

declined in power and popularity as none of them can compete or challenge the dominance of the CPP. Hughes argues that the lack of economic resources to secure loyalties does not help to create a “resource-rich terrain that can sustain a democratizing civil society in the short term” (p. 141). However, all is not lost. The prospect for the future of democracy in Cambodia lies in the ability of the urban centre (Phnom Penh) to develop and expand the emerging urban protest movement of the late 1990s into a wider national movement which could domestically pressure the state to democratize. If they can manipulate and co-opt both local and international resources, urban groups will be able to resist the state’s attempts to monopolize the country’s political spheres.

Throughout her book, Hughes emphasizes that economic reform has been the most influential factor shaping Cambodian politics since the 1990s. It is also the most important element shaping the development of civil society in Cambodia. The powers of the state and its relations with society are closely linked and framed by the economic transition, itself a product of international and domestic changes. What is interesting is the importance of, and the hope placed on international intervention as providing the best possible conditions for sustaining civil society in Cambodia — a theme that is the author’s preoccupation. Given the current global interest in democratization and the expansion of civil society (and especially how it can develop in adverse conditions), this study is timely. It relies on an impressive range of sources, both primary and secondary. The book is a valuable contribution to the study of the “new Cambodia”, in its hopes, fears, and dilemmas as it emerges cautiously from the ashes of its turbulent past.

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***Burma’s Armed Forces: Power without Glory.* By Andrew Selth.**  
Norwalk: Conn.: EastBridge, 2002. 371 pp.

If Selth wrote this book in the mid-1970s when he was posted to the Australian Embassy in Rangoon (now Yangon) the sub-title might have been “Power with Glory”. Much earlier, in the early 1950s, during the first few years of Myanmar’s independence, when the armed forces of the newly minted state fought successfully to turn the tide of the civil

war against overwhelming odds, the sub-title could have been “Glory without Power”.

Among the world’s military forces of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF), which uses the vernacular term *Tatmadaw* (literally the royal force) and controls state power through the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), is unique in that it has held the reins of power for some three-quarters of the period since the country gained independence from the British in 1948. Its “glory” derives from its role in the legendary account of Myanmar’s independence movement. The Burma Independence Army (BIA), the progenitor of the MAF, was a quasi-political entity founded by nationalists of socialist persuasion under the auspices of the Imperial Japanese Army in December 1941 to drive the British colonialists out of the country. The most glorious episode of the MAF’s history was the “anti-fascist revolution” formally launched on 27 March 1945 against the erstwhile Japanese allies who had turned into oppressors. That date later became the historic reference point for the yearly commemorative event marking “Tatmadaw Day”. As for the “power”, it has been relentlessly growing for the last four decades as evident from Selth’s account of the MAF’s organizational development and its accumulation of human and material resources.

The book under review is the culmination of the author’s 25 years of observing Myanmar from near and afar. In terms of content, organization and style it can be regarded as a “full-scale model” of the earlier “pilot project” which manifested in the form of a monograph written in 1995 (Andrew Selth, *Transforming the Tatmadaw: The Burmese Armed Forces Since 1988*. Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre [SDSC], Australian National University, 1996). In fact, of the twelve chapters, nine are updates, expanded or reduced versions of the author’s working papers, articles and chapters from *Transforming the Tatmadaw*. The author also seems to have benefited from the works (p. 328) of Maung Aung Myoe who did his doctoral dissertation on the MAF at the SDSC in the late 1990s. Though it took a historical perspective, the emphasis was on the period after 18 September 1988, when the military took over state power and subsequently initiated an ongoing process of force modernization and military reorganization.

The organization of the chapters begins with the “strategic setting” followed by the software of defence establishment (policies and threat perceptions, organizational structure, recruitment, training and doctrine); the underpinnings (intelligence and economic dimensions); the hardware (the military dimension of the three services and associated weapon systems); and, finally, the current and future role of the MAF in the context of the ongoing political transition.

