

The Role of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Myanmar

Tin Tin Aye*

Abstract

In 1961, the Foreign Assistance Act to administer long-range economic and humanitarian assistance to developing countries was issued by the U.S. Congress. President John F. Kennedy established the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The USAID aims to advance the political and economic interests of the U.S. through its development aid programs. After Myanmar regained independence on 4 January 1948, the U.S. assistance to Myanmar began with small grants to a variety of local and international non-governmental organizations. The U.S. has a long-standing commitment to improving the lives of the people of Myanmar. After the USAID Mission was terminated in 1989, the U.S. continued to deliver emergency humanitarian assistance through local NGO especially when the category-4 Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar on 2 May 2008. Since 2011, Myanmar has become to liberalize in economics and politics, promoted press freedom and ensured protection of basic human rights. So, the U.S. re-established its USAID mission in Myanmar in 2012. Its assistance is mainly provided in five categories namely democratic system, economic, education, health, humanitarian assistance but this research will focus on democratic, health and humanitarian assistance. Therefore, this research attempts to explore why the USAID program does normalize relations with the U.S. and Myanmar government since 2010. It also analyzes the defects of the USAID implementation in Myanmar.

Key words: USAID, Myanmar, U.S., assistance, democratic, humanitarian, health

Introduction

The U.S. foreign assistance or foreign aid is an instrument of the U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. foreign aid policy has developed commercial interests, national security, and humanitarian concerns. The U.S. assistance is provided under the following categories: (1) funds for humanitarian assistance, (2) peace building and national reconciliation, (3) providing for democratic systems and institutions, (4) developing economic reforms, and (5) establishing resilient and productive communities. In order to administer long-term economic and humanitarian assistance to developing countries, the U.S. Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act in 1961. President John F. Kennedy established the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The USAID unified pre-existing the U.S. government assistance programs and served as the U.S. government's lead international development and humanitarian assistance agency. The agency aims to promote the political and economic interests of the U.S. through its programs. The USAID works the development of democratization process by involving people in worldwide. The U.S. foreign assistance has had not only for furthering the U.S interests but also improving lives in the developing world. The USAID also works to (1) promote economic prosperity, strengthen democracy and good governance, protect human rights, (2) improve global health and education, (3) advance food security and agriculture, (4) improve environmental sustainability, education, (5) support humanitarian assistance in the wake of man-made and natural disasters in many countries and (6) prevent societies and recover from conflict. The U.S. foreign assistance totaled USD 48.57

*Dr., Lecturer, Department of International Relations, University of Yangon

billion or 1.3% of total federal budget authority in 2015 financial year (FY). Therefore, the U.S. is the largest foreign aid donor in the world.

The United States Assistance to Myanmar before 2012

In September 1947, Myanmar and the U.S. established diplomatic relations and set up an embassy in Yangon, Myanmar. After the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the U.S. had been providing assistance to Myanmar in economic, military and anti-drug sectors. The main objective of the U.S. aid policy on Myanmar aimed to prevent Myanmar into a socialist country. Meanwhile, the U.S. targeted at preventing Chinese communist penetration into Myanmar. For economic aid, the U.S. initial goal to Myanmar tended to prevent political and ideological expansion from China. In 1950, the U.S. economic delegation visited Myanmar and they advised and offered to aid in Myanmar economic sector. Therefore, the U.S. believed that the aid seemed more urgent with the founding of New China and establishment of diplomatic relations with Myanmar.

From 1948 to 1953, the U.S. supplied for Myanmar not only economic aid but also military aid. During the period, the U.S provided assistance to Myanmar but also supported the Kuomintang troops (KMT) in Myanmar. But Myanmar was no in favour of the existence of the KMT into Myanmar. Later, in 1956, the U.S. assistance program was restarted with an emphasis on food aid. However, in 1962, the U.S. suspended assistance because of the military coup in Myanmar. Nevertheless, the U Ne Win government tried to really keep a neutral stance. Therefore, the U.S. restored assistance to Myanmar again. From 1948 to 1962 more than one thousand Myanmar military officers received training in the U.S. under a military assistance program. From 1953 to 1964, the U.S. increased the assistance to Myanmar and provided a total of over USD 4 billion economic aid and loans and supplied more than USD 2 billion in military aid. In addition, the numbers of Myanmar military officers trained each year in the U.S. amounted to more than 1,000. But it was again stopped in 1964 because of Myanmar's socialist policies and disagreement projects in Myanmar.

