

Abstract of the Thesis

UNDERSTANDING THE STAGNATION OF DEMOCRATIC REFORM IN MYANMAR POLICE FORCE: A BEHAVIORAL AND INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH

By

Aung Myo Maung

Ph.D. in Public Management, International University of Japan, 2020

The ongoing administrative reform in the Myanmar Police Force (MPF) has included adoption of community-based policing as the main philosophy of the police department since 2012; that is, the MPF has been pushed to change with a new objective—be consistent with the newly-democratic political order in the country. However, the democratic values inherent in the community-oriented concept has stagnated under the military influences caused by political instability and armed conflicts among the ethnicities of the country. Subsequently, many studies reveal that the success of the MPF democratic reform is highly dependent on reducing military influences and establishing the police department as an independent organization. However, with the current unstable conditions of the country, the problem of democratic reform with community-based policing in the MPF has become unsolvable if the problem recognition is all related to the military influence. Unlike prior studies on this topic that attribute the failure of the MPF reform to explicit military influence, this study argues that internal factors within MPF explain why the attempted reform stagnated. Specifically, I focus on two factors. The first, which builds upon Simon's (1997) decision-making study, is MPF leaders' interests about the organization's goals, interests, and constraints through the decisional premises. Simon (1997) points out the importance of decisional premises to understand the actual interests of decision-makers in the organization. In the context of MPF, many of the leaders are trained in the military and, accordingly, they perceived community-based policing as something similar to how the military interacts with and mobilizes

people (i.e. People's War strategy). As a result, MPF's specific decisions with respect to community-based policing – such as the content of the training program, values priority, and administrative procedures – have led to stagnation of the reform. And, the second is the impact of instructional context to determine the underlying source of organizational interests and, in turn, provide the factors to consider for the potential solutions. Study about the institutional context intends to understand how the institutional context in Myanmar has affected on the organizational changes, the analysis looks at the inherited and instilled values of the MPF as well as the shared belief system in the (armed) organizational field related to the organizational belief. The study concludes that the uncertainty situations of reform process provided the significant of the impact of institutional context on the organizational interests.