

The Strategy and Tactics of Myanmar COIN Strategy since 2010

note

OBSERVATOIRE ASIE DU SUD-EST 2017/2018

Note d'actualité n°7/8 de l'Observatoire de l'Asie du Sud-Est, cycle 2017-2018
Janvier 2018

Along with the recent democratization, the ongoing peace process has transformed the Counter Insurgency (COIN) strategy and tactics of the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw). Political reforms after 2010 created the new dynamic of civil-military relation, shifting paradigm in the COIN activities. Taking off from the old strategy of four-cut policy, COIN tactics vary, depending on the regions. From the conventional tactics with peace process as leverage in Kachin state, use of militia with the four-cut policy is also active in Shan States. Although militias still remain the backbone of the COIN operations, as the result of the Standard Army reform process, their role has soon to change.

List of the acronyms & abbreviations

Introduction

1. Militias – Backbone of the COIN

2. COIN Operations in the Kachin State

Background of the conflict
Tatmadaw's Tactics in Kachin State
Tatmadaw's types of operations in Kachin State
Resources

3. COIN Operations in the Northern Shan States

Background of the conflict
Tatmadaw's tactics
Conflict between non-state actors
Challenges

4. COIN Operations in the Rakhine State

Background of the conflict
Tatmadaw's tactics

Conclusion: Myanmar COIN in transition

ANNEXES^F

List of the acronyms & abbreviations

AA	Arakan Army
ALP	Arakan Liberation Party
BGF	Border Guard Forces
BSO	Bureau of Special Operations
BRI	Belt Road Initiative
CRT	Conflict Resolution Team
COIN	Counter Insurgency
EAOs	Ethnic Armed Organizations
FUA	Federal Union Army
JMC	Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
KIO	Kachin Independence Organization
LID	Light Infantry Divisions
MNDAA	Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
NA	Northern Alliance
NDSC	National Defense and Security Council
NLD	National League for Democracy
RCSS	Restoration Council of Shan States
RMC	Regional Military Command
PLA	People's Liberation Army
TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party

Introduction

Insurgency and independence are two sides of the same coin. Since 2010, the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) has adopted numbers of Counter Insurgency (COIN) strategies and tactics to expand the government control area and reduce the contested areas controlled by non-state actors: the ethnic and communist insurgents. Countering and reclaiming of the contested areas were significantly limited in 1949 due to lack of strategy, ideology and resources¹. As numbers of well-known literatures on the historical context of Myanmar Tatmadaw have already been published by scholars such as Maung Aung Myo², Marry Callahan³ and Andrew Selth⁴, this short article, rather, focuses on the recent development of COIN tactics, strategies and operations after the 2010 election: civil/military relations, peace processes and political system influences on COIN strategy and tactics. It is essential to understand that the Myanmar political system, as the result of the 2008 constitution and the relationship between Tatmadaw and Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs), shaped the operational tactics and varied on the regions and the stakeholders involved during the relevant security situation. Tatmadaw's external-international relation and vision to reform into a "Standard Army" are also crucial factors on the future development of the COIN doctrine and strategy. As the primary sources are limited and still classified, this report is based on the Tatmadaw and government's strategy and tactics on different operation areas in Kachin, Northern Shan State and the Rakhine States and the testimonies of the members and officers of the Ethnic Armed Organizations and locals in Tatmadaw operation areas.

Although the new civilian administration has been in place since 2010, appointment of some ministers to the security-related ministries (Border and Security Affairs and Home Affairs) were nominated by the Tatmadaw, and were required to align with the Tatmadaw, while reporting and taking orders from the civilian government. As a strong institution with decades of governing and retired military officers took over the civilian positions of these ministries and departments, it resulted in Tatmadaw hegemony over security matters, as the whole and civilian government had limited authority over these departments (although their primary reporting and line of command was to the civilian government)⁵.

