

Andrew Selth, one of Myanmar's closest and most incisive observers, has written a very important book which should be read by anyone who wants to know what is, and has been, happening behind the scenes in this crisis-ridden country. It is a virtual encyclopaedia of events, personalities—and foreign actors—who have played roles in shaping today's military-ruled Myanmar. No one has ever before documented and analysed in such detail the dark side of Myanmar politics.

Bertil Lintner, author of *The Golden Land Ablaze: Coups, Insurgents and the State in Myanmar* and nine other books about Myanmar.

Eloquently written and informative, Andrew Selth's new book is a must-read account of the critical role played by intelligence services in Myanmar's troubled history. In a land long torn by conflict, Selth graphically details how military intelligence emerged as the dominant security apparatus and pre-eminent force for social control in the post-colonial state. Unveiling this world, Selth's account fills a void in military politics and conflict studies that will be a reference for many years.

Martin Smith, author of *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*

Andrew Selth's analysis of the evolution, nature, and practice of intelligence in Myanmar is a monumental achievement and the culmination of over 30 years of close study. It is a major addition to the intelligence studies literature and essential reading for students and practitioners alike.

Mark Phythian, Emeritus Professor of Politics, University of Leicester, and editor of the journal *Intelligence and National Security*, 2015–2024.

Given the self-chosen isolation of a country whose elite has always been distrustful of everything foreign, exacerbated by foreign-imposed sanctions and travel bans, and considering the country's multi-ethnic make up with a diversity of languages, one has to be grateful for Andrew Selth's successful attempt to shed light on the institutional development of Myanmar's intelligence structure over more than two centuries. In his authoritative, well-

balanced and well-phrased study, piecing together a myriad of particles of information, amidst contradictory evidence, making it difficult to distinguish what is real and what is imagined, he does away with many phantasies and rumours. He demonstrates convincingly the continuity, in spite of political vicissitudes, of the essential role intelligence played in both preserving the ruling elites and being a state within a state, constituting a potential threat to their continuance. The impunity with which both civil and especially military intelligence has used both legal and extra-legal powers, is seen by Andrew Selth as the main explanation for the unthreatened survival of an intelligence system, which, in spite of its Stasi-like totalitarian omnipresence and its tremendous brutality, characterizing Myanmar as an intelligence state, has continuously shown a lack of efficiency.

Bob de Graaff, former Professor of Intelligence and Security Studies,
Utrecht University, and editor of *Intelligence Communities and Cultures
in Asia and the Middle East*.

Myanmar

The **ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute** (formerly Institute of Southeast Asian Studies) is an autonomous organization established in 1968. It is a research centre dedicated to the study of sociopolitical, security and economic developments in Southeast Asia and its wider geostrategic environment. The Institute's research programmes are grouped under Regional Economic Studies (RES), Regional Strategic and Political Studies (RSPS), and Regional Social and Cultural Studies (RSCS), as well as six country programmes—namely, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, and the Philippines. The Institute is also home to the ASEAN Studies Centre (ASC) and the Singapore APEC Study Centre.

ISEAS Publishing, an established academic press, has issued more than two thousand books and journals. It is the largest scholarly publisher of research on Southeast Asia from within the region. ISEAS Publishing works with many other academic and trade publishers and distributors to disseminate important research and analyses from and about Southeast Asia to the rest of the world.

Myanmar

The Making of an Intelligence State

ANDREW SELTH

First published in Singapore in 2026 by
ISEAS Publishing
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Singapore 119614
Email: publish@iseas.edu.sg
Website: bookshop.iseas.edu.sg

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.

© 2026 ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

The responsibility for facts and opinions in this publication rests exclusively with the author and his interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the policy of the publisher or its supporters.

ISEAS Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Name(s): Selth, Andrew, author.

Title: Myanmar: The Making of an Intelligence State / by Andrew Selth.

Description: Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2026. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: ISBN 9789815306590 (soft cover) | ISBN 9789815306606 (PDF) | ISBN 9789815306613 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Military intelligence—Myanmar. | Civil-military relations—Myanmar. | Myanmar—Military policy. | Myanmar—Politics and government.

Classification: LCC UB251 B9S461

Cover design by Lee Meng Hui

Index compiled by Raffaie Nahar

Typeset by Stallion Press (S) Pte Ltd

Printed in Singapore by Markono Print Media Pte Ltd

For
Pattie, as always,
and in memory of
Distinguished Professor of Asian Studies Emeritus
David I. Steinberg (1928–2024)

Deep in Burmese thinking is the belief that to have secrets
is to be on the side of power.

Lucian W. Pye
The Spirit of Burmese Politics (1959)¹

CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures</i>	xv
<i>Foreword</i>	xvii
<i>Preface</i>	xxi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xxxiii
<i>Acronyms and Abbreviations</i>	xxxv
<i>Glossary</i>	li
Preamble	1
Protocols	1
People	6
Politics	11
1. Introduction	23
2. Intelligence Under Burma's Kings	27
At Home	28
And Abroad	32
3. Political Intelligence in British Burma	40
The Beginnings of a System	41
The Rise of CID and Special Branch	46
4. Military Intelligence in British Burma	62
Early Days in British India	64
The Burma Dimension	69
5. Intelligence Before the 1962 Coup	95
Structures and Links	96
The Evolution of a System	106

6. Intelligence Under General Ne Win	120
The Shocks of 1983	133
Sources and Methods	142
7. Intelligence Under the SLORC and SPDC: Part 1	163
The Military Intelligence Organization	169
Related Organizations and Laws	190
8. Intelligence Under the SLORC and SPDC: Part 2	214
Targets and Techniques	215
SIGINT and IMINT	225
9. The Fall of General Khin Nyunt	245
Five Theories	249
Personalized Power	252
10. Power Shifts and Structural Changes	266
Out With The Old	267
In With The New	272
11. Intelligence in a “Disciplined Democracy”	295
Organizational Changes	295
Behavioural Changes	310
12. Intelligence Since the 2021 Coup	327
Organization and Funding	328
Human Intelligence	335
Electronic Surveillance	344
Information Warfare	352
13. Intelligence and the Opposition Movement	368
Structure and Organization	368
Intelligence Collection	378
Surveillance and Reconnaissance	381
Information Warfare	385
14. Counterintelligence Challenges	396
The Five Eyes Community	398
Other Foreign Intelligence Threats	408
Individuals and International Organizations	422
15. Looking Beyond Myanmar	444
Operations Outside Myanmar	444
Cooperative Arrangements	449
Foreign Contacts Since the 2021 Coup	456

16. Intelligence Failures	475
Analytical Failures	481
Operational Failures	485
17. Questions of Accountability	499
Plus ça Change?	499
The Culture of Impunity	503
18. Conclusion	519
Appendices	525
1. Konbaung Dynasty Monarchs (1752–1885)	527
2. Capitals of Burma (1752–2024)	528
3. Geographical Names (2024)	529
4. Administrative Divisions (2024)	531
5. Regional Military Commands (2024)	533
6. Military Intelligence Chiefs (1959–2024)	534
7. Intelligence Collection Disciplines	536
<i>Bibliography</i>	540
<i>The Author</i>	584
<i>Index</i>	586

LIST OF FIGURES

1. The Tatmadaw Command Structure, 1958	97
2. The Burma Police Force, 1957	101
3. Burma's Intelligence Apparatus, c. 1957	105
4. Burma's Intelligence Apparatus, c. 1975	132
5. Burma's Intelligence Apparatus, c. 1985	139
6. The Tatmadaw Command Structure, c. 1988	172–173
7. Myanmar's Military Intelligence Apparatus, c. 1995	179
8. The Tatmadaw Command Structure, 1998	222–223
9. Myanmar's Intelligence Apparatus, c. 2004	233
10. Myanmar Armed Forces Command Structure, c. 2010	278–279
11. The Myanmar Police Force, c. 2013	284
12. Myanmar's Intelligence Apparatus, c. 2022	330
13. National Unity Government Intelligence Structure, 2024	372
14. People's Defence Force Intelligence Structure, 2024	373

Given the dearth of reliable information about Myanmar's security forces, the organizational diagrams listed above must be considered indicative only, and not definitive. The details of the Tatmadaw's command structure in figures 1, 6 and 8 are taken from Maung Aung Myoe's *Building the Tatmadaw: Myanmar's Armed Forces Since 1948* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2009), and are reproduced with permission. Figure 10 is considered broadly accurate but the table is drawn from an anonymous contribution to Wikipedia and the details cannot be verified.

FOREWORD

by

Moe Thuzar

(Coordinator, Myanmar Studies Programme,
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore)

Anyone who came of age in Burma or Myanmar whether before or after the name change in 1989 by the State Law and Order Restoration Council military regime which seized power in 1988, and certainly before the “opening” in 2011–12 will be familiar with the extent to which Myanmar’s intelligence network monitors the lives and actions of people. Even before the 1988 coup, authoritarian socialist rule had restricted people’s access to information and avenues for expressing and exchanging ideas and thoughts. The situation in Oceania that George Orwell describes in his novel *1984* might easily apply to a Burma turned Myanmar before and after the 1988 coup, especially after the 2021 coup, with the briefest respites in the preceding decade.

The intelligence state in Myanmar has existed long before its growing visibility during authoritarian military rule in past decades. In this book, which updates an earlier effort at understanding the workings and motivations of Myanmar’s intelligence state, Andrew Selth traces the origins, gradual evolution and entrenchment of how secrets and power in Myanmar have come to be inextricably intertwined with regime survival. The first edition focused on the rise and fall of a prominent figure, with a brief historical context. This updated edition provides a fuller sweep of how Burmese monarchs viewed espionage and secret operations as essential for the kingdom, the introduction of the intelligence apparatus and its practices during colonial times, and how the military leadership of independent Burma adapted those historical and colonial legacies.

The relationship between power and the possession of secrets is not unique to Myanmar. Burmese kings were not unique in their use of spies either. However, the ways in which Myanmar’s intelligence apparatus has used information and intelligence to intimidate and manipulate has

made it akin to an invisible leash that can at any time be yanked, even only if as a mere reminder that to move or express oneself in a way that does not conform to what is deemed to be in the interests of the state, has consequences. Myanmar's security apparatus has many covert and overt ways of obtaining information and exercising possession of that information against citizens. Civil servants have come under especial scrutiny. Examples include posting intelligence officers to various key ministries to monitor civil servants' movements, thoughts, and actions, outright informing decommissioned officials to "limit movements" after retirement, or stationing a minion at the top of the road to surveil who visits a "retired" senior official's residence. Punishment is swift and severe for transgressions from within, as evidenced by the downfall in 2004 of General Khin Nyunt and those in his orbit.

However, the dismantling of the intelligence networks set up by Khin Nyunt also needs to be considered in the post-2021 context. Khin Nyunt built up his intelligence base and operations in the 1980s after the 1983 bombing of the Martyr's Mausoleum by North Korean agents. Similar to a belief that the 1983 bombing incident occurred at a time when the efficacy of Burma's intelligence capacity was affected following the arrests and trials of powerful senior military officers in charge of intelligence, so too a belief exists among resistance groups post-2021 that they might have more to be concerned about if Khin Nyunt's intelligence networks were still active. Myanmar's intelligence capabilities, severely weakened after Khin Nyunt's downfall, do not seem to have recovered fully.

Even so, fear of that invisible leash tightening around loved ones, close friends, or colleagues continues to constrain many with first-hand insights and lived experiences from sharing or recounting those experiences. Yet, now, more than ever, it is important to understand the workings, the political context, the various personalities, and personal motivations that have constructed, dismantled, and reformulated Myanmar's intelligence apparatus.

This is why Andrew Selth's research over the years, now compiled in this book, which has further been updated to include developments after the military coup on 1 February 2021, presents a vital resource for everyone watching, researching, studying, or working on Myanmar to understand what one former senior official once described as "an enigma in a cocoon." Andrew's research has consistently sought to provide background and context on events and developments in Myanmar, a country that has provoked other descriptions as an "exotic unknown" with "fiendishly complex" problems. Because of that complexity and the niche interest,

Andrew has also sought to provide factual, objective, research-based analyses, navigating with tact the various biases that often cloud many public commentaries on Myanmar.

The secretive nature of the Myanmar state over past decades has allowed only a few scholars and researchers to observe first-hand or obtain access to records and documents that help shed insight into how the Myanmar military functions as an institution and wields control via its intelligence services. In addition to Andrew's research, Mary Callahan, Robert Taylor, David Steinberg, Yoshihiro Nakanishi, and Maung Aung Myoe have all contributed immeasurably to the literature (and, in fact, constitute much of the literature) on this topic. Among them, however, is Andrew's work on Myanmar (Burma), which benefitted from his years as a diplomat in Rangoon, with the additional focus via the lens of strategic intelligence that he applies to his analyses.

My own research has also benefitted from Andrew's insights, especially those drawn from the years when he had a ring-side seat to changes in then Burma's intelligence service. I have also learned much from exchanging views with Andrew on Burmese language words and terms related to the military. Many new terms and adjectives emerged after the 2021 coup, reflecting the depths of public sentiment towards the military in Myanmar and its assertions of power and control. Terminology matters, and words matter in our efforts to understand and convey through research just how deep-rooted such sentiments are. For example, the reluctance of many Myanmar people to refer to the State Administration Council junta as a government can be appreciated better when one understands that there is no exact Burmese term for "military regime" or "junta." In the past, both terms have been loosely translated in Burmese as military government. In the post-coup landscape, however, the forces resisting military rule have come up with several terms that seek to avoid describing the regime as a government. In this updated edition, Andrew discusses and contextualizes with sensitivity many new terms coined after the 2021 coup, and their nuances.

To paraphrase Pye, whom Andrew quotes at the beginning of this book, Burmese political thinking is grounded in the belief that secrets are the source of power. Andrew's research, which reveals changes and continuity in the relationship of secrets and power in Myanmar before and after the 2021 coup, must be saluted, as it helps dispel the potency of such secret-keeping and power-wielding. Once learned, these practices tend to endure, regardless of who sits in the seat of power.

PREFACE

Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know.

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld
12 February 2002²

In one sense, work on this book began some 30 years ago. Its composition has been an iterative process, the core text growing and changing as new data has emerged and more light has been thrown on the subject. In all likelihood, that process has not yet ended. As additional information becomes available and our understanding of Myanmar's intelligence system improves, so the public record will need to be adjusted further. Myanmar has always had the capacity to surprise, but this will take time. There is currently little chance that the country's authoritarian central government will suddenly collapse, permitting access to its secret archives, as occurred in the German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany) after the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. Nor will the military regime ever willingly allow the kind of research that was possible in the Russian Federation after 1991, when many of the Soviet Union's old intelligence files were transferred (if only briefly) to the public archives. Even if Myanmar should return to something approaching a democracy, on present indications its intelligence community is likely to remain a closed book.

It is perhaps worth reflecting on the nature of this problem, explaining some issues and making a number of pertinent observations.

In 2019, when the first edition of this book appeared, its main aim was to complement and update an earlier study of Myanmar's intelligence apparatus which had been published in 1997 as a working paper by the Australian National University's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (SDSC).³ That paper, which benefitted from some useful first-hand input, surveyed the

development of Myanmar's intelligence system over the half century from 1948, when the country regained its independence from the United Kingdom (UK). An extract from the paper later appeared as "SLORC's 'Intel-Net': Burma's Intelligence Apparatus" in *Burma Debate*, a periodical published between 1994 and 2002 by the Open Society Institute's Burma Project.⁴ A similar article appeared in the *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter*.⁵ In 1998, a slightly revised version of the SDSC working paper was published in the international journal *Intelligence and National Security* under the title "Burma's Intelligence Apparatus".⁶ It was the first time that an extended treatment of the subject had appeared in the academic literature. This article in turn became the basis of a chapter on military intelligence in my book *Burma's Armed Forces: Power Without Glory*, which was published in the United States (US) in 2002.⁷

In Louis Allen's evocative phrase, the 2019 book was "no more than a preliminary canter".⁸ It was intended to reprise the historical background found in my earlier works, establish a baseline for information, and take the story forward to the present day. It used the downfall of Chief of Intelligence (CI) *Bo Gyoke Gyi* (General) Khin Nyunt in 2004 to highlight various changes to Myanmar's intelligence architecture, functions and operations.⁹ The emphasis of the 2019 book was on the then current state of affairs and recent developments. As such, it did not look at the colonial antecedents of Myanmar's extensive intelligence apparatus, nor go into very much detail about the Ne Win era (1962–1988). Both were only referred to in passing. The book was followed by several other pieces on the role of intelligence in Myanmar's government, notably a chapter written for Bob de Graaf's edited collection *Intelligence Communities and Cultures in Asia and the Middle East* and a policy paper on Myanmar's intelligence state prepared for the Stimson Centre in Washington DC.¹⁰

These and a few related projects permitted me to make some additional observations, for example on developments in Myanmar's intelligence system after the advent of a "discipline-flourishing democracy", under a mixed civilian-military government, in 2011.¹¹ In particular, they prompted comment on the unexpected survival and indeed probable growth of Myanmar's national intelligence apparatus under the quasi-democratic government of Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi (2016–20).¹² In 2018, in a report for the US Institute of Peace, I looked briefly at the use of intelligence during the so-called "area clearance operations" conducted by Myanmar's armed forces (or *Tatmadaw*) and national police force against the Muslim Rohingyas in Rakhine State in 2016 and 2017.¹³ Research conducted for this book prompted me to write articles for two academic journals.¹⁴

I have also contributed a chapter on the development of Myanmar as an intelligence state to a book on intelligence services and cultures in South Asia edited by Ryan Shaffer and ASM Ali Ashraf.¹⁵ All three works are due for publication in 2025.

