

Reforming Myanmar's Military

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The developing relationship between the U.S. and Myanmar represents one of the most positive foreign policy shifts in recent memory. Myanmar is one of few former despotic nations to have “unclenched its fist” and now enjoys generally positive international support. With the U.S. actively engaged in civil capacity building efforts, the people of Myanmar are testing their new freedom of speech to debate nearly all facets of their public and private sectors. The path to democratic and economic reform, begun in 2011, will likely be rocky, but the positive momentum is clear.

There is however one glaring omission in U.S. efforts to help Myanmar: assistance in reforming its military institutions. Critics of comprehensive military assistance suggest that conducting military-to-military engagement offers something for nothing, as the Myanmar military has shown few signs of reform. With ongoing human rights abuses, the U.S. should not provide any benefits to Myanmar's military through enhanced ties. Additionally, some critics believe that U.S. military assistance will simply result in making Myanmar's military better at abusing the civilian population and will give them the tools to undermine democratic and economic reforms.

While these are legitimate concerns, direct military-to-military engagement with Myanmar is a critical part of the overall reform effort. Ignoring this crucial segment of Myanmar's society risks undermining the long-term stability and development of the country. As the military is Myanmar's most powerful institution, the U.S. government must engage with the military in a deliberate, long-term program to reinforce efforts to strengthen civil society, create civilian institutions, and ensure the military is under civilian control. As demonstrated in previous transitions from authoritarian to democratic rule, direct military-to-military assistance can play a critical part of making that a reality. Such assistance must be coordinated with broader civilian efforts, but experience has shown that the Country Teams within U.S. Embassies can manage this cooperation. While the stereotypical image of military assistance involves weapons training and battlefield tactics, the U.S. likely would focus on wider institutional issues like recruitment, pay, military justice,

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promotion, and retirement. Properly designed, these systems can reinforce principles of civilian control, and carve out a space for a professional military to flourish while remaining subordinate to civilian political leadership. Depending on the roles that Myanmar wants its military to play, the U.S. can offer assistance on training for military medicine, disaster relief, and securing the nation's borders and maritime resources.

For those who wish to punish individuals within the Myanmar military, withholding this kind of military assistance is not productive. In fact, it makes it easier for them to resist efforts to reform. If we accept the premise that civilian institutions need assistance to build their capacity to perform new roles and change the way they serve Myanmar's society, then we

must understand that the same holds true for the military. Expecting Myanmar's military to reform in isolation is a risky gamble.

Brief Background on U.S.-Myanmar Military ties

Between 1942 and 2011, the U.S.-Myanmar relationship shifted from cooperation to hostility and, in just the last three years, it has shifted back toward cooperation. During World War II, groups of ethnic Kachins fought alongside the U.S. in Northern Myanmar to open supply routes for Chinese forces fighting the Japanese. During and after the Chinese Civil War, the U.S. provided support to Chinese Nationalist (Kuomintang) troops settling in Northern Myanmar, and sought to make Myanmar a bulwark against communist



Global Journalist

Activists protest the death of freelance journalist Aung Kyaw Naing, also known as Pary Gyi, outside Yangon's city hall. Detained 30 Sept 2014, Naing was shot and killed in military custody 4 Oct, and his death was announced 20 days later.

expansion during the Cold War. As the U.S. grew concerned with the drug trade in the “Golden Triangle” in the 1970s, it worked with the government to disrupt production and outflows. Bilateral ties sharply declined following the 1988 uprising and subsequent crackdown by the military junta as it consolidated its hold on power in Myanmar. The junta’s brutal tactics prompted the U.S. to levy a series of sanctions and restrictions that prohibited new U.S. investment, exports to the U.S., and the provision of U.S. financial services, as well as drastically limiting U.S. aid and diplomatic ties. These measures were undertaken by both executive order and legislation.

After nearly a quarter century of difficulties, the relationship began to warm in 2011. The Myanmar government took significant steps to open the political and economic systems, resulting in the rollback of some of the most restrictive U.S. measures, including broad financial sanctions and diplomatic exchange protocols. However, security ties remain largely frozen as debate rages in the U.S. on how best to deal with Myanmar’s military. Some in Congress and certain human rights groups called for more stringent restrictions on U.S. engagement with Myanmar’s military as both a punitive measure and as leverage for measurable progress on human rights and military professionalization.