In addition, Tatmadaw has its own policies on national security, peace and foreign relations, with full financial control without civilian oversight from the Parliament:

- 1 - M. J. Smith, *Burma: insurgency and the politics of ethnicity*. London ; Atlantic Highlands, N.J., USA: Zed Books, 1991.
- 2 - Aung Myoe, *Building the Tatmadaw: Myanmar armed forced since 1948*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009.
- 3 - M. P. Callahan, *Making enemies war and state building in Burma*. Singapore: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- 4 - A. Selth, *Burma's armed forces: power without glory*. Norwalk, CT: EastBridge, 2002.
- 5 - C. S. Kyi Pya and A. Matthwe, "Administering the State in Myanmar." [Online]. Available: <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/administering-the-state-in-myanmar/>. [Accessed: 25-Jan-2018].

a state within a state scenario has occurred⁶. Coordination (not civilian control) is the crucial part, not only for COIN strategy, but also in the implementation of peace and security related matters. To coordinate between the civilian government and Tatmadaw, the 2008 constitution granted to host the National Defense and Security Council (NDSC). This 11-member council, headed by the president of the union, is the highest executive decision-making body of the state, addressing national security issues⁷.

President U Thein Sein's administration (Union Solidarity and Development Party – USDP) was formed by the government with the senior Tatmadaw officers⁸ creating the informal coordination with the Tatmadaw, as the result of institutionalized senior-junior relations. Together with the NDSC at the policy level, and coordination at the working level with personal influence, the civil-military relationship had functioned throughout their administration.

Political manoeuvres, military operations, together with the peace process, brought about COIN strategy during president U Thein Sein's administration and were able to achieve certain levels of tranquillity in the conflicted and affected areas and to create the new institutions to guard the ceasefire, such as the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC)⁹. As a result of the peace process and People's Liberation Army reform in China, Tatmadaw was made to consider their strategy and idealization of "Standard Army" reform¹⁰. Although the visionary outcome "Standard Army" has been frequently quoted by Tatmadaw, it is still unclear whether it will change the COIN strategy and military doctrine that has been adopted for 5 decades.

This internal coordination and NDSC meetings came into existence soon after the National League for Democracy (NLD) administration took office. Civil-military relations nearly ceased to exist and the civilian government had almost no coordination and oversight of Tatmadaw's actions in the conflicted and affected areas as the previous U Thein Sein administration had. However, the Ministries of Home Affairs and Security and Border Affairs still perform as the coordinating bodies between the government and Tatmadaw.

Due to the nature of the work being closely intertwined, they aligned with the Tatmadaw COIN operations, creating a government that has less authority over the implementation of the security related agenda.

6 - A. T. Diplomat The, "How China Is Courting Myanmar," *The Diplomat*. [Online]. Available: <https://thediplomat.com/2017/08/how-china-is-courting-myanmar/>. [Accessed: 25-Jan-2018].

7 - "Myanmar forms national defense, security council - People's Daily Online." [Online]. Available: <http://en.people.cn/90001/90777/90851/7337304.html>. [Accessed: 25-Jan-2018].

8 - AsiaNews.it, "MYANMAR Thein Sein's cabinet shuffle just a." [Online]. Available: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Thein-Sein-s-cabinet-shuffle-just-a-smokescreen-25663.html>. [Accessed: 25-Jan-2018].

9 - 'On' Nuiñ' Ū", *Pathway to peace: an insider's account of the Myanmar peace process*. 2016.

10 - A. Thiha, "Understanding the Tatmadaw's 'Standard Army' reforms," *Frontier Myanmar*. [Online]. Available: <https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/understanding-the-tatmadaws-standard-army-reforms>. [Accessed: 25-Jan-2018].



Militias – Backbone of the COIN

Since 1956, the appropriate directorate has been established to administer the people's militia forces to provide security to the villages and to assist Tatmadaw COIN operations against the EAO and Communist insurgencies. Recent reports from the Asia Foundation on Militias in Myanmar cover the core aspect, so we will not elaborate¹¹. But it's crucial to address whether militias will always side with the Tatmadaw. It is still unclear and a kettle of fish. Although the militias are part of the Tatmadaw structure, it doesn't mean that they will always follow the codes of conduct, and sometimes they will refuse to fight against their own ethnic groups¹².