Research for all these works brought home to me the fact that, despite the increased attention paid to Myanmar's coercive apparatus since the 1988 pro-democracy uprising, little reliable information and informed commentary about it was available. Inevitably, this had led to misconceptions and misunderstandings of different kinds, and some questionable claims by sundry journalists, activists and pundits.

Several explanations can be offered to account for the dearth of reliable information on this subject. The first is simply that, for many years, Myanmar was considered a backwater for academic research. With some notable exceptions, before 1988 relatively few scholars devoted their attention to Myanmar's history, politics or economy. A few looked at it from anthropological or sociological perspectives but the scope of their research was limited.¹⁶ Their findings were largely confined to specialist journals. There were also serious problems regarding access. Under Ne Win's isolationist and intensely nationalistic regime foreign visitors were only granted visas for one week or less, official records were highly restricted, and little confidence could be placed in government statements or statistics. It was difficult to travel around the country, large swathes of which were off limits to foreigners, ostensibly for security reasons. Added to these difficulties, few outsiders could claim fluency in any of Myanmar's 100 or more vernacular languages. As a result of all these problems, research publications based on field work, particularly in the social sciences, were rare.¹⁷ As Amitav Ghosh wrote, Myanmar became "a kind of lost world".¹⁸

If the security forces were examined at all, it was usually with the aim of illuminating specific aspects of the country's domestic plight, such as the presence of Nationalist Chinese (*Kuomintang*, or KMT) soldiers in the north of the country who were secretly supported, and exploited, by the CIA in its "Operation Paper".¹⁹ Wider issues were barely touched upon. Myanmar's small, poorly equipped military forces, its self-imposed isolation and determined neutrality in world affairs did not encourage serious study by strategic analysts. Faced with a formidable language barrier, those scholars who did tackle such matters tended to concentrate on the British colonial period, or else approached Myanmar through the medium of other countries, like China after the communist party's victory in 1949. The country's many long-running ethnic and ideological insurgencies were monitored by a select group of professionals, and a few intrepid foreign

correspondents, but due to insufficient information and a lack of public interest such issues were rarely mentioned in the international news media or academic literature. Those who wrote articles critical of the military regime were usually blacklisted and denied entry to the country.²⁰

After 1988, a number of these restrictions were eased by the newly-installed State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), but scholars and journalists still found it difficult to travel around Myanmar, interview people and obtain reliable data on sensitive subjects. That meant an accurate and balanced picture of developments in the country remained elusive. In 2001, for example, the Myanmar scholar David Steinberg wrote:

Myanmar presents problems—problems of analysis and even data. Statistics are often whimsical, events are sometimes opaque, the complexity of the past clouds our thinking, information is filtered through skewed political lenses, propaganda is rife, and the future presents conundrums even for participants in this drama, let alone observers on the periphery.²¹

The travel writer and Myanmar-watcher Emma Larkin expressed similar views ten years later:

Given the regime's restrictions on information and association, it is difficult to form any public consensus or verifiable version of the truth. While certain events can be accounted for with certainty, there is much that remains unknown. Like those blind men in the parable [trying to describe an elephant from different vantage points], it has become impossible for anyone to see or fathom the beast in its entirety ... In a society where nothing can be taken for granted, distorted truths, half stories, and private visions are, by necessity, woven into the popular narrative of events.²²

Even foreign agencies with access to advanced technologies and privileged information considered the country's security forces, including the national intelligence apparatus, something of a black hole.²³

Perhaps the greatest problem for anyone wishing to study Myanmar's intelligence apparatus, however, has been the difficulty of finding reliable sources.

Citing "national security", the Ne Win regime consistently refused to reveal any detailed or accurate information about Myanmar's intelligence agencies, details of which have always been closely guarded. Information on them was rarely published in Myanmar. Some historical material was held in the national archives (usually in the Burmese language), but successive military governments have been very reluctant to allow scholars access—not

only to the actual material but at times even to the country itself. Outsiders were seen as “alien cultural influences” and potential threats to the officially endorsed narrative of the Tatmadaw as the nation’s saviour. The few foreign scholars granted the rare privilege of access were closely monitored, and permitted only to peruse files that had been vetted by the authorities.²⁴ Some data was held by foreign intelligence agencies, but that was usually classified. Official material that has been leaked can be helpful but must be treated carefully. The US diplomatic cables released by the Wikileaks organization in 2010 and 2011, for example, while providing insights into the contemporary Myanmar scene, cannot be independently verified.

As a consequence of all these problems, anyone interested in pursuing intelligence issues was forced to rely on the imperfect memories of officials who had been to Myanmar, interviews with exiled dissidents (who were unlikely to be objective), and fragments of information gleaned from a wide range of books, periodicals and online commentaries. Few of these sources could be rigorously tested.

Even after the tentative political opening of 2011, hard data on the sizes, budgets and capabilities of Myanmar’s security forces was very difficult to obtain.²⁵ The structure and internal workings of the country’s intelligence agencies were particularly opaque. After it took power in 2016, it was unlikely that the civilian members of Aung San Suu Kyi’s government—even the State Counsellor herself—were privy to all the relevant information. Sensitive matters were strictly compartmented and probably known only to a small group of senior military officers. As the US Congress was told after the 2021 coup, “the military is an extremely secretive organisation.”²⁶ Indeed, secrecy has long been an obsession with those in Myanmar concerned with security issues, and harsh penalties have been imposed on anyone believed to have betrayed state secrets, a term that has always had a very wide definition.²⁷ This has made most people in the country (and even outside it, if they wished to preserve their access and protect family members still resident there) wary of sharing information and speaking about sensitive issues with outside researchers. Also, verified documents produced by, or about, Myanmar’s intelligence services remained hard to find.

Ironically, the lack of reliable information about Myanmar’s intelligence system seems at times to be in inverse proportion to the number of people who have written about it, and commented on its organization, leadership and operations.²⁸ Much of this product has been based on anecdotal evidence, gossip and speculation. However, as the US scholar Donald Emerson once noted, “the plural of anecdote is not data.”²⁹ Occasional glimpses behind the scenes rarely, if ever, gave observers the whole picture.³⁰

Adding to these challenges has been the fact that Myanmar's security forces have aroused strong feelings on the part of many activists, exiles and foreign commentators. Understandably, the brutality and systematic violation of human rights by the Tatmadaw and police force, including their respective intelligence agencies, have fuelled a deep and abiding anger on the part of pro-democracy campaigners. These feelings have been heightened by a sense of frustration, as foreign governments and international organizations have confined themselves to largely token gestures in support of those fighting either for regime change or simply to improve the living conditions of the Burmese people. Feelings have run high and patience has worn thin, leading to some intemperate remarks about the more sober and dispassionate offerings of academics and other professional observers. *Ad hominem* attacks and even death threats have been made against individuals for unpopular views. Numerous claims, including about intelligence activities in Myanmar, have lacked the intellectual rigour and informed scepticism required to form an accurate and balanced picture.³¹

Some of these claims have been repeated often enough to become established as the conventional wisdom, thus muddying the waters and creating further confusion. One only has to consider the flood of bizarre and inaccurate stories that were published in the 1990s and early 2000s about a non-existent Chinese signals intelligence (SIGINT) facility on Myanmar's Great Coco Island to see how distorted the debate can become.³² One distinguished observer even described the purported facility as "the most important listening station which China operates outside of China itself".³³ Even now, that issue refuses to die, at least in South and Southeast Asia, where dubious claims continue to be made.³⁴ Another well-known case where gossip and speculation overwhelmed more considered reporting related to Myanmar's possible interest in acquiring nuclear technology from Russia or North Korea. In 2009, two respected Myanmar-watchers even predicted that Naypyidaw would possess a nuclear weapon by 2014 and would be capable of making an atomic bomb a year, every year thereafter.³⁵ Such stories were not taken seriously by most of the official intelligence community (India's agencies being a possible exception), but they gained wide currency outside it.³⁶

All that said, since 1988 some useful contributions have been made to the public record by knowledgeable and thoughtful observers. It is now possible to consider intelligence issues in a more informed manner. In addition, leaks about the secret operations of other countries, while still undocumented and unverified, have given an indication of the extent to which Myanmar has been a target of foreign intelligence agencies, both

historically and more recently.³⁷ The 2021 military *coup d'état* has flushed out additional information, including on the intelligence activities of the shadow National Unity Government (NUG) and its allies among the ethnic armed organizations (EAO).³⁸ Much of the opposition movement's apparatus currently exists only on paper, and some accounts of it are exaggerated, but taken together they demonstrate at least an acknowledgement of the important role of intelligence in the civil war, at both the strategic and operational levels.³⁹ The United Nations (UN) had already been paying close attention to Myanmar, but its focus has now widened to include a range of security issues. Attention has also been paid by academics, journalists and others to the nature of the civil war, resulting in a range of detailed open source publications which significantly add to popular understanding of Myanmar's tragic circumstances.⁴⁰

As the former British intelligence mandarin David Omand has written, "Clever intelligence gathering and analysis in the digital age are not confined to secret agencies".⁴¹

By carefully surveying all this material, weeding out obvious inaccuracies, considering improbabilities and then trying to connect the remaining dots, it is possible to make some broad observations about the historical development and current status of Myanmar's intelligence architecture, its structure, attitudes and activities.

In this regard, researching and writing about Myanmar's intelligence state can be likened to China's clichéd "thousand grains of sand" or "mosaic" approach to intelligence gathering and analysis. This relies on the collection of a vast number of disparate snippets of often low grade information accessed from a very wide range of sources, both amateur and professional.⁴² They are then collated according to the relevance and reliability of the data, and carefully analyzed, to form an intelligence picture of sorts. In the words of the eminent Sinologist Simon Leys, analyzing the result can be compared to "interpreting nonexistent inscriptions written in invisible ink on a blank page".⁴³ However, despite being based on incomplete data and informed guesswork, and still full of gaps, such an exercise can throw some light on the way that Myanmar's intelligence agencies have functioned over the years and facilitate a greater understanding of their place in the history of modern Myanmar.

With all those factors in mind, it was considered timely to issue a second, revised and expanded edition of the 2019 book. There are now introductory chapters that sketch out the use of intelligence by Myanmar's kings, and the development of a domestic intelligence structure by the British colonial regime, dating from the First Anglo-Burmese War of 1824–26 to

the Japanese invasion of Myanmar in December 1941.⁴⁴ The latter chapter is based on my research paper *Coercion and Control in Colonial Burma: The Birth of an Intelligence State*.⁴⁵ The intelligence systems that evolved under Ne Win after his 1962 coup and later military regimes are *sui generis*, but it can be claimed that they had antecedents in the old monarchical system and the way that the British sought to watch over and control their new province (and, after its formal separation from India in 1937, their new colony).⁴⁶ Also, the book takes into account material left out of the first edition. Some additional data has been provided by Maung Aung Myoe in his 2009 study *Building the Tatmadaw*.⁴⁷ Finally, as far as the limited sources allowed, and language problems permitted, an attempt has been made to describe intelligence agencies and activities in Myanmar since the 2021 military takeover.⁴⁸

To quote Louis Allen again, this revised and expanded version of the 2019 book tries, “in a discursive way, to give an idea of some conspicuous elements in the story”.⁴⁹ Because it aims to unearth, record and interpret a wide range of material, drawn from a large number of diverse sources, it risks being seen as “a massive magpie’s nest” of contradictory reports, news stories, anecdotes, gossip and speculation. However, to extend Matthew Parris’ colourful metaphor further, as the details mount up, it becomes “much more than a mere pile ... a picture begins to take shape, in the end powerfully”.⁵⁰ This picture has never been described in its entirety before, at least not in any Western language. It can thus be seen as an original contribution to the literature. In three ways, however, the book remains unchanged from the 2019 edition. The first is its close attention to the organization and structural development of Myanmar’s national intelligence apparatus. The second is the deliberately cautious and evidence-based approach taken to what is a highly emotive subject that has always aroused strong feelings. The third is its pedagogic dimension, the aim being to educate and enlighten Myanmar-watchers and others about a subject that has long been clouded in obscurity.⁵¹

The first edition of this book was criticized by one reviewer for its failure specifically to condemn Myanmar’s intelligence agencies for their well-documented history of egregious human rights abuses. It was felt that the book had let General Khin Nyunt, his colleagues and subordinates “off lightly”, by not highlighting their brutality and demanding greater accountability in international forums for their long record of reprehensible conduct.⁵² In short, the book was deemed too “academic” and insufficiently engaged, both emotionally and morally, with its controversial subject matter. A second reviewer seemed to feel that the book was not “academic”

enough, commenting on the lack of a theoretical framework surrounding the discussion of Myanmar's intelligence agencies and their national role in a way that might permit easier comparisons with the place of intelligence agencies in comparable countries.⁵³ Yet another reviewer lamented the lack of detail about General Khin Nyunt's character and personal career, and his influence on Myanmar's so-called "political liberalization" process, which began even before the election of a new quasi-democratic government in 2011.⁵⁴ Needless to say, all three reviews reflected the professional backgrounds and specific interests of their authors.

Given such comments, it might be worth re-stating the aims of the 2019 book, which are also reflected in this new edition. Firstly, it is intended primarily to be an institutional history, to help Myanmar-watchers and other observers better understand the organization, workings and growth of the country's intelligence systems, as they have developed over the past two centuries. The atrocities perpetrated by the state's coercive apparatus since the 1962 coup have not been ignored, nor has the intelligence system's impact on modern Myanmar's national politics. However, the 2019 book, and this one, are not activist tracts, nor exercises in political theory. Their aim is to describe the country's intelligence architecture, not to censure it. That has been done often enough elsewhere. Nor are they a biography of Khin Nyunt, although his pivotal role as Chief of Intelligence between 1983 and 2004 has been cited extensively to illustrate various points relating to the development of the intelligence system and its influence on wider events. Most importantly, and as argued elsewhere, a serious examination of Myanmar's security forces demands a dispassionate and strictly objective approach, what David Omand has described simply as "rational analysis".⁵⁵ Only that can deliver an intellectually rigorous and academically defensible study that all readers can confidently draw upon for their own purposes.

As this book was being written, its intended audience was always kept in mind. This dictated some of its contents and, in many places, the way in which a topic was tackled. It was assumed, for example, that most readers would be unfamiliar with some of the technical terms used. Despite the growth of intelligence studies in recent years, there will doubtless be many who are new to the field and who may appreciate some guidance regarding the concepts and terms discussed. It was also anticipated that some who may pick up this book would be unfamiliar with Myanmar's modern history, including matters pertaining to its national security and armed forces. In addition, given the book's subject matter, and the interest shown in the first edition by people in Myanmar, it was expected that for some readers English would not be their first language. To assist those who may

fit into one or more of these categories, additional information has been provided in terms of lists of acronyms and foreign words, details of names and titles, appendices and explanatory figures illustrating changes in various administrative structures. The aim has been to provide sufficient material to make this survey both comprehensive and readily accessible to all.

It is acknowledged that both the first edition of this book and the current one rely heavily on secondary works published in English. If they were able and prepared to speak frankly, much could be learned from members and former members of the Myanmar government and security forces.⁵⁶ At the very least, they could correct or put into context reports that have appeared in the news media or online, the reliability of which must in many cases be considered suspect. In recent years, a number of autobiographical and historical works have been published in Burmese by former military and intelligence officers, including by General Khin Nyunt himself.⁵⁷ They tend to be rather self-serving, however, and are usually couched in cautious language. Even so, they offer personal and in some cases official perspectives on contemporary developments.⁵⁸ Even the gaps in such accounts can be revealing. Unofficial translations of some of these memoirs have been consulted for this book and a few protagonists interviewed.⁵⁹ Where appropriate, this has been reflected in the text and endnotes. However, it has been left to researchers with a greater command of the Burmese language to follow up the matters raised below, and to make the public record more complete.

For heuristic purposes, and to portray a very complex picture more clearly, the following examination of this subject has been divided into a number of separate chapters and sections within a broadly chronological framework. However, it is recognized that some subject areas overlap and there are both consistencies and inconsistencies in the historical record. As in the 2019 volume, ample notes and references have been provided to help readers identify quotations, or at least to find publications that in different ways have influenced my views. They are also intended to underline my complete reliance on open sources. Additional notes have been included so that readers can follow up specific issues and, if they wish, draw their own conclusions. For, as explained above, this book cannot claim to provide the last word on Myanmar's intelligence apparatus. As the American intelligence scholar Anthony Alcot has noted, the abundance of open sources, even on a subject as opaque and specialized as this, "makes the story much richer, but it also makes quite clear that this is *a* story, not *the* story".⁶⁰ This is a baseline study, not a definitive study.