Myanmar’s Military History

The Myanmar military was born out of a desire for independence from the British in the aftermath of World War II. Aung San, father of pro-democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi, along with his “Thirty Comrades,” created the Burma Independence Army (BIA). Following Myanmar’s independence in 1948, the military played a critical part in guaranteeing the

country’s sovereignty and protecting the new government from dozens of ethnic and anti-government militias threatening secession or coup. General Ne Win, a member of the Thirty Comrades, took power in 1958 to settle a political stalemate and gain the ability to quash uprisings, and again in 1962, this time to stay in power.

Myanmar has been in the throes of war since its independence, fighting ethnic militias – some numbering between 20,000-40,000 troops¹ – and anti-government armies. Waging counter-insurgency operations became the foundation of Myanmar’s military, shaping its doctrine and institutions ever since. In the 1970s, Ne Win developed the “*four cuts*” strategy that cut off access to food and shelter, funds, intelligence, and recruitment, often resulting in a scorched earth policy in its implementation. To this day, the *four cuts* strategy remains the guiding principle behind the military’s institutions and operations, which contributes to ongoing human rights violations that include forced labor, child soldiers, land seizures, displacement, sexual violence, and human trafficking.

Despite a sometimes rocky relationship during the Cold War, the U.S. concentrated its support to Myanmar’s military on preventing the spread of communism and drugs. Through International Military Education and Training (IMET) and similar programs, select groups of Myanmar’s junior and middle ranking officers participated in professional military education in the United States.² IMET’s purpose was to build interoperability with allied and partner militaries and to promote military professionalism. Within the context of the Cold War, and particularly during the Vietnam conflict, this centered on making Myanmar a reliable containment partner. As a frontline state in the

containment of communism, the U.S. sought a strong security partner in Myanmar to counter both Soviet and Chinese assistance to the multiple communist insurgencies in Southeast Asia. Sharing a lengthy and mountainous border with the People's Republic of China, Myanmar held a pivotal position in preventing access to the Indian Ocean and protecting Thailand, a U.S. treaty ally. This interest expanded after 1974, when the U.S. sponsored an anti-narcotics program that provided helicopters and pilot training. Narcotics production and smuggling provided funding to many of Myanmar's internal insurgencies, so this assistance aligned with Myanmar's own *four cuts* strategy.

U.S. interest in maintaining Myanmar as a bulwark against communism declined during the 1980s as the U.S. policy toward China changed, and China shifted its focus to economic development. Even after the downgrade of diplomatic relations following the military coup in 1988, the U.S. maintained a defense attaché office to monitor security developments. In the 1990s, the U.S. military conducted limited operations in Myanmar with its Joint Task Force – Full Accounting (JTF-FA) and the Central Identification Laboratory – Hawaii (CILHI) to identify and recover the remains of soldiers lost during World War II. In 2004, this recovery effort ended when the Myanmar government suspended the work on the ground.³

Current State of U.S.-Myanmar Military Ties

Following Myanmar's reforms beginning in 2011, the Obama administration began to consider re-starting military cooperation. Discussions began during Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's 2011 trip to the country,

with both governments agreeing to resume the recovery of World War II remains, as well as to cooperate on counter-narcotics. Since then, Pentagon officials have traveled to Myanmar in various capacities. When former Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Michael Posner visited Myanmar for a two-day bilateral human rights dialogue in October 2012, Lieutenant General Frank Wiercinski, commander of the U.S. Army Pacific, and Vikram Singh, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for South and Southeast Asia, joined the U.S. delegation. The dialogue's agenda covered a range of topics, such as rule of law, the protection of human rights, and the military code of conduct. Following the human rights dialogue, the U.S. invited Myanmar to send observers to Exercise COBRA GOLD in Thailand, the largest multilateral joint military training exercise in the Asia-Pacific.⁴ In June 2014, Lieutenant General Anthony Crutchfield, Deputy Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, addressed Myanmar's National Defense College, the first U.S. military officer to do so. In January 2014, the second two-day human rights dialogue took place, again with representatives of the U.S. military joining State Department colleagues to discuss a range of topics, including military reform.