This seems clear in the case of the Northern Shan State, where the Shan militia is not attached to the Restoration Council of Shan State troops, but, rather, only attacks the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA)¹³. A similar scenario has also happened in the Karan state, where Border Guard Forces of the Tatmadaw were sometimes sympathetic to the splinter groups of the Ethnic Armed Organization¹⁴. Depending on the ethnicity of the militia forces and its loose command and control, it has not always effectively and efficiently supported the Tatmadaw's COIN operations.

However, they are still the core backbone of the Tatmadaw operations in the ethnic areas. Together with and under the command of the Tatmadaw officers, they jointly patrol and conduct information gathering and search and destroy operations. Because of their lack of formal training, they usually do not comply with the code of conduct and they have violated human rights and were also involved in illegal business activities¹⁵. Their language and local knowledge are key assets for the Tatmadaw to conduct operations in the ethnic area. However, in recent years, the Tatmadaw has tried to rely less and less on them during operations. As a result of the on-going "Standard Army" reform, involvement in illegal business activities, human rights violations and extortions, the Tatmadaw is in the process of reviewing their doctrine.

They are still part of the official doctrine, adopted in 1998, "the people's war under modern conditions". During the first Union Peace Conference, it was restated as "supporting the Tatmadaw through the people's war strategy for national defence." However, their role is significantly smaller compared with operations in the 1990s.

At this time, there has been no official announcement of a new military doctrine. At the same time, some elements of the doctrine have become less prevalent

11 - S. John, "Militias in Myanmar," *The Asia Foundation*. [Online]. Available: <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/militias-in-myanmar/>. [Accessed: 25-Jan-2018].

12 - O.-2 KIO, "Interview with the KIO/KIA officer 2, Shan State," 15-Dec-2017.

13 - R.-1 TNLA, "Interview with the TNLA," 15-Dec-2017.

14 - DKBA, "Interview with the DKBA," 17-Dec-2017.

15 - O.-1 KIO, "Interview with the KIO/KIA officer," 12-Oct-2017.

since 2010. There has been little new recruitment and training of auxiliary forces, such as the fire brigade and the Red Cross. There are also fewer reports on the training of people's militia at the village level, although it still occurs in the Kachin State¹⁶. The training of militias was an essential part of the doctrine and was common from 2006 to 2010. All this suggests that the people's war doctrine is still the official position, but, at the same time, a transition is in process.



COIN Operations in the Kachin State¹⁷

Background of the conflict

Operations in the Kachin State resumed in 2011 (after nearly two decades of ceasefire) under the Kachin Independence Organization. The trigger cause was the attack of Tatmadaw troops securing the Myitsonne dam project, but tensions had begun since the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) refused to be absorbed into the Border Guard Forces (BGF). Operations in the Kachin State are directly commanded and controlled from the War Office by Nay Pyi Taw, deployed by the Light Infantry Divisions (LID) and operated together with the Regional Military Command (RMC). The Bureau of Special Operations (BSO) is in charge of the operations.

At the initial phase of operations, KIA attacked the Tatmadaw outpost and positions in Mansi and Bhamo townships. Most are strategically located along the Myitkya-Laiza (HQ of the KIA) highway, with higher ground. Some points are within the 5 km radius from Laiza and within the range of artillery fire. Most of them are not well prepared and maintained for the defense, as Tatmadaw did not assume that KIA might attack on their outposts so soon. However, the Tatmadaw was able to hold their line for a day and KIA did not overrun the outposts. The following day, Tatmadaw's air force air-lifted reinforcements with Mi-35. Reinforcements also included artillery pieces, deployed at the outposts. The tide had changed and now Laiza was directly under the threat of artillery shells. Shelling had begun and the first ceasefire talk between the Tatmadaw and KIA had begun, but no cease fire agreement was reached. However, an agreement on the reduction of hostility was reached to form the Conflict Resolution Team (CRT) to deter the conflict and prevent further escalation.