The author has meticulously collated and scrutinized data and information from a wide range of “open” sources, augmented by personal observations and selected interviews and has produced a coherent, comprehensive and informative body of knowledge on the MAF. Of course, any study that relies on a wide variety of secondary sources and accounts given by “anonymous” dissidents, deserters, opponents and “insiders” must be treated with caution as they inevitably are coloured by the authors’ perceptions and interviewees’ personal interests and motives. This is especially so because of the highly emotional, personal and ideological nature of the contention between the protagonists. As for the MAF sources themselves, there is also a distinct possibility of being influenced by psychological warfare and disinformation efforts that are part and parcel of the regime’s repertoire to preserve and enhance “national security”. Nevertheless, Selth’s extensive and detailed notes and citations allow the knowledgeable reader to gauge the veracity and reliability of the information. This is probably the best one can do under such trying circumstances in a state where there is pervasive control over all sources of information.

In Chapter 1, the author discusses the geopolitics of Myanmar in terms of having gigantic neighbours in the form of China and India in the context of regional rivalry between the two. He rightly points out that “the military government has become adept at exploiting Burma’s geostrategic position and manipulating the concerns of its regional neighbours” to its advantage (p. 20). In fact, while managing to turn India around from its pro-opposition stance to become an increasingly significant partner in economic and security cooperation the regime has, thus far, avoided becoming a “satellite” or “client” state of China.

The second chapter attempts to identify and delineate the elusive defence policies and threat perceptions of the ruling junta by scrutinizing the speeches of the military leaders and a very small body of literature attributed to native writers. To him, “an examination of the regime’s defence policies and threat perceptions” revealed a “persistent sense of vulnerability” (p. 43). One may add that the recent American unilateral action in Iraq probably heightened the concomitant “siege mentality” that derives from such a perception.

In the chapter on “structure and organization”, the author devotes a substantial portion of the narrative to describing the MAF’s recent attempt to embrace the concepts and associated technology of “information warfare”. He also elaborates on the changes in the command hierarchy, apparently to accommodate the expansion and reorganization of the MAF from a counterinsurgency (COIN) force to a more conventional war-fighting posture. The MAF top brass underwent several exercises of rank upgrading in the last dozen years that saw the creation of two new ranks of “Senior General” (possible equivalent of a “six star

general”) for the junta chairman and the Commander-in-Chief [C-in-C] of the MAF; and “Vice Senior General” (possible equivalent of a “five star general”) for the Army C-in-C and the Deputy C-in-C of the MAF, as well as over 100 general officer positions (one star and above in the American system — up from fewer than 20 in 1988) in various command and staff positions. Since this chapter was written there was another military shakeup and promotion exercise toward the end of 2001 whereby all the regional commanders who have been concurrently members of the ruling SPDC were brought to Yangon with promotion to three-stars rank to assume newly created and vacant command and staff positions. The new positions are reported to be: chief of joint staff (tri-services); four chiefs of bureaux of special operations; chief of air defence; chief of armed forces training; and chief of defence industries and ordnance. Subsequently the office of strategic studies (OSS; see Figure 5, pp. 56–7; Figure 8, p. 110; p. 113; and Figure 9, p. 117) was abolished and intelligence chief Lt General Khin Nyunt was promoted to become a full general in 2003, outranking all the other officers apart from the C-in-C and Deputy C-in-C. Another new development was the shifting of the Defence Ministry premises from a busy neighbourhood in central Yangon (n. 3, p. 71) to a more secure and exclusive place beside the intelligence headquarters and close to the newly built housing estate slated for the MAF’s top leadership.

The next chapter on “recruitment, training and doctrine” describes how the human resources and operating principles of the MAF had been nurtured and developed and appears to rely heavily on the works of Maung Aung Myoe published by the SDSC in Canberra (see p. 328). It notes that the MAF, though having developed strategies and doctrines oriented towards conventional warfare against external enemies, has retained the COIN thrust as well and has also not discarded the “people’s war” concept adopted in the 1960s and 1970s. The author, however, does not elaborate on how these three concepts that demand different (at times divergent) organizational and operational approaches are reconciled and rationalized in the MAF’s defence strategy and doctrines.