One final note is required to set the record straight. Following the release of the first edition of this book in 2019, the publishers received a request from Myanmar for permission to translate the book into Burmese, for local distribution. For a number of reasons, not least concerns about the precise rendition of the text, with all its nuances and carefully worded assessments, this permission was denied. Not long afterwards, however, a Burmese language edition of the book appeared and was put on sale in Myanmar.⁶¹ This translation was completely unauthorized. At no stage was any attempt made to clear it with either the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute as the publisher, or me as the author of the original work. It should not, therefore, be taken to be an accurate facsimile of the first edition. Indeed, the melodramatic cover illustration of the pirate version, depicting a wolf's head with red eyes and blood dripping from its jaws, suggests that, in the interest of higher retail sales, the publisher deliberately ignored the conscious attempt made for the original version to be free of the political bias, emotional language and sensationalism that has characterized so many other treatments of this subject.⁶²

With this in mind, perhaps the last word should go to Richard Dearlove, a former chief of the UK's Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, or MI6), who has written:

Writing intelligence history is problematic. The difficulties it presents are essentially two-fold. First there is the issue of archives and records. ... The second difficulty is how to rise above the sensationalism of the "spy story" and write something that delivers a serious historical perspective.⁶³

This book attempts to tackle both challenges.

Canberra, January 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.

Issac Newton
Letter to Robert Hooke⁶⁴

In researching and writing this book, I was assisted by many friends, colleagues and fellow Myanmar-watchers. Notable among them was *Sayagyi* David Steinberg, for many years the doyen of modern Myanmar studies, who sadly passed away in December 2024. Also deserving specific mention are Sean Turnell, Bertil Lintner, Martin Smith, Maung Aung Myoe, Robert Taylor, Jacques Leider, Rhys Thompson, John Brandon and Lindsay Stubbs. Before his untimely death in 2016, I enjoyed several discussions with Des Ball, who made his own intellectual excursions into Myanmar's shadowy intelligence world.⁶⁵ Brian Martin read through an early version of my manuscript and offered helpful comments. The National Unity Government representative in Canberra, Tun Aung Shwe, was generous with his time and resources. I am also grateful to the NUG officials based elsewhere who answered my queries and provided me with additional information.

Moe Thuzar, the Coordinator of the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute's Myanmar Studies Programme, kindly wrote the foreword to this book. Veteran Myanmar-watchers Bertil Lintner and Martin Smith, and noted intelligence scholars Mark Phythian and Bob de Graaf, read the manuscript before publication and provided endorsements. I owe them all my thanks.

For various reasons, including in many cases the fear of reprisals at the hands of Myanmar's military regime, others who helped me did not wish to be named, but I am grateful to them too. I am particularly indebted to one retired Burmese official who critiqued my 1998 academic article on Myanmar's intelligence apparatus, suggested a number of changes and added useful context to some of my observations. A couple of former Myanmar police officers were also helpful, in various ways, as was a well-informed United Nations official formerly based in Yangon. The Defence Attaché of

one regional country even allowed me access to his official files, which was a remarkably generous gesture. My old friend the *Boh Hmu Gyi* corrected my Burmese and in other ways helped to keep me honest. Also, as far as their official positions allowed, friends and former colleagues in the international intelligence community helped me with advice, references and other support.

Since its formation under Nicholas Farrelly in 2015, and with the continuing involvement of internationally-recognized scholars like Morten Pedersen and Nick Cheesman, the Myanmar Research Centre at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra has provided me with inspiration, information and opportunities, particularly through its biennial Burma/Myanmar Update conferences, which date back to 1999. The Centre's publications and meetings are valuable resources for all students of Myanmar, and deserve continuing support.⁶⁶

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the staff and members of the Griffith Asia Institute (GAI) at Griffith University. Since I joined the GAI in 2006, they have been a consistent source of support and encouragement as I have pursued my third career, as a full-time research scholar and Myanmar-watcher. Special mention must be made of Meegan Thorley and Jill Moriarty, who have shepherded my various writings from the manuscript stage to hard copy and online publications. I am also grateful for Stephen McCarthy's friendship and advice over the past 18 years, on subjects that have ranged far beyond Myanmar and its peculiar academic challenges.

This is the fourth book that I have released through ISEAS Publishing, a component of the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore. Once again, I should like to acknowledge the skill, professionalism and courtesy of the Managing Editor and his staff, and thank them for their help with my research projects.

Last, but certainly by no means least, I want to thank my wife Pattie, to whom this book is dedicated. For 40 years, she has not only tolerated my abiding interest in everything to do with Myanmar, large and small, professional and private, but she has also been a constant source of encouragement, support and advice. During this time, she has probably learned more about Myanmar than she ever really wanted to know. I owe her much more than I can record here.

Needless to say, any errors of commission or omission are mine alone. Also, for the record, my writings on intelligence and intelligence agencies in Myanmar draw only on open sources, represent my views alone and have no official status or endorsement.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS⁶⁷

In English

2PLA	Second Department of the PLA's Joint Staff Department
3BHA (also TBA)	Three Brotherhood Alliance
3PLA	Third Department of the PLA's Joint Staff Department
4PLA	Fourth Department of the PLA's Joint Staff Department
AA	Arakan Army
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABFSU	All Burma Federation of Student Unions
ABSDF	All Burma Student Democratic Front
AEG	armed ethnic group
AF	Asia Foundation
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
AILO	Air Intelligence Liaison Officer
AIR	All India Radio
AIU	Air Intelligence Unit
AMIM	ASEAN Military Intelligence Meeting
ANSP	Agency for National Security Planning
ANU	Australian National University
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
ASD	Australian Signals Directorate
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN-ISIS	ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies
ASEANAPOL	ASEAN Chiefs of National Police

ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
ASIS	Australian Secret Intelligence Service
AUSTRAC	Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre
BA	Burma Army
BACSA	British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia
BAF	Burma Air Force
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCE	Before Christian Era, or Before Common Era
BCP	Burma Communist Party
BDA	Burma Defence Army
BDB	Burma Defence Bureau
BGP	Border Guard Police
BIA	Burma Independence Army
BIC	Burma Intelligence Corps
BJSM	British Joint Services Mission
BMP	Burma Military Police
BN	Burma Navy
BNA	Burma National Army
BP	Burma Police
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa Group
BRUSA	Britain-United States of America Agreement
BSI	Bureau of Special Investigations
BSM	see BJSM
BSO	Bureau of Special Operations
BSPP	Burma Socialist Programme Party
BURMA	Burma Unified through Rigorous Military Accountability (Act)
C3C	Central Command and Coordination Committee
C4I	Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence
CBI	China-Burma-India (Theatre)
CCCT	Central Committee on Counter-Terrorism

CCF	Congress for Cultural Freedom
CCTV	closed-circuit television
CDM	Civil Disobedience Movement
CEC	Central Executive Committee
CI	Chief of Intelligence
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIB	Criminal Investigation Branch
CICIR	China Institute(s) of Contemporary International Relations
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CIF	Chinese Irregular Forces
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CIO	Central Intelligence Organisation
CIO	Civil Intelligence Officer
CNN	Cable News Network
COIN	counter-insurgency
COMINT	communications intelligence
COMSEC	communications security
CPB	Communist Party of Burma
CRDB	Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma
CRPH	Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw
CRPPFMS	Committee for Reform of the People's Police Force Management System
CSIS	Centre for Strategic and International Studies
DA	Defence Attache
DAB	Democratic Alliance of Burma
DC	District of Columbia
DDSI	Directorate of Defence Services Intelligence
DDSS	Directorate of Defence Services Security
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DF	direction finding
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DGFI	Directorate General of Forces Intelligence

DIA	Defence Intelligence Agency
DIO	Defence Intelligence Organisation
DKBA	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
DMI	Department of Military Intelligence
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence
DMI	Directorate of Military Intelligence
DOI	Directorate of Operations and Intelligence
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
DSA	Defence Services Academy
DSAC	Defence Services Attaché Corps
DSD	Defence Signals Directorate
DSIB	Defence Services Intelligence Bureau
DSIC	Defence Services Intelligence Centre
DSISD	Defence Services Intelligence Support Depot
DSMA	Department of Security on Military Affairs
DSO	Defence Security Officer
DVB	Democratic Voice of Burma
EO	ethnic armed organisation
EIC	East India Company
ELINT	electronic intelligence
ERO	ethnic revolutionary organisation
ERO	ethnic resistance organization
EU	European Union
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FEER	Far Eastern Economic Review
FININT	financial intelligence
FISINT	foreign instrumentation signals intelligence
FIU	Financial Intelligence Unit
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)
FRT	facial recognition technology
FSS	Field Security Section

FVEY	“Five Eyes” intelligence alliance
G-2 (and GS-2)	army general staff section dealing with intelligence at the divisional level and above
GAD	General Administration Department
GAI	Griffith Asia Institute
GCSB	Government Communications Security Bureau
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
GEOINT	geospatial intelligence
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GPS	global positioning system
GSO	General Staff Officer
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HQ	headquarters
HUMINT	human intelligence
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IB	Intelligence Branch
IBMND	Intelligence Bureau of the Ministry of National Defence
ICA	International Cooperation Administration
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IDP	internally displaced person (or people)
IDF	Israel Defence Force
IED	improvised explosive device
IJA	Imperial Japanese Army
IIFMM	Independent International Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar
IIMM	Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar

IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMINT	imagery intelligence
INR	Bureau of Intelligence and Research
INSCOM	Intelligence and Security Command
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organisation
IO	Intelligence Officer
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPi	Indian Political Intelligence (Department)
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRD	Information Research Department
ISEAS	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
ISLD	Inter-Services Liaison Department
ISI	Inter Services Intelligence
ISIS	Institute for Science and International Security
IT	information technology
J2C	Joint Command and Communication
JADE	Junta's Anti-Democratic Efforts (Act)
JCLEC	Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
JID	Joint Intelligence Directorate
JMB	Jamaat ul Mujahideen Bangladesh
KCIA	Korean Central Intelligence Agency
KHRG	Karen Human Rights Group
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
KIO	Kachin Independence Organisation
KNDO	Karen National Defence Organisation
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army
KNLA-PC	Karen National Liberation Army—Peace Council
KNU	Karen National Union
LDF	Local Defence Forces
LID	Light Infantry Division

LIG	lawful interception gateway
LMIS	Light Military Intelligence Sections
LORC	Law and Order Restoration Council
MA	Myanmar Army
MAF	Myanmar Air Force
MAS	Military Affairs Security
MASINT	measurements and signatures intelligence
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFIU	Myanmar Financial Intelligence Unit
MI	Military Intelligence
MI5	Military Intelligence, Section 5 (UK Security Service)
MI6	Military Intelligence, Section 6 (UK Secret Intelligence Service)
MIB	Military Intelligence Bureau
MID	Military Intelligence Directorate
MIO	Military Intelligence Officer
MIS	Military Intelligence Section
MIS	Military Intelligence Service
MISIS	Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies
MN	Myanmar Navy
MND	Ministry of National Defence
MNDAA	Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
MOIC-IC	Ministry of International Cooperation—(Department of) Intelligence Cooperation
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MPF	Myanmar Police Force
MPS	Ministry of Public Security
MPT	Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications
MRTV	Myanmar Radio and Television
MSA	Military Security Affairs
MSS	Ministry of State Security

MTA	Mong Tai Army
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCGUB	National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NCSC	National Cyber Security Centre
NDSC	National Defence and Security Council
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	non-government organisation
NIA	National Intelligence Agency
NIB	National Intelligence Board
NIB	National Intelligence Bureau
NIDS	National Institute for Defence Studies
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
NIS	National Intelligence Service
NIU	Navy Intelligence Unit
NLD	National League for Democracy
NSA	National Security Agency
NSAG	non-state armed groups
NSCN	National Socialist Council of Nagaland
NUG	National Unity Government
NUP	National Unity Party
OCC	Operations Control Command
OCMAS	Office of the Chief of Military Affairs Security
OCMI	Office of the Chief of Military Intelligence
OCMSA	Office of the Chief of Military Security Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
OR	Other Ranks
OSINT	open source intelligence
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OSS	Office of Strategic Studies
OTS	Officer Training School

P(4)	People's Property Protection Police
PDC	Peace and Development Council
PDF	People's Defence Force
PDP	Parliamentary Democracy Party
PDT	People's Defence Teams
PHOTINT	photographic intelligence
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PM	Prime Minister
POW	prisoner of war
PPF	People's Police Force
PRC	People's Republic of China
QMG	Quarter-Master General
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAW (also R&AW)	Research and Analysis Wing
RCP	Rangoon City Police
RFA	Radio Free Asia
RIIA	Royal Institute of International Affairs
RMC	Regional Military Command
RMP	Royal Military Police
RN	Royal Navy
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
RRT	Refugee Review Tribunal
RTA	Royal Thai Army
RTP	Rangoon Town Police
SAC	State Administration Council
SAC-M	Special Advisory Council—Myanmar
SAIS	School of Advanced International Studies
SB	Special Branch
SCMP	South China Morning Post

SCS	Special Collection Service
SDC	Security and Defence Council
SDSC	Strategic and Defence Studies Centre
SEAC	Southeast Asia Command
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
SIB	Special Intelligence Bureau
SID	Special Investigations Department
SIFE	Security Intelligence Far East
SIGINT	signals intelligence
SIM	subscriber identity module
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
SLO	Security Liaison Office(r)
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SMS	short message service
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SS	Security Service
SSA	Shan State Army
STU	secure telephone units
SUA	Shan United Army
TBA (also 3BHA)	Three Brotherhood Alliance
TELINT	telemetry intelligence
TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UG	Underground
UK	United Kingdom
UKUSA	United Kingdom-United States Agreement
UMP	Union Military Police
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOSAT	United Nations Satellite Centre
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
URC	Union Revolutionary Council
US (and USA)	United States (of America)
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USDA	Union Solidarity Development Association
USDP	Union Solidarity Development Party
USIB	United States Intelligence Board
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UWSA	United Wa State Army
UWSP	United Wa Solidarity Party
VIP	very important person
VOA	Voice of America
VOPB	Voice of the People of Burma
VPN	virtual private networks
WEN	“wrinkle, eye and nose” facial identification system
WPC	World Peace Council

In Burmese⁶⁸

<i>BaKaTha</i>	All Burma Students Union
<i>DaKaSa</i>	Regional Operations Command
<i>KKY</i>	<i>Karkweye</i> (or <i>Ka Kwe Ye</i>)
<i>KaKaCom</i>	Public Relations and Information Production Unit
<i>KaKaGyi</i>	Defence Department
<i>KaPaSa</i>	Directorate of Defence Industries

<i>KaYaKha</i>	Coastal Regional Military Command
<i>KhaLaYa</i>	Infantry Battalion
<i>KhaMaYa</i>	Light Infantry Battalion
<i>LaKaTa</i>	Air Defence Battalions
<i>LaPaKha</i>	Central Regional Military Command
<i>Lon Htein</i>	Security Preservation Battalion
<i>MaAhLa</i>	Senior General Min Aung Hlaing
<i>MaBaTha</i>	Association for the Protection of Race and Religion
<i>MaPaKha</i>	Northern Regional Military Command
<i>MaWaTa</i>	Township Law and Order Restoration Council
<i>MaSaLa</i>	Burma Socialist Programme Party
<i>MaYaKa</i>	Township Peace and Development Council
<i>NaAhPha</i>	State Peace and Development Council
<i>NaAhSa</i>	State Administration Council
<i>NaBaHa</i>	Tactical Operations Command
<i>NaKaTha</i>	Border Trade Directorate
<i>NaMaKha</i>	Northwest Regional Military Command
<i>NaPaKha</i>	Western Regional Military Command
<i>NaPaTa</i>	Naypyidaw Military Command
<i>NaSaKa</i>	Border Area Immigration Control Command
<i>NaSaYa</i>	Border Area Operation Command (also Border Supervisory Battalions)
<i>NaTaKha</i>	Southwestern Regional Military Command
<i>NaTaLa</i>	Ministry for the Progress of Border Areas and National Races
<i>NaWaTa</i>	State Law and Order Restoration Council
<i>PaKhaHpa</i>	People's Defence Teams
<i>PaWaTa</i>	State (e.g., Chin State) Law and Order Restoration Council
<i>Pi Leh</i>	P4 (Public Property Protection Police)
<i>SaBaHa</i>	Strategic Operations Command
<i>SaKaKha</i>	Military Operations Command (or Operation Control Command)