Tatmadaw's Tactics in Kachin State

This was the first time that the Tatmadaw used helicopters for airlifts and to deploy artillery in the combat situation with high coordination between air forces and ground forces. Since then, air support – particularly helicopter attacks and lifts – are the most frequent tactics for the

16 - O.-I KIO, "Interview with the KIO/KIA officer," 12-Oct-2017.

17 - The primary sources of this part are made up of interviews with two KIO/KIA officers and data collected from the Tatmadaw officers Facebook pages on each incident.]

Tatmadaw. This was widely seen in the Kokang crisis and the Rakhine Crisis. In this form of Joint Operations, BSO is in charge, with the direct command and control from the War Office in Nay Pyi Taw.

The Tatmadaw used the containment policy in eastern Kachin State, around the Laiza areas, and strategically controlled all the logistic roads, putting pressure on Laiza and bringing KIA in on the peace process. They understood that the occupation of Laiza would spread the conflict throughout the Kachin States and that splinters would follow. However, they don't have much local popular support or knowledge to crush potential 4G warfare. This strategy worked well as the peace process went on, allowing the Tatmadaw to use their holding positions to pressure the KIA/KIO to reach agreements during the negotiations.

The CRT, which is located in Myitkyina, serves as the high level liaison office; however, it is mandated only within the Kachin state and point of contact for the Government and Tatmadaw is the Security and Border Affairs minister of the Kachin State. This situation pushed conflict between KIO/KIA into Northern Shan State.

Although the government's militias in the Kachin State are strong and well-trained, they were not involved during the Tatmadaw operations. This may be due to the following:

- (1) lack of trust of its own militias due to the ethnic basis;
- (2) inability to gain the hearts of the Kachin people and to use the militias, worsening the situation;
- (3) ethnic tensions between the Kachin and other minorities, such as Shan Ni and Lisu.

Due to all these reasons, the Tatmadaw is leading all operations without much support from the militias.

Tatmadaw's types of operations in Kachin State

There are two types of operations in the Kachin State:

- (1) operations lead by the RMC and
- (2) operations directly coordinated with the Nay Pyi Taw.

RMC operations are limited to mostly patrolling and securitizing the areas and providing logistic support to operations, led by Nay Pyi Taw, with the station troops deployed at the bases. As a result of the close coordination and decades of peace between the Tatmadaw and KIA, commanders from RMC and KIO have still a good channel of communication and they play an essential role to avoid and deter the escalation of conflicts.

General Administrative Department (GAD) and the Security and Border Affairs Minister (usually a colonel) work closely with the RMC, particularly on administration, conflict deterrence, security of the villages and, most importantly, provide intelligence to their respective channels: Security Border Affairs to their Union Minister of Security, and Border Affairs and Home Affairs to the President's office. The RMC reports to BSO and the Nay Pyi Taw War office.

Based on the information, the NDSC decides upon and sets the policies, both on the peace process as well as the security strategies. The Tatmadaw decides whether or not to conduct the operations with the LID and with the RMC. In recent years, their strategy has been:

- to use more firepower and the air to prepare ground attacks (use of MiG is common),
- followed by the artilleries and then air support with the Mi-35P helicopters,
- then, for the final overrun: ground attack.

In most cases, KIA/KIO troops withdraw before the ground force attack. As all the joint operations are directly controlled from Nay Pyi Taw, there is no chance of stopping the operation from RMC, and the regional government has almost no control over the operation. In this kind of operation, the CRT is unable to intervene to deter the conflict. Most of the major operations, led by Nay Pyi Taw, have press released from the social media of the Commander in Chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

As the KIA/KIO troops were encircled in the Mansi and Bahmo townships, they conducted the operations in Northern Tanai and Hpakant in the Kachin State. In 2014-15, KIO-KIA had tried to setup bases and attempted to relocate the HQ; however, with the direct COIN operations from Nay Pyi Taw, their objective of relocating the HQ is still far achieving. As the majority of people in Tanai are Kachin, the Government is not fully in control and not winning the hearts of the local population. The Tatmadaw just dug in and setup outposts in Tanai; however, due to logistic issues, it was difficult for both the Tatmadaw and the KIA to gain control over the region.

