LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Insurgency as a Social Process

Authority and Armed Groups in Myanmar's Changing Borderlands

David Brenner

A thesis submitted to the Department of International Relations of the London School of Economics for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

London, 3 October 2016

Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

I declare that my thesis consists of 83,725 words.

Abstract

This thesis asks why some ethnic insurgencies in Myanmar have de-escalated since 2011, while others re-escalated concurrently. It investigates this puzzle by zooming into the country's most important ethnic armies: the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO).

Findings from nine months of ethnographically-informed field research in the Kachin and Karen borderlands reveal that internal contestations within both movements have driven their respective conflict and negotiation strategies with the state. These intramural conflicts were sparked in the context of changing political economies in the country's borderlands that enabled the enrichment of individual rebel leaders but eroded their authority within their movements.

The original contribution of this thesis is two-fold:

Theoretically, the thesis contributes to the emerging literature on the internal dimensions of rebel groups by moving away from the prevalent focus on rebel elites and rational-decision making. Instead, it conceptualises insurgency as a social process between differently situated elite and non-elite actors, grounding itself within relational sociology. This appreciates how social dynamics - including figurational interdependencies, reciprocal power relations, and embodied practices - develop a momentum of their own in driving political violence. In doing so, it is suggested that the emergence and erosion of leadership authority in rebel groups depends on whether elites address their grassroots' claim to recognition, enabling the latter to develop and maintain self-perceived positive social identities through affiliation to the insurgent collective.

Empirically, the thesis contributes to a better understanding of one of the world's longest ongoing but least researched civil wars by presenting original findings on its most important rebel groups, particularly with regards to the often uneasy relations between rebel elites and their grassroots and the ways in which internal contestation drives their strategies. Its findings also have implications for policy in so far as they highlight the pitfalls of counterinsurgency and peacebuilding approaches that aim at fragmenting rebel movements and/or privilege the material interests of elites over issues surrounding recognition and identity that – as this thesis shows – are underpinning ethnonational insurgencies.

Acknowledgments

Over the four years that I have worked on this thesis, I have received nothing but infinite trust, encouragement and support from family, friends, colleagues, my supervisor and the many people in Myanmar whom I have met. My debt of gratitude to those who helped me in writing this thesis is a long one! But if I can convey even a small portion of it to those who have been most important to this journey, then in it is certainly worth doing so.

The LSE and the IR Department at the LSE have been special places to pursue my doctoral studies. Not only did they fund my PhD and field research with a generous grant, but they also provided me with a platform to develop my academic interests beyond the mere writing of a thesis.

Thank you to everyone who made studying at the LSE a memorable and fun experience. My special thanks go to Sam, Harsh, Maggie, Mark, Alessio, Ali, Anouk, Aaron, Gustav, Youyou, Chrissi, Borja, Mohammed, Dominika, Flo and Daniel. Without some of our many nights at the George pub, I might have finished my thesis slightly earlier. But hey, my life would have been much more boring.

My work itself benefitted incredibly from the critical eyes of many academics at the LSE.

Among them were my fellow PhD Students who entertained my rambling draft chapters in various workshops (including the legendary IR512!). Many thanks go to Sophie Haspeslagh, Gustav Meibauer, Aaron McKeil, Maggy Ainley, Sidharth Kaushal, Tina Blohm and Asad Zaidi. My special thanks go to Sam Vincent. From the early days of our PhDs, he became a partner in crime for bouncing off the ideas that were necessary to shaping this project.

I also want to offer my sincere gratitude to the senior academics who offered their wise advice and kind friendship. I much enjoyed exchanging thoughts with James Putzel from whom I learned a lot in his seminars, at the pub, or over barbequed "redneck birds" in his garden. Hans Steinmüller was another source of great inspiration. As a Political Anthropologist he helped me to digest my own field work and welcomed me into a fun crowd of Anthropologists, despite my disguise of a "newspaper scientist". Bill Callahan also provided helpful feedback for shaping the ethnographic character of my work, while making sure that it still speaks to the concerns of IR scholars. I am greatly indebted to Dave Rampton, who sacrificed much of his time in patiently reading through my then half-baked ideas. Without his comments on my work and mentoring on many other academic queries, I would have gotten lost more than once during this project. Moreover, I want to take this opportunity to thank Kate Meagher with whom I initially started to work on a very different thesis. Even though I changed my project to the extent that necessitated alternative supervision, she taught me a lot and my own thinking remains influenced by her excellent research.

Thousand thanks go to my supervisor Jürgen Haacke, to whom I am most indebted for his trust, patience and countless efforts on my behalf. From the time I first asked him about supervision on the then ill-defined project about rebels and borderlands in Myanmar he provided his invaluable guidance on the windy road. I benefitted immensely from his expertise on Myanmar as well as his knowledge of critical social theory that inspired the conceptual framing of my analysis. Importantly, he let me run on a long leash when I wanted it, while giving me direction when I needed it. Moreover, it is not exaggerated to say that this thesis would wobble in quite some respects without his close reading of my

often confused drafts and his extensive, critical and constructive feedback. In many ways, my own work began as the exact opposite to Jürgen's concise and elegant style of researching and writing. Although I still feel like an apprentice in some of these regards, I hope that his influence is reflected in this thesis.

Most importantly, my thesis would not exist if it was not for the incredible trust and selfless support that I received from the many people whom I met during field research in Myanmar and its borderlands, as well as from the Kachin diaspora in London. The political situation in the country is unfortunately still too unstable and unpredictable to mention the individual names of my Kachin and Karen friends and acquaintances. This notwithstanding, I want to express my utmost gratitude to the many people who helped make my field work happen, even more so as many of them struggle and continue to be affected by the ongoing armed conflict. Their support did not only include facilitating my travels, access, and interviews. The fact that I was in their caring hands also made me feel safe during my research in what sadly were and remain unstable and violent environments. Their willingness to share their own analyses on the situation in Myanmar's borderlands and permit me into their everyday lives was vital in helping me gain an insight into the complex politics of these regions. Moreover, getting to know them was a most humbling, formative, and enjoyable experience for me as a person. With great fondness, I will always remember my journeys with the crew from KED - whom I admire for their passion for education; the karaoke nights and other parties with many of my Kachin and Karen friends; my seminar participants who challenged Western orthodoxies on Conflict and Peace in the most inspiring ways; the excursions with the "Picnician" gang of Laiza; and the long nights of critical discussions about local and world politics with my friends in Myitkyina, as well as the community in Hounslow. I will always remain eternally grateful for their friendship. They are amongst the most generous people that I have ever met and I hope that they will soon be able to live their lives in peace.

Above all, I owe the greatest thanks to my family. Without their love and support I would not even have been in the position to start this thesis in the first place. My deepest gratitude goes to my parents who managed to raise me and get me through school, despite the occasional hiccups. My mother Gabi, nurtured an early interest in politics in me with her outstanding ability to communicate the complex and often tragic history of our world to children of all ages. My father Hardy, has always encouraged and supported me to pursue my interests - however odd some of them must have seemed - knowing from his own experience that this is the only way to achieve success and joy in one's professional life. Both of them always fought my corner no matter how narrow it was at times. I also thank my uncle Micha, who as an academic, understood my PhD journey and always offered helpful advice and encouragement along the way. Moreover, my thanks go to my sisters Miriam and Jael, my cousin Simone, my Oma Henny and my aunt Michelle, for their love despite my little quirks. Throughout this project, my thoughts have been with my late grandfather Hermann, who was the kindest and wisest person I ever met. I feel incredibly privileged that he told me about his own personal life, during which he unfortunately had to experience the worst of humankind. He left a deep impression on me and I dedicate this thesis to him.

Contents

Maps

Figures

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

Civil Wars are often fought by multiple insurgency movements simultaneously. Why would one rebel group decide to engage in negotiations with the incumbent state at the same time that another movement leaves the negotiation table and returns to the battlefield? This thesis will argue that in order to explain such seemingly paradoxical conduct it is necessary to explore the intramural relations within insurgency movements, specifically the vertical relations between rebel leaders and their grassroots. The argument presented in this thesis is that the strategic choice of insurgency movements to engage in negotiations or return to the battlefield is the outcome of a social process between differently situated and interdependent elite and non-elite actors. In particular, this choice is driven by the internal struggle of rival rebel leaders over authority within their own movement. Rebel leaders capture authority if they satisfy the claims to recognition among their grassroots, their authority erodes if they do not. This argument stands in contrast to conventional analyses of civil wars that view rebel groups as unitary actors, whose strategic conduct can be explained as a function of their external utility expectations. It rather contributes to an emerging body of literature that looks to the internal politics of non-state armed groups in order to understand wider dynamics of conflict.

Myanmar is an informative case to study the often contradicting ways in which insurgencies fight or negotiate with the state. The country has been tormented by decades of civil war between its central state and multiple ethnic insurgencies, striving for greater autonomy in its restive borderlands. In January 2012, leaders of the Karen National Union (KNU), the Myanmar's longest running insurgency movement, signed a historic ceasefire with the government of a country, which has been emerging from decades of military dictatorship after the administration of President U Thein Sein started to embrace a wide-ranging reform agenda with its advent to power in March 2011. At the same time, violence erupted between the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and Myanmar's army after the collapse of a 17 years-long ceasefire the year before. Since then conflict between government troops and various ethnic armies at the Myanmar-Chinese border has escalated to extents unseen since the late 1980s. This has not only resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe, it has also presented one of the most pressing obstacles to peace and wider transition in Myanmar (cf. Burma News International 2015).

By investigating the divergent strategies of the Kachin and Karen insurgencies in comparison, the thesis's goal is twofold. On an empirical level, the thesis seeks to explain why the Kachin insurgency has returned to the trenches at a time when the Karen insurgency chose to engage on the negotiation table. These shifting conflict dynamics have puzzled political observers and scholars alike, who lack adequate explanations for the contradicting strategies of both movements. On a theoretical level, the aim is to improve our theoretical understanding of a phenomenon that we know little about: the ways in which dynamics internal to armed groups drive the strategic choices of their leaders. The case selection makes a significant contribution to our empirical and theoretical knowledge feasible. On the one hand, the Karen and Kachin insurgencies are crucial stakeholders in Myanmar's civil war. Gaining a better understanding of their politics is pivotal for understanding wider dynamics of conflict in the country. On the other hand, they feature important similarities to ethnonational insurgency movements elsewhere in the world. The theoretical arguments presented

in this thesis can, therefore, be brought into a meaningful conversation with other cases.

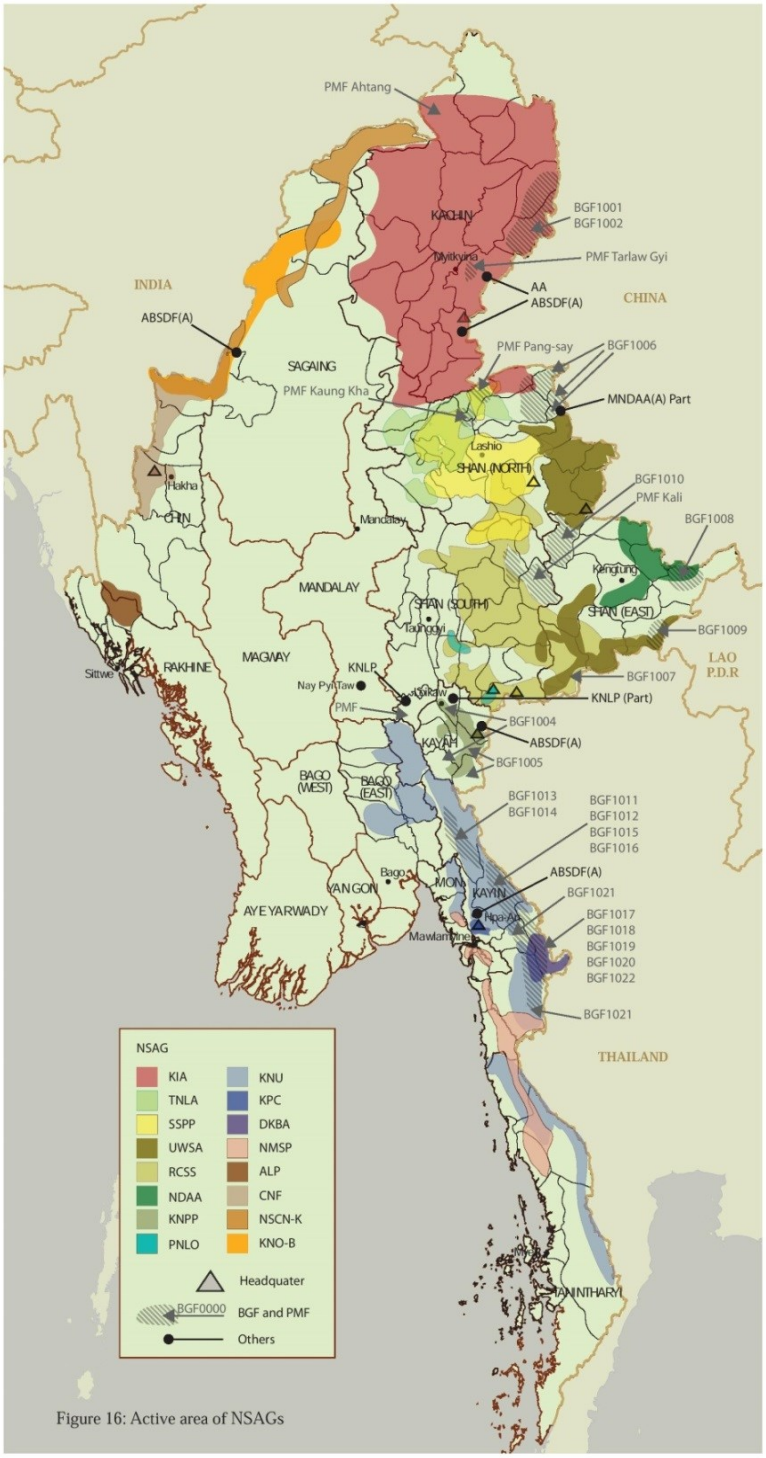
To introduce the thesis, the following chapter will first present its empirical puzzle, surrounding the divergent strategies of the Karen and Kachin insurgencies, which remains unexplained by the available literature on Myanmar. In light of this, the chapter will then briefly review an emerging corpus of literature that looks to the internal politics of non-state armed groups upon which this thesis will build for developing an analytical framework that can address the empirical puzzle. Based on this, the chapter will elaborate on the thesis's primary and subsidiary research questions. In a next step, the chapter will explain the comparative research design to demonstrate the wider significance of this study for other cases before it will end with a brief outline of the following chapters.

2 Myanmar's Insurgent Borderlands

Myanmar's borderlands have historically given birth to a dazzling array of non-state armed groups. The most important of these are ethno-national movements that emerged as a result of militarised and violent identity formation processes during the colonial period and the Second World War. These movements started to fight the post-independence state after the latter failed to guarantee autonomy rights for ethnic minorities located in the country's border regions (South 2008, 1–22). Besides operating guerrilla armies, many of the ethnic armed groups in question developed political wings and administrative capacities with which they maintain extensive parallel governance systems, generating revenues and public goods, in their "liberated territories" (Smith 2007, 16). In addition, several smaller militias operate in Myanmar's border areas. Many of them fight for the government or just act as armed criminal gangs. This complex situation is manifested by the fact that the exact number of Myanmar's non-state armed groups let alone combatants, is unclear and remains in

constant flux. The following non-exhaustive map of the various areas where non-state armed groups operate in Myanmar illustrates this situation (cf. map 1).[1]

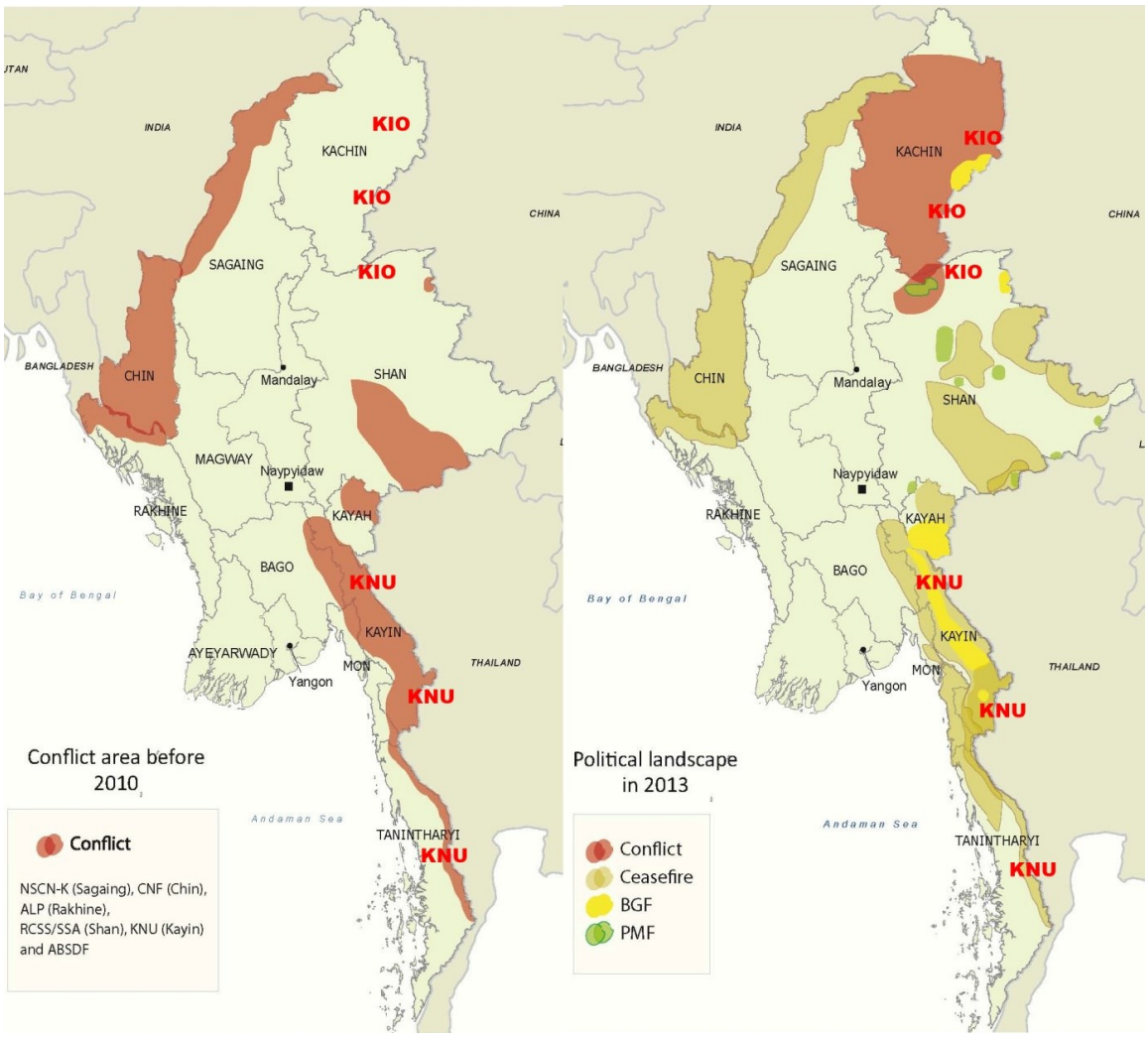
[1] In early 2016, the local information platform Myanmar Peace Monitor counted 18 ethnic armed groups, 13 of which had bilateral ceasefire agreements with the government. Their military strength, territorial control, and political weight varies from groups commanding less than 100 soldiers and possess no territorial foothold to groups with several thousand men strong armies that govern relatively sophisticated insurgent states. In addition, the platform recorded 58 pro-government militias, including 23 Border Guard Force (BGF) militias, with more than 326 soldiers each, and 35 People's Militia Groups (PMG) and other anti-insurgency militias, with up to 100 soldiers each and less-formalised command structures (Burma News International 2015).



Map 1: Non-state armed groups in Myanmar's borderlands. Ethnic armed insurgency groups are shown in colour while pro-government militias are shown in grey. The KNU is denoted in blue and the KIO in red. The map is not exhaustive (Source: Burma News International 2014, 45).

This thesis concentrates on the two most important non-state armed groups in the country, the ethno-national Karen and Kachin insurgencies, with the aim to explain their opposite strategic moves. The following maps illustrate this divergence and puzzle well. Map 2 shows the areas of active fighting in 2010. At the eve of Myanmar's transition, most ethnic armed groups located on the Chinese border, not least the KIO, had working bilateral ceasefire agreements with Myanmar's government, most of which were agreed in the early and mid-1990s. At this point in time, fighting was mostly confined to Myanmar's eastern and western borderlands, with the heaviest battles raging between Myanmar's armed forces, known as the *Tatmadaw*, and the Karen insurgents of the KNU at the Thai border. Map 3 shows how these dynamics have reversed in 2011 and 2012. On the one hand, a new wave of ceasefires has stabilised the situation on the Thai (and also Indian) border. The most important of these agreements was the KNU ceasefire of 2012, which brought unprecedented stability to Myanmar's south-eastern Karen State, a region that had long been the most heated battleground of the country.[2] On the other hand, the breakdown of the Kachin ceasefire in 2011, which had been central to stability in the Myanmar-Chinese borderlands for 17 years, concurrently plunged northern Myanmar back into fully-fledged military hostilities between several ethnic armed groups and the *Tatmadaw* (cf. Farrelly 2012).

[2] While the Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) has also signed ceasefire with the government, the situation on the Bangladeshi border has deteriorated rather than improved as sectarian violence between Buddhist and Muslim communities has since engulfed this border area (Burma News International 2015).



Map 2: Conflict area in 2010 & Map 3: Conflict area in 2013: The left map shows the area of ongoing armed conflict with various ethnic armed groups in 2010 before the new ceasefire wave. It does not show the ceasefire areas before 2010, as some of them overlap with the conflict zones due to different armed groups operating in the same areas. The right map shows how in relation to armed fighting by ethnic armed groups the landscape of escalation and de-escalation has shifted by 2013. The abbreviations BGF (Border Guard Force) and PMF (Paramilitary Force) denote areas held by government controlled militias (Source: Burma News International 2013a, 2,4).

Scholars and political analysts have struggled to explain why some of the country's ethnic insurgencies returned to the trenches at the time others chose to negotiate. On the one hand, the rapprochement between the government and various ethnic armed groups seemed to fit with wider political transition in Myanmar (International Crisis Group 2011). In particular, the ceasefire with the KNU, long regarded as the country's least compromising rebel group, seemed to testify to the significance of these transformations (Burke, December 02, 2012; Mydans, December

02, 2012). On the other hand, the escalation of conflict on the Chinese border could not easily be brushed away as an anomaly. The ferocity with which the KIO and other insurgencies, including Palaung, Kokang and Shan forces, took up arms again, seemed particularly bewildering because these northern borderlands long appeared comparatively stable with regional ceasefires providing economic benefits to elites of all sides since the early 1990s (International Crisis Group 2012). In the absence of satisfactory explanations for the divergent trajectories of the two most important ethnic armed groups in Myanmar, this thesis has been driven by the following empirical puzzle: *Why did the Karen insurgency sign a ceasefire in 2012 and why did the Kachin ceasefire collapse in 2011?*

No academic study has yet addressed this question. That said, an edited volume on the Kachin ceasefire was published at the very time that this thesis was submitted (Sadan 2016b). Edited by cultural historian Mandy Sadan, it deals with several aspects of the Kachin ceasefire years between 1994 and 2011, including the personal experiences of Kachin students (Sadan 2016), the development of culture and arts (Hedström 2016), as well as the political economy of the ceasefire (Jones 2016; Woods 2016). The historic contextualisation of the Kachin ceasefire demonstrates that cycles of conflict escalation and de-escalation have long been characteristic of Myanmar's decades-long ethnic conflict (Anderson and Sadan 2016; Smith 2016). Importantly, its contributors highlight the dire experience among local Kachin communities during the ceasefire, which did not deliver on its initial promise of peace and development (Ibid.). The contributors, hence, provide an important corrective to the narrative of some political observers and policy-makers. Many of the latter have grown increasingly upset with the renewed Kachin resistance at a time of wider transition. As Sadan pointedly comments, to many Western policy-makers and journalists it seemed 'that "the Kachin" were spoiling the party for everyone else' (Sadan 2016a, 12). The volume also includes two brief accounts on the Karen ceasefire (Gravers 2016; Walton 2016). Both of the latter argue that the KNU is highly fragmented (as is Karen society) and that its ceasefire seems unstable because of its lacking code of conduct, without which violations of the agreement seem likely (Ibid.). Much of the following thesis agrees

with these forthcoming essays. Yet, their analyses alone do not provide a satisfactory explanation for why the KIO chose to take up arms again in 2011, nor do they explain why the KNU started to engage in negotiations at about the same time.

In fact, the divergent strategies of both movements reveal the shortcomings of frameworks that understand the strategic choices of Myanmar's ethnic armed groups with regards to their ceasefire politics as a function of their political and economic incentive structures. This logic is common in scholarly and policy analyses of Myanmar's armed conflict. Many scholars have identified political grievances, surrounding ethnic discrimination and marginalisation, as the root cause of Myanmar's civil war that motivates insurgency movements, including the KIO and the KNU, to struggle for autonomy against an authoritarian and ethnocratic state (Martin J. Smith 1999; South 2008; Sadan 2013; Walton 2013). Unsurprisingly then, policy analysts have highlighted the country's changed political context since the end of military dictatorship in 2011 for explaining why several ethnic armed groups, including the KNU, agreed to new ceasefires (International Crisis Group 2011; Peace Donor Support Group 2013). In a forthcoming chapter Matthew Walton also pointed out that

> 'Myanmar President Thein Sein had prioritized ceasefires with ethnic revolutionary groups when he assumed office in March 2011 and the agreement with the Karen seemed to be an indication of the seriousness with which he planned to pursue this goal.' (Walton 2016, 250)

While it indeed appears as if the KNU signed the 2012 ceasefire because Myanmar's reforms finally opened a window of opportunity to engage on the negotiation table, the concurrent breakdown of the Kachin ceasefire demonstrates that we cannot simply infer the strategies of ethnic armed groups from their changing political landscape. In fact, armed conflict has re-escalated and spread along the Chinese border ever since Myanmar embarked on its political transition. At the time of writing, an alliance of Kachin, Palaung, Kokang and Shan forces remain locked in battle with the *Tatmadaw*.

The fierceness of the renewed fighting in Kachin State does not only stand in contrast with Myanmar's overall political transition and move towards peace. It seems particularly puzzling because the Kachin ceasefire lasted for nearly two decades. In explaining its long-term stability scholars and political analysts have pointed to the economic incentives that the ceasefire agreement yielded to key elites of all sides (Smith 1999, 441; Sherman 2003; International Crisis Group 2003; Woods 2011, 2016). Incoming Chinese investments, a lucrative natural resource base, and a counterinsurgency approach that sought to turn rebel leaders into business partners had indeed served to establish close working relations between former enemies. Moreover, the revolutionary ambitions, military capacities, and local support networks of the KIO have withered away while their leaders profited from the spoils of lucrative economies in collaboration with Myanmar's establishment (Ibid.). Yet, since the reescalation of conflict in northern Myanmar the KIO, under the leadership of Gen. Sumlut Gun Maw, has surprised with uncompromising political demands, military strength, and organizational discipline. Moreover, the insurgency again seems to enjoy vast popular support among the wider Kachin society (Farrelly 2012; Sadan 2016a).

The shifting strategic choices of the KNU and the KIO can, therefore, not be deduced from the changing political and economic incentive structures in Myanmar's borderlands, i.e. political transition and ceasefire economies. While political and economic incentives might well have played a role for KNU leaders for deciding to sign a ceasefire in 2012, they cannot explain why the KIO ceasefire broke down the year before. For explaining the inversely shifting strategies of the Karen and Kachin movements, it seems necessary to zoom into the politics of both insurgency movements themselves. While this might seem like a banal starting point, the memories of Aung Naing Oo, a peace negotiator of the Myanmar government, illustrates how little knowledge about the intrinsic dynamics of these movements actually exists, even among local experts. Aung Naing Oo's reflections on negotiations with several Karen armed groups in 2014 highlight that these are pivotal for understanding the strategies of ethnic armed groups:

> 'For two days and two nights, we listened to various officials from rival groups, local authorities and local commanders of the Myanmar armed forces. By the second night of listening to these various accusations, counter-accusations, local situations and history of these local conflicts, my notebook was almost full. But most importantly, I could no longer take notes. So I just wrote one word "Tha-book-oo," which is the name of a fruit. It has a labyrinth of fabric inside so intricate that no one knows the beginning, the middle or the end. Put differently, I thought I knew the protagonists and conflict situation in Karen State since I once worked with the Karen National Union. But my trip proved that I was wrong. Even within groups that broke away from the mainstream Karen armed movement, there were many layers of relationships, feuds, history of conflicts, friendships and camaraderie. […] How about all of these groups with their localized situations, with their own layers of allegiances, kinships, alliances, tribal divides, broken social fabric, grievances, war economy, territorial interests and political and negotiation cultures?' (Aung Naing Oo, June 5, July 2014)

To be sure, the small community of scholars who have conducted extensive field research on Myanmar's ethnic armed groups highlight their multifaceted character. Smith's encyclopaedic history of Myanmar's ethnic conflict is still one of the most authoritative resources on the topic (Smith 1999). Based on multiple years of research during the 1980s, Smith sheds light on the intricate backgrounds of Myanmar's ethnic insurgencies including the interaction of political ideologies and ethnic identities, the idiosyncrasies of rebel leaders, the shifting alliances and antagonisms between and among different groups, their reliance on localised transborder economies, and the oft-occurring infighting between rival leaders. Ashley South has also conducted extensive first-hand research on Myanmar's ethnic armed groups, most importantly on Karen and Mon armed groups at the Thai border (South 2008, 2013). His work highlights the complex relations between ethnic armed groups

and local communities, including the often overlapping local governance arrangements of various armed groups in eastern Myanmar in the 1990s and early 2000s. Sadan's detailed history of the Kachin conflict is also based on years of field research in Myanmar's northern borderlands (Sadan 2013). It demonstrates how international, national and local politics have interacted in creating Kachin ethnic identity and the ethno-national ideology of the KIO. Her account stresses not only the need to understand the hidden non-state histories of Myanmar's borderlands for understanding Myanmar's ethnic conflict, but also the particular importance of cultural politics.

This thesis builds on the invaluable historical insights of these authors and combines it with own original empirical findings from nine months of field research in the Thai-Myanmar and Chinese-Myanmar borderlands in order to find explanations for the changing strategies of the KNU and KIO in 2011/12. This endeavour should also add to our wider, theoretical understanding of non-state armed groups and the ways by which their conduct is driven by local dynamics of violence. In doing so, it this thesis contributes to an emerging strand of enquiry within Conflict and Peace Studies.

3 Authority and Armed Groups

The difficulties in explaining the diverging conduct of Myanmar's ethnic armed groups on the basis of the country's changing political landscape do not only reflect our limited knowledge of one of the world's longest ongoing civil wars. They also point to a more general, theoretical shortcoming within Conflict and Peace Studies: non-state armed groups are often conceptualised as monolithic actors. As per Charles Tilly, 'coherent, durable, self-propelling social units—monads—occupy a great deal of political theory but none of political reality' (Tilly 2008b, 69).

Stathis Kalyvas has also pointed out that political scientists and students of International Relations 'often conceptualize non-state political factions involved in civil wars as monolithic actors akin to states writ small' (Kalyvas 2010, xii). By so

doing, it is assumed that rebel movements act according to a unified strategic rationale aimed at maximising their perceived utility vis-à-vis the state. This conceptualisation has become particularly common in aggregate large-n studies on conflict causes and dynamics as it enables scholars to model collective behaviour of armed groups in theoretically parsimonious ways on the basis of quantitative data (cf. Collier and Hoeffler 1998; D. E. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009). The same understanding, however, also underpins some of the most prominent arguments in the field of Conflict Resolution as, for instance Zartman's Mutually Hurting Stalemate, which defines a situation as "ripe" for mediation at the point that all warring factions perceive the continuation of violence detrimental to their own unified interests (cf. Zartman 1989; cf. also Stedman 1997, for a good critique see Pearlman 2009). While such models make sense on paper, they often struggle to account for the empirically observable conduct of rebel groups. Many non-state armed groups, indeed, behave in ways that seem suboptimal when measured against their assumed strategic objectives with regards to their external environments (Pearlman 2009; Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour 2012).

Writing in the 1970s, James Scott long ago criticised the simplification of multidimensional social movements into presumably coherent entities by questioning the then-prevalent categorisations of revolutionary movements as "communists" or "nationalists". To him, such broad-brush labelling presented a form of 'instant analysis' that centres on the decisions of a few elites but ignores 'a large stratum of revolutionary actors' (Scott 1979, 98). For gaining a better understanding of violent insurrections, he suggested to study the internal politics of insurgency with a particular focus on a movement's grassroots and their often uneasy relations with their own leaders:

> 'A study of the values of "rank-and-file" rebels can teach us a great deal about the many occasions when rebellions escape the tenuous control of their would-be leaders and launch out for objectives of their own. Like the society from which it issues, the stratification of rebels embodies its own tensions and contradictions which provide

> a dynamic and often tragic basis for the internal politics of the movement.' (Scott 1979, 98)

Since then, the study of civil wars has expanded significantly. Scholars from various disciplines have pondered over their causes, dynamics, and potential solutions. Instead of disaggregating insurgency movements and investigating elite-grassroots relations, however, most analyses have continued to operate on a macro-level, conceptualising rebel groups as unitary actors. Only recently, have conflict scholars returned to micro-level approaches, rejecting the notion that civil wars are 'binary conflicts' that are organised around a 'master cleavage' (Kalyvas 2003, 475–76, Chenoweth and Lawrence 2010; Justino, Brück, and Verwimp 2013).

This thesis grounds itself within this emerging strand of literature in Conflict and Peace Studies that looks beyond the conventional birds-eye perspective on conflict and highlights the importance of dynamics internal to non-state armed groups for explaining their strategies (Pearlman 2009; Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour 2012; Berti 2013; Staniland 2014). The core finding of this literature is that non-state armed groups are heterogeneous movements that are often internally fragmented, typically into rival factions. Individual rebel leaders hence do not only contest the incumbent state, but they also struggle against each other for leadership of their respective movements (Pearlman 2009; Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour 2012, 69). Internal contestation and fragmentation can undermine a group's capacity for collective action, redirect violence away from outside adversaries to inside competitors, and eventually lead to attrition and organisational demise (Staniland 2014; Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour 2012). It can also drive the strategies of armed groups in ways that are not consistent with the interests of the collective as a whole, but benefit particular interests within the movement (Pearlman 2009; Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour 2012, 69).

Wendy Pearlman's work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for instance, shows that from a collective bargaining perspective, the divergent strategies pursued by Fatah and Hamas - the former favouring negotiations and the latter spoiling negotiations - were suboptimal for the Palestinian cause vis-à-vis Israel. Yet, both factions'

leaderships behaved in line with their own particular interests with regards to their rivalry for Palestinian leadership. While Fatah aimed at developing and mobilising new sources of legitimacy and power as Israel's negotiation partner in Oslo, Hamas sought the same goal, albeit by boycotting the talks (Pearlman 2009). Benedetta Berti has put forward a similar argument in order to explain the outbreak of violence between Hamas and Israel in 2014. In her view, competition between the political and military wings of Hamas as well as between Hamas and semi-independent local Salafi-jihadi factions drove Hamas to escalate the armed conflict with Israel despite almost certain military defeat (Berti 2014). Her comparative work on Hamas, the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland shows that organisational fragmentation often occurs along particular fault lines, the most common of which might be the one between the military and political wings of insurgency movements (Berti 2013). Another potential cleavage from which intra-organisational feuds commonly emerge concerns inter-generational differences. The violence that embroiled Northern Ireland in the 1970s was, for instance, partly escalated by the newly established northern command of the IRA. Led by a young generation, the northern command stepped up violence against England and Pro-English loyalists not least in order to side-line the movement's old guard that was located in southern Ireland (Berti 2013, 137–38).

To develop an explanation for internal fragmentation and contestation, some authors have turned to organisational analysis. Kristin Bakke et al. argue that group fragmentation can occur in various ways, depending on the degree of organisational institutionalisation and the distribution of power among different organisational cores within armed groups (Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour 2012). Following Staniland, armed group fragmentation happens along two dimensions: horizontal ties between different rebel elites, affecting information flows, trust, contestation and cooperation among the group's leadership; and vertical ties between elites and grassroots of insurgency. The latter are crucial for building and maintaining stable support networks among local communities (Staniland 2014, 1–24). Horizontal fragmentation makes the leadership of armed groups prone to factional infighting and coups. Vertical

fragmentation makes it difficult to sustain asymmetric warfare against a militarily superior enemy because it erodes a movement's support network. Groups that fragment along both of these dimensions are susceptible to quick decay and defeat (Staniland 2014, 1–24). Counterinsurgency planners, therefore, attempt to break both of these organisational ties by trying to erode the insurgents' local support base and by promoting the factionalisation of its leadership. Not surprisingly, rebel leaders, on the other hand, are foremost preoccupied with building and stabilising both horizontal and vertical links.

Rather than aiming to explain the strategy and behaviour of an insurgency movement as flowing from a coherent vision that is pursued by an omnipotent and undisputed leader figure, the central point of an approach that looks to internal contestation and fragmentation is that the strategies of armed groups may also be seen as the result of a complex social interaction process between differently situated actors within the insurgency, whose interests do not necessarily align. Pearlman, therefore, advocates that researchers focus their analysis of conflict dynamics on the differently situated insurgent actors and their social relations because 'if we fail to take account of the interaction of those who constitute a movement, we are liable to misunderstand why and how violence takes place' (Pearlman 2010, 217). While this emerging scholarship on the internal dynamics of armed groups has advanced our knowledge especially with regards to the horizontal relations between or among rival rebel leaders, little research has been undertaken on the vertical relations between rebel elites and their grassroots and how these may drive infighting within armed groups as well as their external collective behaviour.

In contrast, elite-grassroots relations were central to Scott's enquiry into the internal upheavals within Asian revolutionary movements during the Cold War. Highlighting the contestation within these movements in terms of a 'revolution within the revolution', Scott argues that significant tensions often existed in this period between elites and the peasantry. As he put it at the time, 'it is by no means clear that all or even most of the participants in vast popular movements share the ideas which motivate their erstwhile leaders' (Scott 1979, 97). While such tensions between leaders

and mass-level actors might not be important within non-state armed groups with purely criminal agendas, such as many urban gangs, mafia, or armed business networks, as well as private security companies. Yet, they seem pivotal for analysing traditional insurgency movements that are established upon overarching political motives aimed against the state, such as secession or defeating the incumbent regime. These groups are oftentimes in control of pockets of state territory, within which some of them will have established at least rudimentary, state-like structures through which they can govern local communities. The crucial point, however, is that successful insurgency movements to a certain degree tend to rely on mass mobilisation and popular support in order to sustain guerrilla warfare against what is usually the militarily superior state.[3]

While the literature on the internal politics of armed groups has yet to focus on elite-grassroots relations, the importance of vertical support networks has also been highlighted by another emerging field of scholarship, namely that on rebel governance (Wickham-Crowley 1987; Mampilly 2011; Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015). A consistent finding of this literature is that rebel groups provide public goods in their "liberated" areas in order to build stable support networks among local communities. Linking this insight with the discussion of internal contestation among rival rebel factions suggests that rival rebel leaders also need to draw on strong support networks in order to compete against internal rivals. The fundamental challenge that arises for

[3] This thesis uses the terms (non-state) armed groups, rebel groups, and insurgency movements interchangeably. That said, it does of course appreciate that insurgency movements are non-state armed groups of a particular kind. In the absence of an authoritative definition of non-state armed groups and insurgency movements, the thesis defines insurgency movements based on Keith Krause and Jennifer Milken's categorisation of non-state armed groups. With regards to traditional insurgency movements they write: 'While the category of insurgent does not carry binding force in international law, both practitioners and researchers working on armed groups still mainly focus on groups having effective control over some part of a state's territory, and possessing the organizational means to carry out sustained attacks against state forces. This traditional concept of armed groups is also associated with notions of armed groups as 'proto-states' or 'states-in-formation': these groups seek to defeat the regime against which they are fighting, or through secession in a national liberation movement. It also covers armed groups which may not be seeking state takeover or secession, but which are engaged in an 'internal war', or a violent mass confrontation with a certain continuity and participation of the forces of a state on one side' (Krause and Milliken 2009, 204).

leaders of insurgencies then is how to ensure either active support for or at least passive compliance with their own particular faction as they struggle against the incumbent state as well as other rebel leaders.

The literature on rebel governance is however only partly helpful to explore the key question with which this dissertation is concerned as the relevant works have as their primary concern the vertical relations between rebel groups and local communities. In contrast, this thesis seeks to explain how internal contestations drive the strategic decisions of insurgency movements with regards to negotiations and conflict vis-à-vis the state. For doing so it aims to understand the significance and impact of vertical relations within insurgency movement themselves, i.e. between differently situated leaders, the rank-and-file and affiliated support networks, in the social process of insurgency between differently situated elite and non-elite actors. This notwithstanding, the central insight of the scholarship on rebel governance makes for a good starting point for my inquiry: 'fear alone does not suffice to sustain rule in the long term,' not even in the case of violent groups (Kalyvas 2006, 115). While this contemplation might seem contradictory to contemporary orthodoxies that associate rebel groups foremost with notions of "greed" and predation,[4] it is in line with one of the common denominators in Political and Social Thought. Students of the latter have argued over generations that "naked power" does not create sustainable systems of compliance, obedience and support (cf. Zelditch 2001 for a good overview). Rather than wielding power within their movements on the basis of pure violence it seems as if rebel leaders need to establish some degree of legitimate authority among their grassroots.

The importance of legitimate authority for understanding dynamics of political violence is highlighted by a small group of scholars who approach the issue of non-state armed groups from a Political Sociology perspective (Apter 1997; Schlichte 2009a; Bakonyi and Bliesemann de Guevara 2014b). Klaus Schlichte indeed writes that the 'pursuit of legitimacy is the key to understanding their action' (Schlichte 2012,

[4] Cf. Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Kaldor 1999.

723). This is because political violence needs to be justified, even more so as violence in itself can have a delegitimising effect on political action. Together with Ulrich Schneckener, Schlichte argues that rebel leaders, therefore, seek legitimacy from local communities as well as from national and international audiences. They do so by drawing on legitimising discourses - most often surrounding the claim to guardianship for a particular community – as well as by behaving in certain ways, ranging from public service provision to charismatic performances of rebel leaders (Schlichte and Schneckener 2015, 415-418). This suggests that rebel leaders also need to legitimise their strategic choices among the rank-and-file within their own movements, for instance when entering negotiations with the government or when returning to armed struggle.

Exploring these politics of legitimacy questions the rationalist orthodoxies in the study of civil war more generally. Instead of explaining the motivation behind political violence on the basis of material incentives,[5] it highlights the social sources by which political violence is legitimated, surrounding social belief systems and identity. This dovetails with the memoirs of Aung Naing Oo, the Myanmar peace negotiator quoted above, who highlighted the importance of the 'many layers of relationships, feuds, history of conflicts, friendships and camaraderie' as well as 'the allegiances, kinships, alliances, tribal divides [and] broken social fabric' for understanding the moves of his negotiation partners, Karen armed groups in eastern Myanmar (Aung Naing Oo, June 5, July 2014). From this perspective, social relations rather than the interests of presumably self-propelled and asocial rebel leaders become the cornerstone of enquiry into the strategic choices of armed groups. This does not only run counter to the ontological underpinning of conventional unitary actor models, but also departs from methodological individualism within which much of the emerging literature on the internal politics of armed groups remains to operate. While shifting onto a lower level of analysis has contributed much to our understanding of fragmentation and

[5] For examples of orthodox perspectives that explain the motivations to take up arms with material incentives see Collier and Hoeffler 2004 and Weinstein 2006.

internal contestation, the literature's prevailing focus on strategising rival rebel elites maintains a largely technical, ahistorical, and uncontextual perspective that highlights rational decision-making but ignores the social undercurrents of organised political violence.[6]

In contrast, focusing on the social foundations of organised political violence highlights that rebel groups are ontologically embedded in a certain socio-temporal space within which they should be analysed (Schlichte 2009a; Beck 2009; Reno 2009). Rather than understanding the conduct of rebel groups as the sum of self-propelled insurgent leaders, this approach focuses on the social interaction process that drives wider collective trajectories. Schlichte writes that we, therefore, need to place

> 'the relationships within armed groups at the center of attention instead of disaggregating them into unconnected individuals' actions. To understand why and how relations within armed groups and with their social surroundings change is, in this perspective, the central task […].' (Schlichte 2012, 723)

This thesis will build on this relational understanding of insurgency and the politics of legitimacy, to develop an analytical framework that can explain the divergent strategies of both the Karen and Kachin movements. In doing so it will also contribute to our knowledge of the internal politics of armed groups more generally by elucidating the role of legitimate authority relations in the contestation between rival rebel elites and the way in which these internal struggles drive the conflict and negotiation strategies of insurgency movements.

[6] In this sense, the new scholarly field dovetails with a related strand of investigation that has been forwarded by counterinsurgency strategists within U.S. military and intelligence communities. In order to understand and defeat insurgency organisations in Iraq and Afghanistan these "warrior-scholars" drew heavily on social network analysis (Millen and Metz 2004; Muckian 2006). One of the outputs of this endeavour, a U.S. Army Field Manual, summed this up by noting that '[n]etworked insurgencies are not monolithic, and decisions are made by different elements within the insurgency. Some parts of the insurgency may be willing to negotiate, while other parts may decide to keep fighting' (U.S. Army 2014, 18).

4 Research Questions

Based on the above reviewed literature, this thesis looks to dynamics of contestation and leadership authority within the KNU and the KIO in order to answer the empirical puzzle behind this thesis: *Why did the Karen insurgency sign a ceasefire in 2012 and why did the Kachin ceasefire collapse in 2011?*

Considering the importance of fragmentation, contestation and leadership authority, two subsidiary empirical questions arise. If internal contestation drives the strategic choices of rebel groups, and authority relations are central for understanding these intramural contestations, dynamics of rebel authority become the central mechanism that need be accounted for when explaining the shifting strategies of Myanmar's rebel groups. The thesis therefore asks: *How has the struggle over leadership authority within both movements driven their strategic choices with regards to negotiation and conflict vis-à-vis with the state?*

While recent scholarship highlights dynamics internal to rebel movements for explaining their collective strategy, it also points to the complex interactions between the wider environment of rebel movements and their internal politics. Indeed, several authors have stressed that the internal composition of rebel movements is inherently shaped by their wider socio-political and economic environment (Reno 2009; Schlichte 2009b; Staniland 2014; Mampilly 2011). In face of rapid political and economic change that insurgents in Myanmar's borderlands are facing, it is, thus, necessary to ask: *How has the changing politico-economic environment in Myanmar's borderlands impacted on the internal authority relations of both movements under comparison?*

In order to answer both of these questions the thesis's foremost theoretical task is to understand the constitution of authority relations within insurgency movements. In other words, it is necessary to explain how legitimate authority relations between differently situated rebel leaders and their movement's grassroots are built and maintained, as well as the ways by which they erode. The thesis's underlying

theoretical research question, therefore, is: *How do rival rebel leaders capture and lose authority among the grassroots of their movements?*

5 Significance

This thesis intended contributions to knowledge are two-fold: a) it aims to forward the literature on Myanmar's ethnic conflict and b) it intends to advance the scholarship on insurgency and civil war more generally. Its findings should be significant because they are based on extensive field research in Myanmar's borderlands, including rebel-held territories.