Despite these initial steps to restart the relationship, there are still Myanmar-specific and non-country specific legislative and executive restrictions that prevent real assistance to address the challenges faced by Myanmar's security establishment. The 2012 Defense Act prohibited funding for IMET, foreign military financing, or excess defense articles.⁵ The provision of counter-terrorism and stability

operations assistance, commonly known as 1206 funding, is also prohibited.⁶ Additionally, the U.S. restricts direct commercial sales of military equipment or peacekeeping operations in Myanmar (as well as other selected countries) if funds “may be used to support any military training or operations that include child soldiers.”⁷ Since October 1, 2010, Myanmar is also prohibited from receiving aid under IMET due to the provisions of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008.

The Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has the authority to sanction individuals and entities pursuant to the criteria outlined in relevant presidential Executive Orders (E.O.s) and the Burmese Sanctions Regulations, 31 C.F.R. Part 537. The Myanmar military’s holding companies, Myanmar Economic Corporation and Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited, have been included since 2008 on OFAC’s list of sanctioned individuals and entities, the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons list (SDN list). All U.S. individuals and companies worldwide are prohibited from dealing with the individuals and entities specified on the SDN list. In 2012, President Obama issued an Executive Order adding designation criteria to target individuals or entities determined “(i) to have engaged in acts that directly or indirectly threaten the peace, security, or stability of Burma [Myanmar], such as actions that have the purpose or effect of undermining or obstructing the political reform process or the peace process with ethnic minorities in Burma [Myanmar]; (ii) to be responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, or to have participated in, the commission of human rights abuses in Burma [Myanmar]; (iii) to have,

directly or indirectly, imported, exported, re-exported, sold or supplied arms or related materiel from North Korea or the Government of North Korea to Burma [Myanmar] or the Government of Burma [Myanmar].”⁸ The U.S. has since added the Directorate of Defense Industries, Lieutenant Colonel Kyaw Nyunt Oo, and Lieutenant General Thein Htay, to the SDN list for engaging in such trade with North Korea.⁹

The President, under the Arms Export Control Act of 1976 (P.L. 94- 329), can prohibit all arms exports to a country “in furtherance of world peace and the security and foreign policy of the United States.” In 1988, President Ronald Reagan invoked his powers under this law to impose an arms embargo on Myanmar. In 1993 the Department of State (DoS) issued a public notice implementing an immediate ban on exports of defense articles and services to Myanmar. The U.S. continues to maintain an arms embargo on Myanmar.¹⁰

Myanmar security forces also fall under the vetting requirements specified in section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (FAA), as amended, the “Leahy Amendment.” The DoS vets beneficiaries of its assistance to foreign security forces, as well as certain Department of Defense (DoD) training programs, to ensure that recipients have not committed gross human rights abuses. When the vetting process uncovers credible evidence that an individual or unit has committed a gross violation of human rights, U.S. assistance is withheld. The obligation to vet DoS assistance and DoD-funded training programs for foreign security forces is in both the Leahy Amendment and a comparable provision in the annual DoD Appropriations Act. While the DoS legislation applies to all “assistance” under the FAA and the Arms Export Control

Act, the DoD requirements are specific to “training programs” funded under Defense Department Appropriations Acts. Security forces subject to Leahy vetting generally include foreign militaries, reserves, police, and internal security forces such as border guards, customs police, prison guards, and other units or individual members of units authorized to use force.¹¹

The Need to Pursue a Relationship with Myanmar’s Military

Action on developing military ties with Myanmar is critical at this pivotal moment in the country’s democratic transition. It is unreasonable to expect Myanmar’s military to professionalize and subordinate itself to a new civilian government

without assistance. Isolating the military leadership during this transition process can only encourage the status quo or, in the worst case, prompt backsliding. The military is the most powerful institution in Myanmar; active military officers head three ministries (Defense, Home Affairs, and Border Affairs), hold 25 percent of parliamentary seats, and manage significant business interests throughout Myanmar’s economy. Additionally, little is known about the intentions or attitudes toward reform of the Commander-in-Chief, Vice Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, and other top military officials. Given this environment, the U.S. stands to gain in several ways from developing bilateral military ties with Myanmar. Comprehensive and long-term



Robert Coles

2007 anti-government protesters in Yangon; the banner reads “non-violence: national movement.”