With the changing of the Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) government's foreign policy in 1971, the U.S. discussed counter-narcotics programs in 1974 because the U.S. was also concerned with the trade in heroin from Myanmar to the U.S. For that reason, the U.S. supplied dozens of helicopters and four fixed-wing aircraft for operations against narcotics traffickers. In 1978, the U.S restarted assistance program to Myanmar and focused on basic human needs and lasted until 1988.

After 1988 Uprising in Myanmar, the U.S decided to suspend the small military and economic aid program to implement sanctions, to impose bans on trade against human rights violations and drug problems. Therefore, bilateral relations between Myanmar and the U.S. deteriorated. According to the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act 2002 (P.L.107-115), the U.S. confined foreign assistance to Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Myanmar and Laos to encourage democracy and reduce the spread of nuclear weapons capabilities. After the "Saffron Revolution" in 2007, Myanmar and the U.S relations became more severe because of the U.S. sanctions. Thus, the U.S. did not reach the goal of a reform process in Myanmar.

The USAID Mission was closed again in 1989, although the U.S. delivered emergency humanitarian assistance through NGO partners for refugees and asylum seekers in the refugees' camps along the Myanmar-Thai border. In addition, the U.S. began again targeted health programs in 1998. In response to the devastation areas caused by Cyclone Nargis in 2008, the U.S. humanitarian assistance efforts expanded. Since 2008, Myanmar ongoing reforms led to the re-establishment of the USAID Mission in 2012.

Table(1) the U.S. economic aid and military aid to Myanmar (in USD millions)

Year	1946-1948	1949-1952	1953-1961	1962-2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	1946-2013
Economic assistance and others	5.0	10.2	71.9	377.1	31.1	29.5	55.5	99.2	675.5
Military assistance	-	3.1	40.5	50.7	-	-	-	-	94.3

Source: Rong Wang and Cuiping Zhu (Editors), *Annual Report on the Development of International Relations in the India Ocean (2014)*, Current Chinese Economic Report Series, Social Science Academic Press and Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, 2015, P.226

According to Table (1), it can be seen that the U.S. assistance to Myanmar heightened in 2012 and 2013 respectively. It can be said that the USAID mission reopened since 2012 and Myanmar democratization process transitioned from the military government to the civilian government since 2011. But, the USAID assistance to Myanmar emphasized on economic sector and did not provide in military sector since 2010.

The USAID in Myanmar since 2012

The U.S. supports a prosperous, peaceful and democratic Myanmar. The 2010 elections resulted in a peaceful transition from a military government to a civilian government headed by former President U Thein Sein. The government introduced a series of political and economic reforms which resulted in a substantial opening of the isolated country.

Democratic Assistance

Former President U Thein Sein initiated Myanmar political reform, especially 2012 by-election resulted in a close relationship between the U.S. and Myanmar. In response, U.S. outlined several steps such as sending an accredited ambassador, re-opening the USAID mission in Myanmar, and facilitating travel to the U.S. for selected government officials and parliamentarians, designing the framework for private organizations based in the U.S. to commit to non-profit activity designed to assist the population. Moreover, U.S. announced to increase livelihoods in Myanmar and supported USD 171 million for health, food security, economic opportunity and political education and support measures which designed to ensure free, fair, and credible elections in 2015. In March 2013, the USAID started a three-year multi-million dollar program. In addition, President Obama signed a waiver to allow the continuation of counter-narcotics assistance in the same year.

The U.S. interest in Myanmar reform process is more extensive than an economic incentive. Since 2011, the U.S. has provided strategic incentives to the Myanmar government to remain on the reform track. After reopening the USAID mission in Myanmar, the USAID has supported democratic aid. The USAID has provided over USD 500 million to support Myanmar's transition including advance the peace process, capacity building for civil society groups and training programs for parliamentarians.

In order to promote participation in democratic reforms, the USAID has strengthened the activities of civil society within Myanmar by providing social and economic assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugee communities on the Myanmar-Thailand border through education, health, emergency assistance, institutional capacity building, media, advocacy, and migrant protection activities as part of democratic aid. In addition, the USAID has built a foundation for new democracy programs to promote future citizen-led advances and

to support the sustainable development of a strong civil society sector by enhancing its organizational and programming capacity.

