Military intelligence under military rule often played a significant role in preserving the regime’s longevity, notably undermining opposition movements. Moreover, a military that focuses on internal security tends to strengthen its military intelligence for domestic security affairs, allowing the intelligence unit to exert a significant influence. This is also the case with the Myanmar military or Tatmadaw. However, the Tatmadaw is notorious for its secrecy as the primary operational norm, let alone its intelligence. Andrew Selth, a seasoned Myanmar military and security expert, attempts to shed some light upon Myanmar’s intelligence world through Secrets and Power in Myanmar. Selth does not focus solely on the modus operandi of the intelligence system in Myanmar but also the role of General Khin Nyunt, the former Chief of Military Intelligence (MIS) or the Directorate of Defence Services Intelligence (DDSI) (1983-2004) and the country’s former Prime Minister (2003-2004).

Through the book, Selth aims to explain the complex world of Myanmar intelligence. Such an attempt sheds some light on the role of intelligence under a military regime. Selth’s research shows that military intelligence and the military, in general, might not always walking side by side all the time. In fact, the DDSI represents a different political bloc within the Tatmadaw. Furthermore, Selth voices his agreement with David Steinberg’s argument that ‘there is no tradition in Myanmar of sharing power’ (p.65). This means that the rise of Khin Nyunt created a power contestation within the Tatmadaw. Thus, the fall of Khin Nyunt was followed by the purge of his followers. Selth also offers a number of reasons behind Khin Nyunt banishment (pp. 61-65). One of the reasons was Khin Nyunt’s apparent manoeuvre to forge a closer relationship with Aung San Suu Kyi’s camp. Nonetheless, it was hard to tell if Khin Nyunt had genuinely supported democratization in Myanmar.

The book indeed provides us with valuable insights on the rise and fall of Khin Nyunt, as well as the dynamics of Myanmar’s notorious intelligence unit, DDSI. However, the book does not offer a theoretical perspective on the study of authoritarianism nor Myanmar’s democratization. Some discussions in the book give a glimpse of how the Tatmadaw generals preserve unity and cohesion of the military to keep them in power (pp. 57-59). Despite such useful information, Secrets and Power in Myanmar might have little use to explain the 2021 coup, which is beyond the book’s scope. Moreover, Selth’s attempt to cover a wide range of topics related to Myanmar intelligence, such as dynamics between DDSI and other military factions, the fall of
Khin Nyunt, intelligence operational issues, post-Khin Nyunt development, and even foreign relations, made the book lack in-depth analysis.

Overall, this book will be helpful for Myanmar watchers and students of Myanmar study. The book provides information and insights on some dynamics within the Tatmadaw. The attempt to uncover the hidden world of Myanmar intelligence can compensate for the book’s lack of theoretical contribution. Such limited theoretical contribution makes *Secrets and Power in Myanmar* have little use to understand the intelligence phenomenon under military regimes elsewhere. Despite the issue, the book will be a great addition to area studies, particularly Myanmar studies, and readers who are interested in understanding security issues in the country. In addition, this book can be positioned as the first step to understand Myanmar’s intelligence world and trigger further study on the subject.

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