CRPPFMS), the stated aim of which was to conduct an assessment of the force, 'promulgate laws, rules and regulations on PPF management and administration and make certain reforms in conformity with the changing situation'.<sup>81</sup> In 1995, the PPF was renamed the Myanmar Police Force and a MPF Disciplinary Law was promulgated.<sup>82</sup> In 1999, the force issued a new Code of Conduct which spelt out the high expectations placed on all members of the force.<sup>83</sup> Colonial- era manuals detailing the duties, powers and entitlements of all ranks were amended and reissued (in the Burmese language) in 2000 and 2001.

At the same time, an attempt was made to introduce aspects of the 'community-based policing' model. Signs and booklets listing the Buddha's 38 blessings, taken from the *Maha Mangala Sutta*, were distributed to all police stations as guides to good behaviour. In 2001, signs in Burmese and English were erected at police stations around the country, asking 'May I help you?'. A number of magazines were launched, aimed at boosting police morale and increasing public awareness of police functions.<sup>84</sup> After Khin Nyunt fell out of favour with the SPDC in 2004 the reform program continued, for a period under the stewardship of SPDC Secretary Two and later Prime Minister (now President) Lieutenant General Thein Sein. He was assisted by Brigadier General Khin Yi, who served as Chief of Police from 2002 to 2011. Around 2008, a comprehensive 30-int5 3.(to 2018 (a)6 ( Tw (dshi)rengt3 (lp)-2i)-1 ((anma(i) ( )Tc 0.1474 T3 - 31.00676.162 Td 5 3.men)6 (de)7 (

internal coordination is being improved and more modern technology is being introduced. In some ways, the MPFs organizational structure now mirrors those of police forces in most developed countries. For example, a Department Against

separation of military and civilian functions. This in turn could aid in the future oversight of intelligence operations in Burma by a genuinely elected and fully civilian government.

Another pertinent issue is that of external intelligence collection and analysis. As Burma becomes more engaged with the outside world, and the Thein Sein government deals closely with a wider range of foreign counterparts, Burmese officials will need detailed advice about other countries' positions and policies. In the past, such intelligence seems to have been provided mainly by Burma's diplomatic missions.<sup>117</sup> Foreign Ministry officials provided open source intelligence and analyses of current affairs, in the manner of professional diplomats everywhere. Members of the Tatmadaw posted overseas, either as Defence Attaches or intelligence officers, supplemented this advice with their own reports, for example on the activities of Burmese expatriates.<sup>118</sup> Burma's intelligence agencies also developed liaison relationships with a number of foreign services. Yet the demand for such product is likely to have increased significantly, raising the question whether the existing structures need to be strengthened, or new ways found, to provide the intelligence and assessments required to make informed policy decisions.

All these matters cannot be considered in isolation, but will have to form part of a much wider review of Burma's security environment and the state's coercive apparatus. As a Canadian parliamentary committee stated in June 2013, 'securing the rule of law in Burma will require the wholesale reform of the entire security apparatus in Burma'.<sup>119</sup> The committee acknowledged that this would be a slow process and take considerable time, but it drew particular attention to 'the urgent need to begin reforming the Burmese police forces' on the grounds that 'a principled, effective, and accountable police force is a cornerstone of democracy'.<sup>120</sup> It is early days yet, but there are some signs that this is being done. If successful, the proposed reforms will not only see major changes in the role of the MPF itself, and its relationship with the armed forces and the intelligence community, but also with the civil population.



As Morris Janowitz once noted, 'It is a basic assumption of the democratic model of

senior ranks to career police officers. This should not only make the force less subject to military influence, but it would also improve morale by removing a persistent source of complaint from policemen resentful of servicemen being transferred into positions above them.<sup>130</sup> At the same time, the current power structure in Burma will demand that the police force acknowledges the Tatmadaw's continuing influence and authority. The MPFs senior leadership will have to be on good terms with its armed forces counterpart, while finding a workable division of labour, not just legally but also in terms of practical cooperation and responses to internal security challenges.