U.S. military engagement, paired with ongoing efforts by the U.S. government and non-governmental organizations to build civilian governance capacity, can help foster a peaceful and lasting democratic transition.

Decades of ethnic strife, internal conflict, and dysfunctional governance have left Myanmar unable to make the necessary reforms alone. There is broad understanding that Myanmar needs help reforming its economy, infrastructure, and civil society. The U.S. is actively engaging in outreach to Myanmar's "cronies," the businessmen on OFAC's SDN list that have been pilloried for benefiting financially from their ties to the former junta. The U.S. government has identified ways for these business tycoons to reform their practices in order to have the sanctions against them lifted. Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Tom Malinowski, traveled to Myanmar in June 2014 and met with several sanctioned individuals to start a dialogue on ways to change. The delegation explained that removal from the SDN list is a legal, not a political, process managed by OFAC, for which petitioners must demonstrate fundamental behavior change. "Those still on our sanctions list have a chance to build a new legacy for themselves and their country by showing that they have cut business ties with the military and started respecting human rights in the communities where they operate," said Assistant Secretary Malinowski.¹²

The U.S. is also moving away from a transactional foreign policy where the U.S. will only take action, whether to reward or punish, in response to moves the Myanmar government makes. Following the August 2014 Regional Forum meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a senior U.S. government official said that in the

context of removing or imposing new sanctions, "(i)t [discussions] wasn't, 'If you don't do this, we won't do that.'"¹³

The same applies to their military. If the international community, including the U.S. and the human rights non-governmental organizations, wants Myanmar's military to change in a positive way, they must have "skin in the game." Withholding assistance as a form of punishment only undermines the objectives sought: a military in Myanmar that respects human rights, follows the rule of law, and operates under civilian control. There is domestic support for such assistance, including from the political opposition and civil society groups that recognize the need for reform and professionalization of the military. Within the international community and in certain human rights groups however, there is a lack of trust in the Myanmar military and concern that expansion of military cooperation could lead to a greater ability or willingness to commit abuse. While this is a legitimate concern, the only real way to stop Myanmar military abuses is for the military to undergo internal reforms to change its culture and actively prevent these activities. During her initial months in parliament, pro-democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi supported military professionalization, noting her fondness for the armed services due to her father's role in the creation of the BIA. She expressed concern with the military's presence in parliament and the constitutional powers it granted itself, and has repeatedly called for assistance in reforming the military, particularly its role in business and politics.¹⁴ Assistant Secretary Malinowski has also stated that "(t)he only path to a professional and modern [Burmese] military is through discipline, accountability, transparency, and civilian oversight by a democratically

elected government. This may not happen overnight, but in the meantime we encouraged the military to take concrete, visible steps to demonstrate its commitment to human rights, for example by issuing and making public orders to cease land confiscations, and the use of forced labor and child soldiers.”¹⁵

As in all other states, the Myanmar military is not a monolithic institution. There have been calls by soldiers in the lower ranks to reform, and there are those in the military who remember when there was cooperation with the U.S. and would like a return to that status. Finally, the military wants the domestic and international respect that professionalization brings, and has the willingness to do what it takes to earn that respect. On almost every official trip, senior government and military officers acknowledge their participation in IMET and fondly recall their experiences. As an educational development program, IMET is designed to promote professionalization and U.S. military values as part of a long-term strategy that properly nests and complements other engagement policies, especially those targeting human rights violations.

It also is critical to provide the military a stake and a role in the government’s reform efforts. Thus far, this key part of Myanmar’s political system has been further isolated, with increased public calls for more punitive measures. Failing to assist the military with carving out a legitimate role in Myanmar society only strengthens the notion that the democratic experiment offers the military nothing and increases the risk that it will seek to undermine the reform efforts.