A comparative study on the Karen and Kachin insurgencies appears to be particularly important for gaining a better understanding of Myanmar's ethnic armed conflict at a crucial time of wider transition in the country. Both movements are the most important rebel groups in a civil war, which despite being one of the world's longest running armed conflicts remains one of its least researched. A comparative study of both insurgencies seems particularly meaningful as they exhibit divergent strategies despite facing similar challenges in their immediate environment. Not only have they emerged in opposition to the same political order in Myanmar and are faced with the same political transitions since 2011. The politico-economic environments in Myanmar's borderlands to China and Thailand have also changed in comparable ways since the end of the Cold War, exerting similar external pressures on both movements. Comparing both cases with the intention to explain their divergent strategies, therefore, makes for a *most-similar* research design, which seems particularly suited for this thesis's exploratory empirical enquiry as it allows to identify factors that have led to different outcomes in similar circumstances (Gerring 2007, 131–34).[7]

[7] A most-similar case design compares 'cases that differ on the outcome of theoretical interest but are similar on various factors that might have contributed to that outcome [in the hope] that intensive study of these cases will reveal one – or at most several – factors that differ across these cases.' (Gerring 2007, 131).

Methodologically, the thesis has chosen an ethnographically-informed qualitative approach. This entailed elite interviews as well as extensive field research, during which I lived and travelled with differently situated elite and non-elite actors involved in or affiliated with the Karen and Kachin insurgencies for about nine months. Much of the following analysis is, therefore, based on informal conversations rather than structured interviews. This ethnographic bend was essential to gather a wealth of original empirical data, most importantly to gain an insider's perspective into both movements without which it would be impossible to develop an appreciation of the ways in which dynamics internal to both insurgent movements have driven their opposing strategies. While this thesis does not aim to develop a generalizable theory of authority relations in rebel movements, it follows Scott by intending to establish a 'plausible account' that should be 'judged by the standards of its logic, its economy, and its consistency with other social facts' (Scott 1985, 46–47). In doing so, I do not only aim to advance our knowledge of Myanmar's ethnic conflict but also want to contribute to the emerging literature on non-state armed groups in a meaningful way.

My findings from field research should be able to inform the study of non-state armed groups in significant ways because the biggest challenge for scholarly enquiry in this field remains the lack of empirical data. While it has become clear that aggregate macro-models of conflict are of limited value for explaining civil war, local dynamics of violence are difficult to analyse precisely because they lie buried within the 'messy evidence' on the ground (Kalyvas 2003, 480). Close-range empirical research on conflict-affected communities is difficult with regards to feasibility, safety, and ethics (Goodhand 2000; Wood 2006; Mazurana, Gale, and Jacobsen 2013). This is even more so in situations of ongoing armed conflict rather than in post-conflict environments, which is why the latter has attracted the bulk of academic research in Conflict and Peace Studies. Some scholars have, however, shown that conducting field research in "hot" conflict settings is not only feasible but also essential for improving our understanding of societies in conflict (Wood 2003; Goodhand 2005; Keen 2005). This seems particularly important because societies are not static but develop during the course of civil wars (Menkhaus 2007; Wood 2008; Reno 2009). In protracted

conflicts that span over decades, as is the case in Myanmar, conflicts and societies have, however, often 'virtually 'dropped off the "research map"' (Goodhand 2000, 8).

Enquiring into dynamics internal to non-state armed groups, i.e. clandestine organisations, accentuates some of the research challenges that researchers in conflict settings face. Much scholarship in this emerging field has, therefore, relies on the analyses of secondary literature, such as journalistic accounts, and occasional elite interviews (Kalyvas 2003; Pearlman 2009; Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour 2012; Berti 2013). Some scholars have, however, also demonstrated the value of doing field research for understanding the politics of non-state armed groups (Schlichte 2009a; Mampilly 2011; Staniland 2014). Their studies suggest that many misconceptions on insurgency are indeed based on a lack of empirical data. One persisting discourse, which emerged from macro-perspectives on conflict, for instance, associates non-state armed groups mostly with coercion and criminal interests (cf. Kaldor 1999; Duffield 2002; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). At first glance, it might thus appear that legitimate authority relations might not be of relevance in most other insurgencies world-wide, even if they were found to be important in driving the strategies of both cases studied in this thesis. In other words, the Myanmar's ethnic insurgents could simply be outliers and not representative of others.

While William Reno argued that studying deviant cases of insurgency makes them 'disproportionately important' (Reno 2009, 357), a closer look reveals that the cases studied here are not so deviant after all. It seems as if scholars might have simply underestimated the importance of legitimate authority relations between rebel leaders and their grassroots on conflict dynamics, including the ways in which they drive the strategies of rebel groups, because we lack empirical data. The emerging scholarship on rebel governance and sociological approaches indeed point to the fact that legitimate authority has long been a concern to insurgencies world-wide, past and present (Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015; Schlichte and Schneckener 2015). By studying the modalities of leadership authority within rebel groups in Myanmar and the ways in which internal struggles over authority drives their strategies, this thesis can, thus, inform our understanding of insurgency movements in other cases as well.

This is not least because the KIO and KNU feature important similarities to other ethno-national insurgencies in Myanmar and internationally with regards to their ideology and organisational structures.

Ideologically, both are ethno-national movements that demand greater autonomy from the central state under a federal constitution. They emerged as a result of militarised and violent identity formation during the colonial period and the Second World War. Both started to fight against a post-independence state, which - dominated by the country's ethnic majority - failed to guarantee autonomy rights for ethnic minorities. Decades of armed conflict have entrenched ethnic divides and grievances since (South 2008, 1–22). While ethnicity is an inherently fuzzy and contested concept, it has been a salient feature of many civil wars world-wide (Horowitz 1985; Chandra 2006). Following Tilly, this is because it re-organises multifaceted social relations 'around a single us–them boundary', a precondition for political violence (Tilly 2003, 21). In the case of ethnonational conflicts, elites engage in drawing boundaries by employing discourses that aim at homogenising an ethnic community across, for instance, tribal, religious and regional divides, while maximising the differences towards other ethnic groups (Goodhand 2008, 226–27). Ethnonationalism has featured as a driving ideology of civil wars worldwide (Connor 1994). South and Southeast Asia are home to some of most protracted ethnonational insurgencies. Besides the various ethnonational insurgencies in Myanmar, these include, among others, the Naga insurgency in north-eastern India (Baruah 2003), the Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka (Goodhand 2008, 226–27), Malay Muslim separatism in Southern Thailand (McCargo 2008), and the Moro secessionist movements in the Southern Philippines (San Juan 2006). Prominent past and present ethnonational conflicts in other parts of the world include the Yugoslav wars in Europe, the Kurdish insurgency in the Middle East, and South Sudan's struggle for independence (Wimmer 1997).

In terms of organisational structure, the Kachin and Karen insurgencies are both reliant on popular support from local communities, their claimed ethnic constituencies. Despite rejecting Maoist ideology and siding with the capitalist camp during the Cold War instead, their organisational structures and relationships to local,

rural communities have been heavily influenced by Maoist ideas of guerrilla warfare and mass mobilisation (Smith 2007, 16). Similar to the writings of other successful left-wing guerrilla strategists of the 20th century, such as Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Ho Chi Min, Mao's reflections 'On Guerrilla Warfare' stress the need to embed rural revolutionary movements within the local peasantry and build state-like governance structures that garner legitimacy and support from local communities (Mao 1961; Guevara 2002). Their manuals remain widely-read among insurgents of different backgrounds, disregarding their political outlooks (Mampilly 2011, 11–13). Besides operating rebel armies, the Karen and Kachin insurgencies have, indeed, developed pronounced political wings and administrative capacities to operate extensive parallel governance systems, generating revenues and public goods, in their "liberated territories" (Smith 2007, 16). While such quasi-state-like structures are particularly pronounced in parts of Myanmar's borderlands, other past and present insurgency movements have organised in similar ways (Wickham-Crowley 1987; Mampilly 2011; Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015). These include left-wing guerrillas such as the Colombian Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), as well as ethnonational movement such as the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in Southern Sudan, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelan (LTTE) in Sri Lanka (Ibid.). The similarities between both cases studied here and other ethnonational insurgencies world-wide, therefore, makes a meaningful dialogue between this thesis's findings and the wider literature on civil wars possible.[8]

6 Structure

To explain the puzzling and inverted strategies of the KNU and the KIO the thesis develops a conceptual framework, reflects on its methodological approach, discusses the historic background, and analyses both cases. The following chapters are structured as follows:

[8] The cases are 'representative of a broader set of cases [exemplifying] what is considered to be a typical set of values, given some general understanding of a phenomenon' (Gerring 2007, 97).

Chapter Two develops a conceptual understanding of insurgency that explains how shifting authority relations interact with dynamics of internal contestation in driving the wider trajectories of insurgency movements, including their collective conflict and negotiation conduct. To do so it engages with the literature on the internal politics of non-state armed groups and rebel governance through the lens of the relational sociologies of Norbert Elias and Pierre Bourdieu, drawing on a co-constructed and interdependent triad of core concepts: figuration/field, power, and habitus. Building on this it identifies reciprocal exchange relations, social identification and the struggle for recognition as the core drivers behind the building and erosion of leadership authority within rebel movements.

Chapter Three explains the thesis's ethnographically informed methodological approach by discussing its advantages and challenges. In line with the epistemological demand for reflexivity inherent in this approach, the chapter will discuss issues of power, access, and positionality that I encountered during my field research in order to help the reader assess the plausibility of the subsequent account.

Chapter Four discusses the history of Myanmar's rebellious borderlands. This serves to understand the roots and development of the country's protracted ethnic conflict and simultaneously provides an introduction to the Kachin and Karen insurgencies as well as to their social context within which they will subsequently be analysed. To do so, the chapter will trace the emergence of both ethnonational projects within larger geopolitical conflicts and a wider, transnational borderworld between India, China, and Thailand. It will then discuss how geopolitical shifts since the end of the Cold War have worked hand in hand with a changed counterinsurgency strategy to increase commercialisation and state consolidation in Myanmar's restive border areas. Taking this long view helps to contextualises the structural changes in the politico-economic environments of both insurgencies in order to assess their impacts on internal authority relations.

Chapter Five will analyse the case of the Karen National Union (KNU). It asks why Myanmar's oldest insurgency movement, which has historically been least willing

to compromise with the state, signed a ceasefire in 2012 and championed the country's nationwide peace process since. It will show that this resulted from military and geopolitical pressures on the Thai-Myanmar border that drove group fragmentation and internal contestation within the Karen movement. The chapter also demonstrates how shifting authority relations between rival leaders and the movement's grassroots have driven and accentuated these dynamics as well as how they furthered internal contestation since the ceasefire. What emerges from this chapter is that what looks like a stable settlement from the outside is indeed highly contested within the movement.

Chapter Six will analyse the case of the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO). Its driving questions are why the movement's 17 years long ceasefire with Myanmar's government broke down in 2011 and how the KIO's willingness and ability to wage war increased so dramatically, despite its faltering capacities and waning revolutionary agendas during the ceasefire years. The analysis reveals that driving the movement's puzzling trajectory were eroding authority relations between rebel leaders and the movement's grassroots, which were precipitated by the very modalities of the ceasefire. This gave rise to increased group fragmentation and ultimately a rival faction that managed to rebuild authority relations to their grassroots, recruit a new generation of rebels, and take over leadership, which has ultimately changed the organisation's strategy from collaboration to confrontation.

Chapter Seven will conclude the thesis by recapturing its main empirical findings and theoretical arguments, drawing out its key contributions to the scholarship on Myanmar and the field of Conflict and Peace Studies, and elaborating on the implications of my findings for engaging with insurgency movements in Myanmar and elsewhere.

CHAPTER II – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1 Introduction

This chapter conceptualises insurgency as a social process between differently situated but interdependent elite and non-elite actors, whose interactions drive the strategies of armed groups. It starts with explaining the thesis's relational approach to studying the process of insurgency as ontologically embedded within its social environment by drawing on a co-constructed triad of core concepts: figuration, power, and habitus. This chapter will introduce the study's conceptual framework. It starts out by charting the malleable landscape of interdependent insurgent actors, focusing on their mutual interactions and ties with their social surroundings. It introduces fragmentation and factional contestation as an important driving forces behind the collective conduct of armed groups. The chapter will then proceed to identify the fundamental challenge for rebel leaders as being the creation of stable support networks for or at least willing compliance with their insurgent social order as a counter-project to the incumbent state and other rebel leaders among the grassroots of their movement. It will argue that the key to understanding these internal contestations

within armed group therefore is the existence or lack of legitimate authority relations between differently situated rebel elites and the grassroots of a movement. Building on this, it proposes that two interlaced processes are at play in the building or erosion of legitimate authority between differently situated rebel leaders among their grassroots: (1) Reciprocal exchange relations that can be conceived of as an implicit social contract between rebel rulers and local communities, entailing obligations for both sides. (2) Respectful and dignifying interactions of elites with non-elites that satisfy the latter's demand for recognition, allowing them to derive a positive self-perceived social identity from affiliation to the insurgency.

2 A Relational Approach

> 'Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand.'
>
> - Karl Marx[9]

Rebel groups do not emerge out of the blue but are embedded in a certain socio-temporal space within which they should be analysed. In William Reno's words, 'social context matters a lot, perhaps more than individual motives in shaping the uses to which violence is put' (Reno 2009, 371). Chris Cramer has noted that this is precisely why methodological individualism seems ill suited to explain armed group behaviour (Cramer 2002, 1855). Rather than dislocating actors from their surroundings, this thesis attempts to analyse the social process between differently situated but interdependent elite and non-elite actors of insurgency. Taking account of social structures and processes neither leads to structural determinism nor precludes the analysis of agency. In his engagement with the political economy of conflict, Cramer states that 'agency *is* involved in the origins of conflict, choices *are* made, and economic incentives *do* matter, as do individuals. But they are influenced by and operate very

[9] Cited as in Marx, Engels, and Tucker 1978, 247.

much within specific conditions and social and historical features of change' (Cramer 2002, 1857).

Relationalism, i.e. the analytical focus on relations between social entities, provides for an ontological handle for reconciling both, structure and agency. Charles Tilly summarises this approach as 'the doctrine that transactions, interactions, social ties, and conversations constitute the central stuff of social life' (Tilly 2008b, 7). It stands opposed to Substantialism, which infers motivations and behaviour from the properties of social entities, including individual or collective actors as well as social structures. Methodological individualism, for instance, views self-contained individuals to act independently of their environment upon their own powers, whether they are motivated by rational gains as presumed by rational-choice models or follow internalised norms as proposed by more sociological-inspired theories. In a similar vein, structural theories locate the source of action within self-subsistent and coherent social structures, including organisation, class, or nation. From the perspective of a relational approach, individual motivations, including the motivation to take up arms, are not located within a set preference structures of self-propelled individuals. Indeed, they do not even stem from within social actors themselves but emerge from the interactions between them (Emirbayer 1997).

Relationalism has hitherto had limited impact on the study of the internal politics in armed groups, much of which remains grounded in methodological individualism. Political Sociology scholars in International Relations have however already demonstrated its usefulness for the study of political violence and armed groups (Schlichte 2009a; Bakonyi and Bliesemann de Guevara 2014b). The thesis follows in their footsteps by looking to the sociologies of Norbert Elias and Pierre Bourdieu. The ontological embeddedness of actors in their transactional environment is central to the thinking of both Elias and Bourdieu, whose work can be regarded as having contributed to a single heuristic device that focuses its inquiry on the dialectic nature of social structures and individuals (Paulle, van Heerikhuizen, and Emirbayer 2012). This is because their frameworks are made up of a similar understanding and

deployment of a co-constructed and interdependent triad of core concepts: figuration,[10] power, and habitus (Paulle, van Heerikhuizen, and Emirbayer 2012, 70).

Figuration

Following Elias, societies are made up of intertwined structures and processes of interdependent and interacting actors whose identity, cognition, and behaviour are mutually contingent (Elias 1978, 103). These interdependencies stem from 'everyone's fundamental directedness to other people' (Elias 1978, 136). They tend to stabilise social orders from family to nation-state despite suboptimal outcomes for some or even most of its members. Reciprocity, however, does not preclude change. From this perspective, the change of one actor's position entails changes in other parts of a figuration along chains of interdependencies, which ultimately changes the whole figuration (Elias 1978, 133–44). Hence, social interaction enfold a multiplicity of simultaneous but interlaced processes without clear casual primacies, which create a momentum of their own in driving social processes. As Elias points out, this explains the frequently observable disconnect between human intentions and the trajectories of society:

> 'From the interweaving of countless individual interests and intentions – whether tending in the same direction or in divergent and hostile directions - something comes into being that was planned and intended by none of these individuals, yet has emerged nevertheless from their intentions and actions. And really this is the whole secret of social figurations, their compelling dynamics, their structural regularities, their process character and their development; this is the secret of sociogenesis and of relational dynamics.' (Elias 1994, 389)

From a relational perspective, self-contained non-social actors whose interests emerge from within themselves - as Substantialism would have it - do not even exist. Instead,

[10] Figuration is the term for social space used by Elias. Speaking about 'fields' Bourdieu was researching in a very similar vein (Paulle, van Heerikhuizen, and Emirbayer 2012).

Elias posits that because 'people are more or less dependent on each other first by nature and then through social learning, through education, socialization, and socially generated reciprocal needs, they exist, one might venture to say only as pluralities, only in figurations' (Elias 1994, 213–14). For elite and non-elite actors of insurgency their embeddedness in different positions of the wider social environment, thus, becomes constitutive to their identities, interests, and behaviour.

Power

Importantly, societal figurations are characterised by uneven but constantly shifting power relations between actors. Elias notes that dynamic power balances are, indeed, 'at the very hub of the figuration process' (Elias 1978, 131). Using the term *field* instead of figuration to depict the social space under investigation, Bordieu also highlights that significantly they contain 'people who dominate and people who are dominated. […] It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies' (Bourdieu as cited in Thomson, 74). Power is, therefore, the property of a relationship, which is located in neither of two or more actors but in the interactions between them. This relational understanding of power enables to shed light on the reciprocity of power, despite processes of domination.

While power balances are skewed in most societal figurations, power does not only flow from above to below. In fact, all parts within a figuration exert influence upon each other, also the least powerful on the most powerful. Elias illustrates this is in his exploration of rule and authority within the court of Louis XIV in France, showing that even where power differentials are at their greatest, the ruled fulfil particular needs and functions for the rulers, which exerts figurational pressures on the latter that even strips the Sun King of his almightiness (Elias 1983). Authority, hence, becomes an inherently relational concept. The behaviour of any social actor, hence, is not the result of self-propelled agents acting on their transcendental individual interests and powers. It is the outcome of figurational pressures that result from fluctuating power constellations within a particular social figuration (Paulle, van Heerikhuizen, and Emirbayer 2012, 75–78). This reciprocity becomes important when analysing

interactions within insurgency movements. Despite strict military hierarchies and degrees of obedience, non-elite actors possess their own motivations and agency, which can make for an uneasy relationship with elites and enact figurational pressures on the collective.

Habitus

From a relational perspective, identity, interests, and behaviour all flow from one's internalisation of the social. Elias and Bourdieu have conceptualised this phenomenon as *habitus*: evolving systems of dispositions that structure one's ways of perceiving, feeling, thinking, and acting. This understanding conceptualises human behaviour not as the outcome of calculated response to one's externalities but as the *routinised practices* of what one considers to be appropriate within one's relational context. One's *habitus* is structured by past and present conditions - i.e. one's past or present position within a certain social figuration - that order one's perception and actions in systematic patterns (Bourdieu 1990, 53). History, hence, produces 'the structures of the *habitus*, which in their turn are the basis of the perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences' (Bourdieu 1990, 54). Social actors essentially become the *'product of history*' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 136).

Despite these structural qualities, *habitus* is not a deterministic concept. Frequently utilising analogies to games and sports, Bourdieu also calls *habitus* 'the feel for the game' (Maton 2014, 54), stressing the inventive and active side of practices. Actors indeed do strategise in order to improve their own position within the power balance that lies at the core of every relational figuration (Maton 2014, 54). This turns figurations into sites of ongoing renegotiation and contestation between differently situated and empowered actors. In contrast to rational-choice theory, however, actors are limited by their embodied current position in the figuration. This provides them only with a particular set of abilities and only opens up certain paths to manoeuvre. As *habitus*, is also the basis of the actors' perception of themselves and their situation, not all of these options might be visible or seem to be feasible (Maton 2014, 52). Choices made will in turn impact on future perceptions about their interests and

options as the *habitus* evolves. This leads to the emergence of strategic schemes or repertoires which actors resort to in their everyday practices.[11] The outlined relational approach surrounding the concepts figuration, power, and *habitus* will help to reconceptualise insurgency from a rational unitary actor to a dynamic social process in the next step.

3 Insurgency as a Social Process

Conceptualising insurgency as a social process does not view insurgency as an actor category to be analysed separate from society, but understands insurgency as ontologically embedded within its social environment. Working within a similar figurational understanding, Schlichte highlighted that:

> 'Another reason to perceive armed groups in this way [as figurations] is the fuzziness of their boundaries. It is almost always impossible to draw a clear line between members and non-members of insurgencies as forms of participation differ appreciably. Contrary to terms like organization or group, the concept of figuration does not presuppose such clear boundaries, rendering the concept more appropriate than any other for the study of armed groups.' (Schlichte 2009a, 19)

The following section builds on the relational understanding above to develop a conceptual framework that conceives of insurgency as a social network whose in- and outgroup boundaries are indeterminate or blurry at best. Stressing the potential gaps in ideas and motivations between differently situated actors of this network, this study of armed group politics turns essentially into an inquiry about dynamic and

[11] Charles Tilly has utilised a very similar notion of collective repertoires in the context of contentious politics, which are historically developed patterns of public claim-making by collective social actors, such as protests, strikes or the taking up of arms: 'Repertoires vary from place to place, time to time, and pair to pair. But on the whole, when people make collective claims, they innovate within limits set by the repertoire already established for their place, time, and pair.' (Tilly 2008a, 14–15)

reciprocal power relations between differently situated actors within this social figuration. The fundamental challenge that insurgent leaders need to overcome for building a cohesive and capable political and military counter-project to the incumbent state is to ensure compliance and support with their insurgent social order among local communities as well as the grassroots of a movement. In other words, rebel elites need to build and maintain authority among mass-level actors by being perceived as legitimate by the latter. When rebel leaders do not only struggle against the state but also against rival factions within their own movement, similar processes of legitimacy are at stake. For understanding the social process of insurgency the key question, hence, becomes how differently situated elites come to be viewed as more or less legitimate by their movement's grassroots in relation to one another. By combining literature on rebel governance with social identity theory, this framework proposes two interlaced processes behind the creation and erosion of legitimacy within insurgent movements: (1) the *insurgent social contract*, which is an exchange relationship between the elites and grassroots of a movement and (2) the *insurgent social identity,* which is conveyed through elite behaviour to non-elites.

3.1 Insurgent Social Networks

Students of armed conflict have only recently started to question the oft underlying assumption that insurgency movements are unitary actors whose behaviour is the result of purposive strategies in reaction to their external environment (Pearlman 2009; Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour 2012; Staniland 2014). This questioning was mainly because conventional theories of civil war have struggled to account for the empirically observed behaviour of non-state armed groups, which often seem to employ violence in a suboptimal way when measured against their presumed strategic objectives vis-à-vis the state they are fighting against.

The focus of this new research agenda has hitherto rested on exploring the causes, dynamics and effects of group fragmentation and factional contestation within insurgency. Wendy Pearlman's work, for instance, shows that these processes can lead to negotiation or spoiling strategies that—while suboptimal from an external utility

perspective—can be rational for forwarding internal power interests (Pearlman 2009). Cunningham et al. agree that individual rebel factions struggle for leadership against each other. Yet, they stress that this happens simultaneously to their contest with the state. While insurgents engage in the first competition of this 'dual contest' to increase their own faction's political power and material gains, they contend in the latter to gain benefits for the movement as a whole (Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour 2012, 69). Their findings support the argument that although the conflict behaviour of individual rebel factions might often seem to be at odds with their preferences in the wider struggle with the state, it can be perfectly consistent with their internal struggle for power.

This thesis builds on this young body of literature. It understands rebel groups as heterogeneous movements, where differently situated actors form malleable alliances, fragment into factions along various fault lines and wield different sources of authority corresponding to their location within a fluid network of power embedded in wider society. These internal cleavages entail contestation for leadership between rival factions, which, in turn, develops a momentum of its own in driving armed group behaviour. For understanding these dynamics, the interactions between both elite and non-elite actors are important. Rather than being the outcome of elite strategizing, armed group behaviour is driven by a multifaceted social process between differently situated actors. In Pearlman's words a 'movement's conflict behavior takes shape less as a choice on the part of a coherent entity than as an evolving social process in which these differently situated actors launch and sustain their participation for different reasons' (Pearlman 2010, 202). Despite these preliminary insights that have shed light on important dynamics of insurgency, the bulk of recent analysis has remained to focus on strategic decision-making at the level of factional elites.

Notwithstanding the importance of factional elite politics, successful popular insurgency - as opposed to other forms of non-state political violence such as small-cell urban terrorism - is primarily sustained by mass participation (Staniland 2014, 1–24). This is because leaders of popular insurgency rely on the grassroots of a movement for intelligence, recruits, food, taxes and shelter for challenging a militarily superior

state army (Staniland 2014, 1–24). Yet, pure coercion does not create stable support networks and the building of an alternative political order. Popular insurgency, therefore, depends on legitimate authority relations between elites and non-elites in its struggle against the state (Wickham-Crowley 1987; Mampilly 2011; Staniland 2014). The same seems true for rival rebel elites in their internal factional contestation against each other. This said, there is a frequently observed gap between the motivating ideas at the elite and non-elite level of mass movements, which can often make their relationship an uneasy one. James Scott, therefore, remarked in his studies on communist and nationalist insurrections that 'doing justice to radical movements requires not only the analysis of the ideas and activities of radical elites but also the recovery of the popular aspirations which made them possible' (Scott 1979, 98). For studying the social process of insurgency, this framework will, therefore, focus on the relations between both, elite and non-elite, actors of insurgency.

To do so, it builds on Pearlman's categorisation of rebel actors into *rebel leaders, aspirants* and *mass-level actors* (Pearlman 2010). While this is a first helpful guide for conceptualising the different situatedness of insurgent actors, this thesis proposes an important difference to it: conceptualising insurgency as a social process moves away from understanding rebel groups as collective actors with determinate boundaries. On the contrary, following the relational approach outlined above, it shows that the social phenomenon of insurgency cannot be separated analytically from its social environment. The line between the in- and outside of insurgency is often very fuzzy for several reasons:

First, fluid overlaps between combatants and civilians are a defining criterion of most non-state armed groups, which provides an essential advantage in fighting asymmetric warfare against a militarily superior state (Schlichte 2012, 722). Second, integrating the structures of insurgency within wider social institutions of local communities through parallel governance structures and the provision of services is a key mechanism for rebel groups to mobilise and build legitimacy as will be seen below (Mampilly 2011, 12). This support needs not only be conscious and proactive. Teachers and students in rebel-operated schools, for instance, do not necessarily work

and study there because of their conscious conviction and outright support of the insurgents' political cause but because they might simply lack alternatives. Still their participation and support shapes their views and values as well as strengthens and legitimises the insurgent organisation. Third, popular insurgency is often embedded within the everyday mesh of society through kinship and other social ties between civilians and insurgents (Shah 2013, 494). This can generate strong networks of support and loyalty from families of fighters (Kalyvas 2006, 125). Fourth, active membership and passive support of insurgency are difficult to distinguish. Civilians might support the insurgent cause by providing intelligence or food to rebel soldiers or simply not giving them away to state agents rather than joining their ranks on the frontline. Both, membership and support are also not fixed but fluctuate over time as people join and leave the insurgency or decide to support rebellion at one time but not the other (Wood 2003). Fifth, in places of protracted social conflict the 'network of insurgent organizations' (Wood 2003, 190) can be particularly wide-spread across society, comprising civil society actors, such as agricultural cooperatives, churches, student associations, social activist groups and other community-based organisations and institutions (Wood 2003, 190).

Bearing this embeddedness in mind and building on Pearlman's above mentioned categorisation (Pearlman 2010), this thesis conceives of insurgent social networks to comprise of *incumbent leaders, aspirant elites,* and a movement's *grassroots.* The most obvious elite actors of insurgency include *incumbent leaders*, who wield the most power and have the greatest say in decision-making. These are mostly the official political and military leaders of rebel groups. While they might be fighting against the state, they are also interested in maintaining the status-quo within their movement. *Aspirants* are also elite actors. Yet, their aims or preferred means to achieve shared aims differ from incumbents leaders within the same group. Despite their political skills and ambition they lack institutional resources within their groups to lead the way. They, hence, strive to overcome this constraint in their struggle for leadership. Incumbent and aspiring leaders are, therefore, pitched against each other in significant ways that can be the very cause of group fragmentation and power struggles. Understanding

insurgency as a network that spans across different nodes within wider society, however, also reveals that rebel leaders stand in a complex relationship to other social elites, e.g. community leaders or businessmen. While these are not part of the "rebellion proper" they often have close working relations with rebel leaders and sometimes fulfil crucial functions for the insurgency, including mobilisation, funding, intelligence, and legitimisation. Depending on their interactions with incumbent and aspiring elites they could support either of them and become an integral part of the insurgent landscape to the extent that they as well are incumbent or aspirant rebel elites.

Besides elites, insurgency consists of various mass-level actors, whose distinction into "rebels proper" and civilians is even more difficult. These *grassroots* can, for instance, be the foot soldiers of guerrilla armies or administrators of a rebellion's political wing. They can also comprise of supporters from local communities, which despite not being officially part of the rebel movement are inclined to the insurgent cause. They have their own motivations for supporting the rebellion as well as an opinion regarding the insurgency and its elites. Their popular support is crucial to form and sustain armed rebellion by way of recruits, intelligence, and shelter. While the grassroots of a movement do not consciously direct or intend to direct the conduct of the collective, their importance for sustaining popular insurgency implies mutual dependencies between them and rebel elites. The fundamental challenge that arises for rebel leaders within this interdependent figuration is how to ensure active support for or at least passive compliance with their insurgent social order as a counter-project to the incumbent state and to rival insurgent elites among the grassroots of their movement.

3.2 Authority within Insurgency

Understanding insurgency as a social network embedded within wider society implies that contrary to contemporary orthodoxies that associate insurgency foremost with terrorism, "warlordism", and the predation upon civilians, most insurgents are inherently political actors with complex relationships to local communities. Their

main aim is to seize and consolidate power vis-à-vis the state (Wickham-Crowley 1987; Schlichte 2009a). Militarily, rebels depend on local communities for intelligence, recruits, food, taxes and shelter for challenging a militarily superior state army (Staniland 2014, 1–24). Politically, insurgents face similar challenges as other authorities in their attempt to build a "counter-state", particularly how to turn physical violence and coercion into legitimate authority and voluntary obedience (Hagmann and Péclard 2010, 543; Schlichte 2012).

In their military and political struggle against the state, leaders of popular insurgents, therefore, depend on stable support from the grassroots of their movement (Mampilly 2011; Staniland 2014). Yet, as agreed upon by generations of political theorists – from Machiavelli to Max Weber – pure coercion is unstable and ultimately impotent for creating sustainable systems of compliance, obedience and support (Zelditch 2001). To achieve this, elites need to turn "naked power" into authority, which in Weber's words, is 'ein Sonderfall von Macht' (Weber 1980, 541), meaning a 'special kind of power' (Uphoff 1989, 295). In contrast to other forms of power authority rests on 'a certain minimum of voluntary submission; thus an interest […] in obedience' (Weber 1947, 324) on the part of the person subject to authority. Coercion is transformed into authority by processes of legitimation (Weber 1947, 324; Zelditch 2001). This turns legitimacy quite literally into 'the key to politics' (Jost and Major 2001, 4).

While this conceptual link between power, legitimacy and authority is well established in theories about state-society relations, it is uncommon to ponder over the legitimacy of violent non-state actors. On the one hand, this is because normative theories about legitimacy, i.e. what ought to be legitimate rule, and descriptive theories about legitimacy, i.e. when is a political order accepted as legitimate by the ruled, are often conflated. On the other hand, rebel groups by definition pose a threat to the established international system made up of sovereign nation-states. As pointed out by Zacharia Mampilly, many political scientists in general and students of International Relations in particular have, therefore, come to understand rebel groups foremost as warlords who 'are ahistorical, economically minded actors, with no compelling raison

d'être for their presence in the Westphalian state system' (Mampilly 2011, 28). Empirical investigation has shown, however, that state legitimacy is highly contingent on the behaviour of state authorities and, therefore, inherently contestable by other political actors, including non-state armed groups (Kalyvas 2006, 101–3). At the onset of civil wars, for instance, civilian support is rarely decided and mostly depends on the behaviour of warring factions (Kalyvas 2006, 101–3). For analysing empirically how authority of rebel elites arises and erodes - i.e. when the grassroots of a movement accept or reject different insurgent social orders as legitimate - it is necessary to adopt a subjective definition of legitimacy, which stresses the perception of actors themselves.[12] For this purpose, this thesis defines something as legitimate as per sociologist Morris Zelditch, 'if it is in accord with the norms, values, beliefs, practices, and procedures accepted by a group' (Zelditch 2001, 33).

The importance of building legitimate authority relations with local communities have featured heavily in the thoughts of left-wing insurgent leaders, as evidenced in the manifests written by Mao Zedong, Ernesto Che Guevara, and Ho Chi Min (Mampilly 2011, 11–13). Despite this, questions of insurgent legitimacy and authority have attracted little attention from the scholarly community. A notable exception is Schlichte's scholarship on non-state armed groups and the scholarship on rebel governance (Schlichte 2012; Schlichte and Schneckener 2015; Wickham-Crowley 1987; Mampilly 2011; Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015). This following section will build on the scholarship on rebel governance about how rebel groups build legitimacy among local communities in their struggle against the state. In contrast to these authors, the thesis's conceptualisation of insurgency as a social process draws particular attention to processes of legitimacy within the insurgent social network, i.e. between differently situated elite actors of insurgency and the grassroots of a movement. This allows for analysing processes of legitimacy in both of the dual struggles rebel elites are engaged, the struggle against the incumbent state as well as the internal contestation against rival factions. To do so this framework proposes the

[12] This stands in contrast to normative theories of legitimacy, i.e. what legitimate authority ought to look like which is common in Political Thought.

following two interlaced processes that seem central to the building or erosion of legitimate authority between differently situated rebel elites and their movement's grassroots: (1) Reciprocal exchange relations between the elites and grassroots of a movement and (2) experiences of recognition that enable to derive a positive self-perceived social identity from affiliation to the insurgency.

3.2.1 Reciprocal Exchange Relations

Leaders of popular insurgency seem to be aware of the need to build and maintain legitimacy among local communities for waging effective guerrilla war and engage in building it in a strategic way (Mampilly 2011). In fact, historic leaders of successful peasant revolutions attributed their success first and foremost to the building of legitimate authority by way of successful mass mobilisation that integrated local communities into the structures of insurgency through the establishment of parallel governance systems (Mampilly 2011, 11–13). In his handbook on *Guerilla Warfare*, Guevara stressed that the establishment of administrative arrangements that are viewed as legitimate by local communities is directly linked to success:

> 'In view of the importance of relations with the peasants, it is necessary to create organizations that make regulations for them, organizations that exist not only within the liberated area, but also have connections in the adjacent areas. Precisely through these connections it is possible to penetrate a zone for a future enlargement of the guerrilla front. The peasants will sow the seed with oral and written propaganda, with accounts of life in the other zone, of the laws that have already been issued for the protection of the small peasant, of the spirit of sacrifice of the rebel army; in a word, they are creating the necessary atmosphere for helping the rebel troops.' (Guevara cited as in Mampilly 2011, 13)

While one could attribute such campaigns to the left-wing political ideologies of Cold War revolutionaries, these organisational ideas have long been studied by rebel leaders around the world, irrespective of their political agendas (Mampilly 2011, 11).

This is also true for the Karen and Kachin insurgencies in Myanmar (Smith 1999, 93–94). Scholars studying rebel governance, moreover, agree that establishing administrative capacities and providing services can be an important way for insurgents to build legitimacy and gain support among civilians through reciprocal relationships that entail obligations on both sides (Wickham-Crowley 1987; Mampilly 2011).

In his research on authority relations between rebel groups and local communities across Latin America, Timothy Wickham-Crowley has built on Barrington Moore's understanding of peasant-landlord relations as an 'implicit social contract' that entails contractual obligations for both sides, such as taxation for protection (Wickham-Crowley 1987, 477; Moore 1978, 17–31). In a parallel fashion, Wickham-Crowley conceptualises the governance relationship between rebels and local communities living in their controlled territories as an implicit social contract as well. On the one hand, civilians in rebel territories are to support insurgent rule or at least not resist it. Rebels, on the other hand, are expected to defend the local populace from external enemies, maintain internal order, and improve the population's welfare, for instance with providing basic health and education services. While rebel governance can legitimise insurgency and its leaders, the failure to fulfil these "contractual" obligations can erode legitimacy (Wickham-Crowley 1987). In Wickham-Crowley's words, '[w]here guerrilla authority arose, it could also decline. When guerrillas do become the legitimate regional authorities in the areas they control, they must assume the obligations thereof' (Wickham-Crowley 1987, 492).

The present framework builds on this idea of an implicit social contract between rebel leaders and a movement's grassroots by stressing the reciprocal and non-coercive nature of authority relations within insurgency. By doing so I do, however, not intend implying that differently situated rebel actors necessarily "sign" such contracts consciously. While this notion of strategic contractualism – i.e. the idea that local communities strategically sell their allegiance to the highest bidder among local authorities - has been forwarded in the study of strongmen authority elsewhere (Barth 1959), its underlying methodological individualism has been criticised for blinking out

other constraining and motivating factors, such as power relations (Asad 1972). Going back to Weber, it seems more likely that a variety of different motivations are at work simultaneously in the creation of rebel authority. Speaking about the person subjected to authority, Weber points out that his or her 'motives of obedience […] can rest on considerations varying over a wide range from case to case, all the way from simple habituation to the most purely rational calculation of advantage' (Weber 1947, 324).

Issues other than strategic calculations over distributional outcomes seem particularly important to explain everyday motivations to support popular insurgency movements among their grassroots. This is because non-elite insurgents mostly receive little or no short-term payoffs for their participation or support. In addition, partaking in an armed insurrection against a militarily superior enemy often has very limited chances of success but involves the ultimate risk of being killed (Wood 2003). In fact, supporting insurgency might sometimes have little to do with conscious deliberations at all, as pointed out by Kalyvas in situations of prolonged armed conflict, where 'joining an armed group appears as the natural course of action for many' (Kalyvas 2006, 125). Kevin Toolis describes this in the case of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland's small town of Coalisland in the 1970s, reflecting on his encounters with a family of IRA supporters:

> 'At the kitchen table, I sat asking the same question over and over again – why had Tony joined the IRA? The logic of the question was unintelligible to the Doris family. In their minds the mere description of life in Coalisland was sufficient to explain why Tony had joined the IRA. My naïve question shook this natural assumption. They searched for ways to explain something that was so obvious it was inexplicable.' (Toolis cited as in Kalyvas 2006, 125)

From a relational perspective, this is because the motivations to support insurgency might often evolve around routinised practices, which are the result of embodied social environments that structure one's ways of perceiving, feeling, thinking, and acting. This habitus mostly plays a stabilising role for social orders by

acting as 'an automatic, blindly functioning apparatus of self-control' (Elias 1994, 446). Following Bourdieu, this is exactly because the habitus produces an 'ongoing dialectic of subjective hopes and objective chances' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 130). In most cases this results in a fit between the expectations of people and the opportunities granted to them by their position within a figurational setting. In normal circumstances habitus and figurational interdependencies, hence, work hand in hand in stabilising social orders. From this perspective, social orders are perceived as legitimate not if they deliver fair pay-offs but if they are naturalised and their underlying injustices, including structural violence engrained within an insurgency's social foundation, remain unquestioned.

It, hence, appears that rebel leaders might take painstaking efforts to craft legitimate authority relations with local communities whom they court for support, but the grassroots of a movement might not make similarly conscious deliberations on whether or not to pledge their loyalty to one leader or the other simply in return for public goods, including social services or protection. For understanding authority in armed groups, the next section will, therefore, propose the struggle for recognition as an alternative driver of human motivation that is better suited to explain authority within insurgency. It will be argued that elite behaviour and its repercussions on processes of social identification are key for understanding who and what is perceived as legitimate by insurgent grassroots.

3.2.2 Recognition and Social Identity

In his comparative historical analysis of feudal authority relations between landlords and peasants Moore notes that the peasantry often relied on services by the landed class but rose against the latter in case of non-delivery. Yet, he also stressed that these uprisings were not only the result of undelivered material promises but often emerged from experiences of injustice that abrogated the perceived moral obligation to obey traditional rulers (Moore 1978). This observation has been used by Axel Honneth to substantiate his formulation of recognition theory (Honneth 1996, 167). Honneth promulgates that the struggle for recognition as a morally responsible person by the wider society is a core motivational driver behind human behaviour, anchored

in each individual (Haacke 2005, 189). This struggle for recognition is motivated by subjective experiences of injustice and resulting moral claims (Haacke 2005, 194). If these experiences and claims are shared with others, the struggle for recognition can emerge as the motivational foundation for collective action, including insurgency.

According to Honneth, three spheres of recognition exist on different levels. On a personal level, recognition is conveyed through intimate relationships based on emotional support, i.e. love, which builds self-confidence. On a more societal level, formal or informal rights that result in the allowance to take part in public will formation effectuates cognitive self-respect. Moreover, positive societal feedback by way of following social norms improves one's self-esteem, as for instance expressed in feelings of honour or prestige (Honneth 1996, 92–130). 'Taken together,' Honneth writes:

> 'the three forms of recognition - love, rights, and esteem - constitute the social conditions under which human subjects can develop a positive attitude towards themselves. For it is only due to the cumulative acquisition of basic self-confidence, of self-respect, and of self-esteem - provided, one after another, by the experience of those three forms of recognition - that a person can come to see himself or herself, unconditionally, as both an autonomous and an individuated being and to identify with his or her goals and desires.' (Honneth 1996, 169).

On the flip side, abuse, social exclusion, and perceptions of insult contravene these feelings of recognition. Such feelings of disrespect can form the 'moral context for societal conflict' (Honneth 1996, 162) and 'become the motivational basis for collective resistance […] if subjects are able to articulate them within an intersubjective framework of interpretation that they can show to be typical for an entire group' (Honneth 1996, 163). This conception posits that social conflicts contain a "moral grammar". They are driven by the desire to overcome perceived sources of injustice, hence, 'motivated by a demand for due or proper *recognition'* (Smith 2012, 5). Jurgen Haacke points out that recognition, social conflict, and legitimacy, are, therefore,

inherently intertwined as the claim to recognition essentially becomes a 'normative judgement about the legitimacy of social arrangements' (Haacke 2005, 187). When this claim is satisfied, social orders are stable. When it is not, collective resistance can come about from within.

The struggle for recognition as a motivating dynamic seems particularly obvious in the context of ethnonational insurgency, where claims to recognition of minority identities and rights are explicitly made in light of perceived and manifest cultural and socio-economic discrimination and feelings of being looked down upon. This is arguably true for conflicts with non-ethnic components as well. Indeed, Edward Azar's promulgation of protracted social conflicts rests on a very similar premise, locating the main reason why social groups take up arms against others in the 'denial of separate identity of parties involved in the political process' (Azar 1986, 30). Wood's work on the peasant insurrection against a feudal social order in El Salvador shows how this plays out. Following her account, the support for insurgency and justification of violence among the peasantry in El Salvador was mainly motivated by feelings of pride derived from partaking in a collective political project that was attributed with moral principles, the defiance of discrimination and violence perpetuated by the state, and the pleasure in experiencing agency by way of changing entrenched unjust societal structures (Wood 2003, 231–40). Such motivations are also common for other kinds of social protest movements, whose members build communal identities of protest upon feelings of purpose and companionship in a similar fashion. In extreme cases of experienced violence and injustice, motivations surrounding participation, defiance, and agency, i.e. the struggle for recognition, can even serve to reassert a basic 'claim to dignity and personhood' (Wood 2003, 233). Wood describes this as the workings of an "insurgent identity":

> 'An insurgent might act out of pride in acting as an insurgent, thereby expressing his insurgent identity and membership in the insurgent community. He might act on moral principles, to build a more just world or to express outrage, but also to experience pride in having the courage to have done so. He might act to assert his political efficacy, even his

> capacity to make history, capacities long denied by landlords or state authorities.' (Wood 2003, 237)

Notwithstanding the extent to which agency is involved in the decision to support or join insurgency, members or affiliates of the insurgent community, therefore, derive their "insurgent identity" from the association to the insurgent collective. Following the basic tenets of social identity theory, identity is in parts derived from group membership, including identity groups such as ethnicity, gender but also one's organisational affiliations, such as sports team, universities, youth gangs or revolutionary movements. Social identity, therefore, is 'that part of an individual's selfconcept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (Tajfel 1978, 63). The basic argument is that self-perceived positive social identity is derived from feeling recognised as a respected member of a group that is associated with high societal standing and moral principles. A self-perceived positive social identity is important as it leads to feelings of self-esteem and self-worth (Turner 1999, 6–8). Positive social identification can be threatened when the status and morality of the group is questioned from outgroup or ingroup sources. Social identity threat can also occur when one's acceptance as a group member is questioned or refused, i.e. misrecognised. These threats can undermine positive social identification and lead to feelings of being disrespected (Branscombe et al. 1999, 46–55).[13] Expressed in recognition theoretical terms, group membership, therefore, constitutes part of the social conditions that convey social recognition or misrecognition.

In the case of popular insurgency, the moral principles of the collective are normally formulated as 'charismatic ideas' - including the aims of revolutionary struggle against social injustices or the protection of a particular community (Schlichte 2009a, 99–106). In prolonged armed conflict this can, moreover, give rise to an

[13] In addition to the threats to group value and the acceptance to this group, social psychology speaks of the threat of being categorised against one's will to a certain social group and the threat to a group's distinctiveness (Branscombe et al. 1999, 37).

alternative political culture[14] with particular belief, norms and practices of its own, which resemble around the collective defiance of the incumbent political order. Wood has called this the "insurgent political culture", encompassing 'norms of group solidarity, […] practices such as rituals and symbols, and beliefs concerning the feasibility of social change and the potential efficacy of the group's collective efforts towards this change' (Wood 2003, 219). Group value models in social psychology suggest that the extent to which an insurgent group is associated with such revolutionary values by its own grassroots depends primarily on whether non-elites perceive elite behaviour as being in accordance with these accepted beliefs, norms, and practices of proper conduct within a society or social group (Tyler 2001). This is primarily communicated by elite interaction with non-elites, which provides status relevant information to the latter, i.e. their acceptance or rejection as a recognised group members (Tyler 2001, 421–22).

Alpa Shah's analysis of intimacy among Maoist insurgents in local Naxalite communities in India supports this argument. She describes how the everyday social interaction process between commissars and peasants is at the core of elite legitimacy among the grassroots of insurgency. India's Maoist leaders, who have mostly originated from urban elites, managed to build legitimacy for their struggle among marginalised rural communities first and foremost through 'their ability to develop intimate social relations of dignity and respect with the people' (Shah 2013, 496). She describes that:

> 'In everyday life it was often the small things that mattered in the relative reach of the Maoists in comparison to that of the Indian state: for instance, the tone of voice in which one was spoken to, the way one was greeted, the way one's house was entered, whether one sat on the floor like everyone else or required a chair to be found. In contrast to the state officials, the Maoists (whose leaders were also

[14] Political culture is defined as 'the set of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about politics current in a nation at a given time' (Almond and Powell 1978, 25).