<i>SaKaSa</i>	military council
<i>SaPhaRa</i>	Military Affairs Security
<i>SaSaSa</i>	Bureau of Special Investigations
<i>Sa Thone Lon</i>	see <i>SaSaSa</i>
<i>SaYaHpa</i>	military intelligence organisation
<i>SaYaKha</i>	Office of the Chief of Military Security Affairs
<i>SaYaPha</i>	see <i>SaYaHpa</i>
<i>TaMaKha</i>	Light Infantry Division
<i>TaLaYa</i>	military intelligence
<i>TaPaKha</i>	Southern Regional Military Command
<i>TaThaKha</i>	Triangle Regional Military Command
<i>TaWaTa</i>	Divisional (e.g., Mandalay Division) Law and Order Restoration Council
<i>ThaKaSaPha</i>	pro-government militia groups
<i>YaMaKha</i>	Northeastern Regional Military Command
<i>YaKaTa</i>	Yangon Regional Military Command
<i>YaLaKha</i>	Eastern Central Military Command
<i>YaPaKha</i>	Eastern Regional Military Command
<i>YaTaKha</i>	Southeastern Regional Military Command
<i>YaWaTa</i>	Ward/Village Law and Order Restoration Council
<i>YaYaKa</i>	Ward/Village Peace and Development Council

In Other Languages⁶⁹

AD	<i>Anno Domini</i> (“in the year of our lord”)
ADC	<i>aide-de-camp</i>
<i>Aman</i>	<i>Agaf ha-Modiim</i> (Military Intelligence Directorate)
BND	<i>Bundesnachrichtendienst</i> (Federal Intelligence Service)
CERI	<i>Centre d’Etudes et de Recherches Internationales</i> (Centre for International Studies and Research)
DGSE	<i>Direction Generale de la Securite Exterieur</i> (General Directorate for External Security)

DW	<i>Deutsche Welle</i> (literally “German Wave”)
FSB	<i>Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti</i> (Federal Security Service)
GCR	<i>Groupe des Controles Radioelectriques</i> (Radio Control Group)
<i>Gestapo</i>	<i>Geheime Staatspolizei</i> (Secret State Police)
GMD	<i>Guomindang</i> (see KMT)
<i>Gonganbu</i>	<i>Gonggong Anquan Bu</i> (Ministry of Public Security, or MPS)
GRU	<i>Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravleniye</i> (Main Intelligence Directorate of the Soviet General Staff)
GU	<i>Glavnoye Upravleniye</i> (Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation)
<i>Guoanbu</i>	<i>Guojia Anquan Bu</i> (Ministry of State Security, or MSS)
IRASEC	<i>Institut de Recherche sur l’Asie du Sud-Est Contemporaine</i> (Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia)
KGB	<i>Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti</i> (Committee for State Security)
KMT	<i>Kuomintang</i> (Chinese Nationalist Party, literally “China’s National People’s Party”)
MfS	<i>Ministerium fur Staatssicherheit</i> (Ministry for State Security)
<i>Mossad</i>	<i>Ha Mossad le Modiyn ve le Tsfkidim Mayuhadim</i> (Central Institute for Intelligence and Security)
MSF	<i>Medecins Sans Frontieres</i> (Doctors Without Borders)
RSF	<i>Reporters Sans Frontieres</i> (Reporters Without Borders)
SA	<i>Service d’Action</i> (Action Service)
SD	<i>Sicherheitsdienst</i> (Security Service)
SDECE	<i>Service de Documentation Exterieur et de Contre-Espionnage</i> (External Documentation and Counter-Espionage Service)
<i>Shabak</i>	see <i>Shin Bet</i>
<i>Shin Bet</i>	<i>Sherut ha-Bitahon ha-Klali</i> (General Security Service)
<i>Shin Bet Kaf</i>	see <i>Shabak</i>
SR	<i>Service de Renseignement</i> (Intelligence Service)
SS	<i>Schutzstaffel</i> (literally “protective echelon” or “protection squadron”)

SSD	see <i>Stasi</i>
<i>Stasi</i>	<i>Staatssicherheitsdienst</i> (State Security Service)
STR	<i>Service Technique des Reserches</i> (Technical Research Department)
SVR	<i>Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki</i> (Foreign Intelligence Service)
VSN	<i>Volontaires de la Securite Nationale</i> (National Security Volunteers)

GLOSSARY⁷⁰

In Burmese⁷¹

<i>a seik tha</i>	foetuses in the womb
<i>Aba Aye</i>	“father Aye”
<i>Aba Gyi</i>	great father or grandfather
<i>amair like kwe</i>	hunting dog
<i>amay</i>	mother
<i>Amyotha Hluttaw</i>	House of Nationalities
<i>Apho Gyi</i> (or <i>apohgyi</i>)	the old man, or the big guy
<i>ataukdaw</i>	royal assistant
<i>azani</i>	martyr
<i>Baho Htauk Hlanye Tat</i>	Defence Services Intelligence Centre
<i>Bama Pyi Kommyunit Pati</i>	Communist Party of Burma
<i>Bamar</i>	ethnic Burman
<i>baydin saya</i>	astrologer (literally “astrology teacher”)
<i>Bo</i> (or <i>Boh</i>)	lieutenant, also military officer or leader
<i>Bo Gyi</i>	captain
<i>Bo Gyoke</i> (also <i>Bogyoke</i>)	major general ⁷²
<i>Bo Gyoke Gyi</i>	general ⁷³
<i>Bo Gyoke Hmu Gyi</i>	senior general
<i>Bo Hmu</i>	major
<i>Bo Hmu Gyi</i>	colonel
<i>Bo Hmu Gyoke</i>	brigadier general
<i>bo kabya</i>	Eurasian
<i>Bodaw</i>	title given to respected leaders and ascetics (“noble grandfather”)

<i>Bogadaw</i>	colonial-era term for the Burmese wife of a (usually white) foreigner
<i>da shoh</i>	spy
<i>dacoit</i>	armed bandit
<i>dah</i>	sword or machete
<i>dalan</i>	informer
<i>Dhamika</i>	title given to lay Buddhist teacher
<i>Daw</i>	female term of respect (literally “aunt”)
<i>Dobama Asiayone</i>	We Burmans Association
<i>d’pyet hleh</i>	sweeper
<i>Du Bo</i>	second lieutenant
<i>Du Bo Gyoke Gyi</i>	lieutenant general
<i>Du Bo Gyoke Hmu Gyi</i>	vice senior general
<i>Du Bo Hmu Gyi</i>	lieutenant colonel
<i>Duwa</i>	chief (literally “big man”) in Kachin
<i>Galon</i>	Garuda, a mythical creature
<i>hlan</i>	spear, lance or javelin
<i>Hluttaw</i>	Council of State
<i>hpoun (or hpon)</i>	spiritual power
<i>htamein</i>	Burmese woman’s sarong
<i>Htein Chan Hmu</i>	criminal concealment (literally “leaving out the news”)
<i>kalar</i>	foreigner (usually South Asian)
<i>kalar ma (or kalama)</i>	female foreigners
<i>kalar pyu</i>	Caucasian (literally “white foreigner”)
<i>Karkweye (or Ka Kwe Ye)</i>	local defence forces (literally “defence”)
<i>Karkweye Pyitsu Setyoun</i>	Directorate for Defence Industries
<i>Karkweye Wungyi Htana</i>	Ministry of Defence
<i>karma</i>	Buddhist principle of causality, doctrine of births and rebirths
<i>kawlahala</i>	rumours
<i>Kawthoolei (also Kaw-thu-lay)</i>	Karenland (literally “land without darkness” in S’ghaw Karen)

<i>Ko</i>	title of a young male or close male friend (literally “brother”)
<i>koyin</i>	novice Buddhist monk
<i>Kumudra</i>	species of lotus flower
<i>kwe</i>	dog
<i>kwe yu</i>	mad dog
<i>kya gyi</i>	big tiger
<i>kyaung</i>	monastery or school
<i>kyaung chee</i>	cat shit
<i>kyat</i>	the state currency
<i>kywe</i>	rat
<i>lon choan yei</i>	security
<i>Lon-chon-hmu Htein-thein</i> <i>Tat-yin</i>	security preservation (or maintenance) battalion
<i>lu kaun lu taw</i>	loyal people before smart people (literally “good person, clever person”)
<i>lu that thamar</i>	killer
<i>lubyandaw</i>	former Buddhist monks (literally “the great returned”)
<i>Ma</i>	title of a young female or close female friend (literally “sister”)
<i>Maran</i>	one of the five main Jinghpaw clans, in the wider Kachin ethnic group
<i>Maung</i>	title given to young males (also adopted by older men to display modesty)
<i>Medaw</i>	the feminine form of <i>Bodaw</i>
<i>minlaung</i>	“future king” or pretender to the throne
<i>moe kyo</i>	lightning
<i>mone daing</i>	storm
<i>mone thon</i>	monsoon
<i>Myanmar Yae Tat Hpwe</i>	Myanmar Police Force
<i>myoza</i>	lesser Shan prince
<i>na hkan (or nakandaw)</i>	receivers of royal orders

<i>Naing Ngan</i> (or <i>nainggan</i>)	state or polity
<i>nats</i>	animist spirits or ghosts
<i>Naw</i>	Karen equivalent of Burmese “Daw”
<i>nga pway</i>	ringworm
<i>ngwegunhmu</i>	lesser Shan prince
<i>para</i>	secret agent
<i>parabaik</i>	folding book manuscript
<i>pasein yo</i>	“axe handle”
<i>paso</i> (or <i>pasoc</i>)	traditional sarong-like wrap
<i>pauk phaw</i>	kinsfolk or fraternal
<i>pe sar</i>	palm leaf manuscripts
<i>pi</i> (or <i>pye</i>)	“pariah” (dog)
<i>pongyi</i>	Buddhist monk (literally “great glory”)
<i>pwe</i>	festival or celebration
<i>pya leh pya</i> (or <i>hpyat lei hpyat</i>)	four cuts (COIN strategy)
<i>Pyaung Shin</i>	name of death squad (literally “to clear all”)
<i>pyidaungsu</i>	union
<i>Pyidaungsu Hluttaw</i>	Union Assembly
<i>Pyitthu Hluttaw</i>	People’s Assembly, also House of Representatives
<i>Pyitthu Karkweye Tatmadaw</i>	People’s Defence Force
<i>Pyitthu Sit</i>	People’s Militia (literally “people’s war”)
<i>Pyitthu Yae Tup Pwe</i>	People’s Police Force
<i>Pyusawhti</i> (or <i>Pyu Saw Htee</i>)	name given to irregular militia
<i>sangha</i>	community of Buddhist monks
<i>saohpa</i>	Shan prince (literally “lord of the sky”)
<i>Saw</i>	Karen equivalent of the Burmese “U”
<i>sawbwa</i>	Shan prince
<i>Saya</i>	teacher, also patron or respected elder
<i>Saya ma</i> (or <i>Sayama</i>)	female teacher or elder

<i>Sayadaw</i>	title usually given to a senior Buddhist monk (literally “royal teacher”)
<i>Sayagyi</i> (sometimes <i>Saya Gyi</i>)	male term of respect (literally “great teacher”)
<i>shwit a’pweh</i>	“shwit” group
<i>Shwe Daw Pyee</i> , also <i>Shwe Pyi</i>	Golden Land
<i>shwe wah yung</i>	saffron (colour)
<i>sit bo</i>	military officer
<i>sit htauk lanye</i>	military intelligence
<i>Sit Htauk Hlanye Atatthin Kyaung</i>	Military Intelligence Training Centre
<i>sit kwe</i>	military dogs (also “running dogs”)
<i>Sit Maha Byuha Leilaryay Htana</i>	Office of Strategic Studies
<i>sit na</i> (or <i>sit nah</i>)	“ear of the army”
<i>sit tat</i> (or <i>sitdat</i>)	military forces
<i>sit tha</i>	soldier
<i>sit yeh</i>	military police
<i>sitkyawye</i>	interrogation
<i>sitkyawye sagan</i>	interrogation sites
<i>Swann Ar Shin</i>	“Masters of Force”
<i>taing yin tha</i>	national races
<i>tapyit</i>	junior, acolyte or follower
<i>tar wun</i>	on duty
<i>tat</i>	military unit
<i>tat khwe</i>	company
<i>tat ma</i>	light infantry division
<i>tat su</i>	rifle platoon
<i>tat yinn</i>	battalion
<i>Tatmadaw</i>	armed forces (literally “royal force”)
<i>Tatmadaw Kyi</i>	Myanmar Army
<i>Tatmadaw Lei</i>	Myanmar Air Force

<i>Tatmadaw Yay</i>	Myanmar Navy
<i>Tawhlanye Kaungzi</i>	Union Revolutionary Council
<i>tekkatho</i>	university
<i>tha bone</i>	rebel
<i>Thakin</i>	master, or lord
<i>thar ku</i>	opportunists
<i>theippan</i>	writer
<i>Thiha</i>	lion (title)
<i>thit sar phauk</i>	traitor or betrayer (literally “broken legal promise”)
<i>thoke thin ye</i>	to wipe clean, or eliminate
<i>thu hla yoe</i>	spy, or “person doing secret things”
<i>thubon sit-tat</i>	rebel army
<i>Thura</i>	brave (title)
<i>toe</i>	extend, or renew
<i>tumee (or Tu Mee)</i>	traditional black powder firearm
<i>U</i>	male term of respect (literally “uncle”)
<i>Wuntauk</i>	title of official assisting Hluttaw ministers
<i>yadaya</i>	magic rituals to prevent, neutralize or delay misfortune
<i>yae htauk lanye</i>	police intelligence
<i>yatharahavanna</i>	secret agent
<i>yebaw</i>	comrade

In Other Languages

<i>a la mode</i>	stylish, fashionable
<i>ab initio</i>	from the beginning
<i>Abwehr</i>	German military intelligence service (literally “defence”)
<i>ad hoc</i>	for this situation
<i>ad hominem</i>	directed against a person rather than the views they are expressing

<i>agent provocateur</i>	a person who encourages another to perform an illegal act (literally “inciting agent”)
<i>agrement</i>	agreement by a state to receive members of a diplomatic mission
<i>aide-de-camp</i>	military officer serving as a personal assistant to a senior officer (literally “camp assistant”)
<i>akhbar nawis</i>	news-reader, or reporter
<i>Anno Domini</i>	“in the year of our lord”
<i>apparatchik</i>	someone who holds a position of political or bureaucratic responsibility
<i>badmaash</i> (also <i>badmash</i>)	a villain, a dishonest or evil person
<i>baw bi doh</i>	short pants
<i>Braunhemden</i>	Brownshirts
<i>Camicie Nere</i>	Blackshirts
<i>carte blanche</i>	complete freedom to act as one wishes (literally “blank document”)
<i>Charge d’Affaires</i>	A diplomat appointed to act in the place of an absent head of mission (literally “a person charged with business”)
<i>Ch’ing pao chu</i>	Intelligence Bureau of the Ministry of National Defence
<i>circa</i> (c.)	approximately (literally “around” or “about”)
<i>coup d’état</i>	sudden, violent and unlawful seizure of power (literally “stroke of state”)
<i>de facto</i>	in fact, whether by right or not
<i>de rigueur</i>	demanding by fashion, custom (literally “out of strictness”)
<i>Ecole Francais d’Extreme Orient</i>	French School of the Far East
<i>Einsatzgruppen</i>	deployment groups, task forces
<i>en clair</i>	in plain language
<i>et al</i> (or <i>et alia</i>)	and others
<i>ex officio</i>	by virtue of office or position

<i>ex post facto</i>	having retrospective effect (literally “from a thing done afterwards”)
<i>gravitas</i>	weight or heaviness
<i>havildar</i>	non-commissioned officer in the Indian army, equivalent in rank to sergeant
<i>hawala</i>	See <i>hundi</i>
<i>hundi</i>	remittance system for trade and financial transfers (literally “collect”)
<i>inoffizielle mitarbeiter</i>	citizen informers (literally “unofficial collaborators”)
<i>inter alia</i>	among other things
<i>ipso facto</i>	by the fact itself
<i>jihad</i>	holy war
<i>Kempeitai</i> (also <i>Kempei</i>)	Military Police Corps (literally “Law Soldier Regiment”, also “Law Police”)
<i>Lianhe Canmou</i> <i>Qingbaoju</i>	Joint Staff Department
<i>Mahatma</i>	great soul
<i>mewras</i>	runners
<i>Minami Kikan</i>	Minami Agency, or Organisation (after the pseudonym “Minami Masuyo”)
<i>modus operandi</i>	a particular way of doing something (literally “mode of operating”)
<i>modus vivendi</i>	arrangement allowing parties to coexist peacefully until a final settlement can be reached (literally “manner of living”)
<i>mujahideen</i>	Muslims engaged in a holy war, or <i>jihad</i>
<i>Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient</i>	Intelligence Bureau for the East
<i>nom de guerre</i>	pseudonym usually chosen during a time of conflict (literally “war name”)
<i>nomenklatura</i>	privileged member of the higher ranks of management
<i>passim</i>	found throughout (literally “spread”)

<i>per se</i>	by itself, or in itself
<i>plus ça change</i>	“the more things change ...” (the more they stay the same)
<i>pundit</i>	wise or learned man (also used to describe native surveyors acting secretly)
<i>raison d'être</i>	reason or justification for existence
<i>realpolitik</i>	politics based on practical, rather than moral or ethical considerations
<i>rezidentura</i>	intelligence station (literally “residency”)
<i>spasa</i>	watchers
<i>sui generis</i>	unique (literally “of its own kind”)
<i>Thahan Prah</i>	Thai Rangers (literally “hunter soldiers”)
<i>terra incognita</i>	unknown land
<i>Tonton Macoute</i>	“Uncle Gunnysack” (Haitian secret police)
<i>vis-à-vis</i>	in relation to (literally “face to face”)
<i>Wehrmacht</i>	armed forces of Nazi Germany
<i>Xinhua</i>	New China
<i>yaba</i> (also <i>yaa baa</i>)	insanity drug or crazy medicine
<i>yama</i> (also <i>yaa maa</i>)	horse drug or horse pills
<i>Zongcan Er Bu</i>	Second Department of the PLA's Joint Staff Department
<i>Zongcan San Bu</i>	Third Department of the PLA's Joint Staff Department

Notes

1. L.W. Pye, *The Spirit of Burmese Politics: A Preliminary Survey of a Politics of Fear and Charisma* (Cambridge: Centre for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1959), p. 14.
2. US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, press briefing at the Pentagon, Washington DC, 12 February 2002.
3. Andrew Selth, *Burma's Intelligence Apparatus*, Working Paper No. 308 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1997).
4. Andrew Selth, “SLORC's ‘Intel-Net’: Burma's Intelligence Apparatus”, *Burma Debate*, Vol. 4, No. 4, October 1997, pp. 4–18.