Obstacles to Greater Ties

Human rights organizations oppose expanding military ties to Myanmar, highlighting

what they term as “backsliding” on reforms there. Certainly dealing with an institution associated with a litany of atrocities comes with reputational costs. There is a real question on whether the Myanmar military can in fact reform. There have been reports of continued abuses, particularly in conflict areas in Kachin and Shan States, which put in doubt trust of the military. However, while such critics serve an important role in exposing human rights abuses perpetrated by the military, particularly in ethnic minority areas, they have offered few alternatives to punitive measures, or viable recommendations for reforming the institution.

Congress has also expressed deep concern in re-engaging with Myanmar’s military. Representatives Steve Chabot, former Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, and Joe Crowley, in December 2013 introduced the Burma Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2013, H.R. 3889. This bipartisan measure places conditions on U.S. military assistance to Myanmar, including prohibiting the use of FY2014 Department of Defense funds to assist Myanmar until the U.S. Secretary of State certifies the country has taken steps toward establishing civilian oversight of the armed forces, addressing human rights abuses by the military, and terminating military relations with North Korea.¹⁶ In January 2014 Senators Marco Rubio and Robert Menendez introduced The Burma Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2013, a parallel bipartisan Senate measure that would prohibit U.S. military aid to Myanmar, except in cases of basic training on human rights and civilian control of the military. The bill offers no waivers and would lift the prohibition only if Myanmar takes concrete actions to measurably improve human rights conditions, including:

establishing civilian oversight of the armed forces, addressing human rights violations by their military, and terminating military relations with North Korea. The amendment would also request an annual report on the Obama Administration's strategy to engage the Myanmar military.¹⁷

Additionally, it is unclear the degree to which strengthened military ties with the U.S. can influence a reforming a military. A 2011 Government Accountability Office report concluded that the effectiveness of IMET is largely unsubstantiated and that confidence is based on anecdotal data at best due to significant data gaps and a lack of rigorous analysis.¹⁸ Critics of reinstating IMET in Myanmar note that alumni of the IMET program have committed human rights abuses and that the

program did little to change the course of military reform. Human rights groups argue that the U.S. should withhold IMET until all culpable parties are held accountable and the relevant institutions undergo drastic reform.

Getting it Done Right, Not Getting it Done Tomorrow

Resuming military-to-military ties does not mean training and arming the Myanmar military to become better at committing abuses. Given its history since independence, it is unrealistic to assume that Myanmar can organically develop civilian control of its military or turn away from entrenched doctrines, like the *four cuts* strategy, without assistance. The nations of Eastern Europe faced similar challenges in the 1990s



Mikhail Esteves

Burma is home to at least 2 million IDPs of various ethnicities, and at least 2 million others have found refuge in neighboring countries. Shown here is the Mae La refugee camp in Tak, Thailand, which houses a number of Karen refugees; the Karen Conflict has been termed the “longest civil war in the world” (1949-present).

following the collapse of communism. The U.S., along with NATO partners, played an active and positive role in helping those countries reform their militaries. At the time, there was similar concern over the human rights violations perpetrated by members of those militaries and their involvement in the political process (military leaders were often communist party members). However, instead of being aloof and insisting on full internal reform before assistance could begin, the U.S. and NATO took steps, although potentially risky, to positively shape that reform process through a proactive, long-term and comprehensive security cooperation program called Partnership for Peace (PfP).

For 20 years, the annual Congressional appropriation for the Warsaw Initiative Fund (WIF) has enabled the DoD to support NATO's

PfP Program. The objective of both WIF and PfP has been to advance democratic reforms of defense establishments and military forces in the former communist-bloc countries of Eastern Europe, as well as the former Soviet Republics. The program has involved 35 countries, 12 of which have become NATO members. It supports a wide range of activities, from military-to-military engagements and training exercises, to education programs for uniformed military leaders and civilian leaders occupying positions within newly established ministries of defense. The program has been a resounding success for a number of the PfP participants, and countries like Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, and the Baltic States have reformed their militaries and established robust civilian control after decades under authoritarian regimes. Obviously, much of the credit goes to the people of these nations, but



Youtube

TV footage following Myanmar military attack on Kachin rebels

the far-sighted legislative decision to provide assistance early in the reform process enabled this success.¹⁹

There is a range of options to bring about the changes in the Myanmar military that the U.S. wants to see. The concept in resuming ties is to slowly and methodically do so, building the institutions with civilian control first, and then working through to other issues. We recommend the following:

Human Rights Dialogue: The Human Rights Dialogue offers a chance for a higher-level dialogue with U.S. and military officials, and should be continued on an annual basis. After more than a two-year hiatus, the second Human Rights Dialogue was held in January 2015. Human rights are the central theme of this program, and institutionalizing the dialogue would present a regular opportunity for policymakers from various departments, including DoD and DoS, to explain the need for and ways to implement a human rights policy for Myanmar's military.