> outsiders - often high-caste Bihari men) had made it a point to be gentle and kind in everyday interactions.' (Shah 2013, 496)

This illustrates how experiences of fair procedures and dignified treatment by authorities, i.e. procedural justice, convey to the non-elites recognition as valued members of a group that is associated with high societal standing and moral values. In reverse, this argument implies that if elite behaviour, their decision-making and interaction with their movement's grassroots is perceived as unjust and morally wrong, feelings of misrecognition among non-elites can lead to indignation about the group as a whole and ultimately to resistance against group authorities. For generating or eroding legitimacy within insurgent movements the interactions between elite and non-elite actors of insurgency might, therefore, become more important than the distributional outcomes of the insurgent social order, i.e. whether everyone actually receives their fair share of material benefits.

4 Conclusion

The present analytical framework draws inspiration from recent scholarship on the internal politics of non-state armed groups. Yet, it moves away from the remaining orthodoxy of methodological individualism that focuses exclusively on the strategic decision-making of self-propelled rebel leaders. This is because the changing strategies of both insurgencies under comparison can neither be inferred from external utilities of supposedly unitary actors nor by simply lowering the level of analysis to rival rebel elites. In contrast, the following thesis highlights the social dynamics of insurgency by adopting relational heuristics, as proposed by the sociologies of Elias and Bourdieu. By focusing on social interdependencies, reciprocal power relations, and embodied practices, this perspective reveals intertwined and multi-causal social forces that are operating at different levels within the wider networks of insurgency and develop a momentum of their own in driving collective conduct.

Instead of analysing rebels as self-propelled individuals, they are, thus, understood as ontologically embedded within an insurgent social figuration, which itself is inextricably rooted within a wider socio-temporal space and has indefinite in- and outgroup boundaries. The interactions of differently situated elite and grassroots actors can lead to the formation of malleable alliances but also fragment movements into various rival factions, who struggle against the state and also contest each other for the movement's leadership. The fundamental challenge for rebel leaders in both of these contests is how to ensure active support or at least voluntary submission among their movement's grassroots. Building legitimate authority relations to the grassroots of a movement, therefore, becomes a pivotal process in the internal contestation of non-state armed groups and shapes collective willingness and ability to engage in fighting or negotiating with the state. Two interlaced processes seem to be at play in the building or erosion of authority between differently situated rebel elites across the insurgent social network.

First, rebel governance arrangements, particularly the provision of public goods, including welfare and security, can establish reciprocal exchange relations between rebel rulers and local communities in their territory. This relationship can be conceived of as an informal social contract. It entails implicit obligations for both sides, e.g. taxation in return for security. Non-fulfilment can threaten the legitimacy of insurgent social orders. Yet, rebel authority is not solely dependent on the distributional outcome of governance arrangements because the motivations to support insurgency in situations of prolonged armed conflict might often evolve around routinised practices rather than conscious deliberations.

Second, following recognition and social identity theories, rebel authority seems dependent on whether the grassroots of insurgency derives a self-perceived positive social identity from affiliation to the collective. In other words, the participation and support of non-elite rebel actors is motivated by the latter's demand for due and proper recognition. The grassroots of insurgency perceive rebel elites as legitimate if their interaction provides them with feelings of self-respect and self-esteem that are denied from the incumbent political order. It is suggested that this is dependent

on whether elite behaviour is perceived to be in line with the dominant beliefs, norms, and practices of the insurgent project, i.e. the fight against injustice or the protection of the community. Elites communicate this to their movement's grassroots through everyday interactions, mainly by way of fair and dignifying treatment that conveys recognition as valued group members to the latter. On the flip side, when grassroots experience collective misrecognition in their interaction with rebel elites by way of perceived injustices - including abuse, social exclusion, or perceptions of insult – the morality of elites as well as the insurgency as a social order more generally is questioned. This can threaten the positive social identity derived from affiliation to the insurgency, and ultimately, result in the erosion of rebel authority and resistance from within.

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

1 Introduction

In order to study how the social process of insurgency between differently situated but interdependent elite and grassroots insurgents of the Kachin and the Karen movements drives the strategies of both movements, this thesis aims to capture the perspectives of the people involved: elite and non-elite insurgents. While rebels are central actors to civil wars, their own accounts are rarely captured in the field Conflict and Peace Studies.

Ranajit Guha famously described how generations of historians have inferred the motivations and dynamics of peasant uprisings in colonial India from the 'prose of counter-insurgency' (Guha 1988, 84): primary sources produced, processed and archived by the British Raj. Because an alternative first-hand account by the insurgents themselves is missing, the logic of insurgency can only be interpreted through the lens of counterinsurgency. This makes it impossible to produce an analysis that can 'extricate itself from the code of counter-insurgency' (Guha 1988, 70), for presumably distanced and objective historians and partisan observers alike. Guha writes that the historiographic discourse produced on insurgency in colonial India, therefore:

> 'amounts to an act of appropriation which excludes the rebel as the conscious subject of his own history and incorporates the latter as only a contingent element in another history with another subject […]. And since the discourse is, in this particular instance, one about properties of the minds – about attitudes, beliefs, ideas, etc. rather than about externalities which are easier to identify and describe, the task of representation is made even more complicated than usual.' (Guha 1988, 77)

Much of the academic knowledge produced on past and present insurgency in the field of Conflict and Peace Studies suffers from the same problem, namely the absence of first-hand accounts by insurgents themselves. This seems to be the case for two reasons. First, it might often not be feasible or convenient to listen to the first-hand accounts of insurgent members and affiliates. Second, scholars view insurgents as particularly untruthful sources of information. In fact, the study of insurgency has mostly relied on presumably more objective sources to infer the motivations of insurgents, which obviates the need to talk to them altogether. Insofar as scholarship is interested in the insurgent perspective, it mostly analyses the ideologies and interests of rebel elites.

In contrast, this thesis seeks to gain an "insider perspective" into the Karen and Kachin movements in order to provide a plausible account on how social interdependencies have driven wider dynamics. It was, therefore, necessary to understand the perspectives of people involved. In order to do so, this thesis has chosen an ethnographically-informed qualitative approach. This endeavour poses various methodological challenges, which this chapter seeks to address by, first, explaining the ethnographic bend of my research, including its advantages and challenges. In a second step, it will reflect on the most important challenges encountered during my own field research with regards to access and positionality. This will serve as a reflection on my data and help the reader to assess the overall plausibility of my presented account. Moreover, this elaboration can contribute to the nascent but

growing discussions on using ethnographic methodology within Conflict and Peace Studies.

2 An Ethnographic Bend

How we see shapes what we see. In February 2015 I presented a paper at a junior scholar symposium entitled 'The Dynamics of Rebel and Militia Group Behavior' at the International Studies Association (ISA). My co-panellists presented on interesting topics, such as armed group fragmentation and public service provision by rebel groups. All of them were testing well-formulated hypotheses with regression analysis. The subsequent discussion to their projects centred on the appropriate deployment of control variables and problems of endogeneity in the undoubtedly well-thought through models. During the discussion of my own paper, based on findings from ethnographic field research, I was made aware how lucky I can consider myself, being based at a European University, where I am still allowed to study social sciences without "juggling numbers" in the 21st century. Notwithstanding the exoticism with which my methodological approach was received as something from a long bygone era where the social sciences were not yet scientific, I still encountered genuine interest in my findings. After all, I was found to be the only panellist who has encountered a living rebel or militia group member during the research process.

This thesis has chosen an ethnographically-informed qualitative approach to the study of insurgency in order to uncover hidden processes that have commonly been blinked out by the dominant methodological approaches in contemporary conflict research. This entailed extensive stays in the field during which I lived and travelled with differently situated actors involved in or related to the Karen and Kachin insurgencies. "Deep hanging out"[15] - as Anthropologists refer to the practice that makes ethnographic research distinctive - enabled me to develop friendly relationships

[15] "Deep hanging out" as a common denominator of ethnographic methodology was first introduced on a conference by Renator Rosaldo before it was used more prominently in the writings of James Clifford and Clifford Geertz (Clifford 1996).

with many of my interlocutors over the course of my research and, thus, a profound understanding of their social lifeworlds, including their own perspectives and analyses of their situation. This said, my thesis is not "an ethnography" of insurgency in Myanmar but represents a "mixed" approach that can be best defined as qualitative case study research with a strong ethnographic bend. My research methodology also entailed elite interviews that I conducted during extensive field research throughout which I lived and travelled with differently situated elite and non-elite actors involved in or affiliated with the Karen and Kachin insurgencies for about nine months. This entailed four months in the Thai-Myanmar borderlands with the Karen insurgency, three months in the Chinese-Myanmar borderlands with the Kachin insurgency, and two months travelling in other areas of Myanmar, including Yangon as well as in Thailand and China.

Most of this time, I spent living and travelling with a variety of actors linked to the Karen and Kachin insurgencies, which allowed for a wealth of informal conversations and observations on a daily basis. While I did not tape any of these informal encounters, I noted important observations, and the essence of many informal conversations, including occasional direct quotations, in field notebooks during my stay. In addition, I conducted formal, semi-structured interviews with political, social, and economic elites, including rebel leaders, businessmen, activists, religious leaders, and members of civil society. In total, I recorded 50 interviews and two group interviews, which included: 17 interviews with senior KNU leaders, 11 interviews with senior KIO leaders, 9 interviews with Karen activists and civil society leaders, 9 interviews with Kachin activists, civil society leaders, elders, and religious authorities, and businessmen. I also interviewed two foreign experts. Moreover, I conducted two group interviews, one with 24 KNU teachers and another one with three Thai businessmen. I conducted 29 of these interviews in English. In addition, I drew on the help and language skills of local friends and acquaintances for conducting, translating and transcribing 12 interviews in Sgaw Karen, 7 in Jinghpaw, and one in Myanmar.

Many of these formal interviews contained information that was important for understanding why the Karen insurgency signed a ceasefire with the government in 2012, while the Kachin ceasefire broke down one year earlier. This included information about political, military, and economic developments, the movements' organisational features, changing internal and external social relations of differently situated actors, and the reconstruction of important past events. In order to get access to many of these interlocutors, I needed to engage in long processes of trust-building and access negotiations. This allowed for a rare glimpse into the lives of ordinary insurgents and an appreciation of their world-views. Rather than just being by-products of my research, these informal day-to-day encounters, however, became a crucial part of my data and significantly added to my understanding of my research topic. Most importantly, they changed the elite-centrism of my own pre-field perspective. While my original project attempted to trace the impacts of changing border economies on elite contestation within armed groups, my daily encounters with differently situated lower-ranking insurgent actors revealed their often uneasy relations with their own superior and the ways in which these develop a momentum of their own in driving the strategies of their movements. This has ultimately refocused my research on the role of legitimate authority relations within insurgency and the ways these interact with wider structural dynamics, including borderland economies.

Much of the information presented in this thesis, therefore, stems from informal conversations and participant observation. While my research is therefore not a "pure" ethnography of the Karen and Kachin insurgencies, it may still be subsumed under the definition of ethnographic methodology as per anthropologist Rosalind Shaw, who writes that

> 'a combination of participant observation and informal ethnographic interviews [by which] anthropologists and others seek to understand particular processes, events, ideas and practices in an informant's own terms rather than ours. This entails building up relationships rather than making a single visit, and spending time in

> ordinary conversation and interaction, preferably before introducing the more direct form of an interview.' (Shaw 2007, 188)

This stands squarely opposed to methodological orthodoxies in the study of armed conflict and insurgency. Some of the boldest as well as most impactful claims produced by students of civil war have relied heavily on formal research methods producing parsimonious mono-causal theories. Paul Collier, for instance, famously argued that today's insurgents were mainly motivated by economic profiteering, i.e. "greed", rather than by socio-economic grievances, a claim that has steered heated debate among academics for years. To substantiate his thesis, the economist ran large n-regression analyses over aggregated data of civil wars in the world finding correlations between natural resources and the occurrence of armed conflict. According to him, this was the right method "to discover the truth", while listening to accounts produced by rebels themselves would have been a useless endeavour because they were little more than propaganda (Collier 1999, 1–2).

Collier's 'binary intellectual construct' (Cramer 2006, 165) between greed and grievance has fortunately long been refuted on empirical, theoretical, methodological and normative grounds (Keen 2012; Cramer 2002; Stewart and Fitzgerald 2001). Its underlying epistemological assumptions, however, are deeply anchored in the methodological orthodoxies of Conflict and Peace Studies as well as the Social Sciences more generally. This is best expressed by one of the most influential books on how to conduct "legitimate" research in the discipline, King, Keohane, and Verba's "Designing Social Inquiry" (King, Robert, and Verba 1994). It has become the standard reference for positivist political scientists, committed to discerning facts from beliefs and on identifying generalizable governing laws behind human behaviour through formulating hypothesis, identifying variables, and empirical testing. This endeavour to "scientificise" social processes by 'disciplining the discipline' (Wedeen 2009, 76) stems from the concern over the validity of empirical research.

Unfortunately, this prioritisation of 'methods over results' (Wedeen 2009, 76) has led to the self-restriction of political scientists, who often only investigate a 'limited

repertoire of political objects' (Jourde 2009, 202). Cédric Jourde notes that this can lead to cases where scholarship gropes in the dark without noticing it, which is when 'political scientists walk on their path, not realizing that they are surrounded by UPOs [unidentified political objects] that could be, and often are, politically significant for the actors involved in them, if not more significant than the political objects researchers have already "identified"' (Jourde 2009, 203). Ethnographic enquiries can help to uncover such unidentified political objects by providing 'windows onto hidden politics and an opportunity to recalibrate the vision of histories and explanations told from above' (Allina-Pisano 2009, 71). Shaw stresses that this is mainly because of the informal methods of knowledge production. These privilege the analyses of people involved and helps to recalibrate our conceptual flashlights. In her own words:

> 'When we listen to people on their own terms by developing relationships and by observing and participating in events, the answers we receive are often more revealing than those that people give in an interview. This is both because we exert less control over the conditions of their production, and, in interviews that build upon participant observation, we tend to ask better questions. What we learn through ethnography thus has more potential to challenge our assumptions, often forcing us to unlearn as much as we learn. It is this that makes ethnography such a powerful tool for challenging received wisdom and for understanding events and processes on the ground.' (Shaw 2007, 188)

Ethnographic methods, therefore, seem particularly helpful, even necessary, in situations where it is not clear which are the right questions to ask, i.e. when little is known about the phenomena under investigation (Jourde 2009, 203). Despite receiving growing attention, the scholarship on the politics of non-state armed group is still at a very early stage. The landscape of potentially relevant actors and issues has not even been sufficiently mapped in order to know which questions to ask and whom to ask. It, therefore, seems that studying non-state armed groups can profit greatly from an ethnographic perspective for the following reasons in particular:

First, the very clandestine nature of these movements makes the use of more formal methods, including archival and survey, less feasible. On the one hand, this is because of the lack of reliable primary information (Bayard de Volo, Lorraine and Schatz 2004, 269). On the other hand, it is due to the sensitivity of the situation where 'people may have good reason to be suspicious of anything resembling official information gathering' (Shaw 2007, 188). Second, ethnographic methodology does not only deliver raw data to be incorporated and tested in formal modelling. It rather enables an alternative perspective that can provide a better handle on informal political processes. In the words of anthropologist and political scientist Edward Schatz, primary research 'conducted at close range [it] invites the researcher to "see" differently; heterogeneity, causal complexity, dynamism, contingency, and informality come to the fore.' Third, ethnographic methodology shines light on the social environment in question that provides the particular meaning context within which the social world is perceived and acted upon (Wedeen 2009, 80–81). This said, ethnographic research can still adjudicate truth claims and identify causality in a way that Jessica Allina-Pisano has described as the peeling of an onion (Allina-Pisano 2009, 54). She explains that

> 'ethnography with a realist sensibility […] does not deny the value of interpretation in ethnographic approaches to social research. On the contrary, it suggests that an understanding of the ways I which people think about their world can be a necessary condition for the collection and use of reliable empirical data about them.' (Allina-Pisano 2009, 55)

In order to glimpse an 'insider perspective' into a certain social context, 'neck-deep' immersion in form of sustained participant observation is often cited as the sine qua non (Geertz 1974, 29). Following Clifford Geertz, the aim is to grasp 'experience-near' understandings of the people under research in a way that can inform the 'experience-distant' concepts of academics used to explain wider social processes (Geertz 1974, 29). Anthropologists have oftentimes tried to define what qualifies as a "proper" ethnography in terms of the length of time spent in 'the field' as well as the

commitment with which participant observation is practiced. Geertz, however, reminded that such formal thresholds are inadequate in times when the 'myth of the chameleon fieldworker, perfectly self-tuned to his exotic surroundings, a walking miracle of empathy, tact, patience, and cosmopolitanism' (Geertz 1974, 27) has long faded. To him

> 'the trick is not to achieve some inner correspondence of spirit with your informants; preferring, like the rest of us, to call their souls their own, they are not going to be altogether keen about such an effort anyhow. The trick is to figure out what the devil they think they are up to.' (Geertz 1974, 29)

In practice it seems that political ethnography in particular 'is practiced in shades of gray' (Schatz 2009, 13). This is not least because Ethnography remains an underused method in Political Science and International Relations. Schatz reminds, therefore, that

> 'what constitutes an "insider" perspective (or an "outsider," for that matter) depends on the blind spots in a particular research agenda; varying degrees of immersion can generate crucial insights whose importance depends upon the state of existing knowledge on particular topics.' (Schatz 2009, 8)

More important than the particular technicalities of method for the construction of any degree of "insider" perspective that helps to illuminate the lived experiences of people involved, is to profess an ethnographic '*sensibility* that goes beyond face-to-face contact' (Schatz 2009, 5). This turns ethnography into 'an approach that cares' (Schatz 2009, 5) for the people and phenomena under study, which poses challenges in regards to the standard measures of "objectivity", "reliability" and "validity" commonly applied in positivist social science. Yet, ethnography posits that 'observations are not objective or external to the conditions that produce scholars doing the observing' (Wedeen 2009, 80). "Objectivity", "reliability" and "validity" are therefore not the appropriate criterion to measure the

"trustworthiness" of truth claims in ethnographic studies (Yanow 2009, 295). Following James Scott's advice, this thesis rather aims to establish a 'plausible account' (Scott 1985, 47) of the Kachin and Karen insurgencies in Myanmar that should be 'judged by the standards of its logic, its economy, and its consistency with other social facts' (Scott 1985, 46). In order to do so, self-critical reflexivity, defined as the 'explicit attention to the role of the ethnographer in the ethnography' (Pachirat 2009, 144) is pivotal. This is because the researcher's positionality creates power relations, which, 'shape not only *what* is seen (a question of access), but also *how* it is seen (a question of the production of ethnographic knowledge itself)' (Pachirat 2009, 147). Elucidating the politics of knowledge production is therefore not only a matter of intellectual honesty but crucially important for the reader to assess the account's plausibility (Yanow 2009).

While this has become a main issue of concern in Sociology and Anthropology since these disciplines' "reflexive turn,"[16] similar debates have hitherto had little impact on the political sciences, including International Relations and the study of armed conflict. This is mainly because most political scientists have instead departed into the diametrically opposite epistemological direction in an attempt to ground their discipline in the methodological assumptions of natural sciences (Wedeen 2009, 76). Richmond's et al. critique of the 'the field' in 'fieldwork' as a concept that is enmeshed in its colonial past and laden with power hierarchies is a case in point. The authors complain that "the field" is associated with exoticism, otherness, and primitivism, under-development and instability and, hence, 'at the bottom of the structural hierarchy of power in IR' (Richmond, Kappler, and Björkdahl 2015, 27). Following their argument, this does not only legitimise interventionist policies of northern powers into societies of the Global South but also skews the process of knowledge production as such. This is because the data collected in "the field" most often only serves to feed into the theoretical models produced in the centres of power and knowledge "back

[16] See Paul Rabinow's experiments with objective and subjective ways of writing in his "*Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco"(Rabinow 2007)* and James Clifford and George Marcus' engagement with "writing culture"(Clifford and Marcus 1986).

home". According to the authors, field research in International Relations has, thus, often proven to be futile for challenging our orthodoxies in fundamental ways as 'the field, in its mainstream use, can be considered as an extension, rather than as a subversion, of armchair or laboratory research' (Richmond, Kappler, and Björkdahl 2015, 29). While their critique is valid, it also illustrates the need to catch up on debates about reflexivity in the discipline.

I acknowledge that escaping such epistemic centre-periphery relations as a European doctoral student in Southeast Asia is not entirely feasible. Yet, I hope to have mitigated the most obvious "booby traps" in my field research through ethnographic sensitivity, reflexivity about my own role as a researcher, and a commitment to listening closely to my interlocutors' analyses rather than simply harvesting data. The following reflections are by no means an exhaustive account of the various challenges I met during field research on the Karen and Kachin insurgencies in Myanmar's borderlands. Not only would a more comprehensive account go beyond the scope of this chapter, a more extensive elaboration would also be problematic in ethical terms. While Neumann and Neumann remind that ethnographic research in International Relations generally has the obligation to be transparent about access and positionality, they also stress that when working in conflict zones in general and with clandestine groups in particular, full transparency as to how data was gathered is not expedient with regards to the safety of the researched and the researcher, as there '*are* situations when you do not have to, indeed ought not to, tell how the data have been produced' (Neumann and Neumann 2015, 811). The following reflections can, therefore, not provide a full disclosure of my access to and positionality within both insurgency movements. They are rather meant as an insight into the politics of knowledge production within which this research project developed, which should ultimately help to assess the plausibility of my account.

3 Reflections on Field Research

Field research does not only mean travelling to specific geographic sites but is primarily about *entering* and *navigating* a social space (Clifford 1997). Such spaces can be linked with but are not confined to geographic localities. On the contrary, they often travel across borders and are embedded within wider global networks (Marcus 1995). Finding an entry point to the insurgent social network of the Karen insurgency in the Thai-Myanmar borderlands was easier than getting initial access to the Kachin insurgent network at the Chinese-Myanmar border. This is mainly because the KIO operates from within Kachin State, most of which remains largely fenced off to Westerner observers by both the Myanmar and the Chinese government. In contrast, the KNU, operating on both sides of the Thai-Myanmar border, has long been relatively more exposed to Western journalists, researchers, and aid workers, who work in Thailand. This said, the main challenge to researching on both clandestine movements was not necessarily about getting initial access.

More important to reflect upon than the initial access are the ways in which access points and positionality were interconnected and shaped the ways in which I could navigate both social spaces, which ultimately affected my perspective. This is because my entry points came with certain social associations within both movements, which opened some doors rather than others and also shaped the ways in which I and my research were perceived by my interlocutors. John Van Maanen refers to this as "webs of local associations" (Van Maanen and John 1991, 39). Reflecting on his own ethnographic research in urban street police units in the United States, he argues that

> 'neutrality in the field is an illusion. Neutrality is itself a role enactment and the meaning of such a role to people will, most assuredly, not be neutral. Only by entering into the webs of local associations does the field-worker begin to understand the distinctive nature of what lies within and without these webs.' (Van Maanen and John 1991, 39)

Van Maanen, therefore, advises to choose one's associations wisely before entering the field. Timothy Pachirat's participant research in different sections of an industrial slaughterhouse, however, demonstrates that after gaining access to a particular social space, the researcher cannot always freely choose her or his webs of local association. Her or his positioning is often done by others (Pachirat 2009). This was also the case in my experience, at least partly.

To gain initial access to both movements, I first sought contact to the Kachin and Karen diasporas in the UK and Thailand, presenting myself as who I was: a PhD student, interested in and sympathetic to the struggle of their communities in Myanmar. Indeed, it was my background in higher education in general and International Relations in particular, which enabled me to foster a reciprocal relationship to the Karen and Kachin movements during my field research. While researching on the Karen insurgency, I have, for instance, spent four months with the organisation's educational arm, supporting its staff to survey their extensive parallel schooling system in the "liberated areas" of Karen State and their involvement in education provision in the refugee camps on the Thai border. In close cooperation with KNU education workers, I designed a student survey and trained KNU staff in conducting the survey and analying its results with a social science statistics software. During this time, I developed friendly relations with the head of this education arm, an elderly Karen headmaster and rebel leader, and his confidants, many of whom were young and passionate teachers. In addition to their role in education, some of them also held military positions in the insurgency's armed wing. I spent many hours at their work places and living quarters, where conversations enfolded mostly over food, drinks, and beetle nut. My role also enabled me to travel extensively to small towns and refugee camps on the Thai side of the border as well as to villages and camps in eastern Myanmar's Karen State, where I met many other supporters, affiliates, members, and leaders of the Karen insurgency.

While researching on the KIO, I spent three months in government-held and rebel-held areas of Kachin State. During this time, I conducted seminars in Conflict and Peace Studies for a variety of people located within the Kachin insurgent social

network, which I was first asked to do by a Kachin officer who was interested to learn about my field of study. In agreement with the KIO leadership, these sessions encompassed courses extending to several days or even multiple weeks targeting KIO officers and Kachin humanitarian and development workers affiliated with the KIO in government held areas of Kachin State and the town of Laiza, the "capital" of the KIO. These seminars included topics such as international intervention in civil wars, the politics of humanitarianism and international organisations, conflict transformation, peacebuilding, including territorial conflict management and the transformation of war economies. They were seen as interesting and useful by the KIO for several reasons. First, they provided an insight into the Western peacebuilding, development, and aid industry that was entering Myanmar since 2011, including concepts of political violence and armed groups that underpin Western political thought and policy-making. Second, they provided a comparative angle for some of the pressing problems faced by Kachin communities. Particularly popular were for instance discussions of Afghanistan's opium industry and the threats they pose to peace in comparison with the local narcotics industry. Third, many KIO officers and other participants were genuinely interested in learning about Western political concepts, similar to many other people I met across Myanmar, a country where teaching Political Science had long been banned from universities during the years of military dictatorship. During these daily seminars, I gained invaluable insights into my seminar participants' perspective on the Kachin conflict and the KIO and established friendly relations with the participants beyond the classroom. Many of my participants invited me into their homes and circles of friends, they took me on excursions to go fishing and picnicking, and taught me how to sing revolutionary songs in karaoke bars.

While my background in higher education enabled me to gain meaningful access to both movements, my particular entry points also attached me to some webs of local association but not others, affecting my positionality within both movements. While this was unproblematic in some instances, it turned out to be a more important issue to address in others. During my time of research in the KNU, for instance, the movement was highly fragmented with parts of its leadership negotiating with the

government while others positioning themselves against this conciliatory line. Factionalism and mistrust was, thus, pervading the movement when I was with its educational arm. On the one hand, my research benefitted from this situation as it enabled me to observe the internal power struggle that the literature on non-state armed groups speaks about in action. On the other hand, I needed to be careful that my own association with one particular part of the movement kept my communication channels open to other parts as well. Although, the Karen grassroots from different functional parts and geographic regions of the movement were mostly contend to speak to and liaise with me, it was easier to interview some leaders rather than others. Indeed, it became obvious that leaders from the faction that opposed rapprochement with the government were generally more willing to facilitate my research interest than the ones who sought conciliation with the government. In addition, the webs of local associations that I was embedded in through the educational arm of the movement could open the doors to some other parts of the movement better than others. While the education department was not central to the power struggle that was being waged within the movement itself, its leader and staff were still positioned within one of the rival factions.

In order to gain a balanced perspective and to avoid bias and misrepresentation, it was, hence, imperative to a) reflect on my data and b) find ways to triangulate information. Reflection needs to include the acknowledgement that gaining full and equal access to all sides and parts of both clandestine movements was not feasible. After all, my webs of local association reflected the very internal dynamics of contestations that large parts of this thesis are ultimately about. While my embeddedness enabled me to observe the contestation first-hand and to gain an intimate insight into the beliefs held by some of the people involved, it also posed challenges in terms of accuracy and bias as it emphasised some voices and muted others. Similar challenges are common in all ethnographic and non-ethnographic research settings as webs of local association always exist and sharing information is never entirely neutral. These issues were, however, accentuated by a situation that was charged with instability, violence, and fear. This was similar to other situations of

armed conflict, in all of which 'the flow of information - who controls it, who possesses it, and who seeks to share and disseminate it, is highly charged, contextually, specific, and always political' (Kaiser 2013, 114). It was, therefore, necessary to remind myself, per Goodhand, that researchers in conflict settings are 'unlikely to be viewed by local actors as neutral or altruistic' and, therefore, naturally become 'part of this "information economy" and should realize that research necessarily involves political and ethical choices about which voices are heard and whose knowledge counts' (Goodhand 2000, 12).

This does not mean that information in conflict environments is only shared with the intention to distort and distract. While some of my interlocutors - particularly on the elite level – have certainly presented events in particular narratives that serve their own purposes - such as self-legitimisation or mobilisation - many others were motivated to speak to me for different reasons. Most Karen and Kachin insurgents as well as other people affected by the armed conflict seemed willing to talk to me because of an intrinsic eagerness to convey their opinions and experiences to the outside world, which they felt had forgotten about them completely or formed opinions about Myanmar's transition without listening to the account of ethnic minorities in the country's conflict areas.[17] This entailed that some interlocutors had certain expectations of me, often hoping that my research would raise awareness about their plight in the Western world in particular. Karen education workers who provided emotional testimonies and personal opinions on the political developments in various parts of Karen State, for instance, ended a two and half hour long focus group interview with the statement that 'all the information provided is true' but coupled it with the request about how I was planning to 'help the Karen people'[18]. This illustrates that people often went out of their way to facilitate my research expecting that my research would somehow help the situation of their communities, a belief that I needed

[17]This resembles Wood's research experience on supporters of insurgency in El Salvador about which she writes: 'My inquiries met with the enthusiastic collaboration of many residents of contested zones […]. Those interviewed frequently expressed a desire for their story to be told, that some account (or accounting) be made of the local history of the civil war' (Wood 2009, 132).
[18] Group interview with KNU education workers, Mutraw, 24 October 2013.

to dampen on several occasions by stating that I am unfortunately just an academic researcher who hoped to influence the larger discourse on Myanmar but that I could not effectuate immediate change.[19]

While there is no reason to believe that most of my non-elite interlocutors were purposely misrepresenting events, I still needed to interpret the information carefully. This is because testimonies can be skewed unconsciously as well, particularly when they are about past events, by what Wood calls the social processes of memory formation (Wood 2009, 123–24). Personal experiences, e.g. personal losses, societal norms, e.g. grieving cultures, or subsequent political events, e.g. new alliances, all affect which memories are retained and which are forgotten as well as which are accentuated and which are muted (Wood 2009, 123–24). The ethnographic interview setting in situations of political violence additionally shape the narration and representation:

> 'the respondent's personal and family trajectories through the war, by his or her present political loyalties, beliefs concerning the likely consequences of participating in the interview and of expressing particular views, and present personal objectives – all as informed by his or her understanding of the purpose of the interview.' (Wood 2009, 124)

Another important caveat about the information collected in the secretive environment of rebel groups and their internal politics is that it was not always possible to verify information independently and discern "facts" from gossip and rumour. This does, however, not entail that the narratives presented to me were not believed to be true by my interlocutors, which turned rumours into important sources of information in and of themselves for my research about authority and internal contestation. For understanding judgements about leadership legitimacy among the grassroots of

[19] Goodhand also describes that research in conflict zones often comes with the expectation to 'do some good' from both sides: the researcher and the researched. He also clarifies that these expectations need to be kept in proportion to what academic research in such environments can actually achieve (Goodhand 2000, 14).

insurgency, rumours about Lamborghinis being shipped across the Moei River to buy off rebel leaders, for instance, can be as important to the analysis as knowledge about the actual existence of such deals. This is because 'rumors are revealing in and of themselves as to what they disclose about the communities' view of those in power and of the power dynamics affecting daily lives' (Mazurana, Gale, and Jacobsen 2013, 13).

Issues of subjectivity and the accentuation of some voices over others are inevitable by-products of ethnographic research, if not any empirical research. Reflecting on the production of knowledge is, however, no excuse for writing a skewed account of actual events and potential biases, misrepresentations and distortions need to be mitigated. In order to construct a plausible account, triangulation of data became pivotal in my project. The problem for triangulating information about recent developments within clandestine movements is that there is very little independent information available with which to triangulate. Invaluable in this respect were the writings of other academic and non-academic researchers, with some of whom I have also liaised and discussed my findings (Lintner and Lintner 1990; Smith 1999; South 2008; Kramer 2009; Woods 2011; Sadan 2013). Moreover, I also sought to verify information with local journalists, aid workers, and members of civil society outside of the insurgent social networks. As could be expected, some of the information sought-after on the internal politics of insurgency was not to be found in outside accounts of the movements in question.

To mitigate biases and achieve a rounded perspective on the internal politics of both rebel groups, I also opted to triangulate information among differently situated members of the insurgencies. To do so, I sought multiple, alternative points of entry to both insurgent social figurations. The idea was to embed myself within several webs of local associations that allowed me to speak with differently situated people from across different nodes of the insurgent social networks. The geographical multi-sitedness of my research aided me in this regard. When travelling from one region to another, I could often dis-entangle from webs of local associations and embed myself in new ones. People in northern Karen State are, for instance, often more closely

networked with individuals in Thailand's Chiang Mai than with persons in southern Karen State. Hence, I did not only embed myself within the Karen educational arm but also established alternative points of contact through various other Karen organisations in different regions of Thailand and Myanmar. In the case of the KIO, which was geographically and organisationally less fragmented than the KNU, I triangulated information with KIO insiders from affiliated organisations, including local churchmen, community elders, members of Kachin civil society in rebel and government-held areas and the diaspora community in the UK.

It is important to note here that while these various organisations and societal nodes are linked to the wider Kachin and Karen insurgent social figurations, they also constitute a form of public sphere. While many of them would not publicly criticise the rebel leaders and their movements, they critically reflect about their politics and were willing to share their opinions to varying degrees. Finding these multiple access points became easier as research progressed as I gradually built knowledge of and networks to various stakeholders. These networks were often of a personal nature. When travelling to Yangon, for instance, I was welcomed by the brother of a Kachin acquaintance living in the UK. He then helped me to establish further contacts in Myitkyina, the government controlled capital of Kachin State. There I was introduced to KIO members and other contacts that helped me to progress further into the rebel-held areas of Kachin State.

My gradual progression throughout these networks also shaped the way in which I was perceived by my interlocutors many of whom would ask me where I have already been and whom I have already spoken to. Important to mention in this regard is that the KIO and the KNU have historically been allies and were theoretically still allied within the ethnic armed umbrella organisation of United Nationalities Federation Council (UNFC) at the time of field research. Despite the organisations' different trajectories as concerns to ceasefire negotiations with the government, which have brought about tensions and disagreements between some of their leaders, most KNU and KIO members still feel sympathetic towards each other. Therefore, it was generally unproblematic to mention that I was speaking to both groups. Some of my

interlocutors even welcomed my comparative approach explicitly, as expressed by one KNU insider in Chiang Mai, who compared the Karen ceasefire experience to the broken down ceasefire of the KIO. In a formal interview he told me: 'you are doing the right thing to compare the KIA and the KNU, or the Kachin case and the Karen. For us, we are trying to use the Kachin as a precedent, as a kind of example that, eh, we need to learn from, the dynamics, the pattern, the sequence.'[20]

His comment also illustrates that local informants are not only a source of raw data but engage in sophisticated analyses themselves. They are analysing and evaluating the rapidly changing world around them, including Naypyidaw's political transition, incoming foreign investments, changing geopolitics, the dynamics of counterinsurgency, the ongoing negotiations between armed groups and the government, and not least the internal politics in their own movements. My gradual progression from an outsider to a relative insider over time was reflected in the interaction with my interlocutors, many of whom started to inquire about my opinion on their situation. This often led to long discussions, which helped me to fill gaps, and connect dots. To follow Allina-Pisano's metaphor (Allina-Pisano 2009), peeling the onion was in large parts a collaborative process.

4 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated the benefits and challenges of my chosen methodology. The ethnographic bend of my approach was essential to gain an insider perspective into the social process between differently situated insurgents in both insurgency movements and the ways in which this drove their strategies. In order to establish a credible and meaningful account from my ethnographic data, I have, therefore, used this opportunity to reflect on my research, most importantly on the ways in which issues of access and positionality interacted, the advantages and limitations of the data collected, as well as my data triangulation strategies that helped

[20] Interview with Karen activist, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 30 October 2015.

to address potential shortcomings and mitigate against bias and misrepresentation. In doing so, I help my reader in assessing the plausibility of the following account. The above discussion has also demonstrated the potentials of ethnographic approaches for challenging common orthodoxies in the study of conflict and peace in general and the emerging scholarship on non-state armed groups in particular.

CHAPTER IV - CHANGING BORDERLANDS

1 Introduction

After following a muddy track from the sleepy provincial capital of Dawei in south-eastern Myanmar on a small motorbike for almost half a day, I reached the site of a proposed deep sea port. The Thai-Myanmar business conglomerate tasked with developing these white sand beaches into one of the largest industrial estates of the country as a special economic zone (SEZ), including petrochemical facilities, automobile assemblage, a steel mill and light industries, was encountering financial difficulties at the time. Construction was, therefore, temporarily suspended when I arrived at the large clearing on the coast. Although none of the workers were in sight, a young government official was eagerly explaining the high-flying development ambitions for the area to a small group of potential private investors from across the country.

While the sight of a sweaty foreigner in the middle of nowhere seemed to puzzle him a bit, he quickly warmed to the idea of sharing his developmental aspirations with a Western student from a university that after all goes by the name of the London

School of Economics. Overlooking a halfway finished highway that connects the site to Kanchanaburi in Thailand by cutting through dense forests, he praised the strategic location of Myanmar that made it a natural geopolitical partner for regional development. To him, all what seemed necessary to transform the country's far flung and inaccessible borderlands into prosperous hubs of connectivity for the ever increasing cross-border commerce was the construction of physical infrastructure. His narrative fits well with a currently popular understanding of Myanmar that portrays the impoverished country as Southeast Asia's "last frontier economy," among whose most valuable assets is its strategic location, sandwiched as it is between the region's affluent economies of China, India, and Thailand. The historian and grandson of UN General Secretary U Thant, Thant Myint-U, for instance, stresses the transformative powers of these "geoeconomics" in his 2011 book 'Where China meets India: Burma and the New Crossroads of Asia' as follows:

> 'When geography changes, old patterns of contact may disappear and new ones take hold, turning strangers into neighbours, and transforming backwaters into zones of strategic significance.' (Thant Myint-U 2011, 3)

Such grand visions are reminiscent of longstanding historic imaginations of Myanmar's geostrategic relevance, such as in the Second World War, when Myanmar became understood as the "gateway to China", which was manifested in the "Burma Road" built by Allied forces to supply Chinese nationalist troops fighting against the Japanese (Deignan 1943). They also dovetail with current geopolitical strategies and worldviews in the region, including China's "look south" strategy, India's "look east" strategy, and the Thai outlook to its western neighbour, as well as development policies of regional organisations, such as the Asian Development Bank. All of these aim at fostering commerce and regional economic integration through increasing connectivity by way of infrastructure construction through "the Myanmar connection" (Chachavalpongpun 2011, 102; Steinberg and Fan 2012, 280–96; Asian Development Bank 2010).

What frequently goes missing in these developmental and geostrategic visions is that the very areas that are deemed to be developed, Myanmar's borderlands, are far from stable. Indeed, the highway connecting the Dawei industrial project to Thailand crosses through territory where units of the country's oldest rebel army, the Karen insurgency, remain active. At first glance, it seems as if these are indeed only the relics of a bygone era that will soon give way to the overwhelming forces of state consolidation that are driven by powerful regional economic interests. While the heyday of ethnic insurgency in Myanmar has certainly passed, large parts of the country's borderlands have, however, remained home to a dazzling array of non-state armed groups, some of whom maintain relatively sophisticated state-like structures in the pockets of territory under their control. Since 2011, large scale violence between various ethnic armies, including the Kachin insurgency, and the state has, however, again broken out in the country's north, an area where economic development coupled with bilateral ceasefire agreements had previously provided unprecedented stability and an inroad for Myanmar's state to continually expand its presence.

Before analysing and comparing the recent trajectories of the Karen and Kachin insurgencies, this chapter, therefore, provides a historic background to Myanmar's restive borderlands. This serves to understand the roots and development of the country's protracted ethnic conflict and, therefore, offers an appreciation of the social context within which the modalities of authority in both movements will be analysed. It is also intended to contextualise the structural changes in the political, economic, and military environments of both insurgencies in order to assess their impacts on their internal authority relations.

The chapter proceeds as follows. It will first introduce the concept of *Zomia* to explain how Myanmar's borderlands have historically emerged from an extensive space of limited statehood at the periphery of several Asian kingdoms, states and empires (Van Schendel 2002). For understanding the roots and developments of Myanmar's ethnic armed conflicts, taking this long-view on region-wide centre-periphery dynamics is a more helpful starting point than an imagined polity akin to the Westphalian nation-state. Building on this, the chapter will analyse how colonial

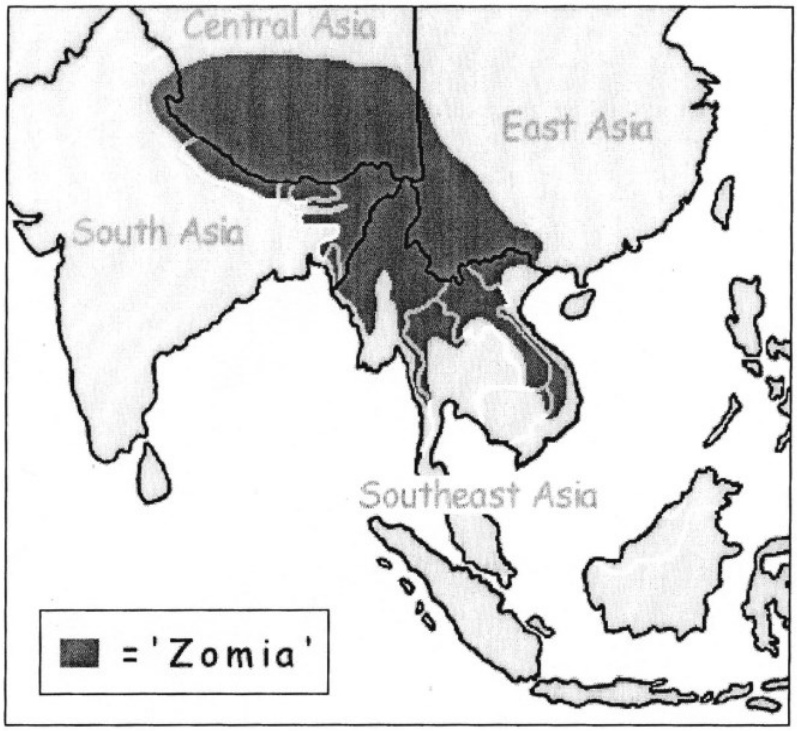
state-building transformed Myanmar's *Zomian* borderlands and their relationship with the state centre by solidifying erstwhile fluid identities into salient ethnic categories, which in turn, gave rise to competing ethno-nationalist projects. In a next step, the chapter will show how militarisation and violence during the Second World War have pitched these projects against each other to the extent that Myanmar descendent into full-fledge civil war at its eve of independence. Focusing on wider regional dynamics during the Cold War, it will then be explained how the social contexts of insurgency emerged within a wider transnational insurgent borderworld. In conclusion, the chapter will discuss geopolitical shifts that have led to increased commercialisation in Myanmar's insurgent borderlands, and enabled the state to consolidate its presence to a still patchy but unprecedented extent. This gave rise to the situation that Myanmar's insurgents face today: overlapping and constantly shifting authority landscapes that encompass semi-independent regional commands of the state military, ethnic insurgent armies, criminal militias, foreign and domestic business networks, and community leaders.

2 Non-State Histories

The far-flung mountains that separate Myanmar from India, China, Laos, and Thailand have long been a particular source of inspiration for students of borderlands in different disciplines (Edmund R. Leach 1960; Van Schendel 2002; Scott 2009). This is not least because they are among the last vestiges of a historically grown extensive zone of limited statehood, straddling the fringes of strong state centres across Asia, a region that has come to be known by the name of *Zomia* (Van Schendel 2002; Scott 2009; Michaud 2010; Formoso 2010). It depicts approximately 2,500,000 square kilometres of remote and inaccessible upland regions surrounding the outliers of the Himalayas, all of which encompass area borderlands that are marginal to the traditional spatial compartments of South, Southeast, Central and Eastern Asia (cf. map 4) By deriving the term from *zomi,* meaning "highlander" in various languages spoken across the upland regions of Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar, the founding

father of the concept, Willem van Schendel, stresses the most important common feature underpinning these areas: their distinctive historical development of highland political orders among the dazzling array of "hill tribes" in these areas, located far from the various lowland centres of power (Van Schendel 2002, 653–54).[21]

[21] Willem van Schendel originally promulgated the concept of *Zomia* as an epistemological critique to the artificial scalar boundaries drawn by conventional Area Studies. He argues that such regionally compartmentalised systems of knowing create a bias in favour for the area centres, creating 'spaces and social practices that are academically marginal and partitioned' (Van Schendel 2002, 665). Area borderlands are, therefore, commonly either neglected in academic knowledge production or studied through the prism of the centre. Yet, their own social, economic and political dynamics are often better understood in relation to other area borderlands than to their respective area centres. Two border towns on the opposite side of the Chinese-Myanmar border, for instance, will often bear more similarities and connections with each other than with Beijing and Bangkok, two centres of their East and Southeast Asian "areas", within which they are nominally studied. For analysing such flows and processes Van Schendel, therefore, proposed to 'break out of the chrysalis of the area dispensation which occurred after World War 2, and to develop new concepts of regional space' (Van Schendel 2002, 665). *Zomia* was the result of this endeavour. Despite the vast heterogeneity among the highland ethnicities inhabiting this vast region, he and other "*Zomians"* make the case that these highland peoples share long-standing cultural, linguistic, and ideational affinities and ties (Van Schendel 2002; Scott 2009). From this perspective, *Zomia* qualifies as a region of its own.



Map 4: Non-state Asian borderlands, i.e. 'Zomia' as defined by Willem Van Schendel (Source: Van Schendel 2002, 653).