5. Andrew Selth, "Myanmar revamps its military intelligence apparatus", *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter*, Vol. 24, No. 4, June-July 1998, pp. 11–12.
6. Andrew Selth, "Burma's Intelligence Apparatus", *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 13, No. 4, Winter 1998, pp. 33–70.
7. Andrew Selth, *Burma's Armed Forces: Power Without Glory* (Norwalk: EastBridge, 2002).
8. Louis Allen, "Japanese Intelligence Systems", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 22, No. 4, October 1987, p. 547.
9. Andrew Selth, *Secrets and Power in Myanmar: Intelligence and the Fall of General Khin Nyunt* (Singapore: ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, 2019). An article drawn from this book was published as Andrew Selth, "Myanmar's Intelligence Apparatus and the Fall of General Khin Nyunt", *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 34, No. 5, May 2019, pp. 619–36. See also Andrew Selth, "Myanmar's intelligence apparatus since the fall of General Khin Nyunt in 2004", *Griffith Asia Insights*, 28 March 2019, at <https://blogs.griffith.edu.au/asiainsights/myanmars-intelligence-apparatus-since-the-fall-of-general-khin-nyunt-in-2004/>.
10. Andrew Selth, "Myanmar", in Bob de Graaf (ed.), *Intelligence Communities and Cultures in Asia and the Middle East* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2020), pp. 197–214. See also Andrew Selth, *Myanmar: An Enduring Intelligence State or a State Enduring Intelligence?*, Asia Policy Paper (Washington DC: Stimson Centre, 7 April 2021), at <https://www.stimson.org/2021/myanmar-an-enduring-intelligence-state/>.
11. See, for example, Andrew Selth, "Myanmar's Intelligence State", *Australian Outlook*, 20 September 2018, at <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/myanmars-intelligence-state/>.
12. Andrew Selth, "Myanmar's intelligence apparatus under Aung San Suu Kyi", *The Interpreter*, 12 April 2019, at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/myanmar-s-intelligence-apparatus-under-aung-san-suu-kyi>.
13. Andrew Selth, *Myanmar's Armed Forces and the Rohingya Crisis*, Peaceworks No. 140 (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2018), p. 27.
14. Andrew Selth, "Investigating an Authoritarian Intelligence Apparatus: The Case of Myanmar", *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2025, pp.187–95, advance copy posted online 10 December 2024, at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02684527.2024.2433820?scroll=top&needAccess=true>; and Andrew Selth, "Spy vs Spy: Myanmar's Multiple Counterintelligence Challenges", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, advance copy posted online 25 April 2025, pp.1–34, at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/08850607.2025.2453723?needAccess=true>.
15. Andrew Selth, "Myanmar: The Development of an Intelligence State", in Ryan Shaffer and ASM Ali Ashraf (eds.), *Intelligence Services in South Asia: Colonial Past and Post-Colonial Realities* (New York: Routledge, 2025), pp. 116–32.
16. In this regard, the names that stand out are Edmund R. Leach, Melford E. Spiro, Manning Nash and (to stretch the category a little) Lucian W. Pye.

17. When Cornell University awarded a PhD for a dissertation on Myanmar in 1974, it was the first time that it had done so to a social studies postgraduate student who had not been “in the field”. Personal communication, 9 November 2017.
18. Ghosh, Amitav, “A Reporter at Large: Burma”, *The New Yorker*, 12 August 1996, p. 39.
19. Operation Paper is usefully summarized in John W. Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance: Nationalist China and American Cold War Strategy in Asia* (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 148–66.
20. Bertil Lintner, “Reporting Isn’t Easy: The Foreign Correspondent in Rangoon”, *Nieman Reports*, Vol. 50, Winter 1996, pp. 69–70.
21. D.I. Steinberg, *Burma: The State of Myanmar* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2001), p. xxv.
22. Emma Larkin, *Everything Is Broken: A Tale of Catastrophe in Burma* (New York: Penguin, 2010), pp. 251–2.
23. Andrew Selth, “Myanmar’s Coercive Apparatus: The Long Road to Reform”, in D.I. Steinberg (ed.), *Myanmar: The Dynamics of an Evolving Polity* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2015), pp. 13–36.
24. Callahan, M.P., “Burmese Research Days or, A day in the life of a nearly extinct life form: A foreign researcher in Burma”, Cornell University, *Southeast Asia Program Bulletin*, Spring 1994, pp. 1–4.
25. Andrew Selth, “Known Knowns and Known Unknowns: Measuring Myanmar’s Military Capabilities”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 31, No. 2, August 2009, pp. 272–95.
26. “US Response to the Coup in Burma”, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific and International Cybersecurity Policy of the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Congress, Washington, 25 March 2021, at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-117shrg44721/html/CHRG-117shrg44721.htm>.
27. See, for example, “Reuters Reporters Arrested in Yangon Under Official Secrets Act”, *The Irrawaddy*, 13 December 2017, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/breaking-reuters-reporters-arrested-yangon-official-secrets-act.html>.
28. A recent contribution to the genre is “Unveiling the intricacies of the Myanmar Military Intelligence Corps”, *Military Sphere*, 9 July 2024, at <https://militarysphere.com/myanmar-military-intelligence-corps/>. This article offers nothing new, contains numerous inaccuracies and in other ways is quite misleading. It seems to have been generated by artificial intelligence.
29. This remark was made at a workshop on Myanmar arranged by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Brookings Institution, held in Washington DC in October 2009 and attended by the author. Its origins are contested. See, for example, “The Plural of Anecdote is Not Data”, *Quote Investigator*, 27 December 2017, at <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2017/12/27/plural/>.
30. See, for example, “Ex-Military Officers’ Books Offer Distorted History of Myanmar”, *The Irrawaddy*, 16 June 2022, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/>

- opinion/analysis/ex-military-officers-books-offer-distorted-history-of-myanmar.html. See also Nick Cheesman, “War and Politics, in Burmese”, *New Mandala*, 17 November 2010, at <https://www.newmandala.org/war-and-politics-in-burmese/>.
31. See, for example, Andrew Selth, “Beware sensational claims about Myanmar’s security environment”, *The Interpreter*, 13 October 2023, at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/beware-sensational-claims-about-myanmar-s-security-environment>.
32. Andrew Selth, “Burma, China and the Myth of Military Bases”, *Asian Security*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2007, pp. 279–307.
33. “Desmond Ball Unbound”, *The Irrawaddy*, 1 June 2004, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/from-the-archive/desmond-ball-unbound.html>.
34. Andrew Selth, “Chinese spy bases on Myanmar’s Great Coco Island?: Here we go again”, *The Interpreter*, 1 May 2023, at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/chinese-spy-bases-myanmar-s-great-coco-island-here-we-go-again>.
35. Desmond Ball and Phil Thornton, “Burma’s nuclear secrets”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 August 2009, at <https://www.smh.com.au/world/burmax2019s-nuclear-secrets-20090731-e4fv.html>.
36. Andrew Selth, “Burma’s Mythical Isles”, *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 80, No. 6, November–December 2008, pp. 24–8.
37. In 2010 and 2011, a large number of cables sent from the US Embassy in Yangon (still called Rangoon by the US government) to the Secretary of State and State Department in Washington DC were obtained by the Wikileaks organization and released without official authorization. Many of these cables have been quoted in this book, but it must be noted for the record that, as leaked documents, they cannot be independently verified as genuine, or accurate.
38. See, for example, “Burmese opposition: The spy who came in from the NUG”, *Intelligence Online*, 24 November 2023, at <https://www.intelligenceonline.com/government-intelligence/2023/11/24/burmese-opposition-the-spy-who-came-in-from-the-nug,110101344-art>.
39. Andrew Selth, “Myanmar’s intelligence war: The battle of wits and wiles against the junta”, *The Interpreter*, 30 May 2023, at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/myanmar-s-intelligence-war-battle-wits-wiles-against-junta>.
40. See, for example, Yun Sun, “The civil war in Myanmar: No end in sight”, *Brookings Institution Commentary*, 13 February 2023, at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2023/02/13/the-civil-war-in-myanmar-no-end-in-sight/>. See also the reports prepared by the Special Advisory Council—Myanmar, at <https://specialadvisorycouncil.org/>.
41. David Omand, *How Spies Think: Ten Lessons in Intelligence* (London: Penguin, 2021), p. xix.
42. See, for example, K.V. Thomas, “Chinese Intelligence: A Thousand Grains of Sand”, *Centre for Public Policy Research*, 21 July 2023, at <https://www.cppr.in/articles/chinese-intelligence-a-thousand-grains-of-sand>.

43. Simon Leys, "The Art of Interpreting Nonexistent Inscriptions Written in Invisible Ink on a Blank Page", *The New York Review*, 11 October 1990, at <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1990/10/11/the-art-of-interpreting-nonexistent-inscriptions-w/>.
44. An early version of the second chapter was published as Andrew Selth, "Myanmar and the second oldest profession", *New Mandala*, 1 March 2024, at <https://www.newmandala.org/myanmar-and-the-second-oldest-profession/>.
45. Andrew Selth, *Coercion and Control in Colonial Burma: The Birth of an Intelligence State*, Research Paper (Brisbane: Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, 2023), at https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/1752018/Selth-Colonial-intelligence-web.pdf.
46. See, for example, M.P. Callahan, "State Formation in the Shadow of the Raj: Violence, Warfare and Politics in Colonial Burma", *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4, March 2002, p. 513.
47. Maung Aung Myoe, *Building the Tatmadaw: Myanmar Armed Forces Since 1948* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009).
48. Andrew Selth, *Intelligence and Intelligence Agencies in Myanmar Since the 2021 Coup*, Research Paper (Brisbane: Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, 2023), at https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0028/1774531/Selth-Post-coup-intelligence-in-Myanmar.pdf.
49. Allen, "Japanese Intelligence Systems", p. 547.
50. Matthew Parris, "How Very Interesting", *Literary Review*, No. 533, September 2024, p. 30.
51. Andrew Selth, "Investigating an Authoritarian Intelligence Apparatus: The Case of Myanmar", *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2025, pp. 187–95.
52. David Scott Mathieson, "Book Review: Secrets and Power in Myanmar by Andrew Selth", *Tea Circle*, 18 May 2020, at <https://teacircleoxford.com/arts-and-literature/secrets-and-power-in-myanmar-intelligence-and-the-fall-of-general-khin-nyunt-by-andrew-selth-singapore-iseas-yusof-ishak-institute-2019-248-pp/>. See also David Scott Mathieson, "Scholar's Account of Myanmar's Intelligence Apparatus Lets Its Former Chief Off Lightly", *The Irrawaddy*, 19 May 2020, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/culture/books/scholars-account-of-myanmars-intelligence-apparatus-lets-its-former-chief-off-lightly.html>.
53. Kai Ostwald, "Book Review: Secrets and Power in Myanmar by Andrew Selth", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 3, September 2020, at <https://pacificaffairs.ubc.ca/book-reviews/secrets-and-power-in-myanmar-intelligence-and-the-fall-of-general-khin-nyunt-by-andrew-selth/>. See also Adhi Priamarizki, "Book Review: Andrew Selth, Secrets and Power in Myanmar", *Asia-Pacific Journal of Elections and Democracy*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2021, pp. 64–5.
54. Tianlei Huang, "Book Review: Secrets and Power in Myanmar by Andrew Selth", *New Mandala*, 5 November 2019, at <https://www.newmandala.org/book-review/secrets-and-power-in-myanmar/>.

55. Omand, *How Spies Think*, p. xviii. See also Andrew Selth, *Myanmar's Military Mindset: An Exploratory Survey*, Research Paper (Brisbane: Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, 2021), at https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0023/1418333/Military-mindset-web.pdf.
56. See, for example, Ye Htut, *Myanmar's Political Transition and Lost Opportunities (2010–2016)* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2019). A former *Du Bo Hmu Gyi* (Lieutenant Colonel) in the Myanmar Army, Ye Htut was later Presidential Spokesman (2013–16) and Minister for Information (2014–16).
57. For example, the autobiography of former Chief of Intelligence Khin Nyunt, titled *The Experiences of My Life* (published in Burmese in 2015), as well as a number of other works by him, are useful but cannot be taken at face value. See Sean Gleeson, “Still Not Sorry: Neither Modesty nor Mea Culpa in Khin Nyunt Memoir,” *The Irrawaddy*, 3 March 2015, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/still-not-sorry-neither-modesty-nor-mea-culpa-in-khin-nyunt-memoir.html>.
58. For example, a memoir by Nay Yi published in 2014 devotes an entire chapter to the fall of Khin Nyunt and the purge of the military intelligence apparatus in 2004. See Myo Lwin, “Book Review: Political thoughts of a former military intelligence officer,” *Myanmar Times*, 16 March 2015, at <https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/13523-book-review-political-thoughts-of-a-former-military-intelligence-officer.html>.
59. Several attempts were made to arrange an interview with former general Khin Nyunt, but they were unsuccessful. Another former intelligence officer was approached for comment, but he declined to answer any emails. Two former Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials were more forthcoming, but insisted on anonymity. Other interviews are noted by place and year only, to protect the identity of those involved.
60. Anthony Olcott, *Open Source Intelligence in a Networked World* (London: Continuum, 2012), p. xiii.
61. Andrew Selth, *Secrets and Power in Myanmar: Intelligence and Fall of General Khin Nyunt*, translated by Nyan Thit, graphics by Kyaw Minn Mounng (Yangon: Lwin Oo Sarpay (Hledan), 2020) (in Burmese).
62. It is understood that a copy of this book was given as a gift to former General Khin Nyunt. However, despite attempts to contact him, his reaction to it is not known. Personal communication from Rangoon, May 2021.
63. Richard Dearlove, “Is the age of the Secret Service over?,” *The Critic*, No. 41, October 2023, p. 68.
64. Isaac Newton, in a letter to Robert Hooke, 5 February 1675, at <https://discover.hsp.org/Record/dc-9792/Description>.
65. See, in particular, Desmond Ball, *Burma's Military Secrets: Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) from the Second World War to Civil War and Cyber Warfare* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1998).
66. For the latest conference book, see Justine Chambers and Michael R. Dunford (eds.), *Myanmar in Crisis: Living with the Pandemic and the Coup* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2023).

67. Some of the acronyms and abbreviations listed only occur once in this book, but they have been included here as they are used more frequently in various works cited, including Burmese sources written in English.
68. These abbreviations are drawn from a range of open sources and may thus reflect different styles of transcription. There is no recognized system for romanizing the Burmese language.
69. Diacritical marks, where appropriate, have not been included.
70. Entries in this table follow the spelling and capitalization found in the original sources. As noted above, there is no official or widely accepted system for the romanization of the Burmese language, hence the differences in style (word breaks, capitalization, etc.) that are apparent. For a scholarly dissertation on some of these and other terms, see Nicholas Cheesman, *Myanmar: A Political Lexicon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).
71. For the purposes of this list, Karen, Shan, Pali, Indian and Anglo-Indian words commonly used in Myanmar are considered “Burmese”.
72. A common variation of *Bo Gyoke* is *Bogyoke*, as in “Bogyoke Aung San” or “Bogyoke government”.
73. General and Lieutenant General are sometimes written as *Bo Gyoke Kyee* and *Du Bo Gyoke Kyee* respectively.

PREAMBLE

If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success.