Resources

With the high concentration of gold reserves, Tanai is the area for KIA/KIO for mining and taxation. The Tatmadaw's preoccupation is with control of the mine areas and roads, rather than control over the whole region. This impacts the KIA/KIO's economy, reducing significant amount of income, resulting in tax increases within their control area, as well as losing the popular supports from both locals and miners (who were the primary tax payers in KIA/KIO).

As the conflict continues, KIO/KIA require fresh troops, resulting in forced recruitments and extortions. Kachin has political cause to join KIA, but others, such as Shan Ni (Shan), don't align with the political vision of KIO/KIA, resulting in ethnic tensions between Kachin and Shan Ni.

As the Kachin population spreads towards Northern Shan, and less in Kachin States, Shan Ni has significant control over the western Kachin States, in which KIO/KIA had tried for years to setup their stronghold; but it has not yet achieved it. Taking this as a chance, the government had trained the Shan Ni militia, but not officially. Shan Ni is now stronger and it is not only challenging KIA/KIO in the western part of the Kachin state, but also asking for an autonomous region within the Kachin States. This may further escalate the tension soon.

Hpakant, the major jade mining side, is another story. Although both the Tatmadaw and KIA exist side-by-side, major conflicts rarely happen compared to the Eastern and Tanai areas. These resources rich regions, with limited communication with the HQ and with troops and commanders in local areas, do not attack each other, but, rather conduct taxation and other illegal business activities. As a business interest, KIA has formed the militia in the area to secure its businesses. This creates some tension with the local stationed troops. However, both parties know that conflict in that area will affect the economy of both and this situation creates the diarchal government in the area without major operations. As most of the miners are from the Arkan states, this is also the major recruiting area for the Arkan Army (AA). KIA/KIO recruits and trains AA from Hpakant, along with the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), to expend the operations in the Northern Shan States.

After nearly 7 years of conflict in the region, the Kachin CSOs and business community want KIA/KIO to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. Together with the containment policy, KIA/KIO has lost their income sources and their strategic holding positions as well as political pressure to sign the ceasefire from their own Kachin population. The COIN strategy in the Kachin State can be seen as the turning point of the Myanmar Tatmadaw in both tactical and strategic (using peace process) coordination. Compared with search and destroy policies with militias in the 1990s, this can be seen as the new paradigm shift.

Note: There is evidence of the use of cluster bombs and locally made drones during the operations to occupy KIA outposts and major bases.



COIN Operations in the Northern Shan States¹⁸

Background of the conflict

COIN in the Northern Shan State is more complex because of:

- (1) the operations are along the China-Myanmar border, which limits the military activities due to the station of Chinese troops;
- (2) the existence of major trade routes between Myanmar-China;
- (3) the number of active EAOs involved;
- (4) the existing ethnic tensions in the region and
- (5) the limited governmental control.

In this region, Tatmadaw policy and tactics are straight forward:

- to secure the strategic areas as well as the trading routes and trading areas,
- then to search and destroy.

¹⁸ - The primary sources of this part are made up of interviews with two KIO/KIA officers, TNLA and RCSS members and data collected from the Tatmadaw officers Facebook pages on each incident.

All operations jointly operate with the militias, and human rights abuses are common. Only KIA/KIO are the dialogue partners in the peace process. The Tatmadaw policy in the region is to clear all the 3 active EAOs – TNLA, AA and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA – Kokang) – with their old school, four cuts policy. But it will be unlikely to achieve its goals as in the 1970s Central Myanmar as the locals do not support the Tatmadaw and all of these EAOs have control over the trade network to maintain their income.

Tatmadaw's tactics

As EAO's troops mobilize along the China-Myanmar border. Unlike in the Kachin States, the government has limited use of air support and range shelling. There was a protest from China during the Kokang crisis, as the Myanmar air force dropped bombs on the other side of the border, forcing the chief of the air force to retire. This scenario pushed the government to use only their ground forces, with limited firepower to control the area.