This analytical distinction between the political orders of highlanders and lowlanders, or hill tribes and valley peoples, in Asia has a long tradition. The region that now comprises the polity of Myanmar has played a prominent role in forwarding this binary understanding. Colonial administrator of British Burma, Sir James George Scott, for instance, stressed the distinctiveness of Myanmar's lowland plains from its highlands. Describing the latter, he provides an account of the extremely remote gorge of the N'Mai River in the northern mountains, which 'seem to be as wild and unengaging as the inhabitants' (Scott 1900, 4). He describes these inhabitants - the Kachin, as 'essentially a hill people' that are characterised by ethnic fluidity and martial traditions (Scott 1900, 360). He, furthermore, stressed that many of them live in rather anarchic and rebellious orders:

> 'The race includes a great number of tribes, sub-tribes, and clans, divided and sub-divided to an extent which would appear needless refinement […]. This is of course due to the isolating character of their abrupt hills and valleys and still more to their combativeness

> and their maintenance of blood feuds. Though therefore the classifications and sub-classifications seem bewildering and recall the grouping of the Karens […]. It may be noted first of all that among themselves there are two political divisions, firstly, Kamsa Kachins, those who have a *Duwa*, or ruler: and secondly Kumlao Kachins, those who have no Chief and even sometimes only an occasionally summoned village council. Such republican or democratic communities are no longer permitted within the Burma administrative boundary. The word Kumlao originally means rebel […].' (Scott 1900, 369–70)

The basic tenants of this assessment, both in terms of the divided political orders between lowlands and highlands as well as the fluid and anarchic characteristics of highland societies, have since been reiterated by academic scholarship on Myanmar in particular and *Zomia* more generally. Most prominently, one of the founding fathers of modern Political Anthropology, Edmund Leach, noted that the divide between highland and lowland societies, driven by different agricultural practices, were constitutive for the historical development of state orders in the region:

> My terms "Hill People" and "Valley People" are intended to denote the diametrically opposed modes of subsistence associated with these two types of terrain. These two modes of subsistence have been present in the area throughout historical times and any hypothesis concerning historical process must take this into account. (Leach 1960, 51)

The idea behind this is that large-scale paddy rice farming in the more densely populated valleys necessitated higher degrees of organisation and hierarchy, as opposed to small-scale shifting cultivation practices in the sparsely populated mountain ranges that were more conducive to egalitarian forms of social order. In his seminal study of the 'Political Orders of Highland Burma', Leach, therefore, came to

stress the anarchic and egalitarian nature of highland societies, i.e. their opposition to hierarchy and rule:

> 'Since the average population density of the hill tracts in this Zone is everywhere very low, people living in localities where the rice production is only marginal have a choice between remaining independent in a small impoverished community or moving into a dependent situation in some more prosperous area. It is quite evident that in such contexts Kachins often value political independence more highly than economic advantage.' (Leach 1954, 234)

Writing about the Kachin in particular, Leach - who himself had previously served as an officer in the colonial British Burma Army, stressed that Kachin social orders were, therefore, constantly oscillating between egalitarian and hierarchical modes of ordering, *Gumlao* and *Gumsa* respectively. Their opposition to central rule, which created regular resistance to overarching chiefs, naturally pitched them in opposition to the hierarchic orders of lowlands kingdom as well. This romanticised idea that the Kachin, emblematic for other highland societies in the area, preferred and chose 'independence above everything else' (Leach 1954, 234), influenced James Scott's take on *Zomia*. In his 'Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia' Scott seeks to explain why this area has historically given birth to armed insurrection on a scale that the 'enumeration of the hundreds, nay thousands, or rebellions mounted by hill people against encroaching states over the past two millennia defies easy accounting' (Scott 2009, 283).

Rather than viewing upland societies as historically separate from the region's centres of power, he explains their development as inherently shaped by relations to lowland state-development. In Scott's reading, swidden agriculture, dispersed modes of settlement, and decentral political organisation were not so much a sign of backwardness and separateness but reflected conscious state-evasion, practised by people who sought refuge from authoritarian modes of extraction, control, and

slavery, which the political economy of lowland kingdoms were based upon. While concentrating on the area that is nowadays known as Myanmar, he contends that similar contentious relationships existed between the hills and other imperial cores, including the Siam, Khmer, and Han empires. This essentially turned *Zomia* into 'a zone of refuge or "shatter zone"' (Scott 2009, 7). While influential in the study of *Zomia*, Scott's account has not remained without substantial critique, mostly surrounding the historical accuracy and evidence of his claim that *Zomia* constituted itself through active state flight (for a critical engagement with Scott's work see Lieberman 2010; Formoso 2010).

The basic thrust behind the concept of *Zomia* as a region whose fluid political orders have defied the projection of power by nearby lowland states for centuries, nevertheless remains useful for contextualising the modern history of many ethnic conflicts in contemporary Southeast Asia, including the one in Myanmar. Similarly, centre-periphery conflicts between non-state borderlands and state centres are also characteristic of other borderlands in the Global South. These often feature a particular 'history of violence' because colonial powers frequently mapped borders onto predating social, cultural, and political entities (Goodhand 2008, 231). In order to redraw such pre-existing boundaries, colonial states and their postcolonial successors have, therefore, often engaged internal colonisation which turned many borderlands in the Global South into militarised spaces of exception and resistance up until today (Goodhand 2008, 228–32). [22] This said, *Zomia* as described above has shrunk significantly with the territorial expansion of Asian States since the early-20th century. The next section will show that this has, however, not always translated into the linear consolidation of statehood in the region's far-flung borderlands. The attempt to incorporate these areas into colonial and postcolonial state-building projects has rather transformed and added additional layers to this uneasy relationship between centres and peripheries. In Myanmar, this process colonial state-making has solidified once

[22] For a good collection of essays addressing similar violent borderland histories and politics in different marginalised borderlands of the Global South see Korf and Raeymaekers 2013.

fluid social identities and gave rise to competing and militarised ethnonational forces, which as a result lay the foundation of ethnic armed conflict.

3 Emerging Ethnonationalism

Following the third Anglo-Burmese War in 1885, the British Empire conquered the territory that today comprises the polity of Myanmar. Compared to neighbouring India, British Burma though was to remain peripheral to imperial core interests. In fact, the main guiding principle was to rule the newly annexed territories with minimal efforts and costs. This was particularly so in Myanmar's far-flung, inaccessible, and sparsely populated highlands, as they were deemed much less "profitable" than the central plains, whose timber, oil, and rice industries were soon to be booming (Smith 1999, 40–48). The British, hence, divided Myanmar in "Burma Proper" - mainly populated by the country's Burman ethnic majority, and the "Frontier Areas" - mainly populated by its ethnic minorities. While the former was governed directly, the latter was largely left to govern itself. Similar to other such "unprofitable" peripheries of the Empire, as for instance Southern Sudan, the minimal administration of the "Frontier Areas" was practised indirectly through local intermediaries (Smith 1999, 40). For doing so, colonial administrators mapped the diverse and fluid ethnic structures of society in ways that made them intelligible for the bureaucratic colonial state.

This process of administrative standardisation turned multifaceted identities and malleable social orders into fixed categories. The hereditary chieftain system, which the colonial government co-opted in order to maintain order in the "Frontier Areas", for instance, was little more than a colonial invention, similar to what has been described in other colonial contexts (Ranger 1983). Rather than ruling the highlands benevolently through traditional institutions, the colonial government, therefore, displaced fluid social orders that had oftentimes incorporated ample possibilities to oust overarching rulers. Instead, it sanctioned the despotism of local strongmen (Smith 1999, 47). Moreover, the colonial state's reordering of society planted the seeds of ethnic conflict, again in a similar way to other colonial settings

(Mamdani 1996). While ethnic self-identification was traditionally fluid and oftentimes of secondary importance to other axes of identity – as for instance one's place in the tributary hierarchy (Gravers 1999, 19), the bureaucratic classification schemes employed by the colonial state apparatus created and entrenched ethnic identities and differences along oftentimes ill-conceived linguistic boundaries in a previously non-existent way (South 2008, 3–12). Robert Taylor explains that this has led to a situation where 'the question of how to cope with demands of politicized ethnicity' has become the driving force of politics in contemporary Myanmar (Taylor 1982, 7):

> 'This ascriptive conceptual mode for intellectually mapping the structure of Burma has been so widely accepted by Burma's political elite that they, like the Europeans who created it, have tended to accept the broad ethnic categories as embodying living social formations with political prerogatives. Thus, the politically neutral Burmese word lu-my*ō*, literally meaning "kind of man" came to be translated as the emotive terms for race or nation. In this century ethnic categories have taken on a life of their own, shaping the political thought and behaviour of central and regional elites. It is now impossible to avoid the use of broad ethnic labels even while attempting to demystify them.' (Taylor 1982, 8)

The road from ethnic differentiation to ethnic armed conflict was paved with militarisation and violence, which led to the emergence of various ethno-nationalisms in Myanmar's borderlands that soon stood in direct competition with growing Burman nationalism. Preferential recruitment into the colonial armed service was the most important factor driving this development. One aspect why ethnic minority soldiers were preferred by colonial army recruiters was because some minorities, such as the Karen, already aided the British conquest of Myanmar as guides and porters (Smith 1999, 44). In addition, Karen, Kachin, and Chin seemed particularly suitable to service the colonial apparatus because many of them converted to Christianity and received

early and modern education as a result of Western missionaries operating in Myanmar's borderlands since the early 19th century (Taylor 1982, 12). Racial stereotypes that depicted some hill people as for instance the Kachin as a particularly martial race, moreover, furthered colonial interest in recruiting them into the imperial war machine (Sadan 2013, 236).

The motivations to volunteer for the imperial service among Myanmar's minority communities were manifold. Most highland minorities, as for instance the Kachin, had never been integrated into the precolonial state of Myanmar, therefore, felt no allegiances to a Myanmar national project. Others even had historic grievances against Burman domination and rule (Taylor 1987, 155). Many Karen, for instance, seemed to have genuinely viewed the British as liberators from decades of oppression under Burmese feudal rule, which followed a series of violent wars between Burmese, Mon, and Siamese court under which the Karen suffered heavily as well (Smith 1999, 44). Large parts of Karen, Kachin, and China communities, moreover, had already converted to Christianity and as a result felt more inclined to accept Western rule (Taylor 1987, 155). Moreover, complex socio-economic considerations have played into the decision to join the imperial military service. Enlistment, for instance, became one of the few available career options for young men from remote villages that led to status and economic benefits (Sadan 2013, 198–253).

Recruits from ethnic minorities, therefore, came to outnumber their Burman comrades by a wide margin. At the eve of the Second World War, the British Burma Army counted 1,448 Karen, 886 Chin, and 881 Kachin soldiers as compared to only 472 Burman soldiers (Smith 1999, 44). This proved particularly convenient for quelling majority dissent and growing Burman nationalism, arguably the main purpose of the imperial armed forces in Myanmar. The deployment of ethnic minority units to violently supress Burman uprisings, as for instance, the Saya San rebellion of 1930/1, unsurprisingly led to resentment among Myanmar's ethnic majority against minority collaboration with imperial rule (Taylor 2006). This had the effect that nationalism in "Burma Proper" did not only develop in opposition to British colonial rule but also in opposition to its ethnic minorities. As noted by Walton, this emerging nationalism in

lowland Myanmar, therefore, was ethnically exclusive, 'a Burman nationalism that gradually began to equate elements of Burman culture and Burman history with a presumably broader "Burmese" heritage' (Walton 2013, 8).

The deepest societal rifts, however, emerged when the geopolitics of the Second World War further pitched Myanmar's population groups against each other. Many ethnic minorities stayed loyal to the British and their Allies and proved instrumental for repulsing the Japanese forces that overran Myanmar in 1943.[23] In an attempt to rid themselves from colonial rule, Burman elites - surrounding nationalist leader Maj.-Gen. Aung San, initially sided with the Japanese Imperial Army. After training in Japan they established the Burma Independence Army (BIA) and aided the Japanese to drive the British out of Myanmar. During this campaign, independent units of the BIA and adjunct local militias committed reprisal attacks on ethnic minority communities, as for instance, several massacres in Karen and Kachin villages (Callahan 2003, 75; Sadan 2013, 257). These violent interactions drove mutual antagonism and fear between Myanmar's ethnic majority and its minorities to an unprecedented level. The director of the colonial Frontier Areas Administration, H. N. C. Stevenson, expressed his worries about this situation in a letter towards the end of the Second World War, writing that the war had 'increased a hundredfold the ancients animosities between the hills and the plains' (Smith 1999).

While the Second World War, hence, further impaired inter-community relations, it also served as a catalyst for the emergence of ethno-nationalist agendas and organisations in the country's borderlands. This minority ethno-nationalism in Myanmar has sometimes been viewed as a merely reactive and somewhat less authentic phenomenon compared to the emerging Burman nationalism in "Burma Proper" (Taylor 2006). Writing about the emerging Kachin nationalism, Mandy Sadan, however, argues persuasively that it should rather be viewed as part of 'the region-wide anti-colonial zeitgeist' (Sadan 2013, 261).[24] Similarly, David Rampton

[23] The US Department 101 of the American Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner to the CIA, for instance, recruited almost 11,000 Kachin soldiers for their war effort in Myanmar (Sadan 2013, 262-263).
[24] For a good background on wider anticolonial struggle in Southeast Asia cf. (Christie 2001).

argues that these various competing nationalisms need to be understood as genuine motivating forces that are deeply engrained into the identities of Myanmar's conflict actors rather than a second order phenomenon to the conflict (Rampton 2016). Speaking with Smith, the Second World War was indeed not only 'the major formative political experience' for 'a whole generation of Burmese of all classes and races, and political belief' (Smith 1999, 60). Ethnic minority regions, in particular, witnessed an 'extraordinary political awakening' during these years (Smith 1999, 63). Central for creating the ethno-nationalist projects in both, Kachin and Karen States were two kinds of local elites: veterans of the imperial service and Christian missionaries.

Imperial service often enabled young men from peripheral ethnic communities to travel across British Burma and across the globe. By way of this exposure they came to appreciate the wider workings of power within which they were serving and also exposed them to new political ideas, including the anti-colonialism and nationalism emerging across the region. Kachin soldiers, for instance trained and fought alongside British Gurkha forces as part of the Mesopotamian campaign of the First World War and often returned as highly distinguished war veterans. They were also sent as aids to crush the Singapore mutiny of 1915, in which Indian colonial troops rose against their British superior. The understanding of and experiences in this global political reordering, in turn sharpened their own local identity as "Kachin" among returning veterans. This fuelled their desire to create a space for their own community within the broader political landscape (Sadan 2013, 230–37). Analogously, global exposure shaped the ideas of Karen elites serving in the imperial service. The Karen district medical officer Dr. San C. Po, for instance, initially visited London for study purposes in the 1920s. There he published his pamphlet 'Burma and the Karens' that compared Myanmar's political future to the situation in Great Britain, within which Karen State would be an autonomous entity comparable to Wales (Smith 1999, 51).

In addition to this, the role of Christian missionaries was also instrumental in creating ethnic differences in Myanmar as well as encouraging and shaping ethno-nationalist projects in its borderlands, particularly among Karen and Kachin communities. Despite the preferential recruitment into the imperial service of ethnic

minorities, their communities in "Frontier Burma" suffered from chronic neglect by the colonial state. The provision of public services, such as education, was instead often carried out by Christian missionaries. In contrast to their limited success in proselytising the Buddhist peoples of the central plains - including the Karen living in the Irrawaddy Delta, the animist Kachin, Karen, and Chin communities living in the hills were much more inclined to accept the Gospel and converted in large numbers (South 2008, 12). In order to translate the Bible into local languages, Western missionaries such as Dr Jonathan Wade in Karen State or Olaf Hanson in Kachin State developed the first orthographies for Sgaw Karen and Jingphaw respectively. They also provided Western-style education by establishing an extensive network of mission schools as well as tertiary education facilities, including the Kachin Theological College in Myitkyina and the Baptist College that was also known under its nickname "Karen College" in Yangon. These colleges trained the local elites and quickly turned into the hotbed for their emerging ethno-nationalist projects (Sadan 2013, 381–82; Smith 1999, 44–45).

On a larger level, Christian primary and secondary schooling was crucial for overriding parochial self-affiliations with local communities and tribes, instead fostering the development of transcending social identity categories such as "Kachin" and "Karen" (Keyes 2003, 212). Besides providing the infrastructure for minority ethno-nationalisms to emerge, Christianity, thus, became an intrinsic part of these projects. This was because it served as the ideological vehicle for the imagination of national communities and, indeed, modernity by providing new meanings and symbols that created cohesion in otherwise loosely connected tribal social orders. In the case of the Chin, Lian Hmung Sakhong wrote, therefore, that 'Christianity itself became a new creative force of national identity' (Sakhong 2003, xvi). With regards to the Karen, some analysts have even gone as far as to state that 'Christianity can be said to have created "Karen" identity in Burma' (Keyes 2004, 212). While there are also non-Christian people self-identifying with the label Karen in Myanmar, Christianity has certainly shaped the Karen ethnonational project, in a similar way than it has in Kachin areas. Writing about the latter, Sadan also notes that 'Christianity

became an important social ideology in the Kachin ethno-nationalist movement' (Sadan 2013, 35).

In addition to welding ethnonationalist agendas through exacerbating inter-communal differences and fostering intra-communal cohesion, Christian missionaries also actively encouraged local minority leaders in their nationalist quest. This was most pronounced in the case of the Karen, which is why subsequent governments of independent Myanmar commonly accused Christian missionaries for having sown the seeds of ethnic hatred and conflict. One American missionary, for instance, reportedly cheered the role of Karen levies in the violent suppression of a Burman-led uprising in 1886 as follows:

> 'I never saw the Karen so anxious for a *fight.* This is just welding the Karens into a nation, not an aggregate of clans. The heathen Karens to a man are brigading themselves under the Christians. The whole thing is doing good for the Karen. This will put virility into our Christianity…. From a loose aggregation of clans we shall weld them into a nation yet.' (Smith 1999, 45)

The next section will elaborate how the failure to address ethnonational demands in this charged situation led to the outbreak of ethnic armed conflict that has plagued the country since gaining independence.

4 Descent into Civil War

Instilled with nationalistic ideas, alienated by preceding communal violence, and afraid of Burman reprisal for their collaboration with colonial rulers, many ethnic minority leaders demanded substantial provisions of regional autonomy or even outright secession from Myanmar at the time when the British were preparing to release the polity into independence after the Second World War. This was most pronounced among Christian Sgaw Karen elites, who were already well organised in the Karen National Association (KNA) - the only sizeable ethnic minority party in

British Burma and the forerunner of the KNU. Relying on premature promises made by local British officers fighting with Karen units behind Japanese lines during the Second World War, Karen leaders believed that they were already granted the right to self-determination in principle and that, therefore, there was little need to negotiate with Burman independence leaders (Smith 1999, 72–76; Walton 2008, 896).

As a matter of fact, ethnic minorities had prominent advocates among the British colonial administration, above all the director of the Frontier Areas Administration Stevenson, who expressed his severe concerns about the explosive situation at several occasions. In regards to the Karen, he pointed to the looming danger of secessionist civil war a year before independence stating that 'when we go, if go we do, the war for the Karen State will start' (Smith 1999, 75). Cementing his belief in this unpromising scenario was not only that after fighting a four-year long guerrilla war alongside British forces, the Karen 'have the guts, the skill, and the allies (the northern tribes) necessary to wrest them from the Burmese by force' (Smith 1999, 75). He also pointed out that the 'only thing that restrains them is the belief that we will repay their loyalty by giving them a homeland' (Smith 1999, 75).

While Karen leaders were, indeed, already preparing for secession as early as 1945 (Walton 2008, 900), other ethnic minorities, including the Kachin, Shan and Chin, were more inclined to negotiate their potential whereabouts in the future state with Burman elites. The latter were led by Maj.-Gen. Aung San and the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), which grew out of a united front of anti-colonial political actors resisting both Japanese and British occupation. While ethnic minority positions were much less homogenous than commonly portrayed,[25] their general posture was to negotiate considerable autonomy provisions within a wider federal union (Smith 1999, 75–77). At a first conference at Panglong in 1946, Kachin elders expressed this as follows:

> 'For the hill peoples the safeguarding of their hereditary rights, customs and religions are the most important factors. When the

[25] For a good discussion of this see Walton 2008, 899–900.

> Burmese leaders are ready to see this is done and can prove that they genuinely regard the hill peoples as real brothers equal in every respect to themselves shall we be ready to consider the question of our entry into close relations with Burma as a free dominion.' (Smith 1999, 75)

These demands for autonomy were again supported by Stevenson's Frontier Areas Administration, as for instance in his proposal for the creation of the 'United Frontier Union' - encompassing Kachin, Chin, Shan, Karen, and Karenni territories, at the same conference (Walton 2008, 895). Despite a general dislike of this proposal among large swathes of the AFPFL, nationalist leader Aung San was open to negotiate autonomy provisions and went to great length to convince Myanmar's ethnic minorities to stay within a future federal polity. While touring Kachin, Chin, and Shan States, the charismatic leader relentlessly lobbied for a joint national future, stressing the common struggle for the independence of a country that would be based on equal rights for all its citizens. Shortly before the historic second conference at Panglong in 1947, he confirmed this vision as follows: 'As for the people of the Frontier Areas, they must decide their own future. If they wish to come in with us we will welcome them on equal terms' (Walton 2008, 896). At the gathering, the present Kachin, China, and Shan delegates indeed managed to come to an amicable conclusion with Aung San in what has since been known as the Panglong Agreement.

Signed on 12 February 1947, the agreement states that the parties agree to form a new state together 'believing that freedom will be more speedily achieved by the Shans, the Kachins and the Chins by their immediate co-operation with the Interim Burmese Government', under certain provisions, including that the '[c]itizens of the Frontier Areas shall enjoy right and privileges which are regarded as fundamental in democratic countries' as well as the potential future creation of autonomous ethnic states.[26] This was delegated to the Constituent Assembly tasked with drafting the soon-

[26] The full text of the Panglong Agreement can be accessed here http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/~mmpeac5/images/pdf/PangLong-Agreement.pdf

to-be-state's constitution. Taylor notes that the signing of the Panglong Agreement 'meant that ethnicity became part of the independence process itself' (Taylor 1987, 286).

Important to mention, however, is that the agreement was only signed by three ethnic minorities that later came to fight the Myanmar government. The Karen stayed away, the Mon and the Arakan were counted as belonging to "Burma Proper", and smaller minorities, including the Naga and Wa, were excluded on the premises of their 'primitive nature' (Walton 2008, 903). More tragically even, the agreement itself never had any significant bearing for the constitution adopted on 24 September 1947. This was because Aung San was assassinated by Burman paramilitaries five months after the Panglong Agreement had been negotiated. The constitution, therefore, did not incorporate any federal provisions and was 'lopsided and riddled with inconsistencies' (Smith 1999, 79). 'The most glaring of all the 1947 Constitution's many failings,' Smith notes 'was its muddled attempt to resolve the Karen question' (Smith 1999, 80). This was also because the KNA and various other Karen organisations had by then re-organised into the much more militant Karen National Union (KNU). The new organisation boycotted the Constitutional Assembly altogether after the latter failed to address its demands, which included the promise to create a separate Karen State and to maintain exclusively Karen units in Myanmar's armed forces (Smith 1999, 83–84). The KNU also started to train its first armed wing, which is still in existence today, when it formed the movement's local defence village militia, the Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO). Notwithstanding these signs of ethnic conflict looming on the horizon, the British were eager to leave their colonial territories and released Myanmar into independence on 4 January 1948.

At the time of independence, the new government was already confronting various insurgencies, not least the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). This multiplicity of opposed, armed actors emerged in the wake of fragmentation of the AFPFL following Aung San's assassination (Smith 1999, 79: 102-110). As Mary Callahan noted, this situation was essentially the legacy of raising a united front against Japanese occupation among disparate political actors that 'tied together loosely the

networks of armed guerillas and soldiers fighting *against* the same enemy but fighting *for* very different visions of the future' (Callahan 2003, 85).[27] Myanmar's army, the *Tatmadaw,* itself was established by drawing on the disparate remainders of these anti-colonial forces and the British Burma Army. Its initial preoccupation was to fight the CPB, despite the fact that Karen units of the KNDO took control over the cities of Thaton and Moulmein in Eastern Myanmar already. However, the anti-communist counterinsurgency campaign soon heightened the tensions within the multi-ethnic armed forces.

This was because Burman officers grew increasingly distrustful of the loyalties among the many Karen soldiers and officers within the *Tatmadaw.* They, therefore, raised Burman levy units, the so-called *Sitwundan.* Rather than only engaging the CCP, these forces increasingly mounted attacks against Karen communities. As their attacks escalated into full-fledged massacres by the end of 1948, the *Tatmadaw's* Karen Rifles deserted and joined the ranks of the KNDO instead (Callahan 2003, 127–32). By the beginning of 1949, the Karen rebellion was in full-swing. While the Kachin insurgency was only established in 1961, some Kachin soldiers already took up arms against the government at the time after the First Kachin Rifles refused to retake the city of Toungoo from Karen rebels and joined their insurrection instead (Callahan 2003, 134).[28] Trained and experienced in years-long guerrilla war against the Japanese, the Karen rebellion quickly took control of most parts of eastern Myanmar. Various other insurgent groups, most importantly the CPB, also conquered large swathes of territory, including most major cities. One year after independence, the young country was already torn apart by full-fledged civil war (Callahan 2003, 134–35). The next part of this chapter will trace the development of the Karen and Kachin insurgent social orders

[27] For more background on the communist insurgency in Myanmar see Callahan 2003, 69–85; Smith 1999, 102–10.

[28] Anderson et al. make the argument that the Kachin conflict has already constituted itself at the time of independence because the Second World War pitched Kachin and Burman units against each other to the extent that it qualified as an internal ethnic conflict as well. In their reading, Kachin forces have voluntarily refrained 'from further fighting on the basis of promises made to them' at Panglong (Anderson and Sadan 2016, 34). The time between Myanmar's independence and the outbreak of the Kachin insurgency in 1961 can therefore be understood as the "first Kachin ceasefire" which broke down after political progress did not materialise.

within this escalating civil war as well as a wider, violent and transnational borderworld that emerged across the region during the Cold War.

5 Insurgent Borderworld

After independence large swathes of Myanmar's borderlands came under the firm control of various non-state armed groups. The Karen and Kachin insurgencies were the two most powerful ethnic insurgencies that thrived in this context. Both established relatively sophisticated quasi-states in their extensive "liberated territories" known as *Kawthoolei* and *Kachinland* respectively.

In Kachin State of the 1980s, for instance, Myanmar government operations were limited to the major towns and railway corridors in the south. At the Chinese-Myanmar border, the Myanmar state was almost non-existent as the *Tatmadaw* only controlled sixty of the 2,100 kilometres long boundary at the time (Smith 1999, 360). The KIO, in contrast controlled almost half of Kachin State, hence, presiding over 40,000 square kilometres and more than 30,000 people. Besides fielding more than 8,000 regular troops, which were organised into four brigades and aided by adjunct village defence militias, the insurgent movement operated an extensive governance apparatus. They provided education with 119 primary schools, ten middle schools, and five high schools. Moreover, they delivered health care with various medic stations and two hospitals fully equipped with X-ray facilities and operation theatres (Dean 2012, 121). While the KIO-controlled territory has since diminished to about one fifth, mainly along the Chinese border around the rebel-held towns of Laiza and Maijayang and in the lesser-populated parts of northern Kachin State, the KIO has maintained an extensive non-state bureaucracy, including the provision of public services up until today (South 2008, 190–92).

Analogously, the KNU has once controlled most parts of Myanmar's much denser populated eastern borderlands towards Thailand, spanning from Shan State in the north to the Tenasserim Region in the south. In their insurgent state of *Kawthoolei,* they also established state-like structures, including schooling and health facilities as

well as several departments, resembling government ministries (South 2011, 14). While authoritative numbers are hard to come by, the insurgency's operating territory has likely encompassed a population of more than two million people during its peak (South 2008, 55). Since the early 1990s, the KNU has lost most of this territory to counterinsurgency campaigns. However, it still fields up to 5,000 regular troops and maintains a partly-functioning administrative skeleton (South 2008, 55). In order to understand the extent and durability of insurgent social orders in these areas - where insurgency has become 'a way of life' (Smith 2007, 15), it is important to account for the often overlooked international dimensions of Myanmar's civil war. These have, indeed, long been inseparable from the wider 'regional conflict complexes', a situation that involves multiple neighbouring countries experiencing inter- and/or intra-state conflicts whose dynamics sustain each other (Wallensteen and Sollenberg 1998, 623, cf. also Smith 2007, 17–20). This transnational conflict system emerged in the wake of decolonisation and was further perpetuated by the geopolitics of the Cold War as well as lucrative border economies.

Similar to the situation in Myanmar, British and French colonial rule has fortified ethnic identification and differences across South and Southeast Asia. Many postcolonial nation-builders heightened these tensions by drawing upon ethnically exclusive narratives of the national community, equating national heritage with the culture and history of the ethnic majority. This is best reflected in region-wide policies that are aimed at assimilating indigenous minority groups - most of which live on the fringes of the state, into the larger nation-body by way of social and economic development programmes that 'ostensibly seek to make these minorities conform to the norms of the ruling majority in the country' (Duncan 2008, 1). Such tensions have also translated into armed ethnic conflict elsewhere, as for instance is the case in India's north-eastern border provinces. Each of these so-called "Seven Sisters" is home to ethnonational insurrections that are fighting for autonomy or secession from India. Some of these are inherently intertwined with the ones in neighbouring Myanmar. Various Naga movements, for example, operate cross-border from within Myanmar where they also claim territory (Egreteau 2006, 91–147).

Viewing Myanmar's borderlands from this perspective reveals that the social spaces of the Karen and Kachin insurgencies are not only constituted by their peripheral location to the state but simultaneously by their central location within *Zomia,* whose postcolonial remnants have transformed into a transnational insurgent landscape, which Sadan calls a 'borderworld […], beset by violence from every vantage point' (Sadan 2013, 347). The relations between these manifold insurgency movements are multi-faceted, involving various degrees of conflict and cooperation. On the one hand, historical tensions and rivalries, for instance, have long fuelled resentments between different minority communities, as for instance between the Wa, Sha, and Kachin (Scott 2009, 150–53). On the other hand, pragmatic working relations and strategic alliances have fostered cooperation between these various movements, ignoring country boundaries and professed ideological differences. Despite formally siding with opposing sides of the Cold War, many rebel groups have at times cooperated widely. Some even fought alongside each other, adopting so-called "united front" tactics, as for instance the CPB/KNU People's Peace Forces of the late 1950s (Smith 1999, 183–86). Insurgents, moreover, travelled frequently in this borderworld between Myanmar, China, India, Thailand, and Laos. This served to trade intelligence and weapons as well as to train each other's cadres (Smith 1999, 329–31). In the 1980s, for instance, it was common for Kachin officers to use their ties to the Assam and Naga insurgency in order to enter India's higher education system before returning in the service of the Kachin rebellion (Sadan 2013, 1–3). The far-flung and rugged borderlands provided the ideal geography for the "flourishing" of this rebellious, transnational borderworld (Smith 2007, 16–17).

The unfolding politics of the Cold War, have, moreover contributed to this regional conflict complex in several aspects. Maoist China was pivotal for supporting the communist forces of the CPB, which operated mostly from border areas in Shan State. Moreover, Maoism as a successful organising method of guerrilla warfare rather than as a political ideology has inspired and shaped many insurgencies in Myanmar and beyond (Smith 1999, 93; Mampilly 2011, 11–13). While the KNU and the KIO nominally opposed communism as an ideology and identified with the capitalist camp

instead, they have both relied heavily on Maoist methods and tactics for organising guerrilla warfare and building their insurgent social orders. This is reflected in their emphasis on organising the peasantry by embedding the insurgent organisation within local communities, the decision-making structure of their revolutionary organisation, and the institutional make-up of their insurgent quasi-states (Smith 1999, 150–51; Smith 2007, 16).

Both insurgencies and their quasi-state structures were built upon a mirrored structure of their organisation's political and military wings, which reaches all the way to the village level. Local and central leaders are represented in central committees which are headed by executive committees, comparable to the politburo system of communist parties. Both committees are constituted by periodic meetings reminiscent of regular party congresses. The peasantry is organised through the provision of services as well as their participation in mass-level organisations, including women's organisations and youth wings. Late long-term leader of the Karen insurgency, David Taw, for instance, described how the KNU decision-making structure resembles a one-party state as follows:

> 'The KNU's decision-making structure is that of a one-party state, topped by a periodic party congress. Between congresses the party is led by a Central Committee and an Executive Committee. The congress is 'selected' to represent the seven administrative districts making up the state of Kawthoolei, each headed by a District Chairman. Until the military defeat of 1994-95, the KNU also formed a Kawthoolei government, with the post of Prime Minister held by the KNU General Secretary. The KNU's army, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), is a parallel command structure of seven military brigades each headed by a Brigade Commander and subject, in theory at least, to the KNU's Defence Minister.' (Taw 2005, 41)

Despite their Maoist organisational characteristics, the Kachin and Karen insurgencies have both sided with the capitalist camp of the Cold War. While this has brought them

into conflict with the CPB at times, it did not prevent them from forging strategic alliances with the CPB during most years of the latter's existence.[29] The staunchly anti-communist rhetoric of both insurgencies under comparison also brought them into the orbit of Thailand, whose own fear of communist insurrection had drawn the country deep into the Cold War on the side of the United States. Thailand, therefore, became one of the most important supporters of the KNU. In return, the Karen rebellion functioned as a proxy force against communists as well as against the rapidly expanding "narco-armies", most importantly the forces of legendary drug kingpin Chang Shi-Fu alias Khun Sa, dubbed the "Opium King of the Golden Triangle".[30] Thai support encompassed material goods, including arms, as well as providing sanctuary on the Thai side of the border. While these relations have significantly cooled off since the end of the Cold War, the KNU maintains close relationships with elements from the Thai security establishment up until today. Many KNU leaders, indeed, have come to live in Thailand since the fall of their Manerplaw headquarters in the mid-1990s. Thailand has, moreover, also long hosted the liaison offices of various Myanmar insurgency groups, including the KIO, which has provided a platform to coordinate activities (Sadan 2013, 358; Smith 1999, 293–300; South 2011, 39–40).

In addition to outright support from neighbouring states, the existence of extensive illicit border economies has sustained Myanmar's conflict by enabling insurgents to fund their military campaigns and quasi-states. The smuggling of drugs, timber, and gemstones has become a particular lucrative trade in that regards (Jones 2014a, 791). For many years, however, the most important source of insurgent revenues was Myanmar's self-isolationist economic policy itself. During Ne Win's "Burmese Way to Socialism", Myanmar suffered under an immense shortage of

[29] For a good account on the malleable relations between the CPB and ethnic insurgency forces, which oscillated between strategic alliances and outright armed conflict see Lintner 2015, 171–203.
[30] Ironically, Khun Sa and the narcotics trade of the "Golden Triangle" were bi-products of the Cold War. They emerged from a failed CIA intervention aimed at supporting the eventual reinvasion of Communist China by Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) forces that have previously fled to northern Myanmar's Shan State after Mao's victory in China's civil war. In order to make these units self-sufficient, the CIA is said to have directly and indirectly promoted the growth and trade of opium in northern Myanmar (McCoy 1972, 166–67; Chouvy 2009, 23-36, 65).

everyday goods - from medicine to petrol and textiles. While these needed to be smuggled into the country, raw products, such as teak, gem stones, rice, cattle and opium were used to pay for these imports in return. The annual volume of illicit border trade in 1988 was estimated at US$3 billion, equivalent to 40 percent of the country's then gross national product (Smith 1999, 25). By taxing 5-10 percent levies on smuggle operators, this black-market trade used to be the 'armed opposition's lifeblood' (Smith 1999, 99) for many years. According to KNU officials, the Karen insurgency earned up to 500 million Myanmar Kyat per year during the mid-1980s - at the time £50 million at the official exchange rate - by controlling the most strategic smuggling gates at the Thai border (Smith 1999, 283).

While this figure might well be overstated, there is no doubt that these border economies empowered insurgent movements, including the KNU and the KIO, to the extent that '[d]efeating the insurgencies was impossible while this trade flourished' (Jones 2014a, 791). The next section explains how the changing regional geopolitics after the end of the Cold War has enabled Myanmar's state to reverse these economic flows and as a result consolidate its presence over large parts of its restive borderlands for the first time.

6 From Battlefield to Marketplace

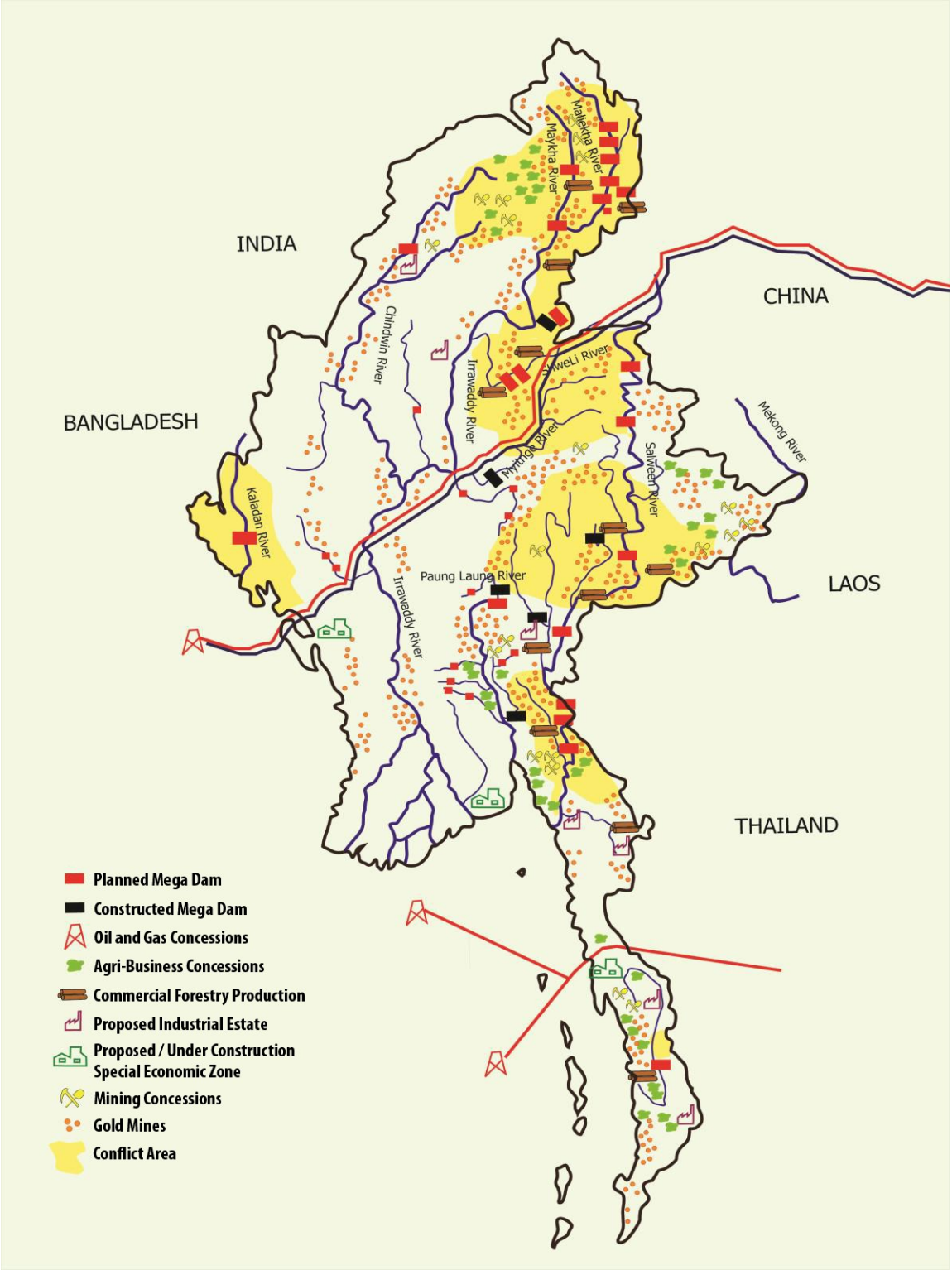
With the end of the Cold War the power relations between Myanmar's state and the various insurgent armies started to shift in favour for the former that has since managed to territorialise its restive borderlands to an unprecedented extent. The crucial driving force behind this was a wider rearrangement of regional geopolitics, most importantly due to changing interests in China and Thailand. Instead of Cold War-era policies that provided covert support to various non-state armies, Beijing and Bangkok became increasingly interested in profiting from their neighbour's auspicious economic potentials to develop their own land-locked and marginalised peripheries.[31]

[31] While relation between Myanmar, China and Thailand generally improved since the end of the Cold War, it also needs to be noted that tensions still exist between Myanmar and its immediate

Myanmar's vast but largely untapped natural riches, comparatively large but undeveloped export market, and strategic location for the construction of trade and energy infrastructure, presented ideal opportunities for this. Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan's reflected this new thinking in his famous 1988 pledge to direct Indochina from 'battlefield to marketplace' (Jones 2014a, 791).

Since then, Myanmar has, indeed, seen a rapid influx of foreign direct investment (FDI), most of which originated from China and to a smaller degree from Thailand. The bulk of official incoming FDI - recorded as US$38 billion between 1988 and 2012 – went into large infrastructure projects, such as gas and oil pipelines and hydropower stations (Buchanan, Kramer, and Woods 2013, 28). These projects created export rents for the state, empowering it vis-à-vis the borderlands. This was also mirrored in the steep decline of border smuggling, whose estimated ratio to official trade fell from 85 to 50 per cent between 1990 and 2005 (Jones 2014a, 794). This notwithstanding, most incoming investments accumulated in the borderlands. Two thirds of official incoming FDI between 1988 and 2012 was invested in the country's borderlands, 25 per cent of it in Kachin State alone (Buchanan, Kramer, and Woods 2013, 28). On the one hand, this is because many infrastructure projects, particularly hydro-electrical dams and pipelines were constructed partly or entirely in the country's border provinces. On the other hand, much investment has gone into the extraction of natural resources, including gems stones, precious metals, and timber, which are mostly located in the border regions.

neighbours in particular with regards to issues of regional and border security. While China's continued interference in the Chinese-Myanmar borderlands and support of some ethnic armed groups including the Kokang and Wa movements frustrates Naypyidaw, Myanmar's generals have also long sought to improve their relations with the US to the dislike of China (Haacke 2006, 2010).



Map 5: Investments and conflict areas in Myanmar (Source: Burma News International 2013b, 4).

With regards to these natural resources, official trade and investment figures only capture the tip of the iceberg. Most money in this sector flows through illicit channels. Actual investment and trade volumes in these border provinces are much higher. This is best exemplified with the jade trade. Global Witness - an organisation specialising in the study of war economies, concluded in a 2015 report that 'Myanmar's jade industry may well be the biggest natural resource heist in modern history' (Global Witness 2015, 95). Exact figures of Myanmar's jade industry are impossible to compile for various reasons. This is because almost all jade mines are located in Kachin State's conflict areas and the mining and trading is controlled by an in-transparent network of actors. According to Global Witness, the main profiteers include the families of former dictator Senior General Than Shwe, former General Secretary of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and retired army general Maung Maung Thein, former regional army commander in Kachin State and Minister for Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development under the U Thein Sein administration Ohn Myint. They also include drug-lords with links to non-state armed groups such as the ethnic Kokang Lo Hsing-Han, and Wei Hsueh Kang, a narcotics kingpin and long-time supporter of the UWSA who has a US$2 bounty from the US government on his head. The latter are invested through crony business corporations, such as the Asia World and Ever Winner groups (Global Witness 2015, 10–12). Jade has also long been the main funding source of the KIO (Lintner and Lintner 1990, 164). While some of its leaders also amassed personal riches by collaborating in the ever expanding Jade business during the ceasefire period, Kachin rebel leaders and businessmen were increasingly squeezed out of the most lucrative parts of the industry (cf. Chapter 6). Indeed, the *Tatmadaw* has taken over control of the main mining sites in Hpakant since the 1994 ceasefire, which left the KIO to tax smuggling operator at the Chinese border (Global Witness 2015, 87–91; cf. also Chapter 6).

The high amount of cross-border smuggling further complicates the estimation of the jade sector's actual value. While high-quality jade is officially only allowed to be sold at the annual Myanmar Gems Emporium in Naypyidaw, industry insiders report that between 50-80% of jade stones are smuggled directly across the border to

China - the key market for jade gem stones, to avoid taxation and tariffs in both countries (Global Witness 2015, 36). Third, there are no standard rules to determine the worth of jade per kilogram. Prices at the 2014 Emporium ranged from about US$2 per kilogram for low-quality jade to over US$2.89 million per kilogram for the highest valued stones, which are known as Imperial Jade (Global Witness 2015, 98). Unsurprisingly, available figures of the jade sector diverge extremely. The official 2014 Emporium reported the total value of jade sales as US$ 3.5 billion. In contrast, Chinese official import data from the same year recorded an overall import value of precious and semi-precious stones from Myanmar - the vast majority of which was jade, at US$ 12.3 billion. Figuring in the rampant smuggling activities, Global Witness estimates that the sector's actual value in 2014 was at least US$ 31 billion, which is equivalent to almost half the country's total GDP (Global Witness 2015, 98–106).

The ability of state elites to reverse much of these economic flows from rebel leaders to themselves as well as to consolidate their presence in Myanmar's borderlands to an unprecedented extent was because the newly incoming economic interests were accompanied by a shift in counterinsurgency strategy. This happened at a time when Myanmar's regime struggled to prevent a united front between ethnic armed groups and militarised democracy activists, following the crackdown of the nationwide pro-democracy protests in 1988. Under the auspices of the newly formed State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the *Tatmadaw*, therefore, reversed its previous strategy of total war. The head of Military Intelligence, then-Major General Khin Nyunt, instead sought to conclude individual ceasefires with ethnic armed groups. This policy proved successful to appease the remainders of the CPB, which emerged as various ethnic splinter armies, following the communist insurgency's disintegration after its ethnic rank-and-file mutinied against a predominantly Burman leadership in 1989. By 2004 almost all non-state armed groups in Myanmar - including the KIO but excluding the KNU, entered into bilateral ceasefires with the state and renounced separatism (Jones 2014a, 795).[32]

[32] In 2004, the KNU was literally the only sizeable rebel group left fighting the Myanmar government. Smaller groups included the Karenni National Progressive Party, the militarised pro-

While these armistices did not lead to substantial political dialogue, they allowed insurgents to retain their arms and govern pockets of territory (Smith 1999, 421–41). Moreover, these pacts encouraged the involvement of non-state armed groups in what has since been referred to as the country's 'ceasefire capitalism': the collaborative exploitation of the area's natural riches by army generals, rebel leaders and Chinese businessmen (Woods 2011). Indeed, political economy scholars have attributed the success of Myanmar's ceasefire politics in the 1990s foremost to the economic benefits that they yielded to elites on all sides, which provided rebel leaders with a 'lucrative "exit option"' from armed conflict (Snyder 2006). According to this argument, Myanmar's ceasefires challenge the common "resource curse" narrative (Sherman 2003, 246). Instead of fuelling violent conflict over lootable resources, Jake Sherman argues that the country's ceasefire politics seemed to demonstrate that 'economic self-interest can also move combatants to cease hostilities' (Sherman 2003, 225). Long-term observer Smith also hints at the importance of these economic dimensions for understanding the de-escalation of conflict at the Chinese border since the early 1990s. He notes that by turning rebel leaders into businessmen, the Tatmadaw, indeed, 'was to have far more success in seizing the local initiative from armed opposition groups than it had ever had in 26 years of fighting' (Smith 1999, 441).

It would of course be wrong to reduce the motivation of rebel groups to sign ceasefire agreements to economic interests only. Lee Jones points out that their motives were of rather mixed nature and mostly included battle fatigue, humanitarian considerations, a desire for socio-economic development, and the genuine belief in political negotiations over the root causes of conflict (Jones 2014a, 792).[33] This

democracy activists that trained in ethnic territories post-1988 and formed a movement called known as the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), and the geographically isolated National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang at the Indian border, which despite operating on Myanmar territory has mostly fought against the Indian military and other non-state armed groups in Northeast-India's Nagaland Province (Kramer 2009).