Confucius
*The Analects*¹

Protocols

After Myanmar's armed forces crushed a nation-wide pro-democracy uprising in September 1988, the country'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 Myanmar regained its independence from the UK in January 1948.² In July 1989, the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council changed the country's name once again, this time to the "Union of Myanmar", which had long been the vernacular version, in the literary register at least. In the formal declaration of the country's independence, for example, it was called the Union of Burma in the English version and the Union of Myanmar (or "Myanma") in the Burmese version. In 2011, after formal promulgation of the 2008 national constitution, the country's official name was changed yet again, this time to the "Republic of the Union of Myanmar". This name is recognized by the opposition National Unity Government, although on its website the NUG also refers to the "Federal Union of Myanmar", the ultimate goal of the shadow government's publicly declared twelve-point roadmap to national renewal.³

Also, in July 1989 a number of other place names were changed by the new military government to reflect their indigenous roots and conform more closely to their original pronunciation in the Burmese language. For example, Arakan State became Rakhine State and Tenasserim Division became Tanintharyi Division (later changed to Tanintharyi Region).⁴

The Mergui Archipelago became the Myeik Archipelago, the Irrawaddy River became the Ayeyarwady River and the Salween River became the Thanlwin River. The city of Rangoon became Yangon, Moulmein became Mawlamyine, Akyab reverted to Sittwe and Maymyo became Pyin Oo Lwin.⁵ The ethnolinguistic groups formerly known as the Burmans and the Karen are now called the Bamar and the Kayin.⁶ The people of Kayah State are widely known as Karenni (Red Karen), the state's name until it was changed by the Burmese government in 1952.⁷ These and some other changes are listed below, in Appendix 3.

The new names have been accepted by most countries, the UN and other major international organizations. A few governments, activist groups and news media outlets, however, still cling to "Burma" as the name of the country, apparently as a protest against the former military regime's refusal to put the question of a name change to the people of Myanmar.⁸ The old name was also believed to be the preference of then opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who was held under house arrest by the military regime for periods totalling almost 15 years, and is now back in prison.⁹ Of necessity, the new name is cited in all formal diplomatic exchanges, but failure consistently to acknowledge and use it in public has prompted complaints by successive Myanmar administrations. These have been directed mainly to the US government which even now, 35 years later, insists on using "Burma" in official correspondence and Congressional documents.¹⁰ All US laws and regulations levelling sanctions against Myanmar since 1988 refer specifically to "Burma", notably in the "Burma Unified through Rigorous Military Accountability (BURMA) Act" of 2022.¹¹ It has been suggested that one reason for Washington's obduracy is that official recognition of the country's new name would require a revision of all these laws and regulations, something that successive US governments have been unwilling to pursue.

Questioned about the official name of the country soon after her party took office in 2016, Aung San Suu Kyi stated her continuing preference for the colonial-era term "Burma", but said that both names were now acceptable.¹²

From January 1862, when British Burma was declared a separate province of (British) India, Yangon (then known as Rangoon) had been the capital. After the UK dispatched troops to the royal capital of Mandalay and completed its three-stage conquest of Burma in January 1886, Rangoon was confirmed as the administrative capital of the entire country. It remains the commercial capital, but in November 2005 the ruling military council formally designated the newly-built city of Naypyidaw (or Nay Pyi Taw),

327 kilometres (203 miles) north of Yangon, as the seat of Myanmar's government.¹³ The terms "Rangoon regime", "Yangon regime", or in some cases simply "Rangoon" or "Yangon", have been used by some authors and commentators as shorthand terms for the central government, including the military government that was created in 1962 and reinvented in 1974, 1988 and 1997. The government after 2005 has sometimes been referred to as the "Naypyidaw regime", or "Naypyidaw", to reflect the administrative change that took place that year.

Another common term is *Tatmadaw*. It is usually translated as "royal force", but the honorific *daw* no longer refers to the monarchy. Since 1948, the name has been the vernacular term for Myanmar's tri-service (army, navy and air force) armed forces. In recent years, it has gained wide currency in English language and other publications on Myanmar.¹⁴ Sometimes, the *Tatmadaw* is referred to simply as "the army", reflecting that service's overwhelming size and influence, compared with the other two. The term "Defence Services", which first appeared in 1952, usually refers only to the armed forces, but is sometimes used in a wider context to refer collectively to the armed forces, the Myanmar Police Force (*Myanmar Yae Tat Hpwe*, or MPF), the "People's Militias" (*Pyitthu Sit*), border guard forces and sundry other state-endorsed paramilitary units.¹⁵ The Myanmar Fire Services Department and Myanmar Red Cross Society are considered "reserve forces for national defence" and as such are also included in this broad category.¹⁶ As the 2008 constitution decrees that "all the armed forces in the Union shall be under the command of the Defence Services", the formal title (in English) of the *Tatmadaw*'s most senior officer is Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of Defence Services.¹⁷

Thanks to references made by countless journalists and on-line commentators, another Burmese term that has become familiar since the 1988 uprising is *Lon Htein*, used to describe those members of the police force that have been called out to quell civil unrest. *Lon Htein* is short for *Lon-chon-hmu Htein-thein Tat-yin*, literally translated as "security preservation battalion". Usually translated into English as "riot police", the *Lon Htein* has suffered several variations of name over the years, from "riot security forces", to "police regiments" to "police security battalions", even "police combat battalions". While the term *Lon Htein* still crops up in articles and blogs, these forces are now collectively referred to as the Police Security Unit. Regardless of the name used, however, they have always been paramilitary police units trained to use coercive methods, up to and including lethal force. They have also been used for area security, very important person (VIP) protection and static guard duties around

embassies and major public buildings. Before the 2021 coup, they were organized into four commands and 39 battalions, stationed in strategic locations around the country.¹⁸

Taken together, the armed forces, the national police force and the main intelligence agencies of Myanmar are often referred to as the country's security forces, and are widely acknowledged as constituting the coercive apparatus of the state. At times, however, other government agencies, such as the Ministry of Border Affairs, the Prisons Department and General Administration Department (GAD) have been included in this term. Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications, the Ministry of Immigration and Population, and the bureaucratic organs responsible for conducting census surveys, have also contributed to the state's surveillance capabilities by opening mail, tapping phones and gathering personal data on the civilian population. Ad hoc militias and informal gangs of thugs overtly or covertly employed by the government as coercive muscle and "enforcers" in local neighbourhoods are not seen as legitimate members of the so-called "uniformed" or "disciplined" services. Accordingly, they are not accepted (by anyone) as members of Myanmar's security forces.

Since the 2021 coup, many activist groups and commentators have refused to call the new military regime by its self-granted title, the State Administration Council (SAC), which on 1 August that year branded itself a "provisional" or "caretaker" government.¹⁹ They refer simply to "the junta" or "the military regime", names rejected by the military leadership. *Bo Gyoke Hmu Gyi* (Senior General) Min Aung Hlaing has been denied any official status, being widely known as "the junta chief" or *MaAhLa*, the Burmese acronym for his personal name.²⁰ The same critics have also objected to calling Myanmar's armed forces the Tatmadaw, on the grounds that they do not deserve the status and prestige that was once associated with that title. The opposition movement and its supporters prefer the description *sit-tat* (or *sitdat*), which in the Burmese language simply means "military force", or "armed forces".²¹ This is despite the fact that "Tatmadaw" occurs in the official name of the opposition People's Defence Force (*Pyitthu Kakweye Tatmadaw*, or PDF). Another popular epithet is *thubon sit-tat*, or "rebel army". Some governments, like that of the US, avoid such linguistic and diplomatic conundrums by simply referring to them in public as "the Burmese military".

Controversy also surrounds the term used to describe those ethnically based armed groups fighting Myanmar's central government, some of them for decades. The Karen struggle, for example, has been described as the longest-running insurgency in the world, dating from 1949.²² For many

years, these groups have been known as “ethnic armed organisations” (EAO), or variations thereof, such as “armed ethnic groups” (AEG). Although it is widely used in the news media, they dislike the term “rebels”, as it suggests a lack of legitimacy, both for the groups themselves and their struggles for independence, autonomy or other goals. Since the 2021 coup, not all EAOs have openly declared their support for the opposition movement but those that have, and are loosely allied with the NUG and PDF, are increasingly being referred to as “ethnic resistance organisations” (ERO).²³ An alternative meaning of ERO found in some sources is “ethnic revolutionary organisations”. This follows moves by some activists and even academic observers to describe the current armed conflict as a “revolution” and not a “civil war” (the more common term). This view seems to be based on the nature of the armed struggle, the scope of the opposition’s aims and the number of people in Myanmar who appear to support them.²⁴ A more neutral term also used from time to time is “non-state armed groups” (NSAG).

Over the years, some components of Myanmar’s national intelligence apparatus have changed their formal titles several times. The military intelligence organization, for example, has periodically been renamed, usually to coincide with structural and personnel changes in the armed forces. These adjustments have not always been known to, or recognized by, foreign observers. Also, Burmese language titles have been translated into English in different ways. For example, the title “Office of the Chief of Military Security Affairs” (OCMSA) has sometimes been written as the “Office of the Chief of Military Affairs Security” (OCMAS), or simply “Military Affairs Security” (MAS).²⁵ It has also been called the Department of Security on Military Affairs (DSMA) and the Directorate of Defence Services Security (DDSS).²⁶ The use of popular names has added another complication. For example, ever since 1948 the Tatmadaw’s intelligence arm has been widely known as the Military Intelligence Service (MIS), or simply the “MI” (“em-eye”). Similarly, the Police Force’s Intelligence Bureau, and later Special Investigations Department (or, strictly translated, “Information Police”), has long been known in both English and Burmese as Special Branch, or “SB”.²⁷

All this has meant that in the international news media, online commentary and other literature some agencies have been called by several different names, and not always accurately.

A word also needs to be said about intelligence itself, a complex and multifaceted subject that has attracted a wide range of descriptions over the years, but has never been clearly defined.²⁸ In this book, “intelligence” is used to describe not only the agencies and personnel responsible for

the collection and analysis of information, but also the end result of that process.²⁹ In the words of one expert, it can be “a process, a product or an organization”.³⁰ The main collection disciplines are listed in Appendix 7. The end product is usually derived from classified sources and methods, and is thus considered privileged in various ways, but aspects of the recognized intelligence cycle (namely planning, collection, processing, analysis and dissemination) can also be applied to open sources.³¹ In addition, while popular conceptions of intelligence relate to the activities of official agents operating clandestinely in foreign countries, or to the covert collection of information about foreign countries, their intentions and capabilities, there is also an important domestic dimension.³² Indeed, as explained below, in Myanmar intelligence agencies have always devoted more attention to the collection of information about the local population, local institutions and local developments than it has to targets abroad.

Finally, a warning about statistics is required. As scholars like Peter Perry have written, considerable care needs to be taken in citing any numbers.³³ In British Burma, a major effort was made by the colonial authorities to produce accurate records. Census and economic statistics were usually reliable, but other data like police strengths and troop numbers were constantly shifting and changing, meaning that a definitive figure is often difficult to identify.³⁴ Most statistics released by Myanmar’s military governments between 1962 and 2015 were either based on unreliable sources, or were deliberately distorted to convey a rosier picture than was actually the case. Even statistics published after 2015 by reputable organizations like the World Bank or United Nations need careful handling, as they often relied on base data provided by the Myanmar government, which can rarely be independently verified.³⁵ Also, given the public relations war being waged since the 2021 coup, all statistics, whether they relate to military strengths, casualties, defectors, areas controlled by various forces, or aspects of the economy, must be considered suspect.

Thus, in modern sources, different numbers are cited by different authors, leaving researchers and commentators wondering where the truth lies. In this book, the most accurate figures available have been used, and relevant sources provided in notes, but inevitably there will still be inaccuracies and discrepancies.

People

All Burmese personal names are particular. Most people do not have surnames or forenames in the Western sense.³⁶ Names may be one to four

syllables long, and are usually chosen depending on the day of the week that a child is born (which is why many people in Myanmar share the same names). Animists may give a child an unpleasant name to keep away malevolent spirits. Sometimes, a child's name may derive from those of its parents, as is the case with Aung San Suu Kyi.³⁷ Also, among the majority Bamar ethnic group names are usually preceded by an honorific, such as "U", literally meaning "uncle", or "Daw", meaning "aunt". "U" can also form a part of a man's name, as in U Tin U (also spelt Oo). The titles "Maung", "Ko" ("brother") and "Ma" ("sister"), usually given to younger men and women, are also found in personal names, as in Maung Maung Aye, Ko Ko Gyi and Ma Ma Lay. Some men adopt "Maung" as a sign of modesty, like the eminent historian Maung Htin Aung. Respected elders are often known by the title *Saya* or *Sayagyi* or, if female, *Saya ma*. Senior Buddhist monks are *Sayadaw*. Eminent personalities, teachers and ascetics credited with special powers can carry titles like *Bodaw*, *Medaw* or *Dhamika*. In addition, servicemen and women may be awarded titles like *Thiha Thura*, meaning "brave lion".³⁸

Some of Myanmar's ethnic minorities, like the Kachin, have family or clan names, which are placed before their given names, as in the case of Maran Brang Seng, where "Maran" is the name of a clan.³⁹ Kachin leaders are often known by the title *Duwa*, literally meaning "big man". Other ethnic minorities, such as the Mon, Karen, Shan, Karenni and Chin have their own systems of honorifics and naming conventions. In the S'ghaw Karen language, for example, "Saw" and "Naw" are broadly the Karen (Kayin) equivalents of the Bamar titles "U" and "Daw". In Shan the male term is "Sai" and in Mon it is "Nai". Before the abolition of their positions and privileges following the 1962 coup, the traditional rulers of the 17 larger and more influential Shan States were known in their own language as *saohpa* ("lords of the sky"), or *sawbwa* in Burmese. Lesser Shan princes were usually known as *myoza* or *ngwegunhmu*.

In Myanmar, names can be changed relatively easily, often without seeking official permission or requiring formal registration. This situation is further complicated by the frequent use of nicknames and other sobriquets as identifiers, such as "Moustache" Maung Lwin, "MI" (military intelligence) Tin Oo, *Theippan* (writer) Maung Wa, "Myanaung" (the town) U Tin, *Tekkatho* (university) Phone Naing, or "Guardian" (the magazine) Sein Win. Also, pen-names, *noms de guerre* and pseudonyms have a long history in Myanmar.⁴⁰ For example, the birth name of General Ne Win, who effectively ruled the country from 1962 to 1988, was Shu Maung. Ne Win, which means "bright sun" (or "brilliant as the sun") in Burmese, was

a *nom de guerre* he adopted in 1941 and retained after the Second World War, probably to hide his mixed Chinese ancestry.⁴¹ Some Myanmar citizens were given or have adopted Western names, including those who attended Christian missionary schools in their youth. Others use only one part of their name for convenience, for example when travelling abroad or dealing with foreigners who are unfamiliar with Burmese naming systems.⁴² It is not uncommon for an obituary to list more than one name by which the deceased was known.

Given the subject of this book, it should be noted that, at different times throughout Myanmar's history, different names have been used to describe those officials and other personnel engaged in intelligence-related activities. In the historical records, for example, people employed on such duties were called *sit na*, or "ears of the army".⁴³ Other court documents refer to "secret agents" as *para* and (in Pali) *yatharahavanna*.⁴⁴ Some foreign scholars have also applied the label of "spy" to those Burmese officials known (under the Konbaung dynasty kings, at least) as *na khan*, or *nakandaw*. This title has been variously translated as "royal listeners", "royal ears" or "receivers of royal orders".⁴⁵ These officers kept the monarch informed of developments, including the performance of appointed officials outside the capital.⁴⁶ One early British historian of Myanmar has also listed as "spies" those court officials known as *ataukdaw*, or "royal assistants" who, like the *nakandaw*, had a responsibility to keep the king informed of "the illegal acts and general doings of his Ministers and provincial Governors".⁴⁷ Similar duties were performed by former monks known as *lubyandaw* ("the great returned").⁴⁸

In modern parlance, the Burmese word for "spy" is *da shoh*, or more formally *thu hla yoe*, literally "a person doing secret things". However, a distinction needs to be made between those who carry out clandestine intelligence duties in the field, and those professional intelligence officers, including analysts, who work in the armed forces, police force and other agencies. Tatmadaw intelligence officers, for example, are generally known as *sit htauk lanye*, with *sit* meaning "military" and *htauk lanye* meaning "intelligence". The police equivalent is *yae htauk lanye*, although both are often referred to simply as "IO" (intelligence officers). As already noted, members of the Myanmar Police Force's Special Branch are usually just called "SB". Officers working in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) are also commonly known by the organization's English language acronym. Officers from the Bureau of Special Investigations (BSI) tend to be referred to collectively as *SaSaSa* or *Sa Thon Lon*, ("three Sa"), an abbreviation of the BSI's name in the Burmese language.⁴⁹ As noted above,

however, intelligence officers in Myanmar tend to be referred to collectively as “MI” (short for “military intelligence”), whichever agency they are from.