As there are limited numbers of troops to control the whole region, the government has stationed and secured Muse, major trading port along the China-Myanmar border on Northern Shan State and area along the trading route. Unlike KIA, TNLA, AA and MNDAA conducted 4th Generation warfare without fortified HQ, patrolling, searching and destroying was the only option left for the Tatmadaw. LIDs are routinely deployed for these search and destroy missions; however, they are ineffective as the operation areas of the TNLA have spread and now are even closer to the Mandalay Region border.

Usually, COIN operations secure the trading routes and adjacent areas. The Mandalay-Muse express highway is the bloodline of the Myanmar economy and more than half of the border trade is going through. As the Tatmadaw troops are stationed and securitized along the highway, the TNLA has mobilized along the villages for recruitments and taxation in Hsipaw, Kyaukme, Kutkhai, Namhsan and Kyethi.

MNDAA operates on the eastern part of the Thanlyin River, but no longer controls the area and operates through a border crossing from China. Northern Shan State was previously the active area of the KIA brigade (4). KIA lost their control areas after their unsuccessful attempts to overrun Muse with the Northern Alliance (at that time Federal Union Army – FUA). As KIA was unable to support their troops, TNLA took the areas previously controlled by KIA.

Conflict between non-state actors

As the power vacuum kicked in, there was competition to control the area in the region between Shan (Restoration Council of Shan States – RCSS), Ta'ang (TNLA) and Kachin. Seizing this opportunity, the government coordinated with RCSS (NCA Signatories) to attack TNLA. However, as the majority of the population is Ta'ang, ethnic tensions escalated from TNLA versus RCSS to more Ta'ang versus Shan struggle. As the majority of the militias operating along with Tatmadaw are Shan, tensions became worse. Local populations

have been abused by the militias that had joined the TNLA. Although AA had briefly operated in that area, they tried to resettle back in the Rakhine State to keep their political objectives but there was no support from the local population in the Northern Shan State.

Coordinating with Beijing, the Myanmar Government tried to cease the financial activities of the major funders and leaders of the MNDAA, resulting in fewer activities of MNDAA troops in the last few years, and now the Tatmadaw fully controls the Kokang region. However, due to language barriers and lack of local knowledge, they still did not win the heart of the population. Prominent Kokang families are still struggling for the power to rule Kokang. However, the Tatmadaw would not let them form their own security forces as they did before. Concentration of troops in that area has also increased the tension with locals as well as with the United Wa State Army.

Challenges

The major difficulties for the Tatmadaw to conduct the COIN in the Northern Shan State is that they don't have a strategy on how to win the hearts of the locals, but rather try to use old tactics. Relying on the militias, and with less coordination with the State Level Government (which is stationed in Southern Shan State), there has been no PR campaign among locals. In addition, they are still not considering the Northern Alliance (NA), TNLA, AA and MNDAA as the dialogue partners for ceasefire negotiations, containment and leverage through peace process strategy. However, there are some positive lights as the result of China's Belt Road Initiative. To secure the trade route (BRI) and Chinese investments in the Rakhine, the Mandalay-Muse road has become their strategic asset. Security along the border and the trade route is crucial for Beijing. This allows Beijing to mediate and to logistically support the Northern Alliance to participate as observer in the last Panglong conference. By supporting the government peace efforts, China is putting pressure on NA members, but it's still unclear as to what extent China could influence them. But if China seals the borders, it is unlikely for NA to operate effectively. The success of COIN strategy in the Northern Shan State depends on China-Myanmar and Tatmadaw-PLA relations.

* Note: Although helicopter support was common during the Muse defense and Kokang crisis, air support is limited in the Northern Shan States, compared with Kachin.



COIN Operations in the Rakhine State¹⁹

Both the government and the Tatmadaw have a policy not to have any armed groups or organizations in Rakhine. Due to the unsuccessful attempts on the use of the militias against the communist insurgency in the 1960s and 1970s and Rakhine nationalism, allowing armed organizations may be considered as a security threat.