[33] It also needs be noted that the material ceasefire benefits, with regards to autonomy provisions and business opportunities, were generally more favourable for rebel groups that signed in the early 1990s and less favourable for the ones who signed ceasefire in the mid and late 1990s (Oo, Min, and Washington 2007).

notwithstanding, he points out that 'the co-optation of borderland elites and the centralization of politico-economic power through "ceasefire capitalism"' was central for state elites to gain the upper hand in Myanmar's civil war since the early 1990s. Co-optation in this context can be understood as the state's attempt to negotiate control in a situation of fragmented state authority, i.e. the indirect projection of power, as was promulgated in scholarship on the "mediated state" and public authority (Menkhaus 2007). In contrast to concepts such as domination or imposition, co-optation stresses a degree of interdependency and constant renegotiation between state and non-state actors, despite power balances skewed in whichever direction. In this sense, co-optation has long been a well-established practice of government in contexts of fragmented statehood around the world, including the borderlands of Myanmar, from the pre-colonial era until now (Scott 2009).[34]

In the wake of increased business interests, a securitised development agenda further enabled state territorialisation in previously off-limits territories since the 1990s. The main vehicle for this was the "Program for the Progress of the Border Areas and National Races Development", which was first introduced in 1989, later upgraded to the Ministry of Border Affairs, and is locally known as *Na Ta La.* Its stated objective is to develop ethnic minority regions, mainly through the expansion of physical infrastructure and the state bureaucracy itself. Directly responsible for carrying out this agenda have since been the frontline commanders of the *Tatmadaw* (Lambrecht 2008). Indeed, bureaucratic reform established the military's regional commands as the de-facto governments in border provinces. Regional *Tatmadaw* units have since engaged in local governance, including policing and economic development. The army's overall troop size has also increased dramatically from 200,000 troops in 1988 to 320,000 troops in 1995 (Smith 1999, 426–27). Most of these units were stationed in the country's border areas and were outfitted with US$2 billion worth of modern Chinese weaponry (Jones 2014a, 792). According to local sources, the *Tatmadaw*

[34] It has been shown that the selective co-optation of different warring factions is common practice in peace negotiations around the world (Driscoll 2012). Accommodating the economic interests of rebel groups in this process is also not unique to Myanmar (Le Billon and Nicholls 2007; Wennmann 2009).

presence in Kachin State increased from 26 battalions at the time it signed a ceasefire with the KIO in 1994 to over 100 battalions by the time the accord broke down in 2011 (Burma News International 2013b, 3). Significant military built-up has also been reported in Kayin State since the signing of the KNU ceasefire in 2012 (Karen Human Rights Group 2014, 106–18).

Despite the *Tatmadaw*'s substantial expansion in terms of troop size and mission, the central government has provided little funds to support regional commands. Between 1989 and 1998, the reported expenditure for borderland development was a modest US$79 million, disregarding corruption.[35] Moreover, regional commands have been tasked to become self-sufficient – or to "live off the land" - by generating the bulk of their revenues themselves since the late 1990s (Meehan 2015, 269). To finance its operations the *Tatmadaw* has, therefore, partly relied on extortion. Reports indicate that a large portion of development funding during the 1990s and early 2000s has been extorted from local communities as so-called "people's contributions" in form of labour, cash, and material (Lambrecht 2008, 156–58). For feeding their troops and maintaining operational viability, local army units have also often relied on levying informal taxes on the commodities and assets of local communities - including land, crops, livestock, and small-scale businesses (Meehan 2015, 2270).

In addition, the *Tatmadaw* transformed itself into Myanmar's most powerful economic actor, controlling access to the country's most lucrative assets by setting up its own company conglomerates - the Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (UMEHL) in 1990 and the Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC) in 1997. While the MEC is mostly invested in heavy industry and commodities, UMEHL controls most of the lucrative gem stone industry in Myanmar's borderlands, including the jade mines in Kachin State and the ruby mines in Shan State, which makes it a major business stakeholder in Myanmar's borderlands (Myoe 2009, 175–87; Jones 2014b,

[35] Resource commitments for borderland development have, however, since been significantly increased. By 2003 the government spent US$506 on borderland development (Jones 2014a, 793).

149). These military holdings tie private entrepreneurs to officials who are in charge for granting trade licenses, joint venture deals and other business concessions. This has since squeezed armed groups out of the most lucrative businesses, as for instance the KIO from large-scale jade mining in the Hpakant area (Jones 2014a, 794). It also provided regional commanders of the *Tatmadaw* with significant sources of wealth and power, upon which could they establish personal fiefdoms (Jones 2014b, 149).[36]

While the changing regional geopolitics and domestic counterinsurgency strategies have worked hand in hand in driving state territorialisation in Myanmar's borderlands, state consolidation remains far from complete. The empirical analysis in the following chapters will indeed dispute the oft underlying idea that economic development necessarily leads to a teleological progression whose outcome will be peace and a consolidated state in Myanmar's borderlands. What emerged instead are patchy and often overlapping landscapes of political authority that involve the state, semi-autonomous army commands, armed groups, business actors and informal institutions to varying degrees. Callahan proposed a good way of conceptualising this fluid and multifaceted web of power. Drawing on Mark Duffield's concept of an 'emerging political complex' (Duffield 2001, 156), she writes:

> 'Governance in Burma today, then, takes place within […] a set of flexible and adaptive networks that link state and other political authorities to domestic and foreign business concerns (some legal, others illegal), traditional indigenous leaders, religious authorities, overseas refugee and diaspora communities, political party leaders, and NGOs. […] They exist in a competitive, yet often complicit and

[36] SLORC's successor, the previous State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) government, attempted to curtail this emergence of independent powerbases with appointing union level positions to regional commanders (Jones 2014a, 794). Moreover, recent administrative reforms under U Thein Sein transferred local administrative powers back to the chief ministers of the states and regions (International Crisis Group 2012, 10). The extent to which this has been effective, however, remains unclear. The escalation of conflicts with various EAOs in Myanmar's north since 2011 and the *Tatmadaw's* repeated violation of President U Thein Sein's executive orders to cease fire have sparked worries about an ongoing fragmentation of military authority in Myanmar's borderlands and competing agendas between the *Tatmadaw* and the semi-civilian government (International Crisis Group 2014, 11–12; Transnational Institute 2015, 9).

> complementary, milieu that varies across geographical space and time.' (Callahan 2007, 4–5)

Rather than viewing the socio-temporal space of the Kachin and Karen insurgencies as part of an entity akin to the Westphalian nation-state, Duffield's notion of an emerging political complex remains useful to understand the fluid political and social orders in the country's borderlands up until today. This is despite the remarkable political transition that large parts of central Myanmar have witnessed since 2011 and the new bilateral ceasefires that the transitionary administration has negotiated with various other ethnic armed groups, including the Chin National Front (CNF), the New Mon State Party (NMSP), and the KNU. At first glance, this new wave of ceasefires appears to be the result of the country's wider political changes. This notwithstanding, the lenses of "ceasefire capitalism" and "emerging political complexes" remain insightful. With regards to the new wave of ceasefires, Veteran Myanmar correspondent Lintner, in fact, notes that up until today 'rebel commanders who have entered into ceasefire agreements with the government have invariably got, in return, profitable business opportunities—once they have stopped fighting' (Lintner, May 05, 2015).

A report on the 'Economics of Peace and Conflict' by the Myanmar Peace Monitor platform of the local Burma News International network, also makes the argument that economic interests are among the main drivers behind the new ceasefire wave under U Thein Sein's semi-civilian government. It encapsulated this in the following cartoon, which depicts former president U Thein Sein as a teacher-like figure lecturing how the "Burma Government Peace Process Plan" to the leaders of various ceasefire groups. These include Sai Leun aka Lin Mingxian, in the centre right of the cartoon. The ethnic Shan leads the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), a splinter group of the former CPB that was the first non-state armed group to sign a ceasefire in 1989. He rules over Mong La, a small town at the Chinese border that has become one of the most well-known symbols of "ceasefire capitalism", featuring an elaborate entertainment industry, including prostitution, gambling, drugs, as well as functioning as a hub for the global trade of endangered animals. Together with his

"teacher" U Thein Sein, the "model student" Sai Leun explains to the other "students" how the "Burma Government Peace Process Plan" works by dint of a black board. The chart on it describes that ceasefires lead to a nexus of economic projects, including resource exploitation and infrastructure development. While this generates money for the ceasefire leaders, political negotiations fade away and legal safeguards such as land rights are denied. The other "students" are depicted as eagerly listening. They comprise of leaders of the new ceasefire movements, i.e. rebel groups that signed a ceasefire with U Thein Sein's government in 2012. On the far left is Pu Zing Cung of the CNF and to Sai Leun's right stands Nai Htaw Mon of the NMSP. To Sai Leun's left is General Mutu Say Poe, the Karen leader who led the KNU into the movement's historic ceasefire of 2012.

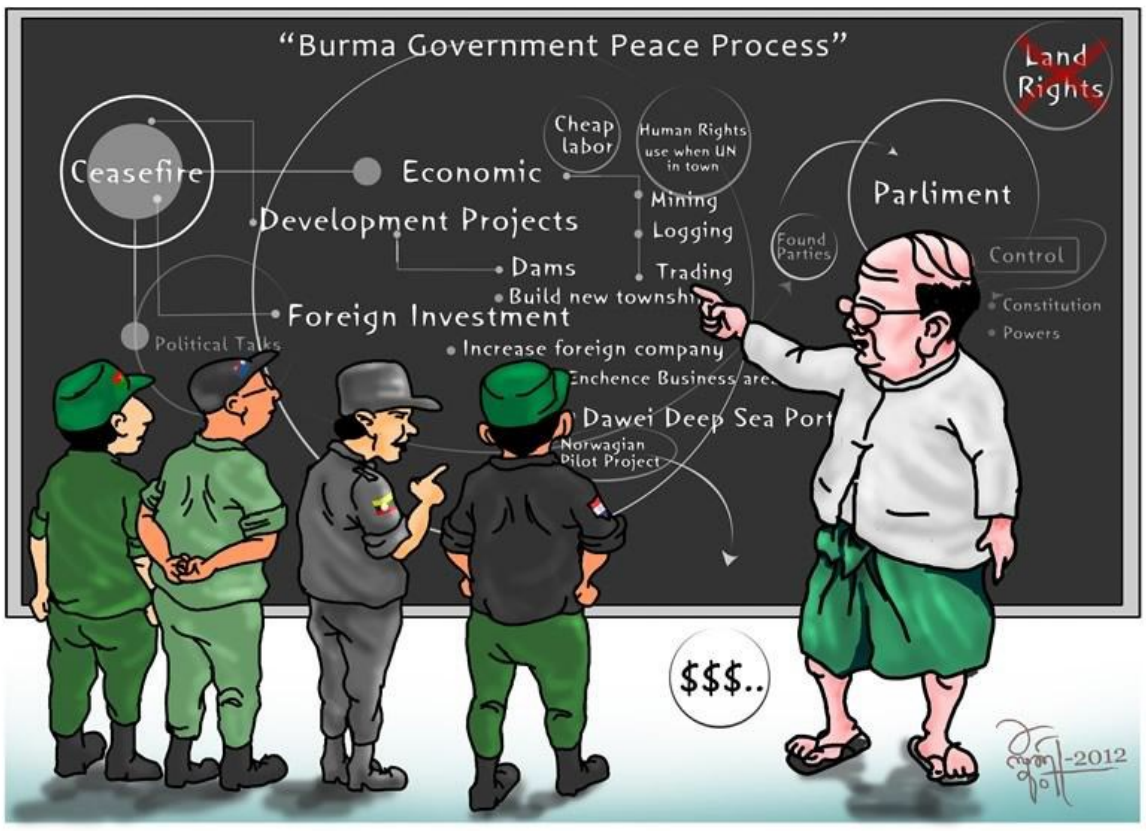


Figure 1: Cartoon about the new wave of ceasefires in 2012 (Source: Burma News International 2013b, 26).

To be sure, caricatures exaggerate and Myanmar's overall political landscape has certainly changed significantly since 2012. The point here is that economic benefits have long played a pivotal role in forging and sustaining the country's extensive ceasefire politics and continue to do so. Chapters five and six will highlight that leadership co-optation by economic means facilitated the Kachin ceasefire in 1994 and also seemed to play a role in the 2012 Karen ceasefire. While a focus on material interests, hence, helps to explain the formation and relative durability of Myanmar's ceasefires, it can neither explain why the Kachin movement remobilised despite mutual business collaboration with the government and why its ceasefire ultimately broke down, nor can it account for the increased contestation that surfaced within the Karen movement in the wake of its ceasefire. While Sherman deploys a political economy framework himself to assess Myanmar's ceasefires of the 1990s, he also hints at the shortcomings of an overly economistic understanding, warning about the potential pitfalls of 'a rough and ready peace through economic incentives':

> '[A]greements reached on the basis of economic interests do not lead to sustainable peace because they fail to address the root causes of conflict. As Burma also shows, such cease-fire deals encourage corruption and criminality, exacerbating existing grievances while also creating secondary rivalries, both of which may contribute to new cycles of violence.' (Sherman 2003, 246–47)

The breakdown of the Kachin ceasefire and subsequent reescalation of conflict with other ceasefire groups along large swathes of the Myanmar-Chinese border were to prove him right indeed. To explain why this was the case in Kachin State and how similar developments can be witnessed beneath the Karen ceasefire, the next chapters will focus on the social process of insurgency. By doing so, it will be shown how the politico-economic changes in Myanmar's borderlands have impacted on dynamics of authority and contestation within the Kachin and Karen insurgencies. These, have, in turn, developed a momentum of their own in driving the strategies of both movements.

7 Conclusion

Back at the deep sea port construction site in south-eastern Myanmar's Dawei, one is inclined to brush over the existence of continued ethnic armed conflict, including units of the Karen insurgency's 4th Brigade that operate not far from there. From here, Myanmar indeed just seems like a latecomer to the region-wide trend of state consolidation and is now repelling the last unruly corners of a bygone *Zomian* borderworld (cf. Formoso 2010). This chapter has shown that geopolitical forces have indeed already tilted the power balance between Myanmar's insurgent borderlands and its state centre in favour for the latter. Increased economic interaction between Myanmar and its neighbours, in particular, has provided an inroad for the state to consolidate its presence in once off-limits territories by way of turning rebels into business partners. Even though state territorialisation and consolidation in the country's restive borderlands are far from complete, observers generally expect this trend to continue. In Thant Myint-U's reading, ethnic insurgencies seem like an already waning issue of the past that will eventually cower to the new geopolitical realities that have started to transform Myanmar into a hub of connectivity on the 'new crossroads of Asia' (Thant Myint-U 2011). South also sees little alternatives for Myanmar's ethnic armed groups than that they conform to these new politico-economic trends and reinvent themselves as partners for development and business. With regards to the Karen insurgency he writes:

> 'For the Karen and other ethnic nationalities in Burma, much will depend on how community leaders position themselves in relation to such economic developments. Will they be able to demonstrate to the international community, and in particular the private corporate sector, that they are part of the solution to developing a modern, equitable and sustainable economy, or will they remain stuck in the politics of opposition or defiance which has characterized much of the past half-century in Burma?' (South 2011, 22)

In light of these powerful structural forces, even Scott, who was often criticised for romanticising the agency and resistance of highland minorities, has written his obituary to *Zomia*. With reference to increased state territorialisation and economic development, he notes that Southeast Asia witnesses 'the world's last great enclosure' (Scott 2009, 282).

While this thesis' subsequent analysis appreciates these powerful structural forces, it contests that economic development drives a linear progression of state consolidation that simply overrides long-grown ethno-nationalisms and insurgent identities, an assumption which seems to underlie popular narratives today. This is not least because, anno 2016, some of these areas are again embroiled in heavy fighting, unseen since the heyday of Myanmar's insurgencies in the 1980s. In fact, some of the same rebel movements that were ostensibly bought off with "ceasefire capitalism", including the KIO, have again taken up arms again and resumed calls for greater ethnic minority rights and federalist constitutional amendments. During a conference at the London School of Economics in 2015, Smith called this renewed escalation of conflict the most pressing and puzzling question that Myanmar currently faces. Indeed, Smith followed this up by asking why some ethnonational armed movements have been able to remobilize on such a scale after years of ceasefire and, in some cases, eroding capacities. The following comparative analysis of the KNU and the KIO addresses exactly these issues by revealing the dynamism beneath the surface of both insurgencies, asking how the shifting politico-economic context in Myanmar's borderlands have impacted on the social authority relations within both movements and how these have, in turn, driven their wider collective trajectories.

CHAPTER V – KNU: FROM WAR TO CEASEFIRE

1 Introduction

On 12 January 2012, Myanmar's oldest ethnic armed groups, the KNU signed a ceasefire agreement with Naypyidaw. The truce received much international praise, not least because the KNU was the only sizeable rebel movement which continued to battle Myanmar's government during the 1990s and 2000s, when most other ethnic armed groups entered bilateral ceasefire agreements. In light of Myanmar's wider political transition, commentators also noted that compared to previous such ceasefires, the Karen agreement could potentially lead to lasting peace in one of the world's longest ongoing civil wars as '[h]opefully this historic cease-fire, with the imprimatur of a new regime, will be different' (Beech, December 01, 2012). At times of remarkable democratisation, the Karen ceasefire seemed like a direct result of political reforms. While applauding the release of political prisoners in an official statement that heralded the restoration of full diplomatic ties between the United States and Myanmar, U.S. President Barack Obama mentioned the 'important ceasefire agreement' as yet another mile stone on the country's windy road to democracy and peace (Obama 13/01/2012; Myers and Mydans, January 13, 2012). At the signing ceremony, long-term Karen leader Saw David Htaw also referred to the altered political landscape as the main game changer and stated that the agreement would garner broad popular support among Karen people:

> 'According to the changing situation everywhere, peace talks are unavoidable now; this is something we have to pass through without fail. The people have experienced the horrors of war a long time. I'm sure they'll be very glad to hear this news. I hope they'll be able to fully enjoy the sweet taste of peace this time.' (Saw David Htaw cited as in Mydans, December 02, 2012)

Since 2012 observers could follow the rapidly 'growing friendship between Naypyidaw and the KNU' (Yan, June 06, 2014). The erstwhile most uncompromising ethnic armed group, indeed, became one of the country's main peace advocates. This culminated in October 2015 when it signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) as the only sizeable rebel group. At the summit, KNU General Secretary Padoh Kwe Htoo Win declared in a statement, which he jointly read with the Government's chief peace negotiator U Aung Min, that the 'NCA is a historical agreement to achieve lasting and sustainable peace in Myanmar.'[37] In contrast, representatives of the wider Karen society seemed less supportive than KNU leaders have hoped for. Days before the NCA was signed, 41 Karen civil society organisations (CSOs) condemned it as deeply flawed. They also denounced the KNU leaders who advocated the agreement as a small clique of corrupted and intransparent elites. According to them, these leaders represented neither the Karen revolution nor the local communities. In a joint letter they wrote:

> 'We, Karen CSO's [sic], are alarmed by the fact that:
>
> 1. Currently, the small group of KNU leaders has demonstrated a chronic lack of transparency and accountability to the Karen people and to their own organization by making the undemocratic and non-inclusive decision to rush to sign the NCA […].
> 2. Currently this group of KNU leaders is in Yangon with the expectation of signing NCA [sic.]. They do this in violation of

[37] http://www.knuhq.org/pdoh-kwe-htoo-win-and-minister-u-aung-min-reading-aloud-together/

KNU and KNLA official procedures and without properly informing or receiving the majority's consent from members of the KNU's Central Executive Committee or the Central Standing Committee.

3. These senior KNU leaders refuse to heed the concerns and voices of other Karen leaders, of civil society organizations, of community groups and the local people whom they claim to represent.'(41 Karen Civil Society Organisations 04/10/2015)

The following chapter will ask why the KNU signed a ceasefire in 2012 and why its leaders advocated for peace afterwards, although the movement had long been the least compromising ethnic armed group in Myanmar. The chapter will also investigate the tensions this has sparked within the group, asking why Karen civil society leaders vocally oppose ceasefire and peace negotiations, although local communities have long borne the brunt of civil war. By zooming into the movement's intramural relations, it will challenge the common assumption that the ceasefire can be inferred from the country's wider political reform process. As will be argued, the agreement rather resulted from the internal contestation between rival rebel factions and has given rise to an increased struggle over authority within the movement.

To build this argument the chapter starts with explaining how changing military and geopolitical pressures in the Thai-Myanmar borderlands have had differential impacts on the movement's scattered brigade territories. The second section will trace these diverging impacts through the lens of reciprocal exchange relations between rebel units and local communities to understand how they have fragmented the authority landscape of the KNU. In a third step, the chapter reveals how group fragmentation has translated into factional rivalries, giving rise to the conciliatory incumbent rebel leadership and a growing internal resistance, which is opposed to the ceasefire proceedings. Building on this, the last section will use insights from Recognition Theory and Social Identity Theory to explain why the so-called "hard-liners" within the group enjoy more support across many of the movement's grassroots, not only from the faction's northern stronghold but also from across the

wider social network of the Karen insurgency, as observed above. It will be argued that this is primarily due to the interactions of the new incumbent leaders with the movement's grassroots, which are perceived as disrespectful rather than dignifying by the latter. In effect, this poses a significant social identity threat to non-elite members and supporters of the Karen insurgency to the extent that they have become increasingly alienated from the movement. Leaders of the internal opposition, by comparison, convey recognition to the Karen movement's grassroots in their interactions with them. Identifying with these "hard-liners", therefore, enables the grassroots to maintain a positive social identity from continued affiliation to the insurgency. This in turn generates significant authority for the group's internal opposition.

2 Shifting Power Relations

On the way to the KNLA 5th Brigade stronghold in northern Karen State a KNU official was speeding a Japanese utility truck along the Thai side of the Myanmar border. The relatively well and recently built roads in Thailand are often the quickest route to go from one rebel-held area in Karen State to the other, particularly to regions where roads and cars cease to exist and dense forests take over completely. While chewing beetle nut, the KNU officer cursed at the sight of regular checkpoints manned with Thai border police, who were searching for narcotics smuggled from the neighbouring Golden Triangle and were also extorting bribes from undocumented Myanmar migrants and refugees. He explained: 'You know, we [the KNU] don't really have a problem with them, I mean they know us well and we had good relations for a long time. In fact, the Thai relied on us to control this border for a long time. *We* used to be in control here, *we* used to be *the* police. All that,' he waved his arm across the lush green that surrounded us, 'is Karen land: *Kawthoolei.* I still remember when we could roam around here freely.'[38]

[38] Conversation with KNU officer, Thai-Myanmar border, 19 October 2013.

His words describe how much the power and territorial control of the once mighty rebel rulers have deteriorated since the early 1990s. As elucidated in chapter four, the KNU is Myanmar's oldest ethnic insurgency movement, which has formerly posed a viable threat to the country's rulers with more than 10,000 well-trained rebel soldiers. During its heyday the movement ruled over vast parts of eastern Myanmar, spanning from Shan State in the north all the way to the Tenasserim Region in the south, which it administered as a quasi-state, known as *Kawthoolei* (cf. map 6). While the KNU still operates across the whole of Karen State with approximately 5,000 soldiers today,[39] chapter four has shown how the power relations between Myanmar's insurgent borderlands and the state have shifted in favour of the latter since the Cold War due to changing geopolitics and counterinsurgency strategies. In the case of the KNU, the insurgents were particularly hard hit from two parallel developments:

(1) Militarily, the KNU lost ground to the *Tatmadaw's* counterinsurgency and rival non-state armed groups that emerged from increased fragmentation of the main movement.

(2) Geopolitically, the changing bilateral relations between Thailand and Myanmar brought powerful, outside economic interests from Thailand and Myanmar to the former periphery.

These pressures have not only shifted the power balance in favour for Myanmar's government, but have also shifted power relations within the movement and led to the significant fragmentation of the KNU. This has in turn driven power struggles between internal rival factions, competing against the state as well as against each other. As Chapter Two argued per Cunningham et al., this 'dual contest' is crucial for understanding a rebel movement's collective behaviour (Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour 2012, 69). Before analysing the role legitimate authority relations play in these contestations - particularly why many Karen grassroots feel alienated by the conciliatory incumbent leadership, while supporting the "hard-line" opposition within the group – the chapter will, therefore, first proceed to explain the origins of group

[39] Cf. http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/component/content/article/57-stakeholders/161-knu

fragmentation and assess how fragmentation translated into contestation between rival factions, holding diverging ideas about the ceasefire negotiations with Myanmar's government.

Before doing so, it needs to be understood that fragmentation is no new phenomenon in the Karen insurgency, which has always been a heterogonous movement, comprised of members from different political, religious geographic, economic and educational backgrounds.[40] In addition to diverse identities, the heterogeneous nature of the KNU stems from its organisational make-up, which is divided in seven geographic districts[41], each of which is under control of a KNLA Brigade: Thaton District (Brigade 1), Toungoo District (Brigade 2), Nyaunglebin District (Brigade 3), Mergui-Tavoy District (Brigade 4), Papun District (Brigade 5), Duplaya District (Brigade 6), and Pa'an District (Brigade 7)(South 2008, 55).

[40] In fact, the ethnic category Karen is inherently fluid and incorporates different linguistic and cultural heritages. Most important are the distinctions between Sgaw Karen and Pwo Karen as well as hill Karen in the rugged forests of eastern Myanmar and so-called "Delta Karen" from central Myanmar. The former speak three different Karen languages, the latter often only speak Myanmar. As explicated in chapter four, instrumental for generating a relatively coherent sense of identity, cohesive organisational structures, and unifying the "liberated territories" of Kawthoolei over the past decades was the colonial state, missionaries, and the emerging insurgent political culture under an ethno-national agenda that was forwarded by Karen elites (Smith 1999, 390–91).
[41] These do not correspond with official administrative demarcations. Officially the government calls Karen State Kayin State and divides it up into seven townships: Pa'an, Kawkareik, Kya-In, Seik-Gyi, Myawaddy, Papun, Thandaung, and Hlaingbwe (South 2008, 55).

Map 6: KNU Administrative Districts and Brigades, (Source: South 2011, 9).

Power imbalances between the movement's brigades and their administered areas have also existed since the movement's inception, particularly in terms of troop strength and prosperity. While finance flows and mobilisation processes within the KNU are centralised on paper, each brigade recruits and finances itself in practice. For this reason Brigades 6 and 7 emerged as the strongest forces of the movement during the heydays of the Karen revolution in the 1970s and 1980s when they controlled the main smuggling routes to Thailand. In comparison, the much smaller Brigades 1 and 2 in Nyaunglebin and Toungoo have long been the struggling to make ends meet (Smith 1999, 395).

For understanding the movement's current fragmented situation, including the origins of its rival factions that hold different opinions in regards to the 2012 ceasefire, it is crucial to explain how the military and geopolitical changes at the Thai-Myanmar border throughout the 1990s and 2000s have impacted differently on this multifaceted power landscape within the KNU. Most importantly was the shifting internal power balance from central to northern units of the KNLA, particularly to *Mutraw's* Brigade 5. Various KNU members, elite and grassroots, have explained to me that this is where the different stances regarding the ceasefire have emerged from. One leader from the central KNU district of Duplaya - controlled by the movement's struggling Brigade 6 - has put it this way: 'The Burman [the government] activity is different from places to places. And so we have to make different moves as well. So we also have different opinions in different brigades.'[42] This section will, therefore, trace how changing military and geopolitical dynamics have impacted differently on the movement's different brigade territories.

2.1 Battlefield: From *Kawthoolei* to Lost Ground

The KNU had been hard-pressed by *Tatmadaw* offensives since the 1980s. Yet, it has suffered particularly since the breakdown of ceasefire negotiations in 1994, at a time when most other ethnic rebel groups signed truces with the government. According to the official version of long-term KNU leader David Taw, this was despite the recognition of a 'younger, middle-level section of the KNU leadership […] that the burden of the conflict had become unbearable for the Karen population in the conflict area' (Taw 2005, 41). Many KNU members wished to conclude a ceasefire along similar lines of the KIO and other northern groups, which granted territorial pockets as well as the rights to do business and economic development to armed groups while excluding political dialogues on the underlying causes of conflict, such as federal reforms. However, following several rounds of negotiation this was rejected by the KNU leadership owing to pressure from its allied National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), a formerly powerful exiled NLD grouping that

[42] Interview with KNU leader from Duplaya, Law Khee Lar, 4 December 2013.

emerged after the violent crackdown of the 1988 pro-democracy demonstrations. It asked the KNU not to sign a ceasefire in order to not undermine its own 'efforts at the UN to win decisive international action against the SLORC' (Taw 2005, 42). Similar alliance pressures from the Myanmar democratic diaspora movement again prevented the conclusion of a ceasefire in 1997 and in 2005 (South 2011, 16–17).

The decision to continue fighting came with heavy costs for the KNU as the *Tatmadaw* made large and rapid advances in eastern Myanmar. This was mainly because the ceasefires with most northern armed groups freed the *Tatmadaw* from fighting on multiple fronts allowing it to concentrat its new firepower on eastern Myanmar, particularly its "arch-enemy" the KNU. Myanmar's generals also invested heavily in the modernisation and enlargement of their armed forces by way of large-scale recruiting and the purchase and production of modern weaponry with help from China. By the mid-1990 Myanmar's armed forces expanded to over 400,000 soldiers from only 180,000 soldiers in 1988 (Callahan 2007, 36). In addition, erupting internal tensions within the Karen movement played into the hand of the state's counterinsurgency campaigns.

Just after the break-down of the 1994 ceasefire negotiations, the KNU experienced a mutiny from which it never fully recovered. The upheaval was, however, not instigated by the pro-ceasefire faction but by Buddhist elements of the KNU. Years of grievances among Buddhist Karen soldiers against the Christian-dominated KNU leadership peaked when it disallowed the followers of the influential Buddhist Karen monk U Thuzana to build Pagodas in the vicinity of the KNU

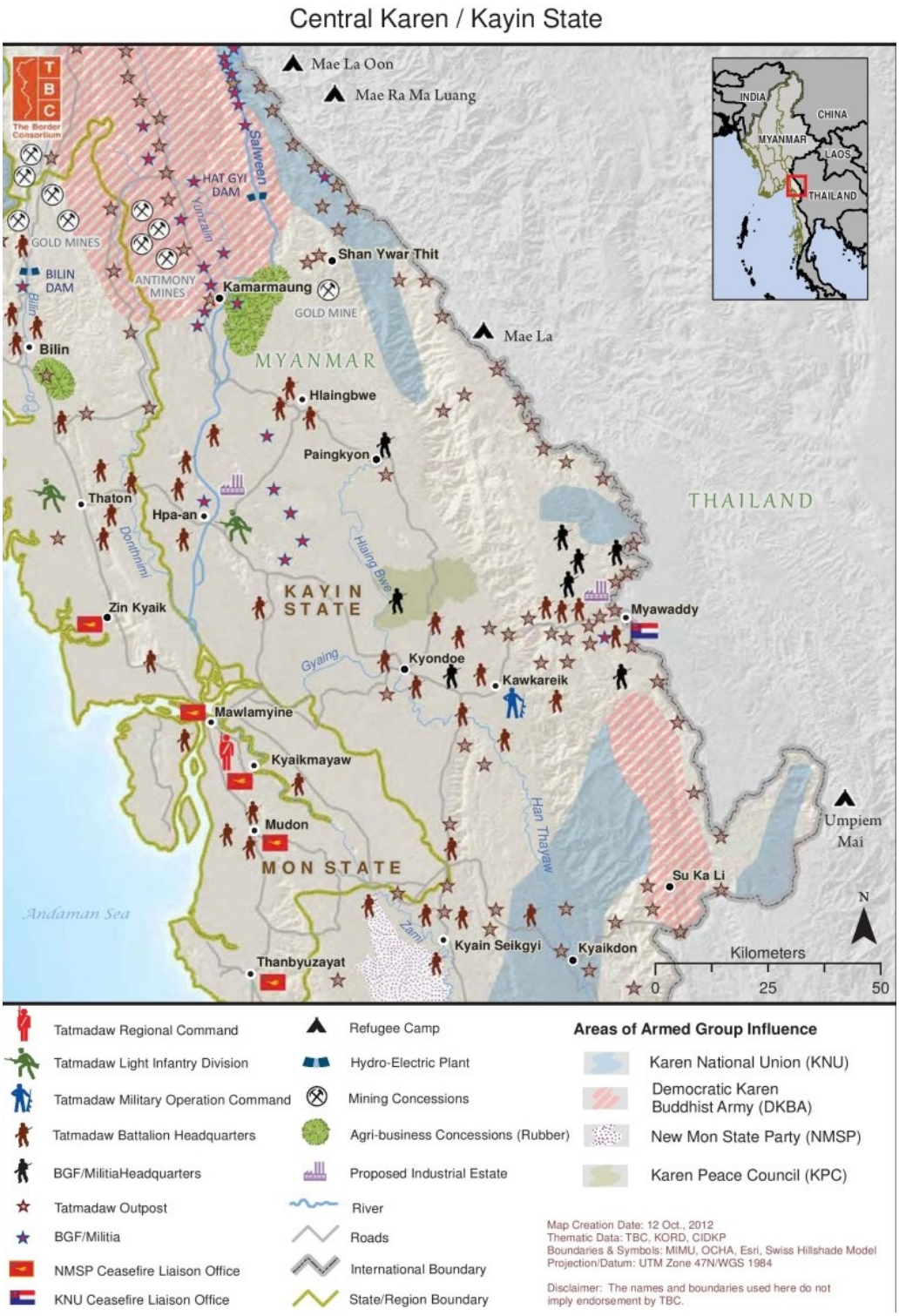
headquarter at Mannerplaw.[43] While KNLA commanders feared that the bright structures might turn the site into an easy target for *Tatmadaw* air attacks, this incident brought these long-standing sectarian tensions among KNU troops to boil over. In December 1994 Sgt.-Major Kyaw Than defected and founded the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). He quickly gathered approximately 3,000 disillusioned soldiers from the KNLA and the Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO), a KNU affiliated village defence militia, which originally had constituted the KNU's main armed wing. The DKBA was soon courted by the *Tatmadaw* with logistical and military support and started to fight alongside its former foe against its ethnic brethren and former comrades. The insider intelligence and manpower provided by DKBA defectors was instrumental for the counterinsurgency to finally overrun the Mannerplaw headquarter of the KNU in 1995, which marked a crucial turning point in the history of the KNU (South 2011, 18–20).

The joint military and DKBA offensives of the mid 1990s concentrated on central Karen State and dealt a serious blow to the once mighty KNLA 'mother brigade' (South 2008, 55): Brigade 7 that used to form the military and logistical backbone of the movement. Located in Pa'an district, Brigade 7 used to preside over the KNU headquarters at Mannerplaw as well as the area's main trade and smuggling routes, including the strategic border crossing between Myawaddy and Mae Sot in Thailand. The loss of territory to the *Tatmadaw* and the DKBA also meant a major loss of revenue for the KNU in general and its Brigade 7 in particular, with many lucrative smuggle gates at the border falling into the hands of the DKBA. After years

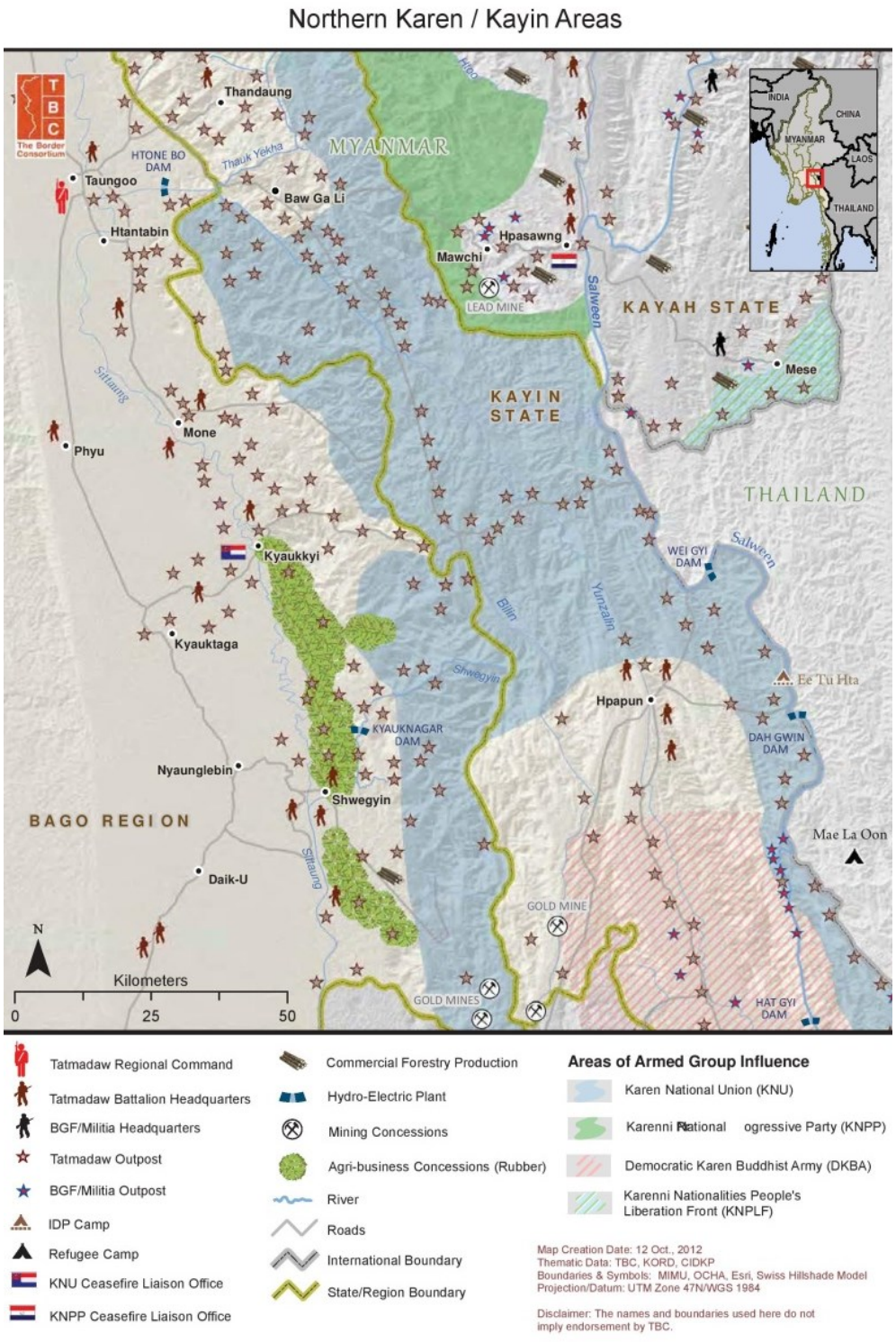
[43] While many commentators on the KNU have stressed the Christian identity of the Karen, only 20 percent of the Karen population might actually be of Christian faith, including Baptist, Anglican, and Catholic denominations (South 2011, 10). The vast majority, particularly the so-called Delta-Karen in lowland Myanmar are of Buddhist denomination. These divides are also reflected in intra-ethnic differences. The majority of Christian Karen speaks Sgaw Karen. Many Buddhist Karen speak Pwo Karen (Ibid.). While sectarian divides have not played a significant role in the current fragmentation of the movement, they have certainly done so in the early and mid-1990s. This was captured in a conversation with a Karen civil society leader and KNU insider who told me that in the past there existed the following cynical saying within the movement: "Everything is controlled by the Seven Day Adventists, everything is managed by the Baptists, the Anglicans have to fight, and those who have to die are Buddhists" (Interview with Karen civil society leader, Yangon, 23 January 2014).

of further group fragmentation, Pa'an District today is contested by even more armed actors. In 2007, the so-called KNU/KNLA Peace Council (KPC) splinter group emerged as a 500 men strong government-supported militia after the then Brigade 7 commander Maj.-Gen. Htein Maung negotiated an individual ceasefire with the SPDC. In addition to military pressure in the area, personal motivations were said to have played a role in bringing about this move as he and his companion, Pastor Timothy, saw their political influence within the KNU decline after their patron and long-term KNU strongmen Gen. Bo Mya died in 2006. The individual ceasefire provided the splinter group with government aid, a small pocket of territory and business opportunities (Core 2009, 98–99). Complicating the situation in Pa'an even further, the 5th Brigade of the DKBA then split from its main organisation after rejecting to follow its transformation into a formal *Tatmadaw* controlled government militia, a so-called Border Guard Force (BGF). The 1,500 men of the so-called DKBA-5, or Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), are once again pitched against Myanmar's armed forces, formally acting in a loose alliance with the KNU (Myanmar Peace Monitor n.d.).

The following maps illustrate the different military situations of the movement's northern and central brigades in 2012. Map 7 depicts central Karen State's Pa'an, where the KNLA's 7th Brigade, marked in blue, has been pushed back considerably by the Tatmadaw and the DKBA (cf. map 7). Map 8 represents northern Karen State's Mutraw, where the KNLA's 5th Brigade, again marked in blue, has maintained relatively strong territorial control and the Tatmadaw only maintains outposts along the few existing roads (cf. map 8).



Map 7: Central Karen State (Source: The Border Consortium 2012, 31).



Map 8: Northern Karen State (Source: The Border Consortium 2012, 29).

2.2 Geopolitics: From Periphery to Border Hub

In addition to these military dynamics that have demoted the formerly uncontested rulers of *Kawthoolei* to being one armed actor among many, the changing geopolitics along the Thai-Myanmar border at the end of the Cold War weakened the KNU even more. These impacts were again particularly severe in central and southern brigade territories, which shifted the internal power balance within the movement towards further towards its northern units.

For many years Thailand used the KNU as a convenient proxy force against the CPB and drug-traffickers from the Golden Triangle, including the infamous "narco-army" of legendary Shan State drug kingpin Chang Shi-Fu alias Khun Sa, dubbed the "Opium King of the Golden Triangle".[44] This changed in the early-1990s when Thailand embarked on a "constructive engagement policy" with Myanmar to promote bilateral trade and investment in order to develop its underdeveloped and landlocked western provinces. Initially Thai businesses were investing into Myanmar's timber sector after the Thai government implemented a logging ban in Thailand following multiple floods that were caused by heavy deforestation (South 2008, 73–74). Since then Thai logging companies decimated the dense forests of Karen State to an unprecedented extent. Cash-striped and not able to oppose the economic interests of their erstwhile benefactors, the KNU quickly became part of this destructive industry by way of receiving compensation from logging companies and by granting their own logging concessions.[45] At the same time, Thai companies have also started to mine for tin, wolfram, and lead in Karen State (South 2008, 75).[46] The Thai government, moreover, set out to tap into its neighbour's energy resources, including hydropower and natural gas (South 2011, 21). As a result the Thai establishment soon

[44] For more information on Khun Sa and the drug trade in the Golden Triangle see Chouvy 2009, 23–36.
[45] According to Smith, the KNU received 5,000 baht per ton of teak (Smith 1999, 409).
[46] Mining and logging are still the most profitable businesses in Karen State today. In addition to teak, wolfram, tin, and lead, other minerals in Karen State include gold, antimony, tungsten, and zinc (Adam Smith International 2015, 68). The 2012 ceasefire with the KNU, has more, sparked increased agro-business investment, including rubber and palm oil plantations (Global Witness 2014, 3)

lost interest in supporting the Karen insurgency as a strategic buffer force and began to consider the movement as a 'nuisance impeding investment in the borderlands' (South 2011, 20). While the Thai security establishment has not cut its ties with the KNU entirely and individuals continue to turn a blind eye to its transborder operations, the insurgents nevertheless had to give way to Thai economic interests.[47]

In southern Karen State, these new geopolitical realities enabled the joint exploitation of natural gas in the Gulf of Martaban in the late 1990s. A consortium between French Total, US American UNOCAL, Thai PTT-EP and Myanmar MOGE started to transport 15 to 20 per cent of Thailand's natural gas needs via a 63km long onshore pipeline through southern Karen State to the Tai border (Kolås 2007, 628). This area, locally known as Mergui-Tavoy District, used to be the stronghold of the KNLA's 4th Brigade. In 1997 and 1998 the Karen insurgents came under heavy pressure by both the *Tatmadaw* as well as its former allies in the Thai security establishment to allow construction of the pipeline. Heavily outnumbered and careful not to displease the Thais, local rebel leaders negotiated their strategic withdrawal into demarcated areas with *Tatmadaw* front-line commanders. Disregarding this informal deal, a *Tatmadaw* offensive of 21,000 army soldiers advanced well beyond the pipeline's corridor and drove the KNU further into the jungle.[48] The demise of Brigade 4 was accelerated by its inability to protect local communities from wide-spread forced displacement and other well-documented human rights abuses at the hands of the advancing government troops, such as forced labour and confinement.[49] This sense of abandonment among Karen civilians is mirrored in the local tale of two chain smoking nine year old twin-brothers, who allegedly led several hundred brave Karen villagers,

[47] Conversation with KNU officer, Thai-Myanmar border, 19 October 2013.
[48] Interview with Karen activist, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 30 October 2015.
[49] International NGOs documented the severe human rights abuses accompanying the construction of the pipeline and filed lawsuits against Total and US-based Unocal in Europe and the US for 'complicity in crimes against humanity' (Kolås 2007, 630).

known as God's Army, into battle against the advancing *Tatmadaw* after the KNLA had retreated.[50]

Liberalising trade policies in Myanmar exerted further pressure on the Karen insurgency. Like other rebel armies in Myanmar's borderlands, the movement relied on incomes from taxing an extensive smuggling industry for many decades. During the self-isolationism under Ne Win's "Burmese Way to Socialism" the immense shortage of everyday goods - from medicine to petrol and textiles - had to be smuggled into the country. Raw products, such as teak, rice, cattle and opium were used to pay for these imports in return. The annual volume of border trade in 1988 was estimated at US$3 billion, equivalent to 40 percent of the country's then gross national product (Smith 1999, 25). By taxing 5-10 per cent levies on smuggle operators, the black-market trade used to be the 'armed opposition's lifeblood' (Smith 1999, 99) for many years. According to KNU officials themselves, the Karen insurgency earned up 500 million Myanmar Kyat per year - at the time £50 million at the official exchange rate - in the mid-1980s by controlling smuggling gates (Smith 1999, 283). While this figure might well be overstated, there is no doubt that due to its strategic location at the Thai border, the KNU was for long one of the main beneficiaries of Myanmar's isolationist trade policies. The main smuggle gates by Shwe Hser at Phalu and Wangkha by Kawmoorah were operated just south and north of Myawaddy, the only government stronghold at the Thai-Myanmar border at the time. With up to 1,000 head of cattle per day into Thailand and tons of manufactured small commodities back into the country, smuggling produced up to one hundred thousand kyat per day at the hand of the KNLA's Brigades 6 and 7 (Smith 1999, 283–84). This revenue base eroded with the successive liberalisation of formal border trade between Myanmar and Thailand since 1988. According to Thai traders who have operated across the border for many years, the loss of these revenues is ultimately what heralded the demise of the Karen insurgency. In 2013 most commodities could legally be traded along official check

[50] Whereas it is unknown to what extend the claimed battlefield success of the two-twin brothers against the *Tatmadaw* are true, the unit did reportedly exist and recruited up to 300 local Karen (Human Rights Watch 2002, 157).

posts, such as the Mae Sot-Myawaddy border crossing. Only some goods remain banned from being imported to Myanmar, including beer and palm oil. These still need to be traded 'the classic way'.[51] While these economic developments undermined the power of the KNU in general, they had particularly disastrous impacts on its central Brigades 6 and 7, who had already suffered from territorial loss due to joint *Tatmadaw*/DKBA offensives.