Informers and informants, both paid and unpaid, are popularly known as *dalan*, although this word too has occasionally been translated into English as “spies”.⁵⁰ Anti-regime elements who are accused of being “traitors”, “lackeys of the colonialists”, “agents of a foreign power”, “puppets” or “Western stooges”, have been labelled *pasein yo* in official speeches and stories in state-controlled news media outlets like the *New Light of Myanmar*. The term is usually translated into English as “axe handles” which, as Emma Larkin has observed, signifies “that the weapon used to chop down the tree is made from the wood of the tree itself”.⁵¹ This is an apparent allusion to those Burmese nationals or organizations that purportedly support foreigners (presumably the “axe heads”) in their opposition to the military government and *ipso facto* in its view, the country. At times, members of the opposition movement have used the term to describe others accused of supporting the regime.⁵² Another label commonly used by both sides of the political divide (including in popular culture, like songs and movies) is *thit sar phauk*, literally someone who breaks a legal promise (of allegiance), hence “traitor” or “betrayor”.⁵³ Those who change their views depending on the audience, or prevailing political climate, have been dismissed as *thar ku*, or opportunists.⁵⁴

It is common among Myanmar’s armed forces (and indeed Myanmar society as a whole) for senior figures to be given nicknames, many of which, while familiar and amusing, can also be quite respectful. For example, until he was pushed sideways by the new military regime in 1988 General Ne Win was often referred to by members of the Tatmadaw, and many civilians, as *Apho Gyi*, meaning (in this context) “the old man”, or perhaps “the big guy”. He was also widely known (in English) as “Number One”, although this was not always out of respect or affection.⁵⁵ During the days of the State Law and Order Restoration Council, and its nominal successor, the State Peace and Development Council, regime leader Senior General Than Shwe was widely known to his troops as *Aba Gyi*, meaning “grandfather” or “great father”. He too was sometimes called “Number One”, even after his formal retirement in 2011. Than Shwe’s deputy, Vice Senior General Maung Aye, was popularly known as *Aba Aye*, or “father Aye”.

In the vernacular register, there are of course less polite terms. Military intelligence officers, for example, have long been known on the street as *kwe* (“dogs”), *sit kwe* (“military dogs”, or even “running dogs”), *amair like kwe* (“hunting dogs”), or *kwe yu* (“mad dogs”), among other epithets.⁵⁶ According to the Australian anthropologist Monique Skidmore, the latter

name arose because night-time raids by intelligence officers on the homes of pro-democracy activists invariably set the local *pi* dogs barking.⁵⁷ For decades, members of the national police force have been called *kywe*, or “rats”, by their detractors.⁵⁸ Tatmadaw soldiers call members of Karen resistance groups *nga pway* (“ringworms”), among other things, as a calculated insult.⁵⁹ Those people of South Asian ancestry and members of the Rohingya community, indeed all Muslims in Myanmar, are routinely called *kalar*. This was once a descriptive term for all foreigners (during the colonial period, for example, Caucasians were known as *kalar pyu*, or “white kalar” and foreign women as *kalar ma*) but the word has always had perjorative overtones.⁶⁰ For example, the military regime and its supporters have tried to shame Aung San Suu Kyi by accusing her of disloyalty for marrying a foreigner or, in their words, a *kalar pyu*. In 2017, Facebook decreed that use of *kalar* constituted hate speech and banned it from its platform.⁶¹

As an aside, it may be worth briefly noting that individual military and police officers have attracted a range of derogatory nicknames. For example, when he was a cadet at the Defence Services Academy (DSA) in the 1970s, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing was dubbed *kyaung chee* (“cat-shit”) by his fellow cadets.⁶² Since extending a national State of Emergency for the fifth time in January 2024, he has been called *Toe*, which means “extend” or “renew”.⁶³ After brutally crushing student protests in 1962, then *Du Bo Hmu Gyi* (Lieutenant Colonel), and later President, Sein Win was called “The Butcher of Rangoon”.⁶⁴ Following negotiations in 1997 with the drug-trafficking ethnic Wa community, then *Du Bo Gyoke Gyi* (Lieutenant General) Khin Nyunt was dubbed *Foe* Khin Nyunt, or “Number Four [heroin] Khin Nyunt”.⁶⁵ Later, when Chief of Intelligence, he was more commonly known (in English) as “the Prince of Darkness”, or the “Prince of Evil”.⁶⁶ For his role in suppressing the nation-wide “Saffron Revolution” in 2007, SLORC Chairman Senior General Than Shwe became known as *Shwe wah yung lu that thamar* Than Shwe, or “monk-killer” Than Shwe.⁶⁷ *Bogyoke* (Major General) Zaw Min Tun, the leader of the Tatmadaw’s True News Information Team and the junta’s current spokesman, is widely known as *Zaw Mae Lone*, a name usually given to a tubby dog with black fur.⁶⁸

In this book, all the appropriate formal names and titles are cited, depending on the people and period being discussed. For example, “Burma” and “Rangoon” are used when referring to events and organizations before the names were formally changed in 1989. After that date, “Myanmar” is used for the name of the country and its institutions, although “Burmese” has been retained as the relevant adjective and descriptor. (Although it occasionally raises its ugly head, strictly speaking there is no such word

as “Myanmarese”). By the same token, organizations created after the 2021 coup are called by the names applied by their creators at the time, such as the State Administration Council, the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) and the National Unity Government. Politically correct and otherwise loaded terms adopted by various groups to make partisan points have been noted, but not necessarily embraced. This practice does not signify sympathy or support for any particular party, faction or organization. It simply reflects the reality of the contemporary political scene in Myanmar in a way that makes the identification of various periods, groups and institutions easier for everyone.

Politics

The armed forces effectively ruled Myanmar for half a century, from Ne Win’s coup d’état in March 1962, when he formed a 17-member *Tawhlanye Kaungzi* (Union Revolutionary Council, or URC).⁶⁹ From 1974 to 1988, the armed forces exercised power through an ostensibly elected “civilian” unicameral parliament called the *Pyitthu Hluttaw* (People’s Assembly), dominated by the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), the country’s only legal political party. On taking back direct control of the country in September 1988, after an abortive pro-democracy uprising, the armed forces created the State Law and Order Restoration Council, which ruled by decree. In November 1997, apparently on the advice of an American public relations firm, the regime changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), but continued to rule through executive fiat.⁷⁰ In May 2008, the SPDC held a sham constitutional referendum, with predictable results.⁷¹ This was followed by stage-managed elections on 7 November 2010. The resulting national parliament, consisting of 75 per cent elected officials and 25 per cent non-elected military officers, first met in January 2011. A new government was installed under President Thein Sein (a former army general) in March. The “baroquely contorted” new constitution was promulgated the same year.⁷²

Continuing this process, by-elections were staged on 1 April 2012 to fill 48 seats left vacant after recently-elected Members of Parliament (MP) had resigned to take up ministerial appointments, or had died. The opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), which was re-registered for the elections in December 2011, claimed that fraud and rules violations were widespread, but the party still won 43 of the 45 seats available on the day. One successful candidate was the party’s leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who had been released from house arrest in November 2010.

On 8 November 2015, a new general election was held which, by most accounts, was reasonably free and fair.⁷³ The NLD received about 65.6 per cent of all votes cast, while the pro-military Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) received 27.5 per cent. Under Myanmar's "first past the post" electoral system, this gave the NLD 79.4 per cent of all the available seats.⁷⁴ It secured 255 in the 440-seat lower house (*Pyitthu Hluttaw* or House of Representatives), and 135 in the 224-seat upper house (*Amyotha Hluttaw* or House of Nationalities), a total of 390 of the 491 seats contested at the Union level.⁷⁵ Under the 2008 constitution, the armed forces were allocated 25% of the seats in both houses, but this gave the NLD a clear majority in the combined Union Assembly (*Pyidaungsu Hluttaw*). As a result, it was able to elect a new president in 2016 and pass a law creating the unique position of State Counsellor for Aung San Suu Kyi. (Under the new constitution she was unable to become president, as her two children were the citizens of a foreign country).⁷⁶

The national charter clearly stated that the president "takes precedence over all other persons" in Myanmar.⁷⁷ However, even before the 2015 elections, Aung San Suu Kyi had made it clear that, if her party won office, she intended to be "above the president" and act as the country's de facto leader.⁷⁸ Consequently, under the NLD the president was essentially a ceremonial head of state. For practical purposes, Aung San Su Kyi acted as head of the government, within the limits of the constitution, which ensured that considerable power was retained by the armed forces. Anomalous it may have been, but her new position was readily accepted by most other world leaders, as evidenced by her attendance at various meetings of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and (as State Counsellor) at the enthronement of the new Japanese emperor in October 2019.⁷⁹ Aung San Su Kyi was also appointed Myanmar's Minister for Foreign Affairs and, formally at least, attended some international meetings in that capacity.⁸⁰

Another general election was held in November 2020, with an estimated voter turnout of more than 70 per cent. Despite "serious deficiencies in the legal framework" noted by neutral observers, voters were able "freely to express their will".⁸¹ The result was an even more emphatic victory for Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD. The party won 258 seats (58.6 per cent) in the *Pyitthu Hluttaw* and 136 seats (61.6 per cent) in the *Amyotha Hluttaw*, or 83 per cent of the total.⁸² Having secured more than 322 of the 476 elected seats, the NLD was thus able to form a government and choose a new president. The USDP suffered dramatic losses all around the country, garnering only 33 seats in both houses. The NLD also dominated the elections for the 14 State and Region assemblies, which were held at the

same time. These results promised that, barring unforeseen problems, Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD would remain in office for another five years, and enjoy the moral authority to make sweeping reforms.⁸³ Once again, they would govern in partnership with the armed forces which, under the 2008 constitution, were automatically granted one quarter of all parliamentary seats and three ministries (Defence, Home Affairs and Border Affairs).

On 1 February 2021, however, almost exactly a decade after the SPDC permitted the transition to a “disciplined democracy”, those expectations were rudely dashed. Before the new parliament could meet that day, the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, unexpectedly declared a one-year state of emergency and created a State Administration Council, made up of eight military officers and three civilians. They were later joined by six more civilians.⁸⁴ The SAC immediately detained Aung San Suu Kyi and more than 50 other officials and activists. Many more arrests soon followed. A military spokesman stated that the Tatmadaw had been forced to seize power due to the NLD’s failure to acknowledge massive fraud in the November 2020 elections.⁸⁵ Few foreign observers (or Burmese citizens) believed that that was the real reason for the coup but, despite widespread speculation in the international news media and online, the thinking behind the takeover remained unknown.⁸⁶ To the people of Myanmar, however, one thing was clear. Once again, the country had an unelected military government, and faced an uncertain future.

Since February 2021, Myanmar has descended into a bitter civil war. On the one side is the junta, commanding the armed forces, the police force, the intelligence agencies, ad hoc militias, vigilante groups such as the *Pyusawhti* and death squads like the “Ogres” and the “Blood Comrades”.⁸⁷ The latter groups tended to be made up mainly of ex-convicts, Buddhist extremists, unemployed youths and other fringe elements.⁸⁸ Members of the pro-military USDP, army veterans and the families of serving military personnel have also been called upon to join the fight against the opposition movement. Facing them is a diverse coalition of anti-junta and pro-democracy groups. It includes the members of the Civil Disobedience Movement and followers of the shadow NUG. Several ethnic armed organizations, now rebranded ethnic resistance organizations, have joined with units of the People’s Defence Force to wage a guerrilla campaign against the junta.⁸⁹ Supporting them are over four hundred township-based Local Defence Forces (LDF) and hundreds of so-called People’s Defence Teams (PDT).⁹⁰ The latter two categories seem to include most of the small resistance cells responsible for the “targeted killings” and bombings that have punctuated Myanmar life, mainly in urban areas, since the coup.

Indications are that the current political and military confrontation will continue for some time, possibly even years. The picture would of course change if there was a significant shift in the strategic environment, say if a major Tatmadaw combat unit mutinied, or if a foreign government broke ranks and (secretly or otherwise) provided the PDF with modern arms, like shoulder-fired anti-tank and anti-air missiles.⁹¹ The NUG has also called for the imposition of a foreign-enforced no-fly zone over Myanmar to deny the junta use of its air power.⁹² However, such scenarios remain hypothetical. The international community does not seem prepared directly to intervene in the war. Also, neither side is in a mood to compromise. The junta has vowed to “annihilate” the opposition movement, which it describes as a terrorist organization.⁹³ The NUG initially declared a “people’s defensive war” against the military regime, upgrading it in late 2022 to an “offensive war”. It has rejected any suggestion of a negotiated settlement. As US Counsellor Derek Cholet said at the Shangri-la strategic dialogue in Singapore in June 2022, there is currently “no off-ramp”.⁹⁴ For both sides, the goal is total victory, but at the time of writing such an outcome seems likely to prove a chimera.⁹⁵

It is in these circumstances that Myanmar’s intelligence apparatus must be researched, described and evaluated.

Notes

1. *The Analects of Confucius*, translated by Arthur Waley (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1949), pp. 171–72.
2. The 1948 constitution formally decreed that the country would be known (in English) as “the Union of Burma”. *The Constitution of the Union of Burma* (Rangoon: Superintendent of Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1948), Chapter 1, clause 1.
3. See, for example, “National Unity Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Ministry of Defence”, at <https://mod.nugmyanmar.org/en/>.
4. In 2010, following promulgation of the new national constitution, Myanmar’s seven administrative “Divisions” were renamed “Regions”. There are also seven States, one Union Territory, one Self-Administered Division and five Self-Administered Zones. See Appendix 4.
5. In Burmese, Sittwe literally means “the place where the war meets” and was so named by King Bodawpaya after he defeated the Arakanese army there in 1784. The settlement was renamed Akyab by the British during the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824–26), after the ancient pagoda Ahkyaib-daw, on the outskirts of the town, where the British troops were camped. Since then, the names Sittwe and Akyab have been used interchangeably. Both still appear on European and American

- maps of the area, although Sittwe is once again the city's official name. Maymyo was originally a small settlement near Mandalay named for Colonel James May of the 5th Bengal Infantry, which was stationed there in 1886.
6. "Writing Systems: Romanization, Government of the Union of Myanmar Notification 5/89", Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Berlin, 27 August 2002, Doc. E/CONF.94/INF75, at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn/docs/8th-uncsgn-docs/inf/8th_UNCSGN_econf.94_INF75.pdf.
 7. See "Karenni and Kayah: The Nature of Burma's Ethnic Problem over Two Names and the Path to Resolution", *Asia Peacebuilding Initiatives*, 5 February 2014, at <http://peacebuilding.asia/burmas-ethnic-problem-over-two-names-and-the-path-to-resolution/>.
 8. Andrew Selth and Adam Gallagher, "What's In a Name: Burma or Myanmar?", *The Olive Branch*, 21 June 2018, at <https://www.usip.org/blog/2018/06/whats-name-burma-or-myanmar>.
 9. Aung San Suu Kyi's incarceration occurred, with a number of breaks, between July 1989 and November 2010. See "Burma: A Chronology of Aung San Suu Kyi's Detention", *Human Rights Watch*, 13 November 2010, at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/11/13/burma-chronology-aung-san-suu-kyis-detention>. Some commentators have cited these beginning and end dates and incorrectly deduced that she was held under continuous house arrest for a total of 22 years. Aung San Suu Kyi was detained again in February 2021 and at the time of writing is in jail serving a 27-year sentence, downgraded from an original sentence of 33 years.
 10. During his visit there in 2012, US President Barack Obama called the country "Myanmar", but the following year the US Embassy in Yangon issued a press release which once again referred to the country as "Burma". See "Myanmar rebukes US for calling it 'Burma'", *Reuters*, 26 January 2013, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/myanmar-usa-idINDEE90P01R20130126>.
 11. "Burma Unified Through Rigorous Military Accountability Act of 2022", (BURMA Act: HR 5497), 6 April 2022, *Congress.Gov*, at <https://www.congress.gov/bills/117/congress-house/bills/5497/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr5497%22%2C%22hr5497%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=2>.
 12. Andrew Selth, "More name games in Burma/Myanmar", *The Interpreter*, 10 August 2016, at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/more-name-games-burmamyanmar>.
 13. Occasionally, it is stated that Naypyidaw is 367 kilometres north of Yangon, but that calculation is based on the distance by road between the two cities, not as the crow flies.
 14. See, for example, Andrew Selth, *Transforming the Tatmadaw: The Burmese Armed Forces since 1988*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 113 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1996).
 15. See, for example, John Buchanan, *Militias in Myanmar* (Yangon: Asia Foundation, July 2016), at <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Militias-in-Myanmar.pdf>.