Chapter 5 bravely tries to piece together circumstantial evidence and disparate data on military intelligence service (popularly known as MIS) — the most feared but least known appendage of the MAF. The author refers to some “intelligence failures” of the much-vaunted MIS (pp. 121–3) and attributes them to a number of factors that include: frequent purges; an extensive field of coverage (especially for political dissent) that entails a deluge of raw information; and systemic problems associated with a “closed society” bordering on the paranoid (pp. 122–3).

The next chapter focuses on the so-called “economic dimension” by discussing defence expenditures (fraught with information gaps and unsubstantiated data) as well as procurement and production of weapons and military *matériel*. A brief description of the MAF’s business ventures and off-budget sources of income that make up the rest of the chapter is the most interesting section but it merely whets the appetite of the reader who ends up craving for more information and analysis.

The three chapters that follow describe the evolution of the army, navy, and air force into the present order of battle. It is abundantly clear that the army took priority over the two sister services and was dominant in all aspects up to the end of the 1980s. Though more resources had since been allocated to modernize the navy and air force in order to accommodate the externally-oriented threat perceptions, the army is still the top service by virtue of sheer numbers and the dominant role of its leadership in governance and administration of the state.

Chapter 10, on “exotic weapons”, is a rather quixotic component of this book relying mainly on circumstantial evidence and informed speculation. One wonders whether the author has been reading too much in between the lines in pursuing this elusive quarry — and the ongoing saga of the yet to be successful search for the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD) comes to mind on reading this chapter.

The penultimate chapter on the current status and role of the MAF touches on the internal dynamics of the officer corps and the question of unity with the MAF which are very important issues in the context of the MAF’s self-professed role of guarantor as well as the embodiment of state authority, implying that the MAF is not only an instrument but also a determinant of state power. There, the reviewer concurs with the author’s conclusion that despite “policy disagreements and personal differences” (p. 262) among the officer corps, a “major split in the armed forces is still unlikely” (p. 267). As the MAF continues to retain the “dual function” role (*this* predates by nearly a decade the Indonesian New Order’s articulation of the *dwifungsi* concept), it appears to have “mortgaged Burma’s vast and diverse political, economic and social resources to continued dependence on military strength” (p. 271). Selth seems to believe that the future stability and prosperity of the country will depend on the MAF’s “willingness to contemplate a future in which the *Tatmadaw* does not have first call on its resources and is not the sole source of political power”(p. 271). Speculation on whether this would manifest is the focus of the next chapter.

The last chapter entitled “The *Tatmadaw* in a Democracy” compares alternative visions of how the MAF would be restructured to serve a democratic regime as espoused by the opposition movement led by the 1991 Nobel laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (the de facto leader of the

party that overwhelmingly won the May 1990 elections, and the icon of democracy). It also contains some observations on the practicality of those visions as well as a measure of prescription on how to realize such a transformation of the MAF under civilian rule. Selth rightly notes that “under current circumstances, a peaceful transition to democratic rule can only occur with its [MAF’s] concurrence, if not active support” (p. 290). As such, the most important goal would be to allay the junta’s fears of retribution against MAF personnel. If a compromise between the pro-democracy movement and the MAF cannot be reached, the MAF’s “real military capabilities will remain limited and its professionalism suspect” (p. 290).

The two appendices on the “order of battle” and statistics of “defence expenditures” would appeal more to the specialist reader. Despite the author’s qualifications and caveats regarding the degree of robustness of the data, they would appear to be confusing to the uninitiated. It would have been extremely helpful if the author provided the status of the weapon (whether it is obsolete or likely to have been unserviceable) besides the particular entry in the lists. For Appendix 2 too, it would be most revealing if the author could provide expenditures for health and education together with the figure for defence in the table showing the amounts in local currency, i.e. Kyats (p. 314).

All in all, this book is a significant addition to a very small body of works on the MAF and the author should be commended for his Herculean task in assembling a reader-friendly portrait of the MAF from a vast amount of disparate information over many years. It would benefit not only those interested in the MAF but also those in the area studies community as well as students of civil-military relations, comparative politics, and international relations.

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***India as an Emerging Power.*** Edited by Sumit Ganguly. London & Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 2003. 233pp.

This book looks at India’s potential to emerge as a major power, with contributions from eight scholars together with an introduction by the editor. It addresses the issue of India’s strengths and weaknesses by