The military and geopolitical shifts at the Thai-Myanmar border since the mid-1990s severely weakened the power of Myanmar's oldest and once strongest insurgency. At the time of writing the overall movement is only a shadow of its once mighty self. To understand the trajectory and conduct of the movement - including its 2012 ceasefire with the government and the emerging internal opposition against it – it is important to trace how these developments impacted the figuration of differently situated and interacting insurgent actors. As the southern and central brigades, the KNU's traditional power base, were particularly hard-hit by military and geopolitical pressures, the northern Brigade 5, emerged as the movement's new stronghold as its military strength in the rugged mountains of Mutraw remained least challenged during the developments of the 1990s. The next section will show how these diverging impacts have fragmented the movement, particularly with regards to internal authority relations by dis-embedding the insurgency from local communities in some areas more than in others. As will be argued, this has disrupted reciprocal exchange relations between local communities and the insurgency, i.e. the implicit social contract as explicated in Chapter Two, and eroded the legitimacy of insurgent leaders. This process has been precipitated by the loss of territorial control in central and southern brigade areas, which explains why it has not happened to the same extent in the movement's northern brigade areas.

[51] Group interview with Thai businessmen, Mae Sot, 03 December 2013.

3 Fragmenting Authority

The shifting power relations within the KNU resulted in the factionalising of the movement along different regions, whose increasingly parochial brigades have faced starkly diverging realities since the 1990s. To be sure, power and wealth disparities always existed between the seven KNLA brigades and the territory they ruled over was never homogenous in terms of their physical and human geography. Despite this heterogeneity and decentralised organisation, the KNU was a relatively coherent movement prior to the fall of its headquarters at Mannerplaw in 1995. While local units wielded considerable autonomy over day-to-day administrative and military operations, the movement's central command used to be the undisputed decision-making organ responsible for the movement's overall political direction. On paper this still holds true today. The KNU District Chairmen and the KNLA Brigade Generals are jointly responsible for the movement's administrative and military operations in their region. Each administrative KNU department, e.g. the Education or Forestry Department, also has a regional branch. On the other hand, the movement operates a central command that encompasses a similar double-structure between KNU administrative departments and the central command of the KNLA overseen by the Chief of Staff and his deputy (Taw 2005, 41).

The nature of this arrangement means that the KNU central leadership organs have only limited means to raise revenues of their own. They mostly depend on resources from district level administrators and brigade generals who traditionally generated funds from taxing smuggling operators, mining and logging businesses in their territory and the local population. While there was never a set quota of revenue sharing, wealthier brigades, such as Brigade 7 or 6, traditionally surrendered up to 40 percent of their incomes to support the central revenue department, which then allocated these funds to its central command structure as well as to support regional operations, where deemed necessary.[52] Together with the District Chairmen and Brigade Commanders and their deputies, the central KNU department heads form the

[52] Interview with KNU leader from Duplaya, Law Khee Lar, 4 December 2013.

central committee of the KNU. In theory, this is the main decision-making organ of a quasi-one-party state, which elects the movement's top five leaders every four years, who are then represented in the KNU executive committee (Taw 2005, 41). In practice, individual strongmen have always dominated both committees, degrading them to little more than consultative organs. In fact, long-term leader Gen. Bo Mya ruled the movement in a staunchly authoritarian fashion, permitting little dissent with no congress elections being held between 1974 and 1991 (Smith 1999, 390–92).

Notwithstanding the decentralised mobilisation and funding structures of the KNU, political decision-making of the KNU has therefore been relatively centralised for many years. Until the early 1990s, the Karen insurgency, indeed, managed to maintain a cohesive organisation despite internal heterogeneity and power imbalances. The military and geopolitical developments since, have, however, impacted these power disparities in a way that fragmented and decentralised the movement considerably. Severe military defeats sent large contingents of the KNU fleeing to Thailand. Many rebels found refuge in the ever-growing camps along the border together with tens of thousands of civilian refugees. The lower rebel ranks increasingly blended in with other refugees in what was to become permanent forest settlements along the Thai border. The organisation's top leaders mostly settled down in urban centres along the Thai-Myanmar border, particularly in and around the border town of Mae Sot. This detached many KNU leaders from the everyday realities of their organisation's grassroots in the refugee camps as well as those left fighting in the Karen forests. A KNU officer, who grew up in Mae La refugee camp expressed this by stating that, '[t]he Burmese government should be thankful to the Thai government for welcoming us [the KNU] in Thailand, because now we are too busy going shopping and to the cinema, which distracts us from fighting.'[53]

Geographic fragmentation also created an ever growing cleavage between the individual brigades and districts that have since largely been left to fend for

[53] Conversation with KNU officer, Mutraw, 20 October 2013.

themselves.[54] This led to an increasingly parochial outlook of different organisational parts, factionalising the movement along geographic lines. Upon discussing the central leadership's stance on the increasing collaboration between individual brigade leaders, *Tatmadaw* generals, and Thai and Myanmar businessmen in ceasefire Karen State, a retired officer of the KNLA central command explained:

> 'Power today lies with the district level. It does not depend on the KNLA headquarter anymore. You see, Pa'an district is 7th Brigade territory. The KNLA headquarter has no land, no territory. Like the German High Command, hahaha, they are only in a building and give orders. But the district commissioner and brigade commander have the full authority within their territory. Today they do a lot of things, like warlords, like kings. But they have to feed their troops, you see. So they will do what they need to do. People sometimes don't like it, and think they are crazy. But this also depends on the population.'[55]

Pa'an, the area in central Karen State that he is referring to, was formerly home to the most powerful and wealthiest district of the insurgent state of *Kawthoolei.* The following section will compare reciprocal exchange relations between local rebel units to local communities in Brigade 7 area of Pa'an with the ones in Brigade 5 territories of northern Karen State's Mutraw. Doing so reveals how the differential military and geopolitical changes on the Thai-Myanmar border had divergent effects on authority relations within different brigades of the KNU insurgency. Southern and central Brigades, including Brigade 7, have been challenged significantly by the military and geopolitical pressures explained above. They lost large swathes of territory and military strength. These developments also dis-embedded them from local communities, which undermined their erstwhile legitimate authority relations to the movement's grassroots in these areas. The northern units of the KNU, Brigade 5 in particular, remain relatively isolated from the outside world and emerged as the last

[54] This impression emerged from interviews with differently situated KNU leaders from different KNU Districts in Law Khee Lar, 5-6 December 2013.
[55] Interview with retired KNLA central command officer, Mae Pa, 12 October 2013.

stronghold of the Karen insurgency. In contrast to their central and southern comrades, northern KNU units maintain comparatively strong control of territory, over which they continue to rule as a quasi-government, delivering social services and security in return for taxes and recruits, and in effect maintain reciprocal exchange relations to local communities.

To briefly recapitulate from Chapter Two, establishing reciprocal exchange relations to local communities is a key mechanism behind rebel authority. This mostly happens through the provision of public goods in return for which local communities provide support to the insurgency or at least willingly obey rebel rule. If these relations are working an implicit social contract between rebels and local communities underpins the established insurgent social order. This creates legitimacy and, hence, provides authority to rebel leaders. In case of non-fulfilment the legitimacy of insurgent rule is threatened, i.e. when rebels struggle to provide public goods relative to the same extent as they did before. This is not to say that local support for rebellion in areas of prolonged armed conflict is the result of conscious deliberations over the distributional outcome of rebel governance arrangements. The proposed relational approach rather understands the motivations to support and partake in insurgency as routinised practices that emerge from the embodied social context, i.e. the *habitus.* This is important as the social context, and in effect local practices, change with shifting degrees of embeddedness that an insurgency achieves in local communities by way of reciprocal exchange relations.

What will emerge from the below comparison of the insurgent social orders in two different KNU territories is that territorial loss and increased commercialisation has significantly dis-embedded the southern and central KNU units from local communities, while this has not happened to the same extent in the insurgency's northern areas. This in turn disrupted the implicit social contract between southern and central rebel units and local communities, which eroded the legitimacy of regional rebel leaders among their grassroots. In contrast, comparative isolation from these wider changes on the Thai-Myanmar border has left the implicit social contract in

northern areas and legitimate authority relations between elites and grassroots of insurgency relatively intact.

3.1 Brigade 7: In the Doorway of Globalisation

The best spots to witness the vast transformations of the Thai-Myanmar border are the two border towns of Mae Sot and Myawaddy, located just opposite each other on the Moei River. For many years Mae Sot, in Thailand's Tak province, has been a hub for an eclectic mix of people connected to the Karen conflict and other Myanmar ethnic conflicts in one way or the other, including humanitarian workers who provided aid in the nearby refugee camps, KNU rebels who relocated their unofficial headquarters after the fall of Mannerplaw to Mae Sot, smugglers operating their illicit business, mercenaries and volunteers from around the world seeking to join various insurgent armies in Myanmar, and spies from all sides who exchanged intelligence on the local night market. The town of Myawaddy in Karen State's Myawaddy Township, which according to KNU District demarcation belongs to the 7th Brigade area of Pa'an, has long been one of the rare outposts of statehood in an area that had otherwise been dominated by non-state armed groups. The *Tatmadaw* and pro-government militias - so-called Border Guard Forces (BGF), secure the corridor to Myawaddy via Hpa'an the government-held capital of Karen State along a windy mud road. Today, Mae Sot and Myawaddy form the backbone of the thriving border trade between the neighbouring countries as the main crossing for goods shipped across the Thai-Myanmar border and Myanmar's second largest trade gate after Muse on the Chinese-Myanmar border. In Mae Sot, sporadic gun fire has given way to the noise of construction works and busy traders filling the streets of a new boom town with modern shopping malls and droves of Myanmar migrant workers. According to official trade figures, the formal import-export volume rose from US$27.32 million in 2001 to US$156.09 million in 2006 (Kudo 2013, 194).

In a meeting at the Tak chamber of commerce in Mae Sot, three Thai businessmen, one of them with a Chinese and another with an Indian family background, elaborated on the new prosperous realities of the region to the constant

rumble of jack-hammers outside. Seated on bright pink sofas and surrounded by trophies made from rubies and other precious stones sourced in Myanmar, the discussion revolved about the plans for a special economic zone to further liberalise trade, investment and labour markets in the transborder region. In their perspective, the armed conflict was already an issue of the distant past. They explained that the tightest bottleneck for further development was really the dire state of physical infrastructure, including insufficient roads on the Myanmar side and the crumbling Thai-Myanmar friendship bridge that can only be crossed by trucks carrying up to 25 tons.[56] Hopes were flying high for the ongoing construction of the Asian Highway 1 that will connect Da Nang at the Vietnamese coast to Mawlamyine at Myanmar's Gulf of Martaban through Lao PDR and Thailand in what is meant to become the Greater Mekong Subregion East-West Economic Corridor. The section from Mawlamyine to Myawaddy - some of which remained a dusty road that could only be travelled in one direction each alternate day in 2013 - is financed with support of the Thai Government and the Asian Development Bank (Asian Development Bank 2010). Speaking about why the area has changed so rapidly, one of the businessmen explained that the Myanmar government understood that the smuggling economy strengthened the Karen insurgency and, therefore, decided to liberalise border trade in order to dry up its funds:

> 'So they changed the policy and opened the Myawaddy side for official trade. First this was only twice a month, than once a week and then regularly every day. Initially they needed to protect the road from the Karen because there was a lot of fighting about this road. Then step by step they developed everything. And now there is peace.'[57]

He continued to explain that the insurgents pose little viable threat to trade since the 2012 ceasefire 'because they can do legal business now. They now have the right to do so and there are no taxes and no duties for them'.[58]

[56] Group Interview with Thai businessmen, Mae Sot, 03 December 2013.
[57] Group Interview with Thai businessmen, Mae Sot, 03 December 2013.
[58] Group Interview with Thai businessmen, Mae Sot, 03 December 2013.

His depiction of rebels-turned-businessmen comes to life when crossing to Myawaddy and driving onwards to Hpa'an. On the other side of the river, in Myawaddy, the KNU indeed opened its first legally registered company under the name of Moe Ko San Travel and Tour Company Limited and Trading Company Limited in 2013. In a public statement, their manager declared that the combined travel and import/export business aims 'to get into international market[s]' and 'can be regarded as the KNU 7th Brigade economic office' (KNU official cited as in S' PhanShaung, September 07, 2013). When travelling further, various non-state armed groups, including the BGF, DKBA, KPC, and the KNU - extorted fees from passenger and commercial vehicles along the windy road to Hpa'an in 2013, even though the route is meant to be under the control of the government. Reports from 2015 indicate that this practice is continued along the Asian Highway 1 that was frequented by many vehicles even before its official opening (Weng, December 06, 2015). Local Karen who live in the area or frequently travel back and forth from Thailand described to me on various occasions that they often have problems discerning between the various armed groups. The most demeaning behaviour at road checkpoints and unofficial border gates is usually associated with units of the pro-government Karen BGF militia. The KNU has, however, also lost much of its former standing among local communities in this area, particularly since its units do not provide effective social services or protection anymore but continue to collect informal taxes.

The ceasefire concluded in 2012 has aggravated these legitimacy problems for local KNU units, in southern and central Karen State. This is because the agreement does not specify demarcation of territory, buffer zones and troop demobilisation between the warring factions. As in previous ceasefires with other armed groups (Human Rights Watch 2005, 55), the Tatmadaw has used this situation to expand its presence in Karen State, leaving the KNU unable to stop this development without breaking the truce.[59] In an area where the counterinsurgency has historically committed human rights violations on a much larger scale than the insurgency (South

[59] Group interview with KNU education workers, Mutraw, October 2013.

2011, 15),[60] this has led many local Karen to feel that their security has not significantly improved, despite an end to fighting, as was expressed by the following comment of a KNU grassroots member:

> 'Before the ceasefire it was difficult for the Tatmadaw to send reinforcements and supplies to the frontline areas because we attacked them. Now they can bring everything easily. So they send much more support and reinforce their military bases. Today there are much more government soldiers in our areas. This is a great concern to us and the local villagers. They also don't feel safe. They had to run away from soldiers [Tatmadaw soldiers] for all their life. How can you expect them to feel safe now?'[61]

A disillusioned Karen English teacher in Mae Sot, who had sympathised with the KNU years ago, described the loss of legitimacy that the KNU central and southern brigades have experienced among local communities as follows: 'In the end it does not matter who they are, they just come into your village and demand money. But they do not give anything in return. They just make our lives more difficult.'[62]

3.2 Brigade 5: The Last Stronghold

Mutraw district of *Kawthoolei*, an area that mostly overlaps with the official Papun Township in northern Karen State, stands in stark contrast to the rapid transformations witnessed further south on the border. A trip to KNU-held parts of the area feels like a journey back in time. The rugged hills of northern Karen State are easily one of the most remote and underdeveloped regions of Southeast Asia. Lacking any noteworthy road network, travel is only feasible by boat along the Salween or Moei rivers to some parts of the region. Most villages are located in the hills and

[60] Targeting and displacing civilians had for many years been an instrumental component of the *Tatmadaw*'s "Four-Cuts" strategy, with which it aimed to divide insurgents from non-insurgents in an attempt to cut rebel groups from food, revenues, recruits, and information (Human Rights Watch 2005, 8).
[61] Group interview with KNU education workers, Mutraw, October 2013.
[62] Conversation with Karen teacher in Mae Sot, Thailand, 12 November 2013.

remain accessible only by long and tedious hikes on small foot-paths through the dense rain forest. Instead of using mobile phones - which today are widely available in most parts of Myanmar's border areas – villagers often share a radio and satellite phone to communicate with the outside world or other parts of Mutraw. Their settlements consist of simple wooden huts, which are built of bamboo on stilts. Electricity is produced only sporadically by shared generators, which frequently lack fuel to operate. The overwhelming majority of people are farmers, practising small-scale agriculture or breeding small livestock such as chicken or toads. Most parts of the local economy are not monetarised. People commonly conduct barter trade or produce basic goods communally. Items of daily need are produced locally and the area is still largely detached from the rapid developments that are taking place further south along the border. Ever growing infrastructure, booming investment and commerce, and state consolidation all seem far away in this part of Karen State.

The area also gives an impression of the years when the Karen insurgents were still the uncontested ruler of *Kawthoolei*.[63] Much less affected by the army offensives of the 1990s and 2000s or the emergence of rivalling armed groups, the 5th Brigade is still in firm control of large pockets of territory in Mutraw and maintains an extensive and remarkably well-functioning insurgent state. Most children go to school in KNU operated primary and middle schools, where students learn Sgaw Karen as their first language and Myanmar as their second. The history curriculum portrays the Karen as the first settlers of Myanmar and provides an extensive narrative of the KNU and its decades-long armed struggle, including the biographies of legendary martyrs and meticulous accounts of historical battles. Teachers, trained in a two year course at the local teacher training college, then go on to graduate with certificates and ceremonies. Small health stations provide healthcare in the larger villages and disciplined KNLA units provide security together with local village defence militias organised under the KNDO. In return villagers are expected to pay taxes in kind and to send one son per family to serve in the KNLA. The conscripts usually serve for up to seven years in the most basic conditions. While they are being provided with food, shelter and some

[63] For an account of insurgent life in *Kawthoolei* in the 1980s see Smith 1999, 394.

"luxury" allowances, such as cheerot cigars, they are not compensated monetarily for their service in any significant way. Similarly, KNU members in administrative roles or KNU teachers also earn negligible amounts. This arrangement only works because KNU staff and soldiers in Mutraw are deeply embedded within the local communities and mostly receive additional pocket money from their families. This has constructed a tightly knit social network where the social identities of insurgents and non-insurgents commonly overlap. It has also established a well-working informal social contract between the KNU and local communities, which is evidenced by many local Karen who speak of 'our government' when they mean the KNU. Sitting under mosquito nets at dawn, a local KNU administrator, who served the Karen movement for almost all his life in various roles but never travelled outside of Mutraw, explained the workings of this implicit social contract as follows:

> 'We all earn our living as farmers here. As KNU members we also have our farms. Even if we are in the army, we come back to help our families with the harvest if we have the time. We do not say: "Give me money and then I will serve in the army!" It's not like that. We fight to protect our people, ourselves. Our soldiers are all very motivated. […] To organise all this we have a policy to pay taxes depending on the acres that you farm. Some people can follow it, but some cannot. They don't have to give money to the administration. We don't have cash in our hands very often here. Instead, they give food, and the administrative committee uses the food to support soldiers on the front. […] Most people understand that civilians have to feed the government, and in return, the government will have to look after its people. So people try to pay tax to their best ability.'[64]

Rather than just stressing the exchange of material goods in the context of rebel governance, his statement illustrates how working reciprocal relations has left the insurgency enmeshed in local communities to an extent that conflates social identities

[64] Interview with KNU administrator, Mutraw, 23 October 2013.

between local communities and the Karen revolution. Insurgency therefore, remains, embodied in large parts of the local population, which is generating legitimacy for local rebel elites, stabilising their insurgent social order. In the words of Smith - who visited and described various 'liberated' territories of Myanmar's ethnic armed groups during their heydays in the 1980s, insurgency appears to remain 'a way of life' in Mutraw (Smith 1999, 88).

The following section will explain how the KNU's fragmentation of power and authority - into northern units on the hand and central and southern units on the other hand - has translated into the emergence of two different rival factions within the movement. At the time of writing, these comprise the incumbent leadership surrounding Chairman Gen. Mutu Say Poe and General Secretary Kwe Htoo Win. This faction has pushed for the 2012 ceasefire and has professed a conciliatory stance towards Naypyidaw since. They emerged from and remain to be backed by central and southern Brigades 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7. These leaders are pitched against an internal opposition, surrounding Vice-Chairperson Naw Zipporah Sein and the KNLA's Vice-Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Baw Kyaw Heh. The latter faction has its roots and stronghold in the northern Brigades 5 and 2 and opposes the incumbent leaders and their conciliatory policies.

Besides explaining the differing stances towards the ceasefire within the KNU, the next section also serves as an illustration of factional contestation within armed groups, an issue that has only recently garnered attention among students of armed conflict (Pearlman 2009; Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour 2012; Staniland 2014). The following observations particularly underpin the importance to analyse the 'dual contest' rival rebel leaders engage in (Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour 2012, 69). Besides competing over power with the state adversary, factions also struggle for group leadership against each other. It will show that peace negotiations with the state can intensify this internal competition even further, with one faction possibly striving for compromise with the government and the other simultaneously mobilising against it (cf. also Pearlman 2009).

4 Factions beneath the Ceasefire

In December 2013, the central KNU leadership met for its annual strategy meeting in the organisation's new headquarters at Law Khee Lar to discuss post-ceasefire developments. Located at the Moei River, the new KNU "capital" was a large bulldozed clearing in the forest at the time. It featured one meeting hall that was surrounded by four sleeping barracks and one canteen. The place was clearly meant for temporary meetings only as the various central departments of the KNU have mostly remained in Mae Sot, even though plans have been discussed to move these at some point in the future. For the aforementioned leadership meeting, however, the group's top five leaders, i.e. the KNU executive committee, and the various district leaders and administrative department heads, who together form the KNU central committee, came together for five days. Their assistants brought office stationery, laptops, and printers along; canteen workers shipped piles of vegetables, fish and rice across the Moei River from Thailand; and heavily armed special units of the KNLA's 7th Brigade guarded the temporary transformation of a jungle clearing into the bustling hub of Karen insurgent politics.

The discussions at the gathering were fierce from the onset and it was obvious that there were two rivalling factions. One side welcomed the ceasefire, articulated trust in Thein Sein's new semi-civilian government, and wanted to speed up the peace process. This pro-ceasefire faction surrounded KNU Chairman Gen. Mutu Say Poe, formerly commander of Brigade 6, KNU General-Secretary Padoh[65] Kwe Htoo Win, formerly district chairman of Brigade 4's Mergui-Tavoy district, and the KNLA's Chief of Staff Gen. Saw Jonny, who used to command Brigade 7. Their main supporters were leaders from central and southern brigade areas, particularly from the areas of Brigades 6 and 7. They were pitched against a much larger grouping of central KNU leaders, including Vice-Chairperson Naw Zipporah Sein, Joint-General Secretary Padoh Thawthi Bwe, most administrative department heads, and many

[65] Padoh is Sgaw Karen for elder. KNU leaders who lack other civilian or administrative titles are usually given this prefix.

leaders from the northern brigade areas. These second-rank leaders expressed their deep mistrust in Naypyidaw as well as their objection to the conditions and conduct of the ceasefire and attempted to slow down a peace process that they felt was slipping beyond their control. This more wary faction was backed by the 5th Brigade of the KNLA, whose previous long-term commander Lt.-Gen. Baw Kyaw Heh now serves as the KNLA's Vice-Chief of Staff. The split between these two internal groupings was not only about diverging opinions on the movement's current strategy towards shared goals, as KNU leaders sometimes tend to portray their internal division in official interviews.[66] Rather it reflected deep-seated tensions and mistrust between two factions that have increasingly grown apart over the past years. Tellingly, leaders from both sides would neither sleep nor eat together at the meeting venue. In fact, the sleeping arrangements at Law Khee Lar spoke volumes about the rift within the movement. The pro-ceasefire faction stayed secluded in a barrack on top of the hill, overlooking the gathering place. Most of the others shared the three barracks downhill of the meeting hall.

4.1 Incumbents: 'The big powers play the tune. We have to dance to it.'

The organisation's top-leader Chairman Gen Mutu Say Poe did not appear very happy at the sight of a foreigner in the headquarters. Similarly uncomfortable, seemed a senior KNU central committee member, with whom I stayed in one of the down-hill barracks, when I asked him to introduce me to Gen. Mutu - as he is often referred to - for a potential interview. Among local Karen as well as among many KNU members the Chairman who came to power in December 2012 is known to be secretive, authoritarian, and disapproving of internal dissent to his conciliatory course with Naypyidaw. After some convincing, the central committee leader, who knew me and my research well, agreed to bring me to Gen. Mutu on the evening after the first meeting day. When we reached the up-hill sleeping place of the pro-ceasefire leaders, the General lay in a hammock listening to the radio. Disenchanted with the

[66] See for (Karen News, July 10, 2013, October 21, 2014).

unexpected guests, he harshly rebuked the central committee member for bringing me there after he revealed that I am a researcher at a university in London. To me he said: 'The British never helped us. In fact, they abandoned us. Why should I help you now?'[67] In a more conciliatory tone he invited us to speak to one of his confidants inside the barracks Padoh Mahn Nyein Maung. The old Karen leader is nicknamed "Burma's Papillon" for his mysterious escape from the infamous, high-security Coco Prison Island 300km off the Myanmar coast as a young pro-democracy activist from the Delta region in 1970 shortly before joining the KNU. He received us in an unexpectedly welcoming manner and excused Chairman Mutu as being frustrated over the negotiations with the group members 'who don't have trust yet and are still afraid of the government'.[68] Pointing to the other leaders present in the barrack, he clarified:

> 'We here trust the President. Every leader here today, they all trust in him. We can see that president U Thein Sein really wants to reform the country. We have met him three times already. He said he wants to end this civil war. He doesn't want to pass it to the next generation. […] For us, we have been suffering from the civil war for more than 60 years, so our people want peace, so we have decided to build peace, we must. […] Especially our current chairman, he is a peace man. He is a leader who truly believes in peace. He believes to solve the political problem on the table. […] The world today does not support resolving problems with violence. The government itself cannot act the same way they used to do anymore. They also don't have a choice but to reform.'[69]

After some further discussion, Padoh Kwe Htoo Win, KNU General Secretary and 2nd most powerful leader of the KNU entered the barrack and extended a friendly greeting in fluent English. The leader, who became General Secretary in December

[67] Conversation with KNU Chairman Gen. Mutu Say Poe, Law Khee Lar, 05 December 2013.
[68] Interview with Padoh Mahn Nyein Maung, Law Khee Lar, 05 December 2013.
[69] Interview with Padoh Mahn Nyein Maung, Law Khee Lar, 05 December 2013.

2012, is one of the most pragmatic figures in the KNU and has been a driving force behind the 2012 ceasefire. He studied Economics at Rangoon University before "going underground" with the KNU in the mid-1970s, where he rose to be District Chairman in the KNU area of Mergui-Tavoy and assumed responsibility for negotiating the retreat of the KNLA's 4th Brigade in the late 1990s when the *Tatmadaw* advanced along the corridor of the Yadana gas pipeline, transporting offshore-gas from the Adaman sea to Thailand. Sitting on a bamboo matt in the corner of the barracks, he explained the shifting geopolitics of the border, highlighting the changing interests of Thailand in particular. According to him, the KNU had become too weak to continue its armed struggle and needed to give into the powerful economic interests of Thailand and Myanmar in areas historically claimed by the KNU. Therefore, the revolutionaries would be required to learn how to do business in order to participate in the region's expanding economy in a way that best benefits the Karen people. In his words:

> 'We are trained to fight, we are not trained to do business. That has been a problem for a long time here. […] From the KNU, we are now forming an economic committee to find opportunities to train our people to get knowledge on how to do business. We invited some economic experts to train our people. So some people blame us and say: "Hey, you revolutionary, you should not do any business!" But we have to do that. You see, when they want to build a road, we cannot stop them. The problem is not only the Myanmar government. We are reliant on the Thai side. The problem started from the Thai side, the Thai companies supported by their government. Both governments understand that they can benefit from each other here, so they make development projects like the Italian-Thai [planned deep-sea port close to Dawei, affecting the KNLA 4th brigade area in southern Karen State]. We cannot stop them. We could disturb them to delay the project but we cannot stop them. But we are reliant on the Thai side, especially after we crossed to the other side. The Thai government will only do what's best for their people.

> So we also have to find a way that benefits our people. You see we are not the decision-makers here. The bigger countries are playing the tune. We have to dance to it.'[70]

His faction, including Gen. Mutu Say Poe, and the group's late foreign minister Saw David Taw, has, therefore, pushed for a ceasefire with Naypyidaw since the mid-2000s. This was already outlined in a report for Conciliation Resources in 2005 by Saw David Taw (Taw 2005), who was described to me as the original 'mastermind behind the ceasefire.'[71] While this group is officially directing the KNU's strategy and behaviour since 2012, it is pitched against a powerful internal opposition.

4.2 Opposition: 'They are pleasing the government'

Some weeks before the meeting at Law Khee Lar, I was invited for a long conversation to one of the organisation's offices in a village outside Mae Sot in Thailand by a senior KNU leader, who preferred not to be identified. He used to be a KNU Executive Committee member at the time the ceasefire was signed but was demoted to second rank when Gen. Mutu and Padoh Kwe Htoo Win became top leaders in December 2012. He made it very clear that he and many other KNU leaders were concerned about the ceasefire because they perceived the focus to rest on business and economic development while there had not yet been any significant discussions on how to solve the political issues underlying the conflict, including constitutional amendments with regards to minority rights and power sharing.[72] His worries were aggravated by the fact that a Yangon-based crony company investing in infrastructure and resource exploitation across Karen State under the auspices of a retired *Tatmadaw* Major – the Princess Dawei Company - funded the ceasefire negotiations and follow-up meetings. The KNU leader put it as follows:

> 'The government at the beginning pushed and pressured us. […] Because in the first meeting and the second meeting, when we

[70] Interview with KNU General Secretary Padoh Kwee Htoo Win, Law Khee Lar, 4 December 2013.
[71] Interview with KNU leader, Mae Sot, 8 November 2013.
[72] Interview with KNU leader, Mae Pa, 25 October 2013.

> started, the business people paid for all the transport and paid everything for us. [...] So we feel that the Burmese government, when they start the ceasefire, they just want to have a ceasefire and then say it is peace in order to do business and development. But we are worried that it will only remain a business agenda, because the government said: "We cannot talk about the politics. It is hard to do because we need to talk about that in the parliament. But business, we can give you right now, the economics we can give you right now. And we can sign right now." But we said: "No, no, we don't want to do it like that. We have to work on the political first and the business will come later." […] So our policy should be something more like self-determination, how we want to do the business, sharing the revenues. But now I think that the [Executive] Committee members, they are pleasing the government and will provide what kind of business they ask for. They established a business committee at the 15th Congress. But most of these committee members, they work with the Burmese government closely.'[73]

In contrast to the new incumbent leadership under Gen. Mutu Say Poe, the rebel leader insisted that the KNU should only sign a preliminary ceasefire and articulated his opposition to furthering the cooperation with the government. In fact, on 12 January 2012, after the Myanmar government announced that a KNU delegation had signed the historic agreement in Hpa'an, his previous leadership refuted that the KNU had even agreed to a truce. According to him, this was because the ceasefire delegation led by General Mutu Say Poe - who at the time served as the KNLA's chief of staff – had only been sent to Yangon to discuss controversial points in the negotiations with the U Thein Sein government but was not supposed to sign an agreement. After the dust settled it became clear that the delegation had

[73] Interview with KNU leader, Mae Pa, 25 October 2013.

overstepped its authority and by signing the ceasefire accord without consent from the KNU Executive Committee. The top leadership at the time, headed by Naw Zipporah Sein and David Tharckabaw, however, quickly backpedalled and accepted the accord for the sake of unity in a movement that had experienced many splits in the past. The demoted KNU leader also highlighted that he was careful not to displease the international community,[74] particularly Western observers, who overwhelmingly praised the agreement (AFP, Kean, and Than, January 16, 2012).

During the following months negotiations intensified between Gen. Mutu Say Poe's delegation and the government's peace initiative headed by Railway Minister U Aung Min. These meetings were, however, marked by the striking absence of the movement's then-top leadership, including Naw Zipporah Sein, Padoh David Tharckabaw, and the movement's Chief of Staff and former leader of the strong northern Brigade 5, Lt.-Gen. Baw Kyaw Heh, all of whom refused to take part. Indeed, a significant rift was looming between them and the ceasefire delegation, which according to the previous incumbent leadership continued to overstep its authority. One KNU leader complained about their 'activities like organising working groups, informing the government about our discussions and setting up a liaison office without letting the headquarter know,' stating that 'their way was not proper according to the rules and regulations of our organisation'.[75] On 2 October 2012 these tensions escalated, leading the then-executive committee to dismiss Gen. Mutu, Gen. Saw Johnny, and David Taw for 'repeated violations of KNU rules and regulations' (Radio Free Asia, April 10, 2012). Yet, three weeks later, a KNU central committee meeting reinstated the sacked leaders for the 'sake of unity', stating that:

> 'There will never be an end to the discussion on the leaders [sic.] dismissal because each side claims they are right. The Karen people do not want the KNU to be divided, and so, for the sake of unity, the KNU leaders have decided to forgive each other and move forward in

[74] Interview with KNU leader, Mae Pa, 25 October 2013.
[75] Interview with KNU leader, Mae Pa, 25 October 2013.

> their respective positions until the upcoming 15th congress' (Yan, October 29, 2012).[76]

Briefly afterwards, in December 2012, Gen. Mutu Say Poe and his faction managed to take power at the KNU's 15th Congress, a general leadership meeting comprising of all regional and central KNU and KNLA leaders that is supposed to elect the movement's Executive Committee every four years. The congress was to decide between the leadership headed by Naw Zipporah Sein and the new one led by Gen. Mutu Say Poe. Held at a time of severe infighting, the meeting was mired in controversies from the outset. Both factions insisted that it takes place in their own stronghold. Zipporah Sein's faction wanted it to be organised in 5th Brigade territory of Mutraw. whereas Gen. Mutu Say Poe's group preferred the venue to be in 7th Brigade territory of Hpa'an. The latter prevailed and 171 KNU representatives, thus, met in the 7th Brigade headquarters of Lay Wah between 26 November and 26 December 2012 to discuss and vote for the new leadership. The first round of voting ended so close that none of the candidates reached the necessary 51 per cent, in effect necessitating a new vote, out of which Gen. Mutu Say Poe emerged victorious.[77]

Despite the formal victory of the pro-ceasefire faction in this internal contestation, the internal opposition of the KNU has grown since. This is not least because it garners significant support among the movement's grassroots, particularly in comparison to the new incumbent leadership. The next section will show that this is not only the case among the grassroots in the "hard-liner" stronghold of Mutraw,

[76] Central committee member Padoh David Taw passed away in the meantime due to a long-term health condition.

[77] Trustees of Zipporah Sein, however, disputed the result and demanded for a recount. This turned out to be impossible as the electoral committee burned the ballot box straight after the first count. One elderly KNU member, who served as an electoral observer, told me how shocked he was by the overall procedure. According to him, delegates felt intimidated in the 7th Brigade headquarters, known as staunch supporters of Gen. Mutu. This was aggravated by the fact that they were not allowed to vote in secret, as was demanded by Zipporah Sein's faction. Moreover, he stated that the burning of the ballot box was no proper procedure and delegitimised the elections as a whole. He as well as many other Karen grassroots, therefore, believe that the elections were rigged and Naw Zipporah Sein should have become the organisation's Chairman (Interview with KNU member, Mae Pa, 14 October 2013. Various other KNU members expressed similar resentments against the 15th Congress election in conversations and interviews between September 2013 and December 2013).

where working reciprocal exchange relations have maintained legitimate authority for the 5th Brigade, as explicated above. In fact, grassroots support for the internal opposition is prevalent across the social networks of the Karen insurgency, including individuals and community-based organisations in various regions on both sides of the Thai-Myanmar border and overseas.

5 Alienated Grassroots and Internal Contestation

In October 2013 a series of bombs hit various sites frequented by foreigners in Yangon and Mandalay. The rumour mills in the country's teahouses were grinding wildly. Their customers spun conspiracy theories and pointed fingers into the usual directions, including Myanmar's marginalised Muslim community and the country's armed forces, the *Tatmadaw.* Government investigators, however, soon presented a suspect believed to be linked to the Karen National Union (KNU). The country's oldest ethnic insurgency movement had signed its first ever ceasefire agreement with Naypyidaw in the previous year and has since surprised with its 'growing friendship' to Myanmar's establishment (Yan, June 06, 2014). The suspect was portrayed as belonging to rogue elements of the movement, a peace spoiler who also wanted to scare off foreign investors from the country's recently opening and liberalising economy. Top KNU leaders were quick to join U Thein Sein's government in condemning the terrorist acts and promised to assist in the official investigations (Yan, October 18, 2013).

The bombings took place shortly before a meeting of the KNU's educational arm, which has operated an extensive parallel schooling system in areas controlled by the insurgency along the Thai-Myanmar border for many years. I was invited to join the gathering that took place at the KNU's teacher training college in northern Karen State's remote Mutraw region deep inside Brigade 5 territory. The government suspected the bombers to originate from this region. Gathering in one of the half-open bamboo stilt-barracks, the KNU education workers, who joined the meeting from various parts of Karen State, listened to a multi-band radio and fiercely discussed the

news of the bombings in the far-away urban centres, where most of them have never been to. Nobody knew whether the bombings were really carried out by one of their own. Yet, in concert they condemned their own leadership for publicly promising full cooperation in the government investigations rather than vowing to protect someone who was potentially a Karen revolutionary. Their criticism of their own leadership seemed emblematic of a wider disillusionment with the ceasefire that held sway among these rank-and-file of the Karen insurgency. Speaking about his hopes and expectations for a potential peaceful future in Karen State, a senior KNU education worker, who has served the insurgents in the forests for most of his life, did not hide his pessimism and argued that the ceasefire was 'just like a tree with cut roots. From the outside people think that this ceasefire is beautiful and that it benefits the Karen people. But from the inside the tree is already dead.'[78]

When I told a Karen political activist, who is well-networked within the KNU, about this situation in an interview, he responded in just the same way, blaming the current rebel leadership as being too 'soft-soaped.' To him, their quick condemnation of the bombers and their pledge to investigate the incident in collaboration with the government made this very clear:

> 'This is absurd, you know, it's like discrediting your own organization. How can you even trust this Government with information? But you see, some of our leaders had a secret meeting with the government and excluded the other leaders. Now they can point the fingers at them for not cooperating. But the ones who are cooperating, they are already submitting to the laws of the government. This is a big issue. We never accepted the government's law. We have our own system, our own laws. Don't they fight for all this anymore? So can you see now why we are frustrated with this kind of leadership these days?'[79]

[78] Group interview with KNU education workers, Mutraw, 24 October 2013.
[79] Interview with Karen activist, Chiang Mai, 30 October 2015.

This situation illustrates the increasing alienation of the KNU's insurgent grassroots from their post-ceasefire leadership and its conciliatory strategy. Despite having borne the brunt of decades-long civil war, the overwhelming majority of lower ranking insurgents and local supporters of the KNU, whom I met, viewed the movement's current top leaders with deep suspicion. Counterintuitively, many of them were inclined to support the group's "hard-liners" rather than the new leadership, pushing for a bilateral and nationwide ceasefire agreement.

In order to understand why this is the case, this section builds on the insights drawn from Social Identity Theory and Recognition Theories, as elaborated in Chapter Two. To briefly recapitulate, the thesis's conceptual framework argued that motivation to support or partake in armed struggle, particularly in identity conflicts such as Myanmar's ethnic conflict, is foremost driven by claims to due and proper recognition. Becoming a valued member of an insurgency movement that is associated with high social standing and moral principles, i.e. charismatic ideas such as protecting the community and fighting against perceived injustices can, hence, meet the insurgent grassroots' demands to recognition denied by the dominant political order. Joining or supporting insurgency, can, therefore generate self-perceived positive social identities, which lead to feelings of self-esteem and self-worth, and in turn render the insurgent social order and its elites as legitimate. Rebel leaders convey both - the moral principles of the movement as well as their recognition of others as valued group members - by way of using fair procedures and dignified treatment in their interactions with the grassroots. On the flip side, elite interaction that is perceived as unjust and disrespectful by the grassroots conveys misrecognition, which threatens positive social identification with the rebel collective. This, in turn, undermines the legitimacy of rebel leaders and their insurgent social orders, which can ultimately lead to resistance from within.

The following observations will illustrate how the new incumbent leaders' legitimacy has eroded because the Karen grassroots perceive their leadership style as authoritarian and their negotiations with Naypyidaw as the corrupted sell-out of decades-long revolutionary struggle for independence. This has given rise to collective

perceptions of misrecognition among the latter, particularly surrounding feelings of disrespect. This has in turn threatened social insurgent identities, leading to the growing alienation of the lower ranks of the movement and its traditional supporters among wider Karen society. In contrast, interactions with the movement's internal opposition are viewed as respectful and dignifying among the insurgent grassroots. Identifying with the group's "hardliners", therefore, enables the grassroots to maintain a positive social identity from continued affiliation to the KNU. This generates significant authority for the group's internal opposition across the social network of the Karen insurgency.

5.1 Eroding Legitimacy: 'They do not listen to our concerns'

Since the 1990s the *Tatmadaw* has utilised economic incentives for a counterinsurgency approach that is best understood as conflict containment. The country's generals have sought to contain and weaken the country's insurrections by negotiating separate ceasefire agreements with individual armed groups. While these armistices did not lead to substantial political dialogue, they allowed insurgents to retain their arms and govern pockets of territory (Smith 1999, 421–41). Moreover, these pacts encouraged armed group involvement in the collaborative exploitation of the area's natural riches by army generals, rebel leaders and foreign businessmen. The co-optation of rebel leaders by economic means has often led to remarkably durable stability and allowed the state to territorialise parts of its formerly off-limits borderlands to an extent that has not been possible by military means only (Smith 1999, 441; Sherman 2003). This thesis argues, however, that the increasing involvement of rebel leaders in business ventures, as well as the corruption sparked by this among the higher echelons of ethnic armed groups, has posed serious challenges for the relations between the leaders of ceasefire groups and their grassroots.

While the KNU had remained locked in combat during the first ceasefire wave of the 1990s and early 2000s, 'ceasefire capitalism' has also entered Karen State since it concluded a ceasefire of its own in 2012 (Woods 2011). The ceasefire economy in Karen State - where ongoing militarisation goes hand in hand with an uncontrolled influx of venture investments in the area's natural resources, agro-businesses, and the

construction of large infrastructure - resembles these historical patterns (Karen Human Rights Group 2015). Long-term observers of Myanmar's civil war, Bertil Lintner and Tom Kramer, have pointed out that these developments in Karen State are catalysed by new liberal land and foreign investment laws that additionally 'opened up the flood gates for local and international companies to enter ethnic borderlands and buy up land - pushing local communities off their ancestral lands' (Lintner, June 25, 2013).

Of particular concern to the KNU grassroots is that some of their own leaders appear to partake in these developments. To be sure, the Karen insurgency was never immune to individual interests of power and wealth. Some individual leaders have long amassed personal fortunes, which they mostly invested in Thailand. This became particularly notorious with the rapid expansion of border trade in the 1970s and 1980s and large-scale logging in the 1990s (Smith 1999, 395). Shortly before his death in 1982, former KNU Chairman and first commander of the KNDO, Mahn Ba Zan, even warned of the effects of increasing economic opportunities on the movement, saying that: 'The Karen can survive poverty, but I am not sure they will be able to withstand prosperity' (Mahn Ba Zan cited as in Smith 1999, 395). Nevertheless, local and outside accounts about life in the 'liberated territories' of *Kawthoolei* during the heydays of the KNU suggest that Karen leaders have mostly utilised revenues from taxing border smuggling and extractive industries for the benefit of the KNU and the building of a self-supporting and fairly well-working quasi-state, which was largely perceived as legitimate among local communities and the KNU grassroots (Smith 1999, 283; 395; 384-401).

Today KNU members are well aware that many of their leaders favour a luxurious lifestyle in Thailand over the hardships of armed struggle in the jungle. The local KNU administrator in Mutraw, who praised the high motivation of local insurgents and working local insurgent governance arrangements above, worried about other parts of the KNU and their involvement in various business activities. He expressed particular concern that the current incumbent leadership surrounding Gen. Mutu had pushed for the ceasefire agreement out of personal economic interests rather than revolutionary ideals, stating that '[i]f we care about money and serve the

revolution for money, we will forget about our motivation and our revolution will not last long and collapse quickly'.[80] His concerns are shared among many lower and higher ranking insurgents, whom I have spoken to. A retired KNLA colonel expressed his worries that leaders at various levels are susceptible to co-optation by economic incentives at a time when Myanmar and Thai companies were increasingly eying business opportunities in Karen State:

> 'Especially after the 2010 elections this here [he rubbed his fingers to gesture money] became everything. At many meetings I warned my colleagues that the British army never really occupied Burma, only the British timber companies occupied Burma. So I told them to be aware of the companies. The Burmese [Tatmadaw] are very clever. They approach low-level officials of our administration and low-level officers of our army, to infiltrate our land area by area. After the ceasefire they can come freely. They don't carry guns, they don't carry bullets. They carry money.'[81]

At a group interview with KNU education workers from across different parts of Karen State, people expressed their outrage at Myanmar's chief peace negotiator, U Aung Min, who reportedly postulated after a meeting with KNU leaders that if 'they become rich, no one will want to hold arms. If their regions are developed, no one will hold arms. If we do all these [sic.] for them they will automatically abandon their arms' (U Aung Min cited as in Phan, December 10, 2013). One KNU teacher vented his anger, stating that 'they know that our Karen people are thirsty for money and material goods because most of us local people and KNU members are poor. So they think that we will agree with them, once they give us a car or motorbike. But our main point is to get our country back. We have not fought for the last 60 years to get some cars.'[82] One of his colleagues expressed his worry that some of their leaders who signed the ceasefire and pushed the peace process might not see it the same way: 'We don't know

[80] Interview with KNU administrator, Mutraw, 23 October 2013.
[81] Interview with retired KNLA colonel, central command officer, Mae Pa, 12 October 2013.
[82] Group interview with KNU education workers, Mutraw, 24 October 2013.

exactly why they signed the ceasefire now, they keep everything top secret. But we see that they get nice cars. I think that the government also gives them money and positions.'[83] Another rebel educator expressed the viewpoint that the behaviour of his new leaders made it difficult for him to identify with the organisation as '[m]ost of them are poisoned by the enemies, their hearts have change and they believe our enemies because of their gifts. That's why they don't stand firmly on our revolutionary principles. We feel bad about our organisation because they deviated.'[84]

Similar sentiments have been taking hold across the wider Karen insurgent social network, as was evidenced by 41 Karen civil society organisations that condemned the signing of the 2015 NCA in a public letter, which was quoted at the beginning of this chapter. In an interview with the founder of one of the signing organisations, the popular and well-connected Karen political activist also highlighted that the incumbent KNU leadership's behaviour made it difficult for the Karen grassroots to still identify with the movement. According to him, the increased corruption among the KNU's higher echelons had brought about a 'moral self-destruction [that] has negatively affected the KNU leaders' relationship with the normal soldiers [which has] started to split the movement.' [85] The Karen CBOs and their work on social justice in Karen State were also affected by these developments because they made the ceasefire KNU leadership secretive and unresponsive to their demands. He explained that this severance of the relationship between the KNU and local communities became most obvious to him at a meeting between Karen community based organisations and the KNU in 2013. At the annual gathering that was established as a means of consultation between local CBOs and the KNU in the mid-2000s, representatives of the Karen civil society raised their concerns over social and environmental problems that had reportedly deteriorated in Karen State since the ceasefire, including land confiscation for economic usage by companies and the military, adverse side-effects of unsustainable natural resource extraction, and the increasing narcotics problem among local youth. According to the political activist

[83] Group interview with KNU education workers, Mutraw, 24 October 2013.
[84] Group interview with KNU education workers, Mutraw, 24 October 2013.
[85] Interview with Karen activist, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 30 October 2015.

present at the meeting, the way a senior KNU leader responded at this meeting alienated many participants:

> 'Suddenly [he] became angry and answered in the most inappropriate, crazy way you can imagine. He said that the KNU is not the saviour of the Karen people. I mean if he would have said that they are not solely responsible for all this, ok, but he basically said that this is none of their concern. Many people were really upset and angry. This told us very clearly that they do not listen to our concerns. It is the complete opposite than what they have told us for years, I mean that the KNU represents the Karen as a political organisation or even like a de-facto government. Usually you tell your government if you have problems and it should not answer that this is not its problem.'[86]

In contrast, the activist highlighted that the previous KNU leadership, which was headed by Naw Zipporah Sein, had consulted with the Karen civil society about the concerns of local communities. He also stressed that this faction continued to seek the opinion of civil society, despite its relegation at the movement's 15th Congress. According to him, this clearly turned them into the movement's legitimate leaders. The next section will turn to these so-called "hard-liners", explaining why they garner significant support among the estranged grassroots of the KNU.

