

Militants Threaten China's OBOR Initiative in Myanmar

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Asia-Pacific Research, July 08, 2018

Region: [South-East Asia](#)

Theme: [Media](#), [Society](#)

Militants in northern Myanmar have once again put China's One Belt, One Road initiative on hold. It should come as no surprise that Anglo-American history played a direct role in their creation, and currently fund and back networks supporting them.

The BBC has mounted a recent propaganda campaign aimed at once again placing pressure on Myanmar's military, within a wider effort to drive a wedge between Myanmar and China.

Amid an already ongoing and deceptive narrative surrounding [the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar's southwest state of Rakhine](#), attention is now being focused on the nation's northern state of Kachin.

Nick Beake of the BBC [produced a narrative](#) aimed at intentionally preying on the emotions of viewers. The report revolved around alleged hardships suffered by Kachin villagers fleeing from a supposed government offensive. The report was absent of any context or evidence and was based entirely on hearsay from alleged villagers Beake claims to have interviewed.

Beake would conclude that his report represented the *"first eyewitness accounts of the Burmese military targeting civilians in their latest offensive in Kachin State."* And supposed eyewitness accounts were all Beake presented. At one point Beake's report even cited third-hand reports of torture and rape – stories fleeing villagers claimed they had only heard from others, but did not directly witness themselves.

The only specific death Beake cited was of a man of military age he claims was killed during the supposed fighting. Beake avoided mentioning whether the victim was a Kachin fighter or a civilian caught in crossfire.

The BBC's Nick Beake makes little mention of the actual conflict and no mention at all that Kachin militants are among the most heavily armed and well organized in the divided nation of Myanmar.

And while the BBC report briefly claims that Kachin militants *"have been fighting for independence for decades,"* it never mentions the central role the British government itself played in creating Kachin militant groups during World War II to protect their colony, how Kachin militants played a role in resisting Myanmar's bid for independence, and the role these militants have played in preventing Myanmar's progress forward as a unified nation ever since.

Manufacturing Crisis, Foiling Chinese Interests

The BBC report and an uptick of sudden concern over Kachin State come at a time when Beijing has been working to foster peace deals to end the chaos unfolding along its border with Myanmar.

An April 2017 article in Foreign Policy titled, "[China Is Playing Peacemaker in Myanmar, but with an Ulterior Motive](#)," would include a revealing subtitle:

Beijing is trying to end the long-running conflicts along its border with Myanmar — but only because it can't exploit the region's resources at will anymore.

While Foreign Policy attempts to cast doubts on China's motivations, it inadvertently reveals that Kachin militants and their conflict with Myanmar's military are impeding Chinese interests, providing an essential clue as to who the fighting benefits and who is likely encouraging and enabling it.



Foreign Policy makes mention of **Aung San Suu Kyi's** National League for Democracy coming to power and the role that Suu Kyi herself played in protesting and obstructing Chinese-led infrastructure projects – including dams, roadways, ports, and pipelines – in Myanmar. Foreign Policy fails to mention [the decades of US-UK funding](#) that created and propelled Suu Kyi's government into power.

Foreign Policy does claim however (emphasis added):

In 2015, elections raised up the Nationwide League for Democracy, an opposition party led by Aung San Suu Kyi, though the military retained control of important ministries and substantial influence in the parliament through a new constitution. **Instead of a client state on its southwestern border, China had to deal with a government that was keen to find great powers to balance Beijing's influence.**

Of course, those “*great powers*” being referred to reside in Washington, London, and Brussels. And despite hopes that Myanmar would bend entirely before the West, it appears that many deals are still being pursued by Beijing and there are still receptive parties in Myanmar working to meet Beijing half way.

Conveniently, Kachin militants have renewed fighting along China’s borders, threatening to complicate development projects in ways mere politics cannot. Foreign Policy would admit:

China’s hopes to restart the [Myitsone] dam were complicated by a resumption of fighting between the KIA and Myanmar’s military after a cease-fire had broken down after two decades in 2011, shortly before the dam was put on hold. The instability has often closed the border and threatened China’s huge business interests in timber, gold, and jade.

Repeated claims that Myanmar is now a “democracy,” and that China must answer to protests and opposition to their projects, sidesteps the fact that opposition to Chinese projects is anything but “democracy” in action. Those behind these protests are funded and directed by US and UK government organizations.

Foreign Policy even cites one – the Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG) – but fails to disclose its foreign funding. KDNG is mentioned in a US State Department cable disclosed by Wikileaks titled, “[Burma: Grassroots Opposition to Chinese-Backed Dam in Northern Burma](#).” The cable also admits (emphasis added):

An unusual aspect of this case is the role grassroots organizations have played in opposing the dam, which speaks to the growing strength of **civil society groups in Kachin State, including recipients of [US] Embassy small grants**.

KDNG general secretary **Steve Naw Aung** would make a point about China’s close relationship with Myanmar’s military and the resistance to Chinese-led projects from the new – and very much US-UK-backed – government headed by Suu Kyi.

This is why more recent reports like Nick Beake’s BBC segment often insist atrocities are carried out solely by Myanmar’s military with Suu Kyi’s government portrayed as a helpless onlooker. [Similar narratives have been applied](#) to violence carried out against Myanmar’s Rohingya minority, despite the most violent and aggressive forces assaulting Rohingya communities are drawn from Suu Kyi’s support base – not the military.