## 5. Internal Security Challenges

There is no question that the Tatmadaw will remain responsible for all aspects of Burma's external defence. It will also continue to conduct military campaigns against any armed ethnic groups which openly challenge

In this regard, the closeness of the MPF battalions and the army poses real problems. Given their overlapping responsibilities for internal security, there is inevitably a crossover of roles and identity. In joint operations it will be the ethos and practices of the more powerful partner – usually the army – that sets the tone for the security forces' behaviour.<sup>140</sup> Not being trained or equipped for crowd control, and unused to dealing with protesting civilians, army units tend to resort more quickly to violence, using combat weapons.<sup>141</sup> This leads to a blurring of public perceptions. It is possible that people in Burma differentiate between the police and the army during major security crackdowns, but this is difficult to confirm. Even if the police wear different uniforms and act in a more restrained manner, they are still likely to be associated in the popular mind with the more extreme measures taken by the armed forces – particularly if their actions are publicised by dissidents, as occurred in 2007.

It goes without saying that, in performing these duties, the MPF must act – and be seen to act – impartially in restoring order, and upholding the law. Yet, this has rarely been the case. Not only has it consistently acted as a strong arm of the government, but the force has often appeared to side with sectoral interests. During the civil unrest in Arakan State in mid-2012, for example, MPF officers were clearly sympathetic to local Buddhists and some reportedly joined in attacks against Rohingya Muslims.<sup>142</sup> The action taken at Letpadaung in November 2012 was seen by many as another example of the police force backing wealthy government 'cronies' and their Chinese business partners.<sup>143</sup> After a series of riots in central Burma in 2013, the MPF was accused of

### 6. International Assistance

One of the most striking aspects of Burma's re-emergence as an international actor since 2011 has been the readiness of the Western democracies to renew or strengthen ties with its armed forces and police.<sup>150</sup> Before the advent of Thein Sein's reformist government, any open relationship with the country's security forces was politically very difficult, but over the past two years several governments, international organisations and private foundations have approached Burma with offers of help in this sector. These approaches have been enthusiastically welcomed by Naypyidaw and, albeit more cautiously, by Aung San Suu Kyi and other opposition figures. They have been condemned as premature and ill-advised by activists and human rights organisations, but the rationale usually offered in reply has been that foreign assistance can ameliorate the very problems about which Burma's critics have been most concerned.<sup>151</sup>

Most of these initiatives have been expressed in principled terms, including by Thein Sein, but broadly speaking they make up two separate, if related, sets of proposals.<sup>152</sup> One is aimed at increasing the profe252Bs(((c)-1 (os)5 a)5 (uTad6-0.0001 27 Tw 2130Tw 17.892m\*[(Moswitte)])).

the criminal justice system.165

take considerable time and effort for the US and its allies to match China's current relationships with the Tatmadaw and MPF – and probably Burma's intelligence community as well.<sup>183</sup> Also, Burma's government will always try to balance its foreign relations, including its requests for assistance, to protect the country's independence. For example, having in mind its chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014, and China's experience with the 2008 Olympic Games, Naypyidaw has asked Beijing for advice on a range of public security issues.<sup>184</sup>

## 7. Where to From Here?

Opinion is divided on whether or not Thein Sein's political, economic and social reforms as 'irreversible'.<sup>185</sup> It is difficult to imagine Burma reverting to the dark days before 2011, but there is still considerable uncertainty about the future. Full democracies and full autocracies are usually the most stable forms of government, but states undertaking the transition from autocracy to democracy are most likely to suffer from instability. In those circumstances, there remains the possibility that the Tatmadaw could step back in, to a greater or lesser extent, and re-exert its control. Should Thein Sein's reform program falter, or unleash forces beyond its control, systemic weaknesses frustrate popular expectations, the security forces feel institutionally threatened, or be unable to accept the changes demanded of them, then the arguments for a return to the old system may become louder, as members of the armed forces and their supporters hark back to the imagined stability and predictability of military rule.<sup>186</sup>