The USAID aims to promote the rule of law, respect for human rights, a strong civil society reflective of the country's diversity, a dynamic parliamentary system and media freedom. The USAID provided more than USD 18 million and supported the technological assistance for the preparation of the 2015 election. Besides, the USAID has provided members of political parties and civil society organizations (CSOs) on voter education, strengthening public participation in Myanmar's reform process through the Consortium for Elections and Political Processes. In order to promote fair, equitable and accessible justice and to enable the public to participate in rule of law reform, the USAID is provided assistance to the Attorney General Office and the Supreme Court.

To strengthen democracy, the U.S. Embassy continues its work by providing research materials and resources through the USAID-funded Parliamentary Resource Centre. The Resource Centre has become a center for many parliamentarians to represent their constituents by becoming more knowledgeable about relevant issues. It has also supported for legislative research and meets together with other parliamentarians and members of civil society.

After reopening the USAID mission in Myanmar, the U.S. waived the 2003 Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 (BFDA) that the U.S. opposes and votes against International Financial Institutions (IFIs) assistance to Myanmar in 2012. Moreover, the World Bank considered 80 million grant to Myanmar for community development. Then, the World Bank approved the grant with the support of the U.S. in 2013. In addition, Myanmar has been invited to attend Cobra Gold, the largest multilateral joint military training exercise in the Asia-Pacific. It can be said that it appears to be the first step on the part of the U.S. to re-engage Myanmar militarily and to progress Myanmar democratization process. The U.S. rapprochement with Myanmar military has been carefully regulated under the umbrella of humanitarian dialogue, constituting one of the boldest rewards for the Myanmar new civilian government.

To democracy promotion, the U.S. used sanctions and democratic aid. After a long review process, the State Department announced the U.S. would maintain sanctions, but begin direct dialogue with the government regarding democracy and human rights. In 2011, Mrs. Hillary Clinton visited Myanmar, the first US Secretary of State to do so since 1955. In 2011, the U Thein Sein government released hundreds of political prisoners as well as held and respected by-elections in 2012. In response to these steps, the US waived restrictions on visas, financial services, the U.S. investments, and international financial institutions. In May 2012, President Obama nominated Derek Mitchell to be the first US ambassador to Myanmar since 1990. In the wake of the 2015 election and the peaceful transfer of power to the opposition, the US has lifted some additional sanctions. The 2015 election represented a remarkable step forward in Myanmar democratic transition.

In addition to sanctions, the U.S. policy toward Myanmar also employed democratic aid. Although the USAID mission closed in 1989 in response to the Myanmar domestic repression, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) provided assistance and training to pro-democracy groups throughout the 1990s and 2000s. When the reforms began since 2010, the USAID and NED began government-approved work inside Myanmar; the positive impact of their democracy programming grew. To build the citizen's capacity and empower youths to participate in political affairs and to know the political information through Civic Education training, workshops and seminars, the USAID has been supported the people in rural areas and

cities. Therefore, the USAID democratic aid was one of the forces to change the government and to become liberalization process in Myanmar.

Humanitarian Assistance

The USAID has been providing humanitarian assistance to Myanmar since 2000. In 2008, the U.S. scaled up in response to the devastation of Cyclone Nargis. For humanitarian assistance, the USAID had provided more than USD 18 million in disaster relief to the people of Myanmar in addition to its regular program funds. In March 2011, the government eased media censorship and released some political prisoners under headed by President U Thein Sein. In response, the U.S. lifted several sanctions and announced an increase in humanitarian aid and a willingness to lift the block on assistance through international financial institutions such as World Bank and International Monetary Fund. After the reestablishing the USAID mission and easing sanctions, the U.S. provided USD 50 million in humanitarian assistance in 2015 FY. It focused on vulnerable populations along the Myanmar-Thai border, in disaster-prone areas and in impoverished communities in Myanmar. Moreover, the USAID provided USD 6.2 million in humanitarian assistance to Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states.

From 2008 to 2012, the U.S. has provided a total of USD 196 million in bilateral foreign assistance funding to support humanitarian needs, promote democracy, and human rights. The USAID has bolstered the coordination of emergency response to get all parties in need during a conflict, and provision of nutrition, food, water sanitation, and hygiene assistance for displaced and vulnerable populations in conflict-affected areas in Myanmar. The USAID program is an effective foreign policy tool which has continued to add restrictions on the management of the USAID programs in Myanmar. Although the USAID mission was launched in 2012, its activity has been limited to humanitarian assistance, democratic aid and capacity-building for NGOs.