The Foreign Policy piece reveals how Kachin militants may still yet be persuaded by China to choose peaceful development over conflict driven by whatever promises have been made by the “*great powers*” likely underwriting their cause, or at the very least, trying to encourage it. Foreign Policy makes mention that beyond infrastructure projects like dams and natural resource extraction – China also seeks to create transit routes through Myanmar to both India and to the Bay of Bengal.

It is no coincidence that conflicts closely minded, even openly cultivated by the US, UK, and other European governments have erupted and now burn precisely in the path of these planned transit routes.

Routes to India pass through contested Kachin State. Routes to, and a port facility on the Bay Bengal so happen to be located in Rakhine State, the heart of the ongoing Rohingya crisis.

Kachin Militants - An Anglo-American Time Bomb

The Irrawaddy – a media platform funded by the US government via the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) – wrote a 2012 article titled, “[Memories of WWII Run Deep for KIO \[Kachin Independence Organization\]](#).”

In it, the article admits that Kachin fighters formed part of the British Empire’s colonial army. It also mentions the strategy of divide and rule used by the British, stating (emphasis added):

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, **the Kachin, along with the Karen and Chin ethnic groups, comprised the overwhelming majority of local troops who served in Britain’s Burmese colonial army**, a force that also consisted of Gurkha from Nepal and Punjabi troops from India. The Kachin and the other groups were all considered trusted “martial races” by the colonial authorities. In contrast, Burma’s colonial army had few if any members of the Burman majority, **a deliberate policy of divide and rule whose legacy is still felt in the country today.**

The article also mentioned the US government’s role in training factions of Kachin fighters during World War II, stating (emphasis added):

Although the KIO did not begin its armed insurrection against Burma’s government until 1961, more than 16 years after the end of World War II, a good portion of the founding leadership of the KIO, including the group’s first head Zau Seng (no relation to the aforementioned major), were veterans of the Second World War who **were trained in guerrilla fighting as part of Detachment 101 operated by the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a predecessor of the CIA, or under a similar group organized by Britain’s Special Operations Executive (SOE) called the Kachin levies.**

As revealing as this is – it still enables Western governments and media to claim Kachin fighting after the World War was done on their own accord. However, a revealing history is laid out by Kachinland News in a piece titled, “[The Biography of Du Kaba Lahpai Naw Seng \(Part III\)](#),” which published part of a British officer’s speech to his Kachin fighters at the conclusion of World War II.

The officer stated (emphasis added):

You endured many hardships displaying extraordinary stamina and perseverance. Due to this, you have vanquished the more powerful, better-equipped Japanese troops despite having much less manpower. **Defeating the Japanese is just the beginning of your legacy. Now to protect and safeguard the recaptured lands, we will begin creating all-Kachin Battalions.**

Of course, this “safeguarding” was being done on behalf of the British Empire as a means of

re-consolidating control over British Burma. Those “*all-Kachin Battalions*” would eventually be formed and would form the foundation of Kachin militant groups now fighting in Myanmar today.

An All Too Convenient Conflict

It is clear that Kachin fighters were formed as part of the British Empire’s strategy of maintaining control over Myanmar – then called Burma – and it was clear that the British saw Kachin fighters as a means of consolidating power after World War II concluded.

It is also confirmed that the US has funded fronts in Kachin to impede Chinese-led development projects – development US diplomats themselves admit the region desperately needs and are not receiving from either the government of Myanmar itself, or from Kachin “freedom fighters” who amass wealth for themselves and leave nothing behind for the rest of Kachin State’s population – [according to another Wikileaks-disclosed US cable](#).

While evidence is scarce concerning what sort of backing Kachin fighters may or may not be receiving from Washington and London today, [their representatives are revealed to be in contact with US diplomats](#) in neighboring Thailand in the northern city of Chiang Mai.

Recent fighting all too conveniently spoils Chinese efforts to move projects forward. It also places additional pressure on Myanmar’s military at a time when the US seeks to cut back or co-op its power in favor of the Suu Kyi government. Washington and London spent millions of dollars over decades placing into power.

Regardless of who is encouraging and enabling Kachin fighters today, the BBC and other Western media organizations are clearly coordinating their narratives to leverage the conflict against both Myanmar’s military and in a bid to impede Chinese-led development.

Should sufficient traction be made, the stage the BBC and other media organizations are setting with their familiar “humanitarian” narratives, will soon be occupied by Western governments and Western-funded fronts seeking to displace Chinese interests in northern Myanmar and setting back its wider, regional One Belt, One Road initiative.

Understanding the US desire to impede the rise of China reveals what appear to be otherwise disparate conflicts as linked together, both within Myanmar itself, and across Southeast Asia as a whole. Once this is understood, it is easy to decipher emerging conflicts as they unfold – especially as the Western media attempts to leverage them to suit Western interests.

Beijing can be expected to continue seeking peace along its borders in order to move long-delayed projects forward. In the coming weeks and months, China’s patience and resilience will be put to the test by the West’s capacity to both create chaos, and wring from it a sense of order more to its liking.

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