5.2 Growing Internal Resistance: 'We are hardliners in the right respects'

At first glance, it is puzzling that the "hard-line" faction that has opposed the new KNU leadership's conciliatory ceasefire politics has garnered so much support among the insurgent grassroots, many of whom have suffered the most in the past decades of civil war. To explain this, it is helpful to consider one of the "hard-line" faction's key figures. At the time of writing, the relatively young Lt.-Gen. Baw Kyaw

[86] Interview with Karen activist, Chiang Mai, 30 October 2015.

Heh is probably the most popular Karen rebel leader among the KNU grassroots. The commando soldier has a reputation as a fierce fighter, staunch revolutionary and caring leader. He used to be the long-term commander of the strong 5th Brigade in *Mutraw* before serving in his current role as the KNLA's Vice-chief of Staff (VCS). While many other high-ranking KNU leaders have long indulged in comparatively luxurious lifestyles in Thai exile, "Baw Kyaw" or "the VCS", as he is often fondly referred to, is said to live among his soldiers in the dense forests of *Mutraw*. It is, therefore, unsurprising that many KNU grassroots regard him as the personified opposite to the incumbent top leaders, whose alleged luxurious lifestyle has put them out of touch with the grassroots.

According to one KNDO sergeant, Gen. Mutu Say Poe, who became the KNU's Chairman in 2012, 'is old now, very old and should retire but he wants to hold on to power like a dictator. You know, like the guy in North Korea or Ne Win, Pol Pot, Gaddafi, all these very old dictators.'[87] A young administrator in his early twenties at the KNU Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW) also complained about the authoritarian attitude of the movement's elderly Chairman, which he views as being aggravated by strong hierarchies between older and younger members of Karen society. In a conversation he revealed his frustration, stating that:

> 'Sometimes we young people have too much respect of the old leaders. Actually it is not respect, but it is fear. Being afraid is different than having respect, no? It is like the military, where you have to listen. But you are not allowed to question. This is maybe the culture. But we have to wait when the young people come back from abroad, the U.S. Then they have a different culture. But for us from the inside it is different, really different.'[88]

[87] Conversation with KNDO sergeant, Mutraw, 23 October 2013.
[88] Conversation with KDHW member, Mae Sot, 02 November 2013.

The same young KNU member spoke fondly of the 'strong and passionate'[89] Lt.-Gen. Baw Kyaw Heh, "the VCS", whom he perceives as breaking with such authoritarian attitudes by 'listening closely to the people.'[90] Many other KNU grassroots that I met also expressed their trust in the young general and his factions. This is particularly so, as both key figures of this internal opposition, former KNU General Secretary Naw Zipporah Sein and Lt.-Gen. Baw Kyaw Heh, have repeatedly and publicly picked up the concerns of the KNU grassroots at a time when the movement's incumbent leadership is perceived as increasingly detached from the concerns of local Karen communities. In public interviews, they have criticised the ceasefire process for its lack of political dialogue on the underlying causes of conflict, the continued militarisation of ceasefire territories, a lacking military code of conduct, including territorial demarcation, the territorialisation of KNU-held areas by way of securitised economic development, and the detrimental social and environmental side-effects of increased resource extraction and infrastructure construction.[91]

Similar to the suspicions of many grassroots insurgents, leaders of this faction express particular worries that KNU leaders, who have pushed for the ceasefire, have done so out of personal interests rather than the common interest of the movement or the Karen communities they claim to represent. A leader of the internal opposition, who wished not to be identified, expressed his concerns over the involvement of businessmen in the ceasefire talks of 2012, stating that 'not only the KNU but also the local people think that it is not appropriate. Because they are worried if business people are part of the negotiations, business people will take the benefits.'[92] Lt.-Gen. Baw Kyaw Heh even publicly denounced economic incentives as the main drivers of cooperation between the incumbent leadership and Naypyidaw stating that 'business development and other issues have taken over the agenda' (Baw Kyaw Heh cited as in Eh, May 09, 2013). When I met the highly praised young general, I encountered a soft-spoken man, who considered his answers very carefully. While his heavily armed

[89] Conversation with KDHW member, Mae Sot, 02 November 2013.
[90] Conversation with KDHW member, Mae Sot, 02 November 2013.
[91] See for instance Eh, May 09, 2013; Karen News, July 10, 2013; Yan, January 29, 2014.
[92] Interview with KNU leader, Mae Pa, 25 October 2013.

bodyguards prepared rice with pumpkin curry and fermented fish paste for lunch, he expressed grave concerns over what the increased commercialisation of Karen State after the ceasefire agreement is doing to the Karen insurgency:

> 'If we work together with all the businessmen coming here, we will turn into businessmen ourselves. I mean, we are members of the armed resistance. We shouldn't engage in business too much. But the Burmese government and some of our own leaders don't see it this way. You know, the ceasefire has largely been driven by business interests. This is our concern.'[93]

In contrast to the insurgent grassroots' trust in "the VCS" and his internal opposition, Western peacebuilders have nourished a deep mistrust in what they perceive and portray to be uncompromising KNU "hard-liners" (Yan, January 29, 2014). According to Baw Kyah Heh himself, Charles Petrie, former UN diplomat in Myanmar and head of the Norwegian-initiated but now suspended Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI), for instance, 'came to meet me and asked me not to destroy the peace process. He questioned me repeatedly, "You won't break the peace process, right?" He asked me three times' (Baw Kyaw Heh cited as in Yan, January 29, 2014). While international peacebuilders in Myanmar are anxious that the KNU "hardliners" are spoiling the peace process out of a lack of pragmatism, the leaders of this internal opposition are aware of their popularity among the movement's grassroots and seem to oppose the ceasefire developments out of moral convictions. This was expressed by one of them, for whom it was important to clarify in an interview that

> 'some people criticize that we are hardliners in the KNU who don't like peace and just want to continue fighting. I say that this is not true. We are no hardliners, we are steady. Maybe it is fair to say that we are hardliners in the right respects.'[94]

[93] Interview with KNLA Vice-Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Baw Kyaw Heh, Law Keeh Lar, 06 December 2014.
[94] Interview with KNU leader, Mae Pa, 25 October 2013.

Conscious about the detrimental impacts of past internal divides, leaders of all sides within the KNU asserted the need for unity in various interviews. Despite this, the group has further fragmented and the internal resistance to the incumbent leadership and its conciliatory ceasefire policies towards the government has grown. This surfaced most poignantly in mid-2014 when the incumbent leadership surrounding KNU Chairman General Mutu attempted to leave the ethnic armed group alliance organisation United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC). The alliance was originally founded in 2011 jointly by the KIO and the KNU as well as four other ethnic armed groups as a means of promoting the unity of ethnic armed groups at a time when the reescalation of the Kachin conflict was looming already. Since then, the new KNU leadership has grown increasingly uncomfortable with their movement's membership in the alliance, which they perceived as putting constraints on their bilateral negotiations with the government. Their attempt to leave the organisation, however, led to stark disagreements with the internal KNU opposition (Lwin, Ei Ei Toe, August 09, 2014). The latter, whom this decision reportedly caught by surprise, pressured the incumbent leaders to remain within the UNFC, fearing that the departure from the other ethnic organisations would speed up the rapprochement with between the KNU and Naypyidaw even more (Karen News, March 10, 2014).

In October 2014, they took an initiative of their own in an attempt to join forces with similarly disillusioned factions from other Karen armed groups. Gen. Baw Kyaw Heh and the Commander of the KNDO Col. Ner Dah Mya met with representatives of the DKBA and the KPC and signed an agreement that founded a new armed group, the Kawthoolei Armed Forces (KAF) on paper (Yan, October 14, 2014). This time it was the incumbent KNU leadership, which was caught off-guard and renounced the creation of the KAF, worried that this would de-facto split the majority of its armed wing from its control. The two factions renegotiated both of these disagreements in an emergency meeting in October 2014 (Lwin, Ei Ei Toe, October 17, 2014). The meeting ended with a compromise declaration, stating that 'reunification of the Karen armed organizations under the political leadership of the KNU or the formation of

Kawthoolei Armed Forces (KAF) is accepted, in principle' but also decided that the 'temporary suspension of [UNFC] membership will be sustained.'[95]

While the KAF remains existent only paper, the KNU's two rival factions have continued to drift further apart. The KNU's official leadership was the most important ethnic armed groups that signed the NCA in October 2015. Indeed, KNU General Secretary Kwe Htoo Win and Chairman Gen. Mutu Say Poe were among the main advocators of the agreement. Addressing the public after President U Thei Sein as the second keynote speaker at the ceasefire summit, Gen. Mutu Say Poe declared that the 'NCA is a new page in history […]. More than just a ceasefire agreement, the NCA is the first step on the important road towards the establishment of a federal and democratic Union' (Mutu Say Poe 15.10.2015). A few days before, an alternative summit took place in Panghsang, the mountain headquarters of the UWSA at the Chinese border. The meeting featured representatives of ten ethnic armed groups that objected the NCA and met to coordinate their actions.[96] In addition to these non-signatories, some of whom remained locked in fierce battles with the *Tatmadaw*, KNU internal opposition leaders Naw Zipporah Sein and David Tharckabaw also attended the meeting. Instead of joining as representatives of the KNU, they were present on behalf of the KNDO. Interviewed at the meeting, David Tharckabaw publicly denounced the current leadership of the KNU and declared that his faction is looking for closer ties to the non-signatory ethnic armed groups:

> 'The KNDO and the KNU have the same fundamental standpoint, but some leaders did not walk on the right path. Our right stance is that we need to work and cooperate with our alliance of ethnic armed forces. Then our alliance will fight for equal rights and the right to

[95] Karen National Union Supreme Headquarters, Central Standing Committee after 15th KNU Congress third Emergency Meeting Statement, 29 October 2014. Obtained by the author.
[96] These included the UWSA, the KIO, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), Shan State Army (SSA), New Mon State Party (NMSP), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), Arakan Army (AA), Kayan Newland Party (KNLP). According to the UWSA, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Kaplan (NSCN -K) was not able to attend the meeting because of the long distance (Sai Wansai, November 04, 2015).

> govern ourselves with self-determination for our ethnic region. Our KNDO stance is that if we do not have our allied force, we need to form it. In the case that we need to lead our alliance, we need to prepare for that. This is our stance. We do not want to lose our path, which is why we will continue to work with our alliance of ethnic armed forces.' (David Tharckabaw cited as in Weng, May 11, 2015)

At the time of writing, it is impossible to predict the future of the KNU and the prospects of Myanmar's fragile peace process. The internal tensions within the Karen insurgency, however, have the potential to cause an organisational split or an internal coup, which could jeopardise the group's ceasefire and the nationwide peace negotiations. Whether the ceasefire will hold or depends on various factors. The most important one will be whether or not genuine grievances among the movement's grassroots as well as claims to power of the internal opposition can be accommodated within the current ceasefire framework and ongoing peace process. Another important factor is to do with the KNU's internal opposition's ability to use its garnered authority among the movement's grassroots for building alliances across the wider Karen insurgent social network and a more cohesive movement again. This would allow them to retake leadership or break apart from the main movement.

6 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed why the KNU signed its historic ceasefire in 2012 and the tensions that have boiled within the movement since. It explicated how military and geopolitical pressures along the Thai-Myanmar border have left the once powerful rulers of *Kawthoolei* fragmented along parochial brigades, which face significantly different individual circumstances. The foothold of Karen rebels in central and southern areas of Karen State has been challenged considerably by the *Tatmadaw* and by other non-state armed groups since the early 1990s. Changing regional geopolitics has, moreover, brought powerful commercial interests to south-eastern Myanmar. In their wake, the legalisation of border trade eroded the black-market revenues of central

KNU brigades while infrastructure construction eased state territorialisation central and southern brigade areas. In contrast, the movement's northern units maintain relatively strong control over a rugged territory that remains isolated from the same extent of military and geopolitical change. External changes on the Thai-Myanmar border have, thus, shifted the internal power balance of the movements from central to northern brigades.

By tracing the impacts of these diverging pressures on the insurgent social orders in both areas through the lens of reciprocal exchange relations between the insurgency and local communities, that chapter has also shown how this fragmented the internal authority landscape along the same lines. This is because territorial loss and increased commercialisation has significantly dis-embedded the southern and central KNU units from local communities, while this has not happened to the same extent in the insurgency's northern areas. This in turn disrupted the implicit social contract between southern and central rebel units and local communities, which eroded the legitimacy of regional rebel leaders among their grassroots. In contrast, comparative isolation from these wider changes on the Thai-Myanmar border has left the reciprocal exchange relations in northern areas relatively intact, which is why local rebel units remain enmeshed in local communities to the extent that social identities between civilians and insurgents are conflated. Insurgency in these parts of Karen State, hence, remains embodied as a 'way of life' similar to past decades (Smith 1999, 88), stabilising local rebel authority.

The chapter has also explained how this regional fragmentation has given rise to two factions with diverging outlooks towards negotiations with the government. The new incumbent leaders emerged from the movement's central and southern brigades, by whom they remain to be backed. Having lost significant military power and authority within local Karen communities, these commanders have sought to compromise with Naypyidaw, signed the 2012 ceasefire, and promoted the peace process with Myanmar's government ever since. In contrast, the previous top leaders, now demoted to second rank, have their stronghold in the relatively powerful northern units of the KNLA. This alliance has formed an internal resistance, which is pitched

against the new incumbent leadership and their conciliatory policies. This internal opposition, often depicted as the group's "hard-liners", has attracted significant support from the movement's grassroots. This is not only the case in the faction's northern stronghold, where the insurgency has remained comparatively well-embedded within wider society.

The grassroots support the internal KNU opposition is enjoying across the wider Karen social insurgent network was explained by analysing at the politics of recognition and processes of social identification. Many among the movement's grassroots view the leadership style of their new top leaders as overly authoritarian and their increasing conciliation with Naypyidaw as driven by personal profiteering rather. This has given rise to collective perceptions of misrecognition, particularly surrounding feelings of disrespect. This has in turn threatened social insurgent identities, leading to the growing alienation of the KNU's lower ranks and its traditional supporters from the insurgent movement. In contrast, interactions with the movement's internal opposition are viewed as respectful and dignifying among the insurgent grassroots, not least because of their outspoken criticism against the controversies of the ceasefire, including personal business interests, increased militarisation, and the detrimental social and environmental side-effects of increased business investments affecting local communities. Identifying with the group's "hardliners", therefore, enables the grassroots to maintain a positive social identity from continued affiliation to the KNU. This has generated significant authority for the group's internal opposition across the social network of the Karen insurgency. The official KNU leadership, which has championed the peace process, has, thus, become increasingly isolated within its own movement. The next chapter will analyse how similar dynamics have, indeed, led to the remobilisation of insurgency in Kachin State and the break-down of the country's most important ceasefire of the 1990s in the thesis's second case: the KIO.

CHAPTER VI – KIO: FROM CEASEFIRE TO WAR

1 Introduction

When the KNU signed the so-called nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) in Naypyidaw in October 2015, I was chatting to a Karen friend on a social media platform, inquiring about his opinion on recent developments. The KNU member voiced his strong disagreement with his own leaders' decision to sign the accord at a time when government forces were battling various other ethnic armed groups – including Kachin, Kokang, Shan, and Palaung movements - which has resulted in heavy losses on both sides and the displacement of more than 120,000 civilians along the Myanmar-Chinese border.[97] To him, the strongest of these rebel groups, the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), and its continued armed struggle for greater ethnic minority rights and federalist constitutional amendments seemed more worthy of support than his own conciliatory leadership of the KNU at the time. Knowing that I had visited the KIO's informal capital - Laiza, the year before, he expressed his wish to travel there as well. In his imagination, Laiza featured as the last symbol of ethnic armed struggle, which he craved to see for himself.

[97] Concrete numbers are difficult to obtain. This is not least because many Kachin flee behind rebel-held lines where international humanitarian agencies have limited access. Government figures from 2014 estimate that the renewed conflict in Kachin State alone has displaced 123,000 civilians. 43,000 of them were living in government-controlled camps and 80,000 in KIO-controlled camps (Burma News International 2014, 23; 2015, 25–29).

The armed conflict in Kachin and Shan States has, however, only escalated again since the Kachin ceasefire with Myanmar's government broke down in 2011. After 17 years of relative stability in the hills of Kachin State bordering China, the KIO's armed wing – the Kachin Independence Army (KIA)[98] - and the *Tatmadaw* have since engaged in fierce fighting. The ferocity of this renewed escalation came to the surprise of many observers who had long thought of the Kachin ceasefire as comparatively stable and the KIO as relatively weak and conciliatory (Global Witness 2003, 117–18; International Crisis Group 2003). During the ceasefire years, Kachin leaders indeed established intimate ties with *Tatmadaw* commanders and were relatively accommodating towards the government (Woods 2011, 761; International Crisis Group 2012, 5–6). Moreover, the revolutionary ambitions and military capacities of the KIO seemed to have withered away over the long ceasefire years, while its leaders profited from the spoils of a lucrative ceasefire economy. In 2003, a Global Witness report assessed the disintegration of the ceasefire KIO as follows:

> 'To some extent, the discipline and a sense of duty, evident during the conflict, have been replaced by self-interest, opportunism, corruption and incompetence. […] Increased corruption has subverted the functional and political capacity of the KIA, to conduct public works, maintain political direction and to oppose the SPDC and provide an alternative to it. They have become less cohesive and the rank and file more disillusioned and frustrated as a result. Since the ceasefire, the KIO's image and self-image have been damaged, it has become marginalised and its popular support has waned. […] One way for the KIO to regain direction and power would be to reassert its military strength' (Global Witness 2003, 118).

A potential revitalisation of the movement was, however, deemed 'unlikely' (Global Witness 2003, 118). In a similar vein, an International Crisis Group report of the same

[98] In theory the KIA is subordinate to the KIO. In practice, the distinctions between military and political arm of the organisation overlap to the extent that even local people use both names interchangeable.

year also assessed the movement's eroding power, concluding that any 'renewed armed struggle in Kachin State would almost certainly quickly be contained' (International Crisis Group 2003, 11). Since the war broke out again the Kachin insurgents have, despite these predictions, surprised with uncompromising political demands, military strength, organisational discipline, endurance on the battlefield, and a vast popular support base among the wider Kachin public. Against this background, this chapter asks why the 17-years long ceasefire with the KIO eventually collapsed. It also enquires why and how the KIO's willingness as well as ability to wage war against Myanmar's government increased so dramatically again.

It will be argued that behind the movement's puzzling trajectory stood eroding authority relations between incumbent rebel leaders and the movement's grassroots in the ceasefire years, which have sparked group fragmentation and internal contestation and ultimately led to the rebuilding of the movement from within. Similar to the more current developments as observed within the ceasefire KNU in the previous chapter, reciprocal exchange relations between local communities and the Kachin insurgency suffered significantly in most of the ceasefire years. Most importantly, the KIO could not protect communities from forced displacement induced by increased militarisation and resource exploitation. In addition, the increasingly authoritarian and corrupted leadership style – particularly the overt self-enrichment of individual rebel leaders, led to the alienation of the movement's lower rank-and-file. These interlaced processes were at the heart of the insurgency's declining legitimacy and authority. The previously elaborated case of the ceasefire KNU allowed tracing how these dynamics impact on group fragmentation and the formation of an internal opposition that contests the incumbent rebel leadership. The case of the KIO will demonstrate how such dynamics can unfold further over time to the extent such internal oppositions can successfully take over an entire movement and change its trajectory. As will be argued, the key to the aspiring Kachin leaders' success was their careful rebuilding of the broken legitimate authority relations with the insurgency's grassroots. They managed to do so by seeking an alliance with the local Kachin churches, the only powerful political institution left wielding significant legitimacy among the Kachin public for

most of the ceasefire years. In partnership with them, they established consultative mechanisms with the wider insurgent social network, which signalled dignity and respect - i.e. conveyed due and proper recognition, to the movement's grassroots, particularly to the disillusioned Kachin youth. This allowed the latter to rebuild self-perceived positive social identities from their affiliation with the insurgency, upon which the KIO's internal opposition could recruit a new generation of rebels on a large-scale and ultimately take over the leadership.

To explain the movement's trajectory, the first part of the chapter will analyse the erosion of rebel leadership authority in the wake of the 1994 ceasefire. To do so, it will first introduce the ceasefire arrangement, with a particular focus on the changing political economy in Kachin State. It will then trace how new business opportunities incrementally corrupted individual Kachin leaders and spurred leadership factionalism, which resulted in disastrous infighting. In a next step, the chapter will analyse how these developments eroded leadership authority due to impairing previously established reciprocal exchange relations between the KIO and local communities. This planted the seeds of new grievances among local communities and alienated the KIO grassroots' social insurgent identities, sparking resentment against their own superior. Building on this, the chapter's second section will analyse the rebuilding of the movement from within. To do so, it will first trace the emergence of a new faction surrounding aspiring young KIA officers and their alliance with the powerful local churches of Kachin State, which enabled them to rebuild the KIO's authority by re-embedding the movement within local communities. It will then explain how they used their re-gained legitimacy to mobilise the region's disillusioned youth and recruit them into the insurgency on a large scale. In a final step, the chapter explains how this new force within the KIO managed to achieve a take-over of the leadership, which prompted the change of the movement's strategy.

2 Ceasefire: Losing their Way

The KIO capital of Laiza is a small town straddling the Chinese border. Protected by rebel units dug into fortified hilltop positions, it is inhabited by about 20,000 people. Rebel policemen patrol the streets, tailors produce KIA uniforms, nurses are being trained to work in the KIO-operated hospital and Kachin soldiers sing revolutionary songs while their self-manufactured AK-81 assault rifles lean against the tables of dingy karaoke bars. Soldiers from various other allied insurgencies are also regular guests in town. While this fits within the imaginations of my Karen friend who told me that he longed to visit this "Mecca" of armed ethnic resistance, Laiza did not always look like this. Before the KIO signed a ceasefire with the *Tatmadaw* in 1994, the settlement had only been a small village. After the truce was in place, it quickly developed into a bustling border town. Not only did the KIO move its quasi-government, including "civilian" departments, from its mountain fortress in Pa Jau to the valley settlement. Increased economic activities also turned Laiza into a bustling border trade-hub with China. In addition to the rapidly expanding resource economies, a buzzing entertainment industry opened its doors to Chinese costumers. It included casinos, which reportedly featured dancers, transvestites, and prostitutes from as far away as Russia (Boehler, 06/2012). According to a foreign diplomat in Yangon of the early 2000s, international diplomats have formerly regarded the KIO as one of the "good" ethnic armed groups that had not colluded with the *Tatmadaw* during the Cold War. With its increasing business activities after the ceasefire, they increasingly came to identify the Kachin movement with the "bad" armed groups mostly associated with running illicit businesses along the Myanmar-China border (Sherman 2003, 234).

The days when the Kachin conflict resembled a mutual business enterprise rather than a revolutionary struggle, seemed long gone as I visited in 2014. Three and a half years after war had returned to Kachin State the town's once bustling central bus station lay deserted as normal traffic could not cross through the nearby frontline to the rest of Myanmar. Yet, its sheer size and modern facilities spoke of more

prosperous days, as did the paved roads, the quality of which equalled the infrastructure found in neighbouring China's Yunnan province rather than in most standard Myanmar towns further south. The receptionists at the spacious Laiza Hotel, the best address in town, featuring hot running water and Chinese Wi-Fi internet, waited for guests from China that would no longer arrive now that heavy fighting had resumed in the area. Meanwhile, the small golf course on the outskirts of Laiza was only occasionally still used by KIA officers keen on practising their swing. Lorries arrived sporadically at the border gate with China to be checked by the KIO's customs authority, and Chinese traders, hawking small commodities at the town's market, complained about their declining profits. The sight of Laiza's largest casino summed up this transformation. Since its business dried up after the ceasefire broke down and Chinese tourists stayed away, the KIA had turned it into its operational headquarters, where senior officers turned to planning the movement's military campaigns on the first floor. Locals proudly call the building complex "the Pentagon" or "the war room". When asked about the remnants of the ceasefire entertainment industries, many KIO members seemed to feel uneasy, insisting that this was a long gone issue of the past. One KIA officer explained the new realities by stating that: 'Laiza is not a town for businessmen anymore. This is a political town now.'[99]

The following parts of this chapter will explain why and how the Kachin insurgency had seemingly come to lose its way, in so far as it came to resemble a business-minded armed group more than a revolutionary enterprise. It will then analyse why and how the movement was transformed back into a capable insurgency that resolutely struggles for autonomy and minority rights and is supported by large swathes of the Kachin public.

2.1 Fragmentation and Infighting

When Myanmar old-hand Lintner visited KIO territory as the first foreign correspondent during the 1980s, he noted that the movement was the 'strongest ethnic rebel army in Burma' (Lintner and Lintner 1990, 6). The insurrection was founded on

[99] Conversation with KIA officer, Laiza, 15 March 2014.

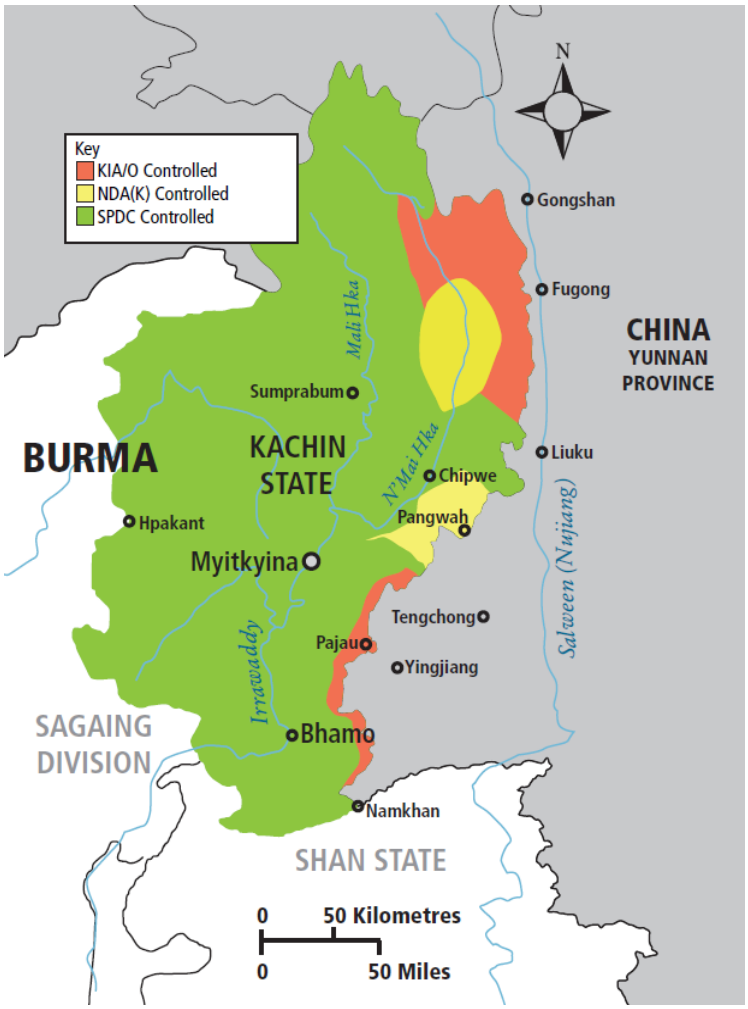
5 February 1961 minorities by a broad coalition - including Kachin university students in Yangon, intellectuals in Kachin State's capital of Myitkyina, and Kachin veterans of the Second World War - in reaction towards repressive state policies that discriminated against ethnic minorities. It quickly developed into one of the most powerful and best organised ethno-nationalist insurgencies in Myanmar. By the end of the 1980s it controlled vast parts of Kachin State and northern Shan State, administering them as a para-government (Smith 1999, 191–92). During these decades the KIO was at the forefront of Myanmar's ethnic minority struggle against the central state.[100]

In 1994 the KIO signed a ceasefire with Yangon. According to Nicholas Farelly, the agreement became 'integral to the security of northern Burma' for the 17 years to follow (Farrelly 2012, 54). There are different accounts regarding why that has happened. Most important was the state's changing counterinsurgency strategy in the early 1990s. Being faced with pressures of their own, Myanmar's generals changed from applying all-out military force to crush various insurgent armies to a strategy that sought to pacify these restive borderlands by granting various insurgency movements the concessions to hold on to pockets of territories, retain their arms, and pursue their own businesses. The truce agreement with the KIO in 1994 materialised at a time when many other armed groups in Myanmar's north had already signed individual ceasefires. The Kachin movement was under pressure to do so for different reasons. Most importantly, a *Tatmadaw* offensive had isolated its strong southern brigade, which was fighting in neighbouring northern Shan State. Without possibilities of being resupplied, these units formed an independent movement in 1991 – the Kachin Defence Army (KDA) – and signed an individual ceasefire with the government (Kramer 2009). A little known fact, moreover, is that shortly before the KIO signed their own armistice, Chinese arms dealers had cheated the group, disappearing with

[100] While the KIO started out as a separatist movement, it later demanded for autonomous provisions under a federal constitution rather than outright secession. For more background on the history of the movement see Smith 1999, 60-87, 190-198, 301-333; Sadan 2013, 331–60.

almost its entire war chest without delivering the promised weaponry in return.[101] According to the General Secretary of the KIO, another major incentive behind their agreement lay in the provisions that allowed a war weary-movement to retain their arms and to administer a sizeable part of Kachin State: the so-called Kachin State Special Region-2.[102] This ceasefire territory spanned approximately one fifth of Kachin State, mainly along the Chinese border around the rebel-held towns of Laiza and Maijayang and in the lesser populated parts of northern Kachin State. Most other areas - including the state capital of Myitkyina – remained under government control (Dean 2005, 131). These areas are approximated in red on the following map that illustrates territorial control in Kachin State in 2005. The green areas demarcate the control of the *Tatmadaw*. The yellow area is the Kachin State Special Region-1, which was controlled by the New Democratic Army-Kachin (NDA-K).[103]

[101] This was confirmed in various conversations with differently situated KIO insiders, among them a Kachin religious leader, interviewed in Laiza, Kachin State, Myanmar, 29 March2014.
[102] Interview with Brig.-Gen. Dr. La Ja, KIO general secretary, Chiang Mai, November 2013.
[103] The NDA-K, which was made up of mostly non-Jingphaw Kachin, split from the KIO due to intra-ethnic grievances and ideological differences in 1968, when it joined the communist umbrella of the CPB. After the collapse of the CPB in 1989, the NDA-K concluded a ceasefire with the Myanmar government and transformed into a *Tatmadaw* controlled Border Guard Force (BGF) militia in 2009. While its territory demarcated on the map below seems relatively large, the NDA-K was of comparatively minor strength, commanding about 1,000 soldiers. In contrast to the KIO, it never exerted exclusive control over its assigned territory and did not attempt to create a state within a state. Observers agree that the group was focused on business rather than politics (Global Witness 2005, 54; South 2008, 153; Callahan 2007, 42–45). Writing during the ceasefire years, Callahan notes that 'the NDA-K operates more like an armed syndicate, while the KIO has tried to establish a kind of state-within-a-state' (Callahan 2007, 42).



Map 9: Territorial control in Kachin State as of 2005 (Global Witness 2005, 56)

Outside observers also highlighted the importance of economic incentives that additionally made the armistice palatable to rebel leaders (Sherman 2003; Smith 2007). The government granted the KIO the right to exploit their area's vast natural resources by allowing it to set up their own legal corporations, to sell concessions to other companies, and to tax the ever growing transborder trade with China. Subsequently, the KIO became one of the most accommodating ceasefire groups, some of whose leaders seemed more interested in plundering their territories together with *Tatmadaw* generals and Chinese businessmen than in waging revolutionary war (Global Witness 2003, 117–18). As a KIO leader admitted, 'the government gave a lot of business opportunities to the armed groups and some leaders made a lot of benefits from that,

not only within the KIO but also in other groups.'[104] Yet, he explains that the KIO leaders hoped that the arising economic opportunities will help to develop the marginalised region to the benefit of the Kachin people.[105] The government, in fact, welcomed the KIO to take part in its Border Regions Development Programme, whose alleged success was propagandised by the regime's mouthpiece newspaper "The New Light of Myanmar" on February 1994:

> 'Border regions of today are not like before. Education, public health, communications and agriculture have progressed and developed. The city of Yangon has now become more easily accessible to border regions. Post and telegraph services are already functioning. Electric lights have brightened the border regions. National races who had lived in darkness in the past are now enjoying the fruits of progress.' (The New Light of Myanmar, 14 February 1994 cited as in Lambrecht 2000).

Although the idea of economic development was welcomed in impoverished and war-torn Kachin State, many Kachin eyed the construction of roads and bridges with mixed feelings because they allowed the state – mostly in the form of the *Tatmadaw* – to gradually tighten its grip over formerly off-limits territory.[106] In addition, it soon transpired that Myanmar's military government was not willing to seek a broader political solution to end the country's civil war, arguing that it could not decide on political matters due to its own status as an interim administration.

The ceasefire, however, left the KIO with the formal authority to govern an own designated territory. This transformed the movement from an insurgent army into a local para-government. With no means to achieve its original political goals, it was left to focus on administration and economic development. As a local leader stated in 2002, 'we agree on the need for development. Instead of talking (politics), which will not bring agreement, we should practice (development). We need to build for the

[104] Interview with KIO Joint-General Secretary U La Nan, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[105] Interview with KIO Joint-General Secretary U La Nan, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[106] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Myitkyina, 13 February 2014.

future' (International Crisis Group 2003, 10). While the KIO always had governing ambitions in its controlled territories and possessed rudimentary administrative structures, before 1994 it was primarily a guerrilla war-fighting organisation (Lintner and Lintner 1990). With the ceasefire in place, its civilian components proliferated. The KIO established functional departments, including the departments of health, education, agriculture, and women's affairs. In addition, it started to operate several civilian hospitals, equipped with Chinese utensils and run by Chinese-educated doctors and technicians. Nurses have since been educated in their own dedicated training school, similar to teachers who work in a non-accredited schooling system (International Crisis Group 2003, 10).

The major focus of the KIO rested on the development of physical infrastructure as described by the KIO General Secretary Brig.-Gen. Dr. La Ja. Construction of roads was mostly outsourced to private companies in return for logging and mining concessions. The road from Myitkyina to Sumprabum and further on to Putao was, for instance, built by Jadeland Company owned by Kachin businessman Yup Zaw Hkawng (Global Witness 2005, 69). Looking back at the 1990s, Dr. La Ja assesses:

> 'Our most significant achievement during these years was infrastructure development. […] So we developed many roads, for cars.. for example from Bhamo to Myitkyina, more than 100 miles. These were very good roads, perfect roads. But now they are destroyed by the war.'[107]

The KIO also sought to improve the dire electricity supply in Kachin State. To do so the KIO set up their own development corporation, the BUGA Corporation, which hired the Chinese company Jinxin to develop two hydropower plants at the Mali and the Dabak rivers in return for extensive logging rights in the area (Global Witness 2009, 59). Since 2006 these dams have provided electricity to Myitkyina—the

[107] Interview with KIO General Secretary Brig.-Gen. Dr. La Ja, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 14 November 2013.

government-controlled provincial capital of Kachin State—and neighbouring Waimaw Township.[108] Interestingly, BUGA still provides electricity to the government-held towns of Myitkyina and Bamo despite the return to war in 2011. A company representative explains this with reference to the Kachin civilians living in these towns, stating that 'they are also Kachin. So we cannot just shut down the power.'[109] Zawng Buk Than - head of the KIO's Economics Department - describes the paradoxical situation of this rebel company, which continues to operate despite the collapse of the ceasefire that had originally sanctioned it:

> 'We established the company when we signed the ceasefire agreement in 1994, because with the ceasefire agreement the government allowed us to open official companies. And it can legally exist even now, after the ceasefire. We still get a lot of income through the BUGA company.'[110]

Besides such revenues from own KIO-companies, the rapidly expanding ceasefire economy – fueled by Chinese hunger for the area's natural riches - was instrumental in funding the KIO and its developmental ambitions, Brig.-Gen. Dr. La Ja explains that the KIO 'used taxes collected from all the companies working with natural resources, you know... timber and mining, to develop our infrastructure.'[111] Apart from large-scale land sales, Kachin civilians were not taxed in this newly established order.[112] This reliance on and entanglement with incoming business interests, however, had fundamental consequences for the KIO, detrimentally affecting leadership cohesion, which in turn affected legitimate authority relations between elites and grassroots.

[108] Interview with BUGA company representative, Myitkyina, 14 February 2014.
[109] Interview with BUGA company representative, Myitkyina, 14 February 2014.
[110] Interview with Head of the KIO Economics Department Zawng Buk Than, Laiza, 25 March 2014.
[111] Interview with KIO General Secretary Brig.-Gen. Dr. La Ja, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 14 November 2013.
[112] Interview with Head of the KIO Economics Department Zawng Buk Than, Laiza, 25 March 2014.

To be sure, the KIO has long been involved in illicit economic activities on the Myanmar-Chinese border to fund its armed struggle, most importantly jade mining and small commodity smuggling (International Crisis Group 2004, 10).[113] Yet, the 1994 ceasefire stabilised the area to an extent that enabled Chinese, Myanmar and Kachin companies to exploit natural resources on an unprecedented scale and pace (Buchanan, Kramer, and Woods 2013, 17–18). Since then, the Myanmar government has gradually taken control of the most resource-rich parts of the region, including the infamous jade mines of Hpakant. Yet, the head of the Kachin's Economics Department explains:

> 'Even though the Hpakant region has fallen under the official control of the Burmese generals since the ceasefire in 1994, we have our clandestine ways to manoeuvre there. Although we don't use formal, or… let's say legal methods, we can still acquire taxes from the companies.'[114]

These informal taxation practices are mostly related to protection rackets imposed by the KIO on companies operating within its reach as well as KIA mobile and stationary toll gates along illicit trade routes towards the Chinese border. Yet, the KIO official explicated that since the *Tatmadaw*'s intrusion into and incremental take-over of the jade sector,[115] the KIO has started to rely more heavily on timber logging.[116] This became additionally attractive by rising prices paid by Chinese consumers due to a newly imposed logging ban in China (Buchanan, Kramer, and Woods 2013, 18).

[113] While other ceasefire groups, including the Shan, Kokang and Wa as well as Kachin militias, have relied on the de-facto legalised narcotics production to fund themselves, the KIO was never a big player in the narcotics industry and has refrained from drugs-related business since 1991 (Interview with Head of the KIO Economics Department Zawng Buk Than, Laiza, 25 March 2014).
[114] Interview with Head of the KIO Economics Department Zawng Buk Than, Laiza, 25 March 2014.
[115] Since the 1994 ceasefire the *Tatmadaw* has taken control over the most lucrative jade mining areas, particularly around Hpakant. Today the jade industry is controlled by senior *Tatmadaw* commanders who control access for mining companies by granting mining concessions to crony businessmen, who often work as proxies for Chinese investors, which as foreign companies are not permitted to invest directly into Myanmar's mining sector (Global Witness 2015, 40–71).
[116] Interview with Head of the KIO Economics Department Zawng Buk Than, Laiza, 25 March 2014.

Asked about the massive deforestation in KIO territories, reported by Global Witness (Global Witness 2009), the KIO leader nods: 'We know that it's not good for the environment and environment agencies prohibit timber cutting like that,'[117] yet, he justifies: 'but we need to manage our income. So we need to do it. We need that business up until now'.[118] After the ceasefire in 1994 Chinese companies also started with large-scale hydraulic gold mining – mostly along the river banks of the Irrawaddy River and its two tributaries: Mali and N'mai. Since then taxing gold mine operators has also provided the KIO with new sources of income.[119] Participating in these lucrative industries, however, sparked greed among the top leadership of the KIO.

A well-connected leader of the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) - the most important religious institution in Kachin State - explained how these new opportunities turned rebel leaders into businessmen:

> 'The KIO has many departments and the department heads know the Chinese businessmen well. Until 2008/9 many KIO leaders became big businessmen, including the heads of the mining and forest department. They became rich. [...] They have many nice houses in the cities and a lot of land. They worked very close with the Myanmar leaders [and in this respect were] not faithful to the KIO.'[120]

Business interests indeed facilitated cooperation between individual rebel leaders and Myanmar officials. This was mainly because of the central role the *Tatmadaw* was playing in the ceasefire economy. Despite the formal devolution of power to ceasefire groups in their specially designated administrative zones, *Tatmadaw* generals and military intelligence acted have long acted as gatekeepers to most "crown jewels" in the region. This is due to their cachet of officialdom, which allows them to

[117] Interview with Head of the KIO Economics Department Zawng Buk Than, Laiza, 25 March 2014.
[118] Interview with Head of the KIO Economics Department Zawng Buk Than, Laiza, 25 March 2014.
[119] Interview with Head of the KIO Economics Department Zawng Buk Than, Laiza, 25 March 2014.
[120] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Myitkyina, 13 February 2014.

sell land concessions with ostensible investment security to foreign companies in ways that rebel armies cannot. Warm relations with state elites is, hence, key to doing big business in these territories even for the KIO (International Crisis Group 2004, 10). Observers also noted that 'during the KIA ceasefire years, collaboration with the Myanmar government became socially acceptable among Kachin elites' (Farrelly 2012, 55).

At the same time as many Kachin leaders developed intimate ties with their erstwhile enemies, competing business interests sparked rivalry among them. Individual strongmen often lined the pockets of their own families first. This led to the fragmentation of the movement's leadership, turning KIO strongmen against each other (Sherman 2003, 235). In the early 2000s, these tensions peaked violently. In 2001, Lt.-Gen. N'ban La ousted the organisation's top-leader since the ceasefire - Gen. Zau Mai - in a coup. According to the KBC elder this happened because of rival business interests:

> 'Inside the KIO they had many individual conflicts, you know.. Zau Mai, he took too much opportunities, advantage to do business, working with the Chinese, and also his own relatives, very close relatives. This is why the power struggle happened in the KIO [...]. Many people viewed him as too much selfish, giving our jade mining concessions to his relatives. That's why N'ban La took over the power from him. This is one reason. And the second reason is [...] he came very close to Myanmar leaders. That is why the KIO Central Committee worried about that. This was the foundation for the conflict.'[121]

When asked about the assassination of the rebel army's vice-chief of staff and head of intelligence in 2004 following another coup attempt, he adds that 'all the conflicts within the KIO back then were based on business, based on personal business

[121] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Myitkyina, 13 February 2014.

interests.'[122] The KIO's new Joint-General Secretary U La Nan explains that he retrospectively understands that the offered economic opportunities were part of a 'government policy to weaken us as well as the other armed groups.'[123] Speaking about these days he admitted:

> 'We thought that the ceasefire will lead to a political settlement. But as time went by without [political] talks, we were given incentives, such as business, whatever you want. In that time, some of us wanted to do business […]. The division among us appeared […]. When we left the political and revolutionary aims behind in exchange for personal businesses, we had a separation in the group. This happened to every [ceasefire] organisation.' [124]

Besides sparking disastrous infighting within the movement's leadership, the increased entanglement in the region's lucrative ceasefire economies has weakened the movement by damaging its vertical relations - i.e. legitimate authority relations between the movement's elites and their grassroots, as will be shown next. This was because the same economies that enriched individual rebel leaders infringed on the livelihoods of local communities sparking new grievances among the latter as well the KIO's own rank-and-file. This time, however, the resentments were not directed against Yangon, but against the KIO leadership itself, leading to the erosion of the rebel leaders' legitimacy among their grassroots. Crumbling authority relations in turn eroded the group's previously stable support networks among the wider Kachin public.

2.2 Eroding Authority – New Grievances and Growing Alienation

The new prospects for increased security and welfare initially had the potential to benefit the standing of KIO leaders after the ceasefire was inked. In 1994 many Kachin civilians indeed felt optimistic that their insecure and impoverished

[122] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Myitkyina, 13 February 2014.
[123] Interview with KIO Joint-General Secretary U La Nan, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[124] Interview with KIO Joint-General Secretary U La Nan, Laiza, 29 March 2014.

circumstances would improve after decades of brutal civil war.[125] To be sure, the end of fighting removed the most significant source of insecurity. The developmental agenda of the KIO also contributed to increased access to education, health and electricity in their administered areas (South 2008, 55: 190-192). Moreover, incoming investments and better transport links made many towns of Kachin state modestly prosperous (Farrelly 2012, 56). Despite these tangible benefits, many ordinary Kachin today feel as if their socio-economic lots as well as their security situations have not significantly improved during the ceasefire period. This is mostly due to the large-scale unsustainable resource exploitation and further militarisation, which were unleashed after the ceasefire. Despite the KIO's attempt to expand its governance arrangements, the movement's reciprocal exchange relations with local communities had, hence, suffered, mainly because it could not protect communities from forced displacement and other insecurities. The following section will show how this failure has added to resentments over the increasingly authoritarian and corrupt leadership style. This posed a threat to the social identities of lower ranking insurgents and rebel supporters, which sparked alienation among the movement's grassroots and ultimately eroded leadership authority.

To briefly recapitulate, Chapter Two posited that reciprocal exchange relations between rebels governing territory and local communities form a key mechanism behind legitimate rebel authority. Rebel rulers provide public goods, such as basic welfare and security, in return for which local communities support or at least willingly obey rebel rule. If these relations are working an implicit social contract between rebels and local communities underpins the insurgent social order. When rebels struggle to provide public goods relative to the same extent as they did before, the legitimacy of insurgent rule suffers. The following observations suggest that the failure to deliver security to local communities against external enemies eroded leadership authority in the KIO, indeed. It seems, however, that this was not so much the case because of undelivered material promises, as contractualism would suggest. Under the conditions of prolonged rebel rule, the Kachin insurgent social order has become naturalised for

[125] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Laiza, 29 March 2014.

many decades and embedded the movement into the social context to the extent that insurgents and civilians are often impossible to distinguish. Support for the insurgency should, therefore, best be understood as a routinised practice rather than a conscious deliberation over material obligations. The inability to provide security for local communities has, thus, eroded leadership authority within the movement because it posed significant threats to the self-conception of the insurgent's own-rank-and-file. This undermined the second proposed key mechanism behind rebel authority: the ability of its grassroots to derive positive social identities from affiliation to the insurgent collective.

The livelihoods of local population in Kayin and Kachin States traditionally depend on smallholder and subsistence farming. Before the 1994 ceasefire these were often undermined by forced displacement as a result of armed conflict. The Kachin ceasefire has, however, not always improved this situation. The end to fighting has enabled large-scale investments, most of which originated from China, that created new sources of displacement and environmental degradation impeding on livelihoods of local communities. The logging and mining sectors saw the most rapid expansion after the ceasefire was in place. Small scale-mining industries, such as jade mining in Hpakant or gold-mining in Hugawng, industrialised their operations with the influx of Chinese capital. The use of heavy machinery and explosives has since degraded entire mountain ranges (Global Witness 2015, 38). The following sequence of satellite images show the rapid expansion of jade mining in the Hpakant valley.