16. "Burma's Khin Nyunt warns police to correct mistakes to gain public trust", Radio Myanmar, *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 2 August 2002.
17. *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (2008)* (Nay Pyi Taw: Ministry of Information, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2008), chapter 7, clause 338.
18. Interview, Yangon, November 2014.
19. The SAC has sometimes been called (including by parts of the UN) the "State Administrative Council".
20. See, for example, "Myanmar Junta Prepares for Name Change as End of Emergency Rule Looms", *The Irrawaddy*, 3 January 2023, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-prepares-for-name-change-as-end-of-emergency-rule-looms.html>. See also "The Master of the Myanmar Junta's 'Skyful of Lies'", *The Irrawaddy*, 14 June 2022, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/the-master-of-the-myanmar-juntas-skyful-of-lies.html>. It is no coincidence that *MaAhLa*, with slight tonal shifts, can also be translated as "mother-fucker".
21. See, for example, Desmond, "Please Don't Call Myanmar Military Tatmadaw", *The Irrawaddy*, 25 May 2022, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/please-dont-call-myanmar-military-tatmadaw.html>; and Aung Kaung Myat, "Sit-tat or Tatmadaw? Debates on what to call the most powerful institution in Myanmar", *Tea Circle*, 3 October 2022, at <https://teacircleoxford.com/politics/sit-tat-or-tatmadaw-debates-on-what-to-call-the-most-powerful-institution-in-burma/>.
22. See, for example, Ben Dunant, "The longest war", *Frontier Myanmar*, 21 February 2019, at <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/the-longest-war/>.
23. See, for example, *Briefing Paper: Effective Control in Myanmar*, Special Advisory Council for Myanmar, 5 September 2022, at <https://specialadvisorycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/SAC-M-Briefing-Paper-Effective-Control-in-Myanmar-ENGLISH-2.pdf>.
24. See, for example, "Military defeat will come from the cascading collapse of military forces in different parts of the country", *Mizzima*, 11 May 2023, at <https://www.mizzima.com/article/military-defeat-will-come-cascading-collapse-military-forces-different-parts-country>.
25. See, for example, Christina Fink, *Living Silence in Burma: Surviving Under Military Rule* (London: Zed Books, 2009), p. 96; and "Wives of the High-Ranking Officers of the Myanmar Armed Forces and the DSAC Attend the 'Coffee Morning'", *Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar*, 23 February 2006, at http://mm.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/xwdt/200602/t20060223_1389577.htm. The term "Military Affairs Security" is also used in *Civil and Military Administrative Echelon of State Peace and Development Council in Burma* (Mae Sot: Documentation and Research Department, Network for Democracy and Development, 2007).
26. See, for example, "Interim Report Card: July 2004-February 2005" (Bangkok: ALTSEAN Burma, March 2005), p. 6.
27. Rhys Thompson, "Securing the Colony: The Burma Police Special Branch (1896–1942)", *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2020, pp. 35–53. See also

- Helene Maria Kyed, et al., *Police under the Military Coup in Myanmar: Between Violence, Fear and Desertions* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies and Nyan Corridor, 2021), at https://pure.diiis.dk/ws/files/4303211/police_under_the_military_coup_myanmar_final_2.pdf.
28. Michael Warner, "Wanted: A Definition of 'Intelligence'", *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2002, at <https://www.cia.gov/static/72b2d4c0d01e4e05c60ff7d37fdd68b1/Wanted-Definition-of-Intel.pdf>.
 29. Useful in this regard is Robert Dover, Michael Goodman and Claudia Hillebrand (eds.), *Routledge Companion to Intelligence Studies* (London: Routledge, 2014).
 30. Dennis Richardson, cited in Ben Scott, *Adapting Australian Intelligence to the Information Age*, Occasional Paper (Canberra: National Security College, Australian National University, December 2023), p. 20.
 31. These steps can be described more fully as requirements, planning and direction, collection, processing and exploitation, analysis and production, and dissemination and integration. Throughout the entire cycle, evaluation and feedback should also occur. See, for example, "Intelligence Studies: The Intelligence Cycle", *US Naval War College*, at <https://usnwc.libguides.com/c.php?g=494120&p=3381427>.
 32. See, for example, The Joint Chiefs of Staff, US Department of Defence, *Dictionary of Military Terms* (New York: Arco Publishing, 1988), p. 183.
 33. Peter Perry, *Myanmar (Burma) Since 1962: The failure of development* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 13–20. See also Andrew Selth, *Myanmar-Watching: Problems and Perspectives*, Regional Outlook No. 58 (Brisbane: Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, 2018).
 34. One scholar who has looked closely at fluctuating police numbers during the colonial period is Lalita Hingkanonta Hanwong, *Policing in Colonial Burma* (Chiang Mai: Centre for ASEAN Studies, Chiang Mai University, 2015).
 35. See, for example, Andrew Selth, "How credible are the casualty figures coming out of Myanmar?", *The Interpreter*, 20 September 2023, at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/how-credible-are-casualty-figures-coming-out-myanmar>.
 36. D.I. Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. xix–xx.
 37. In her case, "Aung San" comes from her father, independence hero Aung San, who was assassinated in 1947. "Suu" is said to come from her paternal grandmother and "Kyi" reportedly derives from her mother's name, Khin Kyi. Past military regimes have sought to reduce Aung San Suu Kyi's claim to these historical credentials by simply referring to her as "Suu Kyi" or "Ma Suu Kyi". To many of her followers, she was "Daw Suu" (Aunty Suu) or "Ama Suu" (Mother Suu).
 38. Thiha Thura is the second highest military decoration for gallantry awarded by the Myanmar armed forces, after the Aung San Thuriya.
 39. Strictly speaking, "Maran" is a clan of the Jinghpaw, who make up the majority of those now commonly grouped together as "Kachin". See also "A Note on Burmese Names", in Thant Myint U, *The Hidden History of Burma: Race, Capitalism, and the Crisis of Democracy in the 21st Century* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2020), p. xii.

40. See Andrew Selth, "Burma and the politics of names", *The Interpreter*, 12 July 2010, at <https://archive.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/burma-and-politics-names>.
41. Martin Smith, "General Ne Win", *The Guardian*, 6 December 2002, at <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/dec/06/guardianobituaries>. Independence leader Aung San adopted the *nom de guerre* Bo Teza (Commander Flames), but stopped using it in 1942 when he was appointed commander-in-chief of the newly-created Burma Defence Army (BDA).
42. Mi Mi Khaing, "Burmese Names: A Guide", *The Atlantic*, February 1958, at <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1958/02/burmese-names/306818/>.
43. Than Tun (ed.), *The Royal Orders of Burma AD 1598–1885*, 10 vols. (Kyoto: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1998), Part 8 (AD 1819–1853), p. 76.
44. U Tin (ed.), *The Royal Administration of Burma*, translated by Euan Bagshawe (Bangkok: Ava House, 2001), pp. 93–4.
45. Victor Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c.1580–1760* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 116.
46. John Nisbet, *Burma Under British Rule—And Before*, 2 vols. (London: Archibald Constable, 1901), Vol. 1, p. 161.
47. Nisbet, *Burma Under British Rule—And Before*, Vol. 1, p. 161.
48. Nisbet, *Burma Under British Rule—And Before*, Vol. 1, p. 161.
49. The full name is A'Htoo Son Zan Seh Seh Yay Oo Zi Hta Na. In some reports, SaSaSa or Sa Thon Lon have been incorrectly described as abbreviations for the Directorate of Defence Services Intelligence (DDSI). See, for example, *A Conflict of Interests: The Uncertain Future of Burma's Forests* (London: Global Witness, October 2003), p. 75. The two intelligence organizations are often confused in the public mind, but are quite separate entities.
50. While the two terms are often used interchangeably, "informants" tend to be those who provide information to government agencies as part of a standing agreement or paid arrangement. "Informers" tend to be more ad hoc providers of information, usually at the expense of specific individuals or groups.
51. Emma Larkin, *Secret Histories: Finding George Orwell in a Burmese Teashop* (London: John Murray, 2004), p. 61.
52. See, for example, Roger Mitton, "How things look inside the NLD", *Asiaweek*, 16 July 1999, at <http://edition.cnn.com/ASIANOW/asiaweek/99/0716/nat5.html>. See also Marc Purcell, "Axe handles or willing minions: International NGOs in Burma" (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute and Burma Centrum Nederland, 1997), at <https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/docs3/purcellpaper.htm>.
53. See, for example, "Myanmar 'traitors' hounded in on-line anti-coup campaign", *France 24*, 1 April 2021, at <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210401-myanmar-traitors-hounded-in-online-anti-coup-campaign>.
54. See, for example, Ye Htut, *Myanmar's Political Transition and Lost Opportunities*, p. 81.

55. Robert Horn, "Is Burma's Strongman Really Retiring?", *Time*, 11 April 2011, at <https://time.com/archive/6957112/is-burmas-strongman-really-retiring/>.
56. See, for example, Delphine Schrank, *The Rebel of Rangoon: A Tale of Defiance and Deliverance in Burma* (New York: Nation Books, 2015), p. 3.
57. Monique Skidmore, "Darker than Midnight: Fear, vulnerability and terror making in urban Burma (Myanmar)", *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 30, No. 1, February 2003, p. 18.
58. Wai Moe, "Scandal Hits Rangoon Police", *The Irrawaddy*, 6 October 2009, at https://www2.irrawaddy.com/print_article.php?art_id=16942.
59. Interview D25, in "Refugees From The SLORC Occupation", *Karen Human Rights Group*, 25 May 1997, at <https://khrhg.org/1997/05/khrhg9707/refugees-slorc-occupation-0>.
60. Sai Latt, "Intolerance, Islam and the Internet in Burma", *New Mandala*, 10 June 2012, at <https://www.newmandala.org/intolerance-islam-and-the-internet-in-burma-today/>.
61. Juan Cebu, "Facebook Bans Racist Word 'Kalar' in Myanmar, Triggers Collateral Censorship", *Global Voices Advox*, 2 June 2017, at <https://advox.globalvoices.org/2017/06/02/facebook-bans-racist-word-kalar-in-myanmar-triggers-collateral-censorship/#:~:text=Although%20the%20etymology%20of%20the,widespread%20hate%20speech%20on%20the>.
62. This was a reference to "something deposited quietly but leaving a powerful smell". Dominic Faulder, "Myanmar's iron-fisted ruler Min Aung Hlaing fights to stay on his throne", *Nikkei Asia*, 1 February 2023, at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/The-Big-Story/Myanmar-s-iron-fisted-ruler-Min-Aung-Hlaing-fights-to-stay-on-his-throne>.
63. "Junta-Watch: Billion-Dollar Myanmar Military 'Outgunned'; Dictator Gets New Nickname; and More", *The Irrawaddy*, 3 February 2024, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/specials/junta-watch/junta-watch-billion-dollar-myanmar-military-outgunned-dictator-gets-new-nickname-and-more.html>.
64. More recent sources link this sobriquet to Sein Win's uncompromising approach to demonstrations during the 1988 pro-democracy uprising, but it ultimately derives from his brutal actions in 1962.
65. "Special Press Briefing Held", 2 January 1998, at <https://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199801/msg00020.html>. Number Four is the purest, and thus most addictive, form of heroin.
66. See, for example, Donald M. Seekins, "Japan's 'Burma Lovers' and the Military Regime", *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 2000, p. 327. See also Kyaw Phyoo Tha, "Analysis: Kowtowing to the 'Prince of Evil'", *The Irrawaddy*, 3 January 2019, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/analysis-kowtowing-prince-evil.html>.
67. Ingrid Jordt, "Notes on the Coup in Myanmar: Karmic Kingship, Legitimacy and Sovereignty", *Contending Modernities*, 6 April 2021, at <https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/global-currents/myanmar-coup-kingship/>.

68. "The Master of the Myanmar Junta's 'Skyful of Lies'".
69. This is not to overlook the 16 months between October 1958 and April 1960 that Ne Win and the armed forces ruled Burma under a "Bogyoke" or "caretaker" government.
70. David Scott Mathieson, "The Burma Road to Nowhere: The Failure of the Developmental State in Myanmar", *Policy, Organisation and Society*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1999, p. 108. See also "A SLORC By Any Other Name", *The Washington Post*, 6 March 1998, at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1998/03/06/a-slorc-by-any-other-name/84bdf222-1eb8-417c-97ee-032cd9535e91/>.
71. The SPDC claimed that 92.48% of eligible voters endorsed the new constitution. *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar* (2008), p. iv. Neutral observers strongly challenge this figure.
72. The description is from Colin Kidd, "Making the rules of government", *The New Statesman*, 8–14 October 2021, p. 49.
73. *Observing Myanmar's 2015 General Elections: Final Report* (Atlanta: Carter Centre, 2016), at https://www.uec.gov.mm/show_data_content.php?name=209.pdf&type=law&code=x&sno=8455&token=9ce69a1b8f9f0effbfef662cab5728f5fbc183e9b61b04b06fc97ff71e62c7fc70510d5cc03e2cd38726c2d47dab9e8471cc95b390758055bf40fa6fbe6e0cd.
74. Kyaw Kyaw, "Analysis of Myanmar's NLD Landslide", *New Mandala*, 1 May 2012, at <https://www.newmandala.org/analysis-of-myanmars-nld-landslide/>.
75. *The Myanmar Elections: Results and Implications*, Asia Briefing No. 147 (Yangon/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 9 December 2015).
76. "Myanmar's 2015 landmark elections explained", *BBC News*, 3 December 2015, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-33547036>.
77. *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar* (2008), chapter 3, clause 58.
78. "Myanmar election: Aung San Suu Kyi will be 'above president'", *BBC News*, 5 November 2015, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-34729691/myanmar-election-aung-san-suu-kyi-will-be-above-president>.
79. "400 foreign VIPs to attend emperor's enthronement ceremony", *The Japan Times*, 19 October 2019, at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/10/19/national/400-foreign-vips-attend-emperors-enthronement-ceremony/>.
80. When Aung San Suu Kyi represented Myanmar at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in December 2019, to defend her country against charges of genocide, she did so in "a private capacity" as Myanmar's official agent, not as the de facto head of government or foreign minister. This posed a protocol and security dilemma for the Dutch authorities. See Larry Jagan, "Suu Kyi gears up for genocide hearing", *Bangkok Post*, 2 December 2019, at <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1806409/suu-kyi-gears-up-for-genocide-hearing>.
81. *Carter Centre Preliminary Statement on the 2020 Myanmar General Elections* (Atlanta: The Carter Centre, 10 November 2020), at <https://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/2020/myanmar-111020.html>

82. “Myanmar’s 2020 General Election Results in Numbers”, *The Irrawaddy*, 11 November 2020, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/elections/myanmars-2020-general-election-results-numbers.html>.
83. Tamas Wells, “Reading Myanmar’s 2020 Elections”, *Election Watch*, University of Melbourne, 28 October 2020, at <https://electionwatch.unimelb.edu.au/articles/reading-myanmars-2020-elections>.
84. Htet Myet Min Tun, Moe Thuzar and Michael Montesano, “Min Aung Hlaing and his Generals: Data on the Military Members of Myanmar’s State Administration Council Junta”, *ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute Perspective*, No. 2021/97, 23 July 2021, at https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ISEAS_Perspective_2021_97.pdf.
85. Sebastian Strangio, “Myanmar’s Military Seizes Power in Early Morning Coup”, *The Diplomat*, 1 February 2021, at <https://thediplomat.com/2021/02/myanmars-military-seizes-power-in-early-morning-coup/>.
86. See, for example, Hannah Beech, “Democracy Hero? Military Foil? Myanmar’s Leader Ends Up As Neither”, *The New York Times*, 1 February 2021, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/01/world/asia/myanmar-coup-aung-san-suu-kyi.html>. See also Andrew Selth, “The coup in Myanmar: What do we know?”, *The Interpreter*, 3 February 2021, at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/coup-myanmar-what-do-we-know>.
87. See *Resisting the Resistance: Myanmar’s Pro-Military Pyusawhti Militias*, Asia Briefing No. 171 (Yangon/Bangkok/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 6 April 2022). See also “Pro-junta ‘Blood Comrades’ resurface in Myanmar with April killings”, *Radio Free Asia*, 9 May 2023, at <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/comrades-05092023094008.html>.
88. *Resisting the Resistance*.
89. David Scott Mathieson, “Ethnic armies rescue Myanmar’s democratic forces”, *Asia Times*, 22 March 2021, at <https://asiatimes.com/2021/03/ethnic-armies-rescue-myanmars-democratic-forces/>.
90. Ye Myo Hein, “Understanding the People’s Defence Forces in Myanmar”, *United States Institute of Peace*, 3 November 2022, at <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/11/understanding-peoples-defense-forces-myanmar>.
91. Andrew Selth, “Is world opinion shifting on lethal aid to Myanmar’s opposition movement?”, *Asialink Insights*, 22 March 2022, at <https://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/insights/is-world-opinion-shifting-on-lethal-aid-to-myanmars-opposition-movement>. See also Andrew Selth, “Three years on from the coup, what could help Myanmar’s opposition movement?”, *The Interpreter*, 17 January 2024, at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/three-years-coup-what-could-help-myanmar-s-opposition-movement>.
92. Andrew Selth, “A no-fly zone won’t fly in Myanmar”, *East Asia Forum*, 19 February 2022, at <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2022/02/19/a-no-fly-zone-wont-fly-in-myanmar/>.

93. Bertil Lintner, "Annihilation over compromise for Myanmar's generals", *Asia Times*, 4 April 2022, at <https://asiatimes.com/2022/04/annihilation-over-compromise-for-myanmars-generals/>.
94. Derek Chollet was speaking at the Shangri-la Conference in Singapore, hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), 10-12 June 2022. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KldI75Yzq1Y>.
95. Andrew Selth, "Myanmar's civil war and the myth of military victory" *Asialink Insights*, 28 June 2022, at <https://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/insights/myanmars-civil-war-and-the-myth-of-military-victory>.