The geographical position of Rakhine, unlike that of Shan and Kachin State, is flat, making it almost impossible to initiate and conduct insurgency operations. This lets the government having full control over all the townships and having effective and efficient bureaucratic systems. Although there are no people's militias, the government equips the border guard and immigration with small arms to control the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, but weapons are outdated and were unable to prevent the communal violence in 2013.

After the communal violence in 2013, the Tatmadaw increased its military presence in Rakhine, but, in the same time, was able to conduct operations in the Shan States. As the aids' supply came in, the local population sold out its products to buy rice and other commodities, resulting in supplies, such as tents and energy biscuits, to flow into the black market. Most of these goods were bought by the AA supporters and members to supply the AA. Although the AA attempted to control the area in Rakhine, it was not successful, due to the tensions between Rakhine and Rohingya²⁰, as well as the geographical concern.

AA conducted numbers of raids to Tatmadaw outposts over the last 3 years; however, it was easily found and destroyed by the Tatmadaw. Attack helicopters were actively used during these operations, as the geography favored this tactic. AA tried to control the base of the Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) in the Southern Chin State, resulting in tensions between AA and ALP, as well as the Chin population. With the use of air superiority, the Tatmadaw easily reclaimed the base in few weeks.

Although having support from the local community to some extent, lack of income sources, logistical limitations and, most importantly, the geographical position resulted in the AA failing to resettle in the Rakhine States. Similar to tactics against AA, the Tatmadaw used both ground forces and attack helicopters during the recent Rohingya crisis. All operations were directly controlled by BSO and RMC, coordinated with the local GAD. Although allegations of human rights abuses have been recorded, the Tatmadaw and the government have full

19 - The primary sources of this part are made up of the interviews with the AA member and of data collected from the Tatmadaw officers Facebook pages on each incident.]

20 - Rohingya had the citizenship status until 1982 Myanmar Nationality Law which do based the citizenship on the list of 135 national races. Rohingya was not considered as the national races and revoke their citizenship. They had their own radio station in 1950s, recognized as national races in Myanmar Encyclopaedia published in 50s and 60s.

control over the region. With the use of nationalism and racism towards the Rohingya, both the Tatmadaw and the government have used wide ranges of propaganda and public relation tactics to win the heart of the local population²¹. Still, Rakhine nationalism is the major challenge for them. If the government reached a political settlement with the Rakhine political parties and granted them a certain level of autonomy, Rakhine would not be a major issue. But it is necessary that a certain level of well-trained troops stay present to prevent communal violence between Rakhine and Rohingya.



Conclusion: Myanmar COIN in transition

With the use of air support and less reliance on the militias, the Tatmadaw is in transition in COIN tactics.

However, the Tatmadaw's public relations strategy and tactics are still limited in the era of the 1970s and 1980s, whereas the EAOs actively use social media to conduct public relations campaigns, communicate and recruit. Currently, COIN relies on firepower with the use of political leverage and international relations, rather than attacking on the ideology and winning the heart of the local population. With this strategy, tranquillity can be achieved but sustaining peace and winning the war is still far reaching. The structural limitations and the lack of civil-military relations in the current administration limit the development of COIN strategy and is using the full potential of legitimacy of the democratic government.

Although the Tatmadaw is in the stage of transforming into a "Standard Army," its policy and vision are still unclear. Defence review is necessary as initial steps, but questions on what is the overall national security policy and who is going to lead the process remains. Overall, the current COIN strategy of the Tatmadaw is tactical and varies depending on the areas of operation.

21 - Myanmar nationalism and anti-Indian sentiments were the two sides of the coin during the anti-colonial movement. Anti-Muslims literatures can be seen as early as 1920s as the threat to the nation and religion. These literatures have been republished and widely circulated within public throughout the decades. People in Myanmar consider Muslims as the threat to the Buddhism, particularly in Rakhine.



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Map