Track 1.5 and Track 2 Exchanges: In addition to the Human Rights Dialogue, a combination of Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogues can bring in the appropriate human rights and military scholars, foreign policy practitioners, and retired military officials to discuss ways to professionalize the military, as well as offer first-hand experiences of how senior military officers serve under civilian leadership. Retired U.S. military officers and civilian defense officials can speak in military parlance while offering constructive advice on professionalization and appropriate roles for military officers in both governance and national security institutions.

Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Assistance Capacity Building: Myanmar is prone to natural disasters and its fragile

infrastructure places its citizens at even greater risk from flooding, cyclones, and earthquakes. Cyclone Nargis in 2008 devastated the Ayeyarwady Delta and the city of Yangon, killing close to 130,000 people. Myanmar's military could be trained to quickly mobilize to aid victims of natural disasters, evacuate them to safer areas, and support reconstruction efforts. More importantly, Myanmar could use its military to focus on disaster risk reduction and other preparedness efforts, something Bangladesh has done to great effect. The U.S. government could offer military-to-military training programs and technical assistance in an effort to begin to transform the military's role in Myanmar. Given the effort expended since Hurricane Katrina to develop the doctrine and conceptual foundation of Defense Support to Civil Authorities, the U.S. military could use these lessons to help Myanmar's military turn away from the *four cuts* strategy and adopt a strategy focused on protecting citizens from significant environmental risks. Additionally, the U.S. could include Myanmar in its annual Pacific Partnership and Pacific Angel operations, which focus on bringing civil engineering and military medicine programs to countries in the region. These programs assist host nation militaries develop capacity in these areas, and provide humanitarian assistance to civilian populations through the construction of schools and other public buildings and the provision of basic health and dental care.

Security Cooperation Programs: The U.S. has a number of security cooperation programs that could be used in combination to bring about positive changes and accountability. The first and probably most important for Myanmar today is the Defense Institutional Reform Initiative (DIRI). The goal of this

program is to develop effective, accountable, professional and transparent security establishments, something that all assess is lacking in Myanmar. DIRI would place U.S. subject matter experts within Myanmar's military institutions to develop a common assessment of organizational weaknesses and a plan for making reforms. Another is the Ministry of Defense Advisor (MoDA) program that seeks to build civilian ministerial capacity. It partners U.S. DoD civilians with foreign counterparts to help them develop specific programs for budgeting and programming, acquisition processes, and running personnel systems for recruitment, pay, promotion and retirement. While the DoD currently operates MoDA only in Afghanistan, it represents the kind of program that could be employed to assist Myanmar. As policy makers discuss increased military engagement with Myanmar, DIRI and MoDA should be among the first considerations.

Over time and in line with legislative and executive restrictions, the IMET program can educate and influence future military leaders and establish a rapport between U.S. and Myanmar military officers. As progress is made and reforms are undertaken, the U.S. has a number of programs designed to assist in providing military resources, whether through financing (Foreign Military Financing - FMF) or direct sales (Foreign Military Sales -FMS), to purchase new equipment or pay for specialized training for new roles and missions.

Peacekeeping Operations: As Myanmar reforms its military institutions, the U.S. could begin providing assistance to build peacekeeping capacity, so that Myanmar can be a net contributor to stability. This effort is likely years off in the future, but a number of countries like Mongolia and Bangladesh have

focused their military doctrines and training to provide the United Nations with forces capable of fulfilling peacekeeping operations in other parts of the world. The U.S. could use its extensive experience in training other peacekeeping forces to help shape the Myanmar military for this role, if the government desires. Conducting such training would have the added benefit of establishing interoperability between the U.S. and Myanmar militaries, making it easier to integrate Myanmar into multilateral exercises and regional security efforts, like the ASEAN initiatives on maritime security, counter-piracy, counter-terrorism, and disaster relief. These are decisions that do not need to be made today, but their consideration could suggest a path for the U.S. and Myanmar to follow if both choose to establish a long-term, comprehensive military relationship.