To influence good governance in Myanmar, the U.S. has more flexible and less binding than sanctions. Moreover, the U.S. has been exercised influence through international organizations on human rights, religious freedom, narcotics and human trafficking, etc. In response to specific circumstances, the U.S. has been given trade benefits from the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). For example, the U.S. Congress purposely gave GSP for Myanmar pending the government's handling of the 2015 elections.

Concerning with the migrant issues which occurred in May and June 2015 at the Bay of Bengal, the U.S. supported the emergency reliefs to the refugees under the International Organization for Migration and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It amounted more than USD 6 million. These emergency relief items included shelter, health, nutrition, and psychosocial assistance. The USAID continues to provide emergency assistance to vulnerable communities in Rakhine, Kachin, Shan states, the Ayeyarwady Delta and humanitarian assistance along Myanmar-Thailand border. To support flood relief efforts in Myanmar, the USAID provided USD 600,000 in humanitarian assistance for safe drinking water, improved sanitation facilities, hygiene materials, emergency relief interventions supplies and other critical interventions to the people affected by flooding caused by Cyclone Komen and monsoon rains. Moreover, a team of USAID disaster experts is to conduct damage assessments and coordinate response activities with local government agencies and humanitarian partners. Due to the re-establishment of the USAID mission in Myanmar in 2012, it enables to support Myanmar reforms as the country emerges from decades of isolation. The U.S. has provided nearly 50 million in humanitarian assistance such as safe drinking water,

emergency shelter and basic health care to Myanmar as well as to refugees in the regions in 2015 FY.

Health Assistance

People can face hindrances in their healthy lives because of HIV, malaria and drug-resistant tuberculosis rates in Myanmar. The USAID is reinforcing health systems and controlling and preventing the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV and drug-resistant strains of malaria and tuberculosis. In order to reduce maternal and child death rates, the USAID builds the capacity of midwives and community-based volunteers to improve maternal and child health.

Since 2003, the USAID has implemented infectious disease programs focused on malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and Avian Influenza. In order to halt the spread of drug-resistant malaria, the USAID is set to expand a USD 24 million anti-malaria project into Myanmar. It is a first USAID-funded malaria project in Myanmar and it will span five years and covers three countries including Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand. The project also underscores the emergence of closer relations between Myanmar and the U.S. Besides, the USAID has also funded HIV prevention and treatment in Myanmar. 158,584 people with HIV prevention education program to key affected populations most at risk for acquisition and transmission of HIV have been provided by the USAID. Furthermore, the USAID supported a nationwide TB prevalence survey that was three times the previous estimate by the World Health Organization. In order to achieve countrywide first-line drug coverage and second-line tuberculosis drug coverage in Yangon and Mandalay, the USAID supported health assistance program to Myanmar.

The embassy in Yangon uncovered a five-year USAID program called ShaeThot (The Way Forward) to deliver humanitarian assistance to communities in central Myanmar through the international NGO Pact. Previously, the USAID funding to Myanmar had been directed primarily to pro-democracy groups, humanitarian assistance to Myanmar nationals in Thailand and containing "the spread of infectious diseases" along the country's border with Thailand.

In order to promote training curriculum and provide accredited training, the USAID cooperated together with the Ministry of Public Health and Higher Education Institutes in Thailand to more than 1,000 community health workers/volunteers along the Myanmar-Thailand border. The border programs have supported health workers and over 150 health-care facilities to provide basic medical care to approximately 360,000 beneficiaries living in eastern Myanmar and within refugee camps inside Thailand. On top of that, in central Myanmar, the USAID has improved access to health services for over 20,000 individuals, 73,000 people have improved to access safe drinking water. Over 20,000 have improved access to sanitation facilities.

In particular, the USAID has focused on preventing the spread of infectious diseases, improving the health of mothers, newborns, and children and addressing the malaria burden in Myanmar which is the highest among all of the six countries of the Greater Mekong sub-region. President Obama's Malaria Initiative has made possible the procurement and distribution of insecticidal nets, rapid diagnostic tests, and anti-malaria drug treatment courses, empowering more than 1,000 community-based health providers in Tanintharyi, Rakhine, Kayin, Kayah and East Bago, reaching more than one million people. The USAID assistance has enabled care and support to more than 1,100 patients, resulting in preliminary treatment success rate of nearly 82 percent.