Some analysts have suggested that the 2008 constitution is simply a political device, like the 1974 charter, behind which the Tatmadaw can still run Burma.<sup>187</sup> Whether or not that is true, for the time being at least the military leadership seems prepared to let the new government and parliament exercise their formal roles.<sup>188</sup> While heavily constrained, both seem to be aiming for a more flexible and liberal system. Politicshitrbhtm .go-3 ( for ale a)5 (n)-1

## Notes and References

- 1 Arguably, Burma's Prisons Department (part of the Ministry of Home Affairs) could be added to this category, but its role is outside the scope of this paper.
- 2 *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (2008)* (Naypyidaw: Ministry of Information, 2008), p. 3.
- 3 Burma is still predominantly rural. There are no reliable statistics available but, according to the CIA, in 2011 the urban population constituted 32.6 per cent of

- 18 Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma: A Study of the First Years of Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 316.
- 19 The BMP and related Frontier Force collapsed in the face of the Japanese land invasion in 1942. After the reconquest of Burma in 1945, a renamed Frontier Constabulary was created to deal with security problems around Burma's borders, but the place of the BMP was taken by a new unit called the Armed Police. After Independence in 1948 this force became the Union Military Police.
- 20 M.P. Callahan, 'The sinking schooner: Murder and the state in independent Burma, 1948–1958', in C.A. Trocki (ed.), *Gangsters, Democracy, and the State in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1998), pp. 17–38. See also Callahan, *Making Enemies.*
- 21 'Police force in Burma people's security force', memo from F.T. Homer, Charge d'Affaires a.i., Australian Embassy, Rangoon to The Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs, Canberra, 31 December 1962, in File: 'Burma police force', Australian Archives, Series 1838, 3008/3/1/1, Barcode 547596.
- 22 Yoshihiro Nakanishi, *Strong Soldiers, Failed Revolution: The State and Military in Burma, 1962–88* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2013), p. 160.
- 23 'Police force in Burma People's Security Force', Memo from F.T. Homer, 31 December 1962.
- 24 Tin Maung Maung Than, 'Myanmar: Military in charge', in John Funston (ed.), Government and Politics in Southeast Asia (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001), p. 224.
- 25 See, for example, Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India: White Violence and the Rule of Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- 26 See, for example, C.H. Campagnac, *The Autobiography of a Wanderer in England and Burma* (Raleigh: Sandra L. Carney and Lulu Enterprises, 2011); and Jonathan Saha, *Law, Disorder and the Colonial State: Corruption in Burma c.1900* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
- 27 Callahan, *Making Enemies*, p. 186.
- 28 Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*, p. 452.
- 29 *Lon Htein* is short for *Lon- chon- hmu Htein- thein Tat- yin*, or 'Security Preservation Battalions'. After the 1988 uprising, the force's discredited paramilitary arm was renamed (in English) the 'Police Battalion Command'.
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- 31 Until 1951, the BSI was known as the People's Property Protection Police, or P4. Andrew Selth, 'Burma's intelligence apparatus', *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 13, no. 4, (Winter 1998), pp. 33–70.
- 32 For example, it was estimated in 1991 that there was one spy for every 20 students at Burma's universities. In the armed forces, the ratio was reportedly one spy for every ten servicemen. See 'Country of spies', *The Economist*, 13 April 1991, p. 38.
- 33 Burma/ Myanmar: How Strong Is The Military Regime?, p. 13.
- 34 While the military intelligence apparatus during this period was referred to simply as the OCMI, it is possible that the actual 'office' was a higher level unit that managed the operational level DDSI, which continued to function.
- 35 Estimates of the number of military intelligence officers purged at the time range from 'scores' to over 8,000, of the reported 10,000 in the service. Some were imprisoned, some were forced to resign and others were transferred, many to infantry units. See, for example, 'Myanmar junta dismantling intelligence unit headed by former PM', *Agence France Presse*, 19 December 2004, at http://www.burmanet.org/news/2004/12/20/agence-france-pressemyanmar-junta-dismantling-intelligence-unit-headed-by-former-pm/; Kate McGeown, 'Khin Nyunt's fall from grace', *BBC News*, 19 October 2004, at

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