Conclusion

It is tempting to think that Myanmar's military leadership could just snap their fingers and immediately institute civilian control or abandon the *four cuts* strategy. Unfortunately, such efforts require comprehensive institutional changes and would be difficult even under the best conditions. If the U.S. wants and expects change, then it must actively work to realize that change, including by providing training, resources, and support to the individuals trying to reform that space in Myanmar's society. The same holds true for Myanmar's military and security sectors. The U.S., in cooperation with the wider international community, must be willing to engage Myanmar's military to develop a comprehensive program that does not simply focus on how *not* to act, but provides resources and assistance in adopting new roles and missions, as well as the new doctrines, processes, and systems that will

ultimately create a new military foundation in Myanmar. That is a daunting and scary prospect for any institution. In the end, the people of Myanmar, both civilian and military, will have to do the hard work of reforming; we should help them in that effort.

As Assistant Secretary Malinowski said, “(t)his country’s transition has just begun, and the hardest work is still ahead – but there is unlimited potential. And the United States is committed as a partner and as a friend to seeing that potential fully realized.” **PRISM**

Notes

¹ <http://cogitasia.com/burma-preview-2013-united-wa-state-army-the-challenge-to-peace/>.

² From 1950-1962, 972 Myanmar officers participated in the IMET program and during 1980-1988 another 255 participated. “Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know,” David Steinberg, 2009, p. 116.

³ “Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know,” David Steinberg, 2009, p. 116.

⁴ Jim Garamone, “U.S. Open to Thais Inviting Burma to Observe Cobra Gold,” American Forces Press Service, October 19, 2012.

⁵ Section 8128 of Division A of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-74).

⁶ Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 (P.L. 109-163).

⁷ <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43035.pdf>.

⁸ <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2012/07/13/2012-17264/blocking-property-of-persons-threatening-the-peace-security-or-stability-of-burma>.

⁹ <http://blogs.wsj.com/riskandcompliance/2013/12/17/us-targets-burmese-companies-over-north-korean-links/>.

¹⁰ <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42939.pdf>.

¹¹ <http://www.humanrights.gov/issues/leahy-vetting/>.

¹² <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/NewsArticleView/tabid/7464/Article/9877/press-release-on-assistant-secretary-malinowskis-visit-to-burma.aspx#.U7YVGwRIMdl.twitter>.

¹³ <http://online.wsj.com/articles/u-s-backs-myanmar-reforms-no-threat-to-resume-sanctions-1407586417>.

¹⁴ <http://www.voanews.com/content/burmas-army-defends-involvement-in-politics-vows-continued-reform/1629420.html>.

¹⁵ <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/NewsArticleView/tabid/7464/Article/9877/press-release-on-assistant-secretary-malinowskis-visit-to-burma.aspx#.U7YVGwRIMdl.twitter>.

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¹⁷ http://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=9e19299f-0019-44e7-80dc-1b1623aa16c4.

¹⁸ <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d12123.pdf>.

¹⁹ NATO’s PFP Program has “graduated” 12 nations into NATO membership (1999 – Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic; 2004 – Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia; 2009 – Albania and Croatia).

²⁰ <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/NewsArticleView/tabid/7464/Article/9877/press-release-on-assistant-secretary-malinowskis-visit-to-burma.aspx#.U7YVGwRIMdl.twitter>.

Photos

Page 76 photo by Mohd Nor Azmil Abdul Rahman. 2008. *Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar. Views to show the effects of the wind and rain on 3 May 2008*. From http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cyclone_Nargis_-_Myanmar-3May2008.jpg licensed under the Creative Commons **Attribution 2.0 Generic** license. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en>. Photo reproduced unaltered.

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Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and Medvedev in the Casa Rosada, Buenos Aires, Argentine, 2010