Besides, the USAID has begun support for Myanmar first-ever demographic and health survey, which will take place in all 14 states and regions of the country. This first nationwide survey will provide timely and reliable data upon which future health policies and programs will be made for the benefit of people throughout the country. In October 2011, the USAID proposed a five-year assistance plan for marital and child health, food safety and clean water. It proposed helping 2,500 villages of 24 counties obtain clean water through non-profit civil organizations. During Mrs Clinton visited to Myanmar, she announced an assistance package worth USD 1.2 million for Myanmar to cover medical care and microfinance. Assistance for refugees along the Myanmar-Thailand border is another focal point of the U.S. assistance to Myanmar.

The USAID projects in Myanmar already being supported USD 4.3 million for strengthening community-based organizations, USD 4.0 million for microfinance activities, USD 2.6 million for HIV/AIDS assistance, USD 2.5 million for community leaders training, USD 2.5 million for technical assistance on avian influenza and USD 2.4 million for journalist training. In addition, the USAID is continuing its funding for IDPs in eastern Myanmar and Myanmar refugees in Thailand. Especially, over 200,000 beneficiaries have received food assistance in the IDP camps and in conflict zones in eastern Myanmar. The USAID has budgeted USD 55 million for humanitarian assistance program providing maternal/child health care, water/sanitation assistance, and food security training. Moreover, USD 40 million has been allocated to health and education services to Myanmar IDPs and refugees.

Table(1) shows U.S. Assistance Appropriations for Myanmar

Fund	2010 FY	2011 FY	2012 FY (estimate)	2013 FY (estimate)
Total	38,600	38,527	38,100	38,000
Economic Support Fund	36,500	36,427	35,100	27,200
Civil Society	9,500	9,500	8,500	7,455
Education	3,300	3,300	3,300	2,306
Humanitarian Assistance	23,700	23,627	23,300	17,439
Global Health Program	2,100	2,100	3,000	10,800

Source: Michael F. Martin, U.S. Policy Towards Burma: Issues for the 113th Congress, Specialist in Asian Affairs, 12 March 2013, P.17

To strengthen the people's ability to shape Myanmar democratic reform, the U.S. supported over 300 CSOs local initiatives valued at nearly USD 11 million and implemented by 90 local partners the U.S. assistance improves the lives of millions in Myanmar in 2014. These programs aim to assist IDPs and reduce under-five child mortality and transmission of infectious diseases. The U.S. provided clinical services to about 60,000 clients through mobile health clinics. The U.S. funded programs have reached over 20,000 individuals at risk for HIV with outreach services, screened more than 70,000 people for TB and treating more than 23,000. The U.S. emergency food assistance supports 172,000 IDPs in Rakhine, Shan and Kachin states. The U.S. Peace Corps is opened its first program in Myanmar where volunteers will cooperate with Myanmar counterparts to strengthen local capacity and facilitate cultural exchanges at the grassroots level, beginning with the first arrival of volunteers in late 2015.

In FY 2015, the USAID has provided nearly USD 14 million in humanitarian assistance to support activities that strengthen IDPs camp management, facilitate access to food and safe

drinking water, and improve the health, nutrition, and livelihoods of vulnerable populations in Myanmar. Additionally, State/the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) has provided nearly USD 29 million to support IDPs in Myanmar and Myanmar refugees and asylum seekers in neighboring countries.

The total budget for U.S. assistance from 2011 to 2015 was USD 276 million. Most of the assistance has been provided through contracts with a variety of educational and professional organizations for technical assistance. But the U.S. does not assist to the military, except for very limited, non-lethal, judicial and legal training through the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies in Hawaii. However, informal and unofficial discussions with Military officers indicate that there is broad receptivity and interest in a renewal of their participation in the U.S. International Military Educational Training (IMET) program. According to the UN's June 2015 Global Humanitarian Overview, 120,000 IDPs displaced in Myanmar have access to temporary shelters. The USAID's Office of the U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) contributed USD 400,000 to International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support ongoing shelter activities in IDP camp in Kachin, Rakhine and Shan States. In FY 2015, the USAID has supplied USD10 million to WFP to support food assistance activities benefiting IDPs in Kachin, Rakhine, and northern Shan states.

According to U.S. Ambassador, Mr. Marciel, Myanmar-U.S. relations has been quite consistent for many years. As part of that normalization, the U.S. continued to promote trade and investment to help bring both our private sectors together and launched the Peace Corps program which is bringing American volunteers that teach English in 2016. In order to promote agricultural cooperation and trade between the two countries, the U.S. opened a department of agriculture office in Myanmar. The USAID has been very involved in working with coffee farmers who are exporting coffee to the U.S. looking ahead with the upcoming by-elections, the U.S. is continuing to provide technical support with the civil society and the media for the Union Election Commission. U.S. really focus on maternal and child health programs, rule of law, training judges, working with the police and judges and counter narcotics issues, trying to reduce demand for narcotics and extending scholarship exchange programs. It is a very normalized relationship between the two countries militaries.

Conclusion

Although the funding for ongoing the USAID projects continued until they were completed after the 1988 Uprising, the USAID again halted all economic assistance to Myanmar in 1989. Nonetheless, the Myanmar government requested renewal of the joint development assistance in health and agriculture sectors with the U.S. government. But the U.S. had provided emergency humanitarian assistance. In 1998, the USAID resumed targeted health programs in Myanmar through the international organizations such as the WHO and FAO. Moreover, the USAID and the Department of Defense provided immediate relief items and humanitarian assistance to victims at the Cyclone Nargis affected areas through UN agencies and international NGOs in 2008. Myanmar is in the process of a democratic transition from military to parliamentary democracy and negotiating ceasefire between the government and ethnic armed groups that created a protracted humanitarian crisis. The transition presents opportunities and challenges to achieving sustainable development and inclusive growth for Myanmar.

The U.S. has been using foreign aid/assistance as a tool to promote democracy, good governance and strengthen public institutions around the world. However, Carothers argued that "the greatest impact of democratic assistance has often been the transmission of ideas that will change people's behavior". The U.S. democratic assistance has provided to foster a

democratic government system, norms and values in a non-democratic country like Myanmar. It has provided in the areas of elections, strengthening civil society, promotion of human rights and gender equality, upgrading government institutions to be accountable and transparent and parliamentary strengthening. Democratic assistance is often aimed at strengthening public institutions and civil society. The U.S. democratic assistance continued to have a positive effect on Myanmar democratization process through the provision of critical training to political parties, CSOs and others leading into the 2015 election. Since 2011, the government has engaged in a series of liberalizing and democratizing reforms that culminated in the 2015 general elections that brought the National League for Democracy (NLD) government took office to power.

The U.S. sanctions against Myanmar prohibit assistance to the country that is not earmarked for humanitarian, prodemocracy or human rights purposes. The international financial institutions such as World Bank and International Monetary Fund are also prevented from providing aid to Myanmar. Therefore, the U.S. assistance to Myanmar is mainly directed to projects for humanitarianism, refugees and the development of a strong civil society in Myanmar. Highlighting the role of overseas aid in its engagement policy, the Obama administration has lifted restrictions on multilateral aid to Myanmar while increasing the volume of its own assistance.

The US had “the fundamental goal in Myanmar of supporting a unified, peaceful, prosperous and democratic [Myanmar] that respects the human rights of its citizens,” and the U.S. would begin a sustained process of interaction with Myanmar that the country has shown its interest in engaging the U.S.. Myanmar is wary of the U.S., who is pressing Myanmar in terms of democracy and human rights that the Myanmar government pursues a western democratic path for the core purpose of transforming the regime peacefully. To this end, the U.S. constantly penetrates into Myanmar society through funding the non-governmental organizations and supporting the democratic forces to influence the public in various circles and nurture a civil society. In conclusion, despite all the challenges, it will be a long-term trend that the U.S. and Myanmar will improve their bilateral relations, particularly as Myanmar continues to promote reforms. How far and how fast the bilateral relationship will go depends mainly on the fulfillment of the internal reconciliation and democratic processes in Myanmar and the bilateral gaming. In terms of improving the bilateral relationship, Myanmar is appealing to the U.S., who has a relative upper hand. If Myanmar keeps moving ahead on a path towards democratic reform, it would be likely that U.S.-Myanmar relations will develop in a way similar to the normalization of the U.S.-Vietnam relations.

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