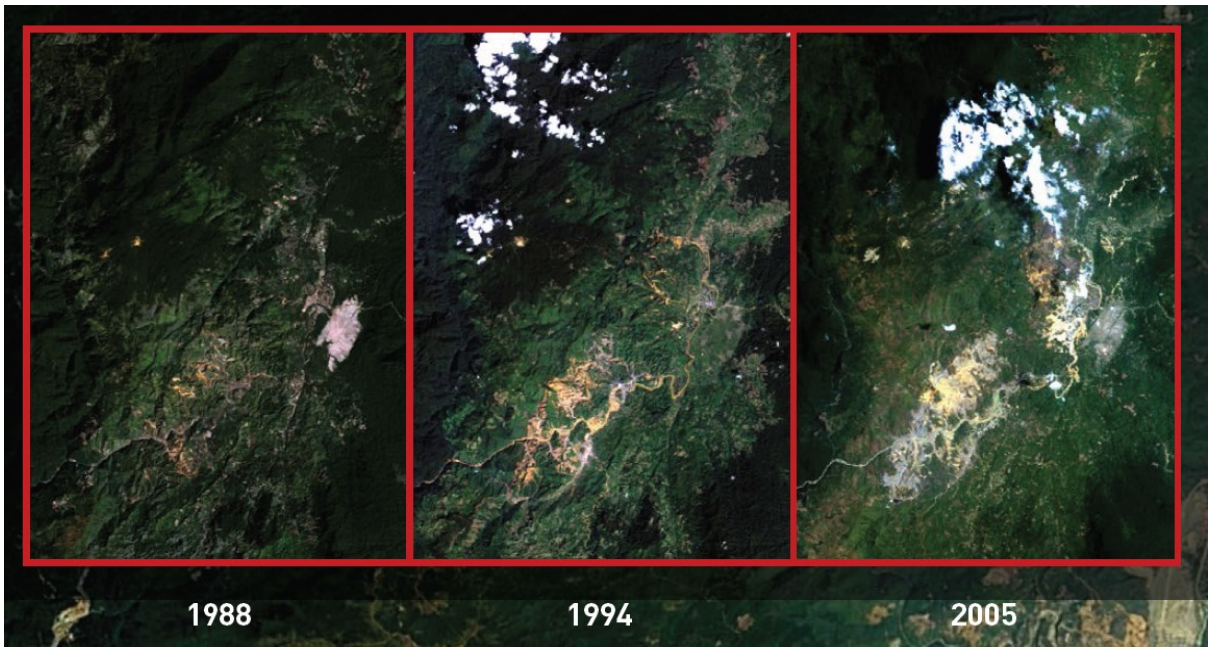


Figure 2: Satellite images of jade mining operations in Hpakant before and after the Kachin ceasefire (Source: Global Witness 2015, 39).

Gold mining has become the second largest mineral extraction activity in Kachin State. While 14 small-scale gold mines existed in Western Kachin State's Hugawng Valley at the time of the ceasefire in 1994, they expanded to 31 industrialised mines in 2006. Relying on mercury as a chemical reagent to loosen the gold, hydraulic mining has since polluted the rivers and soil. Since the ceasefire, timber logging also increased dramatically, which led to large-scale deforestation. This was not least because the KIO lost access to the most profitable mining areas, including Hpakant to the *Tatmadaw,* and relied more heavily on timber logging for generating its revenues, as explained above (Global Witness 2009). Since, the mid-2000s Chinese agro-businesses have, moreover, invested in large mono-crop plantations for cash and food crops. While these have benefitted Chinese businessmen and local authorities, they further marginalised local communities who suffer under the impacts of large-scale monoculture, including soil degradation, land encroachment, and the dependence on volatile market forces (Buchanan, Kramer, and Woods 2013, 47).

Private concessions for commercial land use, for mining, logging, and agro-businesses, have, hence, impeded on local livelihoods and often additionally led to the

displacement of smallholder farms, resulting in land-poverty and landlessness. This development has been accentuated across Myanmar's ethnic border areas because of the uncodified status of communal land ownership that often goes hand in hand with traditionally practised swidden agriculture in the highlands. In areas of resource extraction and agro-business this has facilitated large-scale "land-grabbing", in effect resulting in the landlessness of more than half of the rural population in most areas of Kachin State (Buchanan, Kramer, and Woods 2013, 47). Some of these "land grabs" and business-related displacements are well documented by local rights activists. The Kachin Development Networking Group, for instance, reports about the Hukawng Valley. In 2001 the Myanmar government officially designated the area as the world's largest tiger reserve in cooperation with an US-based NGO, The Wildlife Conservation Society (Kachin Development Networking Group 2012). The establishment of such nature conservation areas since the early 2000s has posed additional burdens to local livelihoods because they restricted access to forests, including their resources such as game and timber, for local people (cf. Buchanan, Kramer, and Woods 2013, 18). The Kachin organisation also reported that despite the stated aim of conservation, most parts of the valley were granted to the Myanmar-based Yuzana Company in 2006, which established an 81,000 hectares mono-crop plantation for cassava and sugarcane. About the subsequent displacement of local communities, the organisation writes as follows:

> 'Bulldozers have razed forest areas, animal corridors, and farmlands of ethnic people living in the valley for generations. […] Local people have been forced from their homes into a relocation camp' (Kachin Development Networking Group 2012).

In addition to the environmental costs and investment-induced displacement, the ceasefire economies brought about new social problems. The most obvious one relates to the spread of narcotics and related HIV/Aids. This was due to increased availability and demand. Poppy production itself is nothing new to the area long-known as the 'golden triangle.' After most local insurgent groups agreed to ceasefires opium, heroin and amphetamine production in Shan and Kachin State flourished

further as it became part of the area's 'ceasefire capitalism' (Woods 2011; Meehan 2011). Richard Synder argued that the *Tatmadaw* granted ceasefire groups the right to engage in narcotics production as a 'lucrative "exit option"' from violence (Snyder 2006, 959). With the de-facto legalisation of the narcotics industry, drugs in Kachin State have since become cheaper and more readily available, even though the KIO itself officially stopped growing poppy in 1991.[126] Impoverishment and insecurity have been the key drivers of the burgeoning opium industry, which is mostly located in Kachin and Shan States.[127] As Patrick Meehan showed in the case of Shan State, the opium and heroin trade is controlled foremost by pro-government militias. The actual growing of poppy is, however, often done by impoverished highland farmers as a means of survival (Meehan 2011). Large-scale Chinese crop substitution programmes that have involved Chinese investment in monoculture rubber plantation in northern Myanmar since 2006, however, might have done more harm than good to the livelihood of local farmers as elaborated above (Buchanan, Kramer, and Woods 2013, 47).

At the same time narcotics have spread throughout Kachin State, demand for drugs has also surged. This was due to the expansion of labour-intensive extractive industries, which have attracted droves of migrant workers from all over the country to the mining towns of Kachin State (Buchanan, Kramer, and Woods 2013, 18). The practice among heroin users of sharing needles in combination with the expansion of prostitution in these commercial hubs sparked HIV/Aids epidemic in northern Burma (Kachin Development Networking Group 2007, 37–56). A local social worker – who is working with drug affected youth in the government-controlled state capital of Myitkyina - states that these developments had a particularly severe effect on the Kachin youth.[128] According to him, half of the local university students were drug-

[126] Interview with Head of the KIO Economics Department Zawng Buk Than, Laiza, 25 March 2014.
[127] Although the opium industry had steadily declined between 1997 and 2006 as a result of opium bans by various ceasefire groups, including the KIO, it has risen steadily again since, doubling its output from 2006 to 2012 (Buchanan, Kramer, and Woods 2013, 2; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2014).
[128] Conversation with Kachin social worker, Myitkyina, 10 February 2014.

addicts. While exact figures could not be verified, the severity of the narcotics problem among Kachin youth was evidenced by a visit to Myitkyina University in February 2014. Heroin, needles, and amphetamines were readily available on campus. In the social worker's opinion, which is shared among many local Kachin, government officials turned a blind eye to these activities because narcotics provided a convenient to crush ethnic resistance. He states that 'the army has stopped killing us directly. Now they leave us to destroy ourselves.'[129]

These developments severely undermined the legitimacy of KIO leaders among local communities. A local priest described that 'some of our leaders back then behaved just like warlords'[130] and that the legitimacy of the KIO in local communities eroded after the ceasefire. He remembered that in the late 1990s and early 2000s many former supporters 'didn't accept the KIO as their representative anymore.' [131] According to him, continued impoverishment of local communities at a time when KIO leaders grew rich was only one of the reasons for that. More, important was that displacement and repression did not end for ordinary Kachin with the cessation of fighting in 1994. Consulting with internally displaced persons (IDPs) in various IDP camps - which have mushroomed once more since the renewed escalation of conflict across Kachin state - indicates that for some communities who previously enjoyed the protection of the KIA, insecurity had even increased during the ceasefire years. A father of five, for instance, reported that his family had to flee four times during the last twenty years, which two of his sons did not survive: 'Now we ended up here because of the war. But before that we had to leave because the companies and Burmese soldiers took our land for doing business.'[132]

The *Tatmadaw*, moreover, used the ceasefires of the 1990s to build up military capacities in northern Myanmar, particularly in areas of economic interests. In Bhamo District of Southern Kachin State, the *Tatmadaw* maintained four battalions before the

[129] Conversation with Kachin social worker, Myitkyina, 10 February 2014.
[130] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[131] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[132] Conversation with IDP, KIO-administered IDP camp outside Laiza, 15 March 2014.

1994 ceasefire. Ten years later, its presence increased to ten battalions, all of whom have confiscated approximately three hundred acres of land each (Human Rights Watch 2005, 55). For local communities, this was often accompanied by abuses at the hands of *Tatmadaw* soldiers - including extortion, forced labour, and expropriation (Global Witness 2009, 64–66). Sitting on his desk in the KIO's "Pentagon" – the abandoned Chinese casino in Laiza, the Joint-General Secretary of the KIO U La Nan pondered about this predicament:

> 'This became a dilemma and weakened the KIO. Within the ceasefire it was very difficult for the KIO to manoeuvre between the government and the civilians. They were trying to get trust from the civilian side but also not to break down the ceasefire with the government. [..] From the civilians view, the KIO sometimes even looked like a government agency.'[133]

Another senior KIA officer in the movement's liaison office in Chiang Mai had equally bad memories of these days, admitting in a conversation that among the biggest problems arising of this situation was that 'we could not provide security for the public. We simply had no power to protect them.'[134] According to a local priest in Laiza, this lack of protection was, indeed, one of the major issues why 'people became very disillusioned about the KIO and thought it lost its revolutionary goals.'[135] The provision of effective physical security, including protection against external enemies and the upholding of internal order, has become a particular important source of legitimacy for the Kachin insurgency. This is even more so as protecting the community is arguably the essential moral principle of an insurgent movement built on ethnonational ideology. The KIO's lacking ability to protect Kachin civilians from abuses by government troops, from the land-grabs of Chinese companies, and the rampant environmental and social problems arising from the ceasefire economy, therefore, led to the rapid erosion of rebel leaders' authority by the early 2000s. This

[133] Interview with KIO Joint-General Secretary U La Nan, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[134] Interview with senior KIA officer, Chiang Mai, 14 November 2013.
[135] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Laiza, 29 March 2014.

happened not only among local communities but also among the movement's own rank-and-file, particularly among the foot soldiers of its armed wing.[136]

While civilian departments in the KIO expanded during the ceasefire years and individual leaders enriched themselves, the loser of this transformation from a guerrilla army into a business and development-focused quasi-government was the organisation's armed wing: the KIA. At the same time as its senior commanders capitalised upon the ceasefire economy, defections and low morale withered the KIA's base away. Young officers and foot soldiers were barred from similar lucrative opportunities. In order to feed their families and themselves, they had to supplement their nominal monthly sold of 100 Chinese Renminbi - equivalent to $16 – with operating petty businesses, such as small-scale cross-border jade smuggling or being supported through family networks.[137] Witnessing their own leaders' self-enrichment and their amicable ties with Myanmar's establishment, their complicity in exploiting their own territories, their internal feuds, as well as experiencing their own inability to protect Kachin civilians, the morale plunged within the middle and lower ranks of the KIA. A Kachin soldier remembers these days as 'really dark,' explaining his estrangement from the insurgency at a time when 'we just didn't know what to fight for anymore'.[138]

The dilapidated state of the KIA during this time was a far cry from its pre-ceasefire situation. When Lintner visited the area in the 1980s he wrote: 'Discipline in the KIA was always impressive by any standards' (Lintner and Lintner 1990, 174). In contrast, a local journalist elaborates how the armed wing threatened to collapse in the early 2000s, as many soldiers 'really didn't like the ceasefire but wanted to continue fighting for their rights. Some ran away and tried to organise something else.'[139] A local priest recaptures the waves of desertions during these years when 'almost all of them, something like 80 percent of the KIA soldiers went back home. They got very

[136] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[137] Conversation with KIA soldier, Laiza, 20 March 2014.
[138] Conversation with KIA soldier, Laiza, 20 March 2014.
[139] Interview with local journalist, Maijayang, 14 April 2014.

discouraged and went home.'[140] Another Kachin elder remembers that the general problem the movement faced during this time was that 'the KIO, the organization itself, was poor, but the leaders, personally, they became rich.'[141]

This almost collapse of the KIO signified how the tides have changed over time. While the ceasefire had seemed to be in the interest of both sides – the KIO and the *Tatmadaw* – in 1994, it brought the KIO to the brink of collapse by the early 2000s. This was mainly because the ceasefire's modus operandi ruptured reciprocal exchange relations, i.e. the implicit social contract, between the KIO and local communities, thereby, causing the insurgency's previously stable support networks among the Kachin public to crumble. The testimonies of Kachin soldiers and supporters of these days elucidate that such relations are not based on conscious deliberations over the distribution of public goods. In a region where local communities and the grassroots of insurgency are inherently intertwined, the delivery of public goods to local communities, particularly security from outside enemies, rather forms part of the expectations of rebels, in line with their self-conceptions of insurgent social identities. Experiencing their own inability to protect the Kachin community from insecurities that were partly caused by their own leaders' self-enrichment, therefore, alienated many lower ranking Kachin insurgents.

To explain how the movement could rebuild authority among its grassroots and remobilise on a large scale, the next section traces a disillusioned group of young officers who gathered around a charismatic leader and realigned with the powerful Kachin churches, the only powerful political institution left wielding significant legitimacy among the Kachin public during most of the ceasefire years. This alliance enabled these aspiring rebel leaders to rebuild legitimate authority relations to local communities, to remobilise the movement by recruiting a new generation of rebels on a large-scale, and ultimately to take over the KIO leadership.

[140] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[141] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Myitkyina, 13 February 2014.

3 Rebuilding Popular Insurgency

By February 2014, renewed armed conflict had ravaged Myanmar's northern-most province of Kachin State for more than three and a half years already. At first glance, the inhabitants of Myitkyina - the government-controlled provincial capital - were going after their everyday business as usual, frequenting the bustling markets and beer bars in the southern part of the city, where people from Myanmar's Bamar majority mingle with Kachin, Shan, and other ethnic minorities. After dark, however, the streets quickly emptied of inhabitants, most of whom had become used to curfews and the omnipresence of the infamous agents of the Myanmar military intelligence in a city that had headquartered the dreaded Northern Command of the *Tatmadaw* for decades.[142] Many of the trains arriving at the nearby train station came from Mandalay. Their waggons were bursting with *Tatmadaw* soldiers on their way to fight Kachin rebels in the trenches of the nearby frontlines just north of Myitkyina.[143] Transferred to cargo trucks, they rode past intimidated civilians, who were rushing by without raising their heads.

The city's northern part offered an intriguingly different sight. The neighbourhood remains almost exclusively populated by ethnic Kachin. It also hosted many IDPs who had sought refuge from recent fighting in more conflict-ridden parts of Kachin State. Two of the largest constructions in this part of town were the ceremonial *Manau* ground, used for traditional festivities, and just opposite of it, the office of the KIO's Technical Advisory Team (TAT), the movement's former ceasefire liaison office, which still housed a small delegation of KIO negotiators. On the street in between, enthusiastic Kachin students from nearby Myitkyina University were selling the insignia of the Kachin insurgency printed on t-shirts for men and women, mugs, keyring holders and protective smart-phone covers from a pop-up stand decorated with KIO flags. Local youth, zipping by on their scooters, frequently

[142] For more information on the conduct and power of frontline *Tatmadaw* commands in ethnic minority areas, cf. Chapter 4.
[143] In Kachin State contemporary armed conflict is largely fought over hilltop positions, where both rebel and government forces are dug into trenches.

stopped to stock up on the accessories, which were deemed stylish among the young Kachin population of Myitkyina. Surprised at the boldness with which young people distributed and wore the insignia of the insurgency in a city, which still felt beleaguered by years of militarisation, I asked one of the students why they did so. To her, my question seemed misplaced, even more so as it came from someone who professed to study the Kachin conflict. In her opinion, the dire situation in Kachin State was self-explanatory as to why the local youth would support the KIO.

The following section will explain this renewed popular support for the Kachin insurgency, showing that the eroding legitimacy of the KIO's old leadership was, indeed, the breeding ground for an aspiring faction of young officers who set out to rebuild legitimate authority relations within the movement. With the help of the powerful Kachin churches and consultative mechanisms they managed to convey due and proper recognition to their rank-and-file and the wider grassroots support networks of the Kachin movement. In effect, large swathes of Kachin started to identify with the insurgency after years of alienation again by the mid- to late-2000s. Utilising this regained authority, the young KIA officers recruited a new generation into the KIO, forming a strong internal force that ultimately enabled them to topple their own superior.

3.1 Re-establishing Authority – 'He is a good gangster now'

The eroding legitimacy of the KIO's incumbent leadership gave rise to young aspiring KIA officers.[144] A close companion of them recounted how the young officers were increasingly pitched against their superior:

> 'There was a gap between old officers and young officers, their ideas and many other things [...]. For example, the old men acted just like Burmese soldiers. They wanted to control the organisation and make profit. But the young officers wanted to change that behaviour.'[145]

[144] Since 2008 Sumlut Gun Maw serves in the position of Major General as the KIA's vice-chief of staff.
[145] Interview with co-founder of the EEDY, Maijayang, 14 April 2014.

Ranked at the middle of a top-down military organisation in a strictly age-based traditional society, these officers were largely excluded from the power and wealth enjoyed by more senior commanders. They were also faced with the potential collapse of their army, a disintegrating central leadership, and the erosion of overall support among local communities. Against this background, they set out to change this unpromising status quo. Crucial to their success was the rebuilding of legitimate authority relations to the movement's grassroots. They managed to do so by establishing new ways of interactions with the insurgency's rank-and-file and, crucially, with the wider Kachin public. In contrast to the old leaders, their methods conveyed due and proper recognition to the movement's grassroots, which enabled the latter to derive positive social identities through affiliation to the insurgency again.

As posited in Chapter Two, positive social identification with the insurgency is a key mechanism behind rebel authority because the motivation of grassroots rebel supporters seems foremost driven by claims to due and proper recognition. The recognition as a valued member of a rebel group that itself is associated with high social standing and moral principles allows for deriving a self-perceived positive social identity. Both of this, collective moral principles as well as relevant status information, i.e. appreciation as a valued group member, is conveyed when the interactions with group authorities are perceived as fair and dignifying. Likewise, the authority of rebel leader erodes, when their interaction with their grassroots is perceived as unjust and disrespectful by the latter and, hence, undermines the insurgent grassroots' positive social identification with the rebel collective.

The widespread grievances among the KIO's rank-and-file and local communities against the movement's ceasefire leaders, whose overt corruption and loss of revolutionary ideals alienated the Kachin insurgent grassroots at the time, provided the young officers with fertile grounds for mobilising against their superior. Building support networks to local communities, nevertheless, posed an immense challenge to the aspiring rebel leaders in a situation where the KIO was widely discredited among the Kachin public. This was highlighted by their aforementioned confidant, who stressed how difficult it was to find ways with which it was possible to

> 'relate to the people again. I mean the people of Myitkyina [the government-controlled capital of Kachin State]. Before that, the people of Myitkyina were afraid of the KIA. Even though they are Kachin, they were afraid of the KIA. [...] Afraid because before that most of the KIA leaders were like businessmen.'[146]

At a time when the government and the insurgency were viewed with significant mistrust, the young KIA officers, therefore, sought the cooperation of the only remaining institution that many ordinary Kachin were still identifying with: the powerful Kachin churches. As elaborated in Chapter 4, the large Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) and the smaller local Catholic Church have had a significant influence on Kachin society, including the production of Kachin ethno-nationalism, and the Kachin armed struggle since the arrival of Christian missionaries in the late 19th century. In fact, most early Kachin ethno-nationalist leaders were educated in church institutions, such as the Kachin Theological College in Myitkyina. While the KIO was never a religiously inspired movement, the interests of the KIO and the Kachin churches have historically overlapped to a significant degree. Most significantly KIO and church elites co-constructed a unified modern Kachin identity in a society that comprises six major ethnic subgroups: Jinghpaw, Lawngwaw, Zaiwa, Nung-Rawang, Lisu, Lachik (Sadan 2013, 331–60).[147]

Although these taxonomies are not entirely uncontested up until today, the creation of ethnic coherence was perpetuated by the nationalistic project of Kachin

[146] Interview with co-founder of the EEDY, Maijayang, 14 April 2014.
[147] The boundaries between them have always been fluid and permeable as explained in Chapter 4.

elites, most of who belong to the majority Jinghpaw sub-ethnicity.[148] With the outbreak of armed conflict in 1961 a coherent Kachin identity became an additional requisite for forging a capable and coherent ethno-nationalist rebel army across sub-ethnic divides. From the outset, Christianity served as both, a mechanism to delineate from the Buddhist Bamar majority, and an imagination of modernity to overcome a self-perceived backwardness (Sadan 2007). This created inextricable ties between the local churches and the Kachin armed movement, which was captured by a local Baptist leader with the following words:

> 'Yes, we have a good relationship because we all belong to Christianity. And most of the KIO are Kachin, very few are non-Kachin, almost all are Christian. We are all relatives. So KIO, KBC, we became the same. Same motivation, same goal.'[149]

Unsurprisingly then, church leaders have historically been influential elites in Kachin society, possessing a moral authority that makes them highly respected within Kachin society. Due to their close ties with the KIO, they have also always been influential within the Kachin insurgency, and for instance played a driving role in pushing for a ceasefire in 1994 as well as in mediating in the negotiations.[150] At the time of field research local churches also enjoyed warm relations between religious elites and the rebel leadership in the area, as I was assured by Father Abraham,[151] a

[148] Historically, there have been instances of grievances against Jinghpaw domination in the KIO. These intra-ethnic power imbalances still persist, which was captured in a conversation with one staff of a Kachin CBO. He lent me his motorbike, to which he referred jokingly as a "*Lisu*-cycle" because the sturdy but cheap model was popular among low-ranking Kachin foot soldiers, who are often recruited from the Lisu subtribe. When thanking him for the "*Lisu*-cycle" upon returning his motorbike he hushed me, asking me not to use this designation because it was politically incorrect (Conversation with CBO member, Laiza, 20 March 2014). The relationship between the different denominations has historically also not been without tension, particularly because of Baptist predominance (Smith 1999, 332). These tensions did, however, not play a role in the recent upheaval, which pitched young officers against their superior, because of the latter's corruption and profiteering. This motive is also not unheard of in the long history of the movement (Smith 1999, 330).

[149] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Myitkyina, 13 February 2014.

[150] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Myitkyina, 13 February 2014.

[151] Name changed.

Catholic priest in Laiza, stating that '[i]t's very, very friendly. We really have great trust on one another, the KIO has great trust on the Catholic Church and we also have great trust in the KIO. We have no problem at all.'[152] The priest, however, also conceded that these relations have only recently improved again after they had significantly cooled off during the ceasefire years. He explained that this was primarily because the senior KIO leaders at the time were becoming 'increasingly secretive, who didn't let the younger leaders or the public know about their plans, and did not listen to us [the churches] either.'[153]

The leader of the young officers, Sumlut Gun Maw, who ranked as a Brigadier in the early 2000s, in contrast, turned out to be an eager listener. While he managed to strike an alliance with some individuals in the more senior ranks of the KIA, including General Gam Shwang, he focused on partnering with the local churches to regain the trust of the Kachin public. When Father Abraham described how he first met Brig. Sumlut Gun Maw in 2002, he stressed his approachability and popularity, which stood in sharp opposite to the old, corrupted, and secretive incumbent leaders. In the priest's own words:

> 'At that time he was a very active young officer. He had a lot of friends in the towns. He is a very friendly person also, he had a lot of friends among the university students, even though they were very much younger. He was a friend of them. Everybody was talking: Duba[154] Gun Maw, Duba Gun Maw! The elders were different, very secretive, they didn't listen to the younger ones, including their ideas. So they didn't let the younger ones or the civilians know. Because of this they [KIO leaders] became divided. […] Gun Maw and other young officers did not like this. They said: let the people know all the ideas, people

[152] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[153] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[154] Duba means "General" in Jinghpaw language.

> should know what we are discussing and where we are going. Only then they will come and cooperate with us.'[155]

Gun Maw's consultative approach transpired to be particularly successful in rebuilding legitimacy among the organisation's grassroots. A diaspora Kachin political activist explained this by stressing the importance that relatively flat hierarchies and practices of consultation play within traditional cultural norms of Kachin society: 'If you want to understand the Kachin rebellion, you need to understand Kachin society first. We are very loyal but we want to be asked. The leaders cannot leave us out of their decisions. But once a decision is made we will follow.'[156] In their attempt to build and expand consultative mechanisms between KIO leaders, KIO grassroots, and wider Kachin society, the young officers relied heavily on the wide-reaching networks of the Kachin churches, which unlike the KIO has not suffered a loss of legitimacy during the ceasefire years. Father Abraham proudly explicated the key role that the churches played in reviving the movement's authority:

> 'I advised him [Gun Maw] about the importance of organising the local, the village level. Just like the Vietnamese did. But here we need to organise through the religious churches. So our churches became a great force in that. Because when the people from the different towns and the different villages when they came here and saw me with my clothes in white among the other people [the KIO officers] who came for the meeting [consultation], they were very inspired. They saw that there is change.'[157]

[155] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[156] Conversation with member of the Kachin diaspora, London, 28 October 2015. In her account of traditional Kachin society, she referred to Edmund Leach's work, which stresses the constant flux of traditional Kachin political organisation between more hierarchical forms (*gumsa*) and more egalitarian ones (*gumlao*), in which consultative councils play an important role (Edmund Leach 1954). While the plausibility of Leach's seminal depiction of Kachin society is a matter of ongoing debate, the above expressed beliefs regarding relatively flat societal hierarchies and consultative decision-making appear to be widely shared among my interlocutors.
[157] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Laiza, 29 March 2014.

In Laiza, the KIO's capital, I could attend one of these consultative meeting, which was held in "the Pentagon". At the event, young men and women in colourful traditional costumes were welcoming the families of KIA soldiers to gather in one of the large and empty casino rooms-turned-meeting-halls. In the court yard, heavily-armed commando units waited for the arrival of a senior KIO leader, who was supposed to address the soldiers' families. Eventually an elderly general arrived in a $300,000 bullet-proof, luxury-edition Hummer SUV. To my surprise he was not one of the young officers but one of the movement's old former strongmen, who had made a fortune from jade mining but was said to have lost his revolutionary ideals along the way.[158] After the old general had addressed the crowd with a long speech about the need to endure current hardships for the freedom of future generations, he patiently responded to many questions of concerned parents asking about recent developments on the frontline, where their sons and daughters were battling against the militarily much superior *Tatmadaw*. When the meeting finished after more than three hours, the general disappeared as quickly as he came.

I asked a local aid worker, who helped me translate at the meeting, to explain why people would now trust the same old leader that they have disregarded as a "warlord" just a few years ago, especially as he shamelessly displayed his jade millions up until this day. The aid worker looked at me a bit amused and shrugged his shoulders, declaring: 'Sure he is a gangster, but he is a good gangster!'[159] After having heard this comment, a local journalist and KIO insider laughed out loud:

> Journalist: 'Hahaha. Ja, [he] is the good gangster. Yes, sure. He is a good gangster now because he is guided by some good people these days. […] He has a lot of money. [...] But now, Duba Gun Maw and Duba Gam Shwang, they advise him and organise him in the right way. Now he knows the political side of our struggle more. Before that he didn't know this well.'

[158] As this rebel leader continues to be powerful and maintains a role in the movement's leadership, I wish to anonymise his identity.
[159] Conversation with local aid worker, Laiza, 02 April 2014.

> Me: 'So when he overthrew Zau Mai in 2001, it wasn't about politics?'
>
> Journalist: 'No, no, no. You just said it, he is a good gangster. Just like that.'
>
> Me: 'So?'
>
> Journalist: 'At the time it was all about the jade business. But now he changed. His political stand is good. Just now.'[160]

The above observations and exchange illustrate the importance of elite interaction with their grassroots for building authority within non-state armed groups. They show that perceptions about the legitimacy of rebel rulers among the grassroots of a movement are not much shaped either by material interests or binary judgements about the morality of elite behaviour. To be sure, the rampant corruption among the higher echelons of the Kachin insurgency during the ceasefire years has been a cause of growing resentment among the movement's impoverished rank-and-file as well as local communities. It appears, however, that this is not to do with distributional outcomes but depends on whether or not elite interaction with their grassroots conveys respect and dignity to the latter, satisfying their demand for due and proper recognition. Only then it seems can affiliation to insurgency generate positive self-perceived social identities for the insurgent grassroots. This was also illustrated in a conversation with a Kachin diaspora activist in London. Speaking about the jade trade in Kachin state, he clarified that some of the new KIO leaders were also making personal profits from industry. He put it this way: 'David, don't be naïve. They are no angels. They also profit from the jade. But these days, they show that they care about the local population and the KIO.'[161] The above discussion also highlights that it might be less important whether rebel leaders are conveying recognition in their interaction with the grassroots out of their own moral convictions. Crucial for turning a "bad gangster" into a "good gangster" in the case above was the old leader's performance and the way it was perceived.

[160] Interview with local journalist, Maijayang, 14 April 2014.
[161] Conversation with a member of the Kachin diaspora, London, 12 November 2014.

The next section will show how the young KIA officers were able to use their regained popular support to rebuild and remobilise the faltering Kachin insurgency by large-scale recruiting among the disillusioned Kachin youth.

3.2 Mobilising the Youth – "The Love for the Revolution"

After gradually regaining popular support by way of tapping into the social networks and legitimate standing of the Kachin churches that enabled to implement consultative mechanisms, i.e. the conveyance of due and proper recognition to the movement's grassroots, the young officers have utilised their gained authority to rebuild the faltering movement by recruiting a new generation of rebels into the KIO from among the disillusioned Kachin youth. Their recruitment strategies directly address the social pressures and problems of young Kachin, and, in effect, satisfy their claim to recognition, which turns affiliation with the insurgency into a means for positive social identification.

The most instrumental recruitment tool for this was the establishment of a KIO youth wing, the so-called Education and Economic Development for Youth (EEDY). Gun Maw and Gam Shawng jointly established this organisation in 2002 but it only started operating on a large-scale in the mid-2000s. It has targeted youth across Kachin State with a special emphasis on government-controlled areas, where recruiting often happened among school, college and university students. Since then hundreds of youths have travelled to KIO-controlled areas to participate in 45-day-long workshops, in which they learn about Kachin history, the ethnonational political agenda of the KIO and receive basic guerrilla warfare training. One of the founding members of the EEDY explained that the internal upheavals and eroding strength of the KIO in the early 2000s – which he described as 'a very troublesome time' – were the reasons why the young KIA officers

> 'decided that the university system should participate in the KIO. By participating in the KIO, the KIO will become stronger again. It needed much more strength because at the time they faced many problems. Duba Gun Maw also knew about that.

> So after we started the EEDY many more people got to know about KIO because the youth came into the KIO area and participated in training. We give a lot of lectures, like religious, like politics, like history, a lot of lectures, and also armed training.'[162]

The centrality of educational campaigns demonstrate that youth mobilisation in Kachin State was about more than only filling up the deserted lower ranks of the insurgency's armed wing.

Indeed, the emphasise on youth was essential for reviving the wider social movement behind the Kachin insurgent organisation, including the ethnonational project and insurgent political culture in Kachin State, both of which have withered away during the ceasefire years. The aforementioned Joint-General Secretary of the KIO, U La Nan, is one of the young officers loyal to Gun Maw. Since the Kachin ceasefire broke down in 2011, U La Nan became the deputy head of the EEDY as the two previous EEDY leaders, Gun Maw and Gam Shawng, were busy leading the movement's military campaign by the time. He spoke at length about the importance of rebuilding the ethnonational identity and revolutionary spirit of urban youth living in Kachin State's government-controlled population centres for remobilising the ethnonational insurgency. His youth wing, therefore, focused on rebuilding the ethnic Kachin identities of urban youth and their social identities as revolutionaries opposing a Burman-dominated political and social order. In his words:

> 'The government has been ruling with Burmese Nationalism for very long. Other ethnic youths gradually became unaware of their culture values, literature and mother languages and so on. Most began to practice Burman culture and language. This began to happen to us, too. Because we have to go to Burmese schools where we are taught with a Burmese curriculum. The Burmese government teaches only the Burman language, history, culture and religion and so on. But we

[162] Interview with co-founder of the EEDY, Maijayang, 14 April 2014.

> Kachin are predominantly Christian and we do not become Burman easily like others. However, we Kachin youth have little or no knowledge of Kachin culture, customs, history, literature even when graduating from Burmese Universities. […] If we are following this kind of Burmese system, we will gradually end up with the extinction of our identity. So our Kachin youth should understand Kachin affairs such as history, literature, language and culture. In addition, some youths have a burning desire to learn more. And we have to find ways to go further for those who are talented. In our country, have a crisis of the political system. So, we have to do revolution. So, it is important to know why we have to do revolution. […] In this respect, we focus on our youth.'[163]

While U La Nan managed these activities of the insurgency's youth wing when I met him in Laiza, he stressed also stressed that Gun Maw's intimate relations to the movement's grassroots was crucial for establishing the EEDY in the first place. Similar to Father Abraham above, he praised the young rebel officer for his extraordinary charisma:

> 'Leadership ability differs. When General Gun Maw established the EEDY program, he was the Joint- General Secretary in the Central Committee, the position that I am serving in now. The EEDY was established in that time in 2003. But human ability differs from one person to another. He performed this role better, organising youth and the general public from towns and villages to become more united. He could perform so well because of his innate ability to relate to the people. But at the moment he has to travel a lot and has other things to do. So I am the one who is responsible to look after the EEDY. Although I am not as popular as him because I cannot perform like him, I am completing the job as good as I can. When

[163] Interview with KIO Joint-General Secretary U La Nan, Laiza, 29 March 2014.

> we implement this job, it is not identical in terms of performance. I find he has a better ability in this role.'[164]

The young officers did, however, not solely rely on Gun Maw's charisma but sought assistance from various professionals to organise the EEDY successfully. One co-founder of the EEDY is a journalist. He explained that the young officers originally approached him for his media expertise to coordinate the youth wing's public outreach. Besides building the EEDY, he also got involved in the wider propaganda efforts of the KIO, as for instance running the Laiza-based television station Laiza TV, which screens regular news on the ongoing armed conflict between the Kachin rebels and the Myanmar government. He recounted his shock about the dilapidated and backward state of the KIO's media efforts when he first joined the insurgency in 2002:

> 'When I arrived in here they had a media department but they didn't know how to do it. In their offices they still used typewriters. We trained all the PAs [personal assistants to the KIO's department heads] how to use computers, how to use the internet, how to use email, so we trained them. After that they knew all that and their way around the media. And then I started with radio broadcasting. They had some equipment but they didn't know how to use, they didn't know how to write the news, how to broadcast. So I taught them.'[165]

In their effort to reach out to Kachin youth in government-held areas of Kachin State, the KIO also utilised social media platforms. One of the methods utilised was the remaking of classic Kachin revolutionary songs into karaoke version music clips, whose visuals and audio resemble Asian popular music videos from across eastern Asia. These videos can be watched on Laiza TV and on YouTube. One well-known song from the 1970s, for instance, is called 'Shanglawt Sumtsaw Ga Leh' - which means "the love for the revolution".[166] Its lyrics are about daring KIA soldiers calling on beautiful young Kachin women graduating from high schools and colleges to marry

[164] Interview with KIO Joint-General Secretary U La Nan, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[165] Interview with co-founder of the EEDY, Maijayang, 14 April 2014.
[166] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRpUq8ozgcw, last accessed 02 October 2015.

them. According to the song, this way everyone was doing their part for the revolution. Moreover, the verses promise economic safety and physical security and comradeship. One verse, for instance, tells about the commanding officer who will share his troop's rations with the women. While the unchanged song text of the revolutionary oldie might seem somewhat outdated in the 21st century, the video depictions clearly appeal to the desires of Kachin urban youth. Besides featuring ethnonationalist and revolutionary symbols - including dashing uniforms, minority costumes, and a traditional Manau ceremonial ground - in parts of the video, large parts resembles the videos of popular Asian boybands. The KIA soldiers are portrayed as handsome and well-off young men who are leaning against an expensive car and are singing with their guitars in jeans, shirts and sunglasses. The girls wear make-up and fashionable clothes whilst watching from the balcony of a luxuriously looking building.

These idyllic worlds and heroic lyrics stand in stark contrast to the depressed realities of urban Kachin youth, which are characterised by rampant drug abuse and widespread disillusionment about the dire state of the local economy. At a visit to Myitkyina university students seemed generally unenthusiastic about their chosen courses, fearing that higher education will not better their prospects for the future in a region where employment for university graduates is lacking. One physics student expressed this, saying that 'it does not matter what I study. I could study philosophy or law. No job will be there for me.'[167] It is, hence, not surprising, that young Kachin – who have not experienced war before the 1994 ceasefire - were particularly susceptible to revolutionary agendas promising an end to injustice, improved security, and generally a better life, which were broadcasted by way of the EEDY. While some graduates of the EEDY training courses return home afterwards, often operating as recruiters and multipliers in their home communities, others stay on working in the bureaucratic KIO apparatus or joining the organisation's armed wing as part of a three-year long voluntary enlistment service.

[167] Conversation with university student, Myitkyina, 10 February 2014.

Many of the young soldiers who are defending Laiza in hilltop positions outside the town, for instance, have come to join the rebellion by way of the EEDY. One 21-year old KIA soldier, who has lived in the muddy trenches for more than two years, told me that before joining the rebellion he had been a student in a college in Myitkyina, where he had been using heroin and amphetamines. He declared that he would certainly have perished if it was not for the lifeline of the EEDY and later on the KIA.[168] Father Abraham, the catholic priest in Laiza, who was aiding the young officers to set up consultative mechanisms, was also involved in building the EEDY, teaching classes on religion and ethics. He explained that many Kachin youth came to the EEDY experiencing similar social problems themselves or witnessing them within their immediate social circles. According to him, the EEDY scheme was so successful because it addresses these problems providing for a purposeful alternative. In his words: 'So EDDY is about reformation, moral reformation. The youth became very weak in their morality, so we needed to correct this. We teach them the value of God.'[169]

Indeed, it is important to appreciate that by establishing the KIO youth wing, the young officers did not only create a vehicle for rebel propaganda which simply converted urban Kachin youth into gun trotting rebel soldiers. It rather established a platform for the positive social identification with insurgency and the co-production of insurgent political culture. This becomes obvious when tracing the evolution of mobilisation videos on social media platforms, many of which have increasingly been produced by independent Kachin musicians outside the rebel organisation. Their music videos often picture the suffering of Kachin civilians in the renewed conflict and many of these singers profess unambiguous support for the KIO, wearing rebel insignia. In comparison to the EEDY remakes of revolutionary oldies, many of these songs also feature quite radical and violent lyrics.[170] Independent youth mobilisation

[168] Conversation with KIA soldier, frontline position near Laiza, 8 April 2014.
[169] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[170] A good example is the song "Share Shagan Nampan Lahkawng" (Two Heroic Flowers) by Ah Tang. It is dedicated to two female volunteer teachers who were allegedly raped and murdered by *Tatmadaw* soldiers in Northern Shan State in January 2015. The incident sparked protests across Kachin State, not least because government investigators denied army responsibility (Weng,

dovetails with the KIO agenda, which is evidenced by the fact that they are broadcasted by Laiza TV. Yet, they also lodge their own claims, which also impacts on the Kachin insurgent organisation and demonstrates the extent to which the insurgent's youth mobilisation has taken on a life of its own, providing an additional spin to the social process of insurgency.

The impact of this could be witnessed in the case of the so-called *Pat Jasan* movement. The social movement emerged in the wake of the deteriorating narcotics problem in Kachin State as a vigilante movement in 2014. Its objective is to end the narcotics problem in Kachin State as the state seems unwilling and the KIO unable to do so. Besides eradicating poppy fields, the movement also targets drug user directly, and seeks to correct their behaviour with extrajudicial punishment, including beatings and incarceration. The movement has also used music videos to spread its message. Videos that emerged from within the *Pat Jasan* movement refer to narcotics as the 'cold enemy' of the Kachin people and all activities related to producing, selling and using narcotics as a 'cold war'. While these videos emerged independently from the KIO in the wake of the *Pat Jasan* movement, it is interesting to note that the KIO propaganda efforts have picked-up on the discourse using the same themes and terms, such as 'katsi hpyen' (cold enemy) and 'katsi majan' (cold war).[171] One KIO video, for instance, shows a band of young Kachin soldiers rocking hard tunes in front of an IDP camp, declaring the rebel's intend to join into the struggle against drugs: 'It is our duty to

November 02, 2015). It features footage of the crowded funeral march/rally, which was organised by the KBC in Myitkyina for the two young teachers. Wearing a cap with KIO insignia, the musician appeals to the Kachin public to fight their repressors in revenge for the dead women, singing 'It hurts a lot. Two heroic flowers who sacrificed their lives. Tears drop from everyone […] the two flowers had no opportunity to blossom. We will claim blood debt. All the people who love their country and serve their duties. Forward!!! …in harmonious manner… Fight, fight, fight!!! We will fight the enemy while holding up the winning flag… the unjust abusers will lose/fall…we will get rid of the enemies…there will be no footprints of them …fight all the devils… we will win this unjust war. God is with us.' (Cf. https://www.facebook.com/856928137743956/videos/858292547607515/?theater, last accessed 02 October 2015, Translation received on a social media platform from Kachin student, 15 January 2015).

[171] See for instance 'Katsi Majan' Hpe Yawng Rau Gasat Ga https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cT9WyHlwL28 and 'Katsi Majan' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VA0XjH2_mCU

fight against the cold enemy who has destroyed many of our young beautiful lives and happy families... Let us prevent this awful disease, let us fight against the cold enemy!'[172]

After having shown how Maj.-Gen. Gun Maw and his faction of young KIA officers managed to rebuild legitimacy among Kachin society and how created a powerful social movement, the next section analyses how the young officers utilised this newly established force to take over leadership from their superior. This will link back to the larger question about how authority relations interact with the factional power struggles between rival rebel factions in driving the strategies of armed groups.

3.3 Take-Over – 'They could change the old people'

The puzzling change of the KIO's trajectory, with regards to its willingness and ability to take-up arms again after 17 years of ceasefire, cannot be understood as the outcome of top-down decision-making. It rather emerged from the social interaction process between differently situated but interdependent actors, as was argued in Chapter Two. Leadership co-optation during the ceasefire had alienated the movement's grassroots and brought about an internal opposition surrounding a faction of young officers. By re-establishing the insurgencies local networks, these junior leaders managed to repair the movement's ruptured authority relations between local communities and the KIO and to recruit a new generation of rebels loyal to their faction. Creating this strong internal force eventually enabled the young officers to take power from their own superior. While the remainder of this chapter will explain how they managed to do so without encountering noteworthy resistance, it also stresses the dynamic and reciprocal power relations the KIO's new leaders themselves are acting within and to which they have to respond to.

Buoyed by their successful recruitment among Kachin youth, Gun Maw and his followers rebuild the movement's armed wing, which has suffered from mass-desertions during the early 2000s. They, therefore, established an officer's school in

[172] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRMUCCwR14Q, translated by member of the Kachin diaspora in London, 17 May 2016.

the mountains surrounding Laiza in 2007. Since then the facility trained a new generation of able and motivated KIA officers. Most of the school's new cadets have a background with the previously established youth wing. Having gone through its ideological education programme, they are staunch Kachin nationalists and loyal to the faction of young KIA officers. After graduating, they have come to occupy key positions within the expanding rebel army. This has enabled the young officers to gradually take-over power from their own superior. The co-founder of the EEDY proudly explained this as follows:

> 'Now most of the young officers are educated men. They came from universities to the EEDY and then to the new officers school. With that they could change the old people, the old officers [...] after that everything changed in the KIA.'[173]

The new recruits were loyal to the young officers and provided a power base with which they could reform the movement from within and eventually take over leadership. On the face of things, the group still looked and behaved as it has done for most of it ceasefire years: a significantly weakened, business-minded, and conciliatory ceasefire group. Yet, the new internal realities soon became visible.

The shifting power relations within the KIO surfaced in 2008 at a time of heightened tension with the Myanmar government. In an attempt to exert tighter control over non-state armed groups in its borderlands, Naypyidaw demanded that the various ceasefire organisations transform themselves into so-called Border Guard Forces (BGFs). This aimed at legalising armed groups as militias in return for their subordination under *Tatmadaw* command. Moreover, it was meant to minimise their political ambitions by offering the registration of political ethnic minority parties instead, which were promised to compete in future election campaigns (Woods 2011). After long years of ceasefires and militarised state-building - which has significantly reduced the strength of most ethnic armies - Myanmar's generals seemed to have concluded that they finally changed the balance of forces in their favour and were

[173] Interview with co-founder of the EEDY, Maijayang, 14 April 2014.

determined to bring the country's borderlands under more direct control (Jones 2014a). While the BGF issue was not at the heart of the new generational divide within the KIO, it brought the internal struggle for leadership to the fore. According to KIO insiders, many within the old elite were initially inclined to accept the KIO's transformation from a ceasefire group to a government militia.[174] Some of them had previously taken part in other government initiatives, including the National Convention process in 2003, which was tasked with drafting the country's 2008 constitution. An International Crisis Group report in 2012 remembered that even 'despite its failure to have any influence over the National Convention process and outcome, the KIO maintained a fairly cooperative stance' (International Crisis Group 2012, 6). For a long time the movement's old guard – entangled as it was with Myanmar's establishment – had ensured the conciliatory stance of their organisation. In their opinion, accepting the transformation to a government militia and establishing a political party was better than risking a return to armed conflict.[175]

In contrast, the new faction of young officers vehemently opposed the *Tatmadaw*'s demand. In their eyes submitting to the government scheme would have dealt 'the deathblow to the KIO.'[176] This internal controversy provided the trigger for the young officers to finally take over leadership, which they carefully did. First, they mobilised the KIA brigades against the BGF demand and the attempts of the movement's old guard to deescalate the situation by promoting demobilisation. The young officers managed to overcome their own superior because most ranks of the movement's military wing were by that time filled with new recruits and under the firm control of young officers, most of whom had a background with the EEDY. By winning this row over re-mobilising the movement's armed wing, the young officers demonstrated how the internal power relations have shifted over the past years in their favour. By 2008, their faction has indeed become a formidable and coherent force

[174] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Myitkyina, Myanmar, 13 February 2014. Interview with co-founder of the EEDY, Maijayang, 14 April 2014.
[175] Interview with Chairman of the Kachin State Development Party (KSDP) and former KIO Vice-Chairman Dr. Manam Tu Ja, Myitkyina, 10 February 2014.
[176] Interview with KIO Joint-General Secretary U La Nan, Laiza, 29 March 2014.

whereas the established leadership stood weakened by years of infighting. Yet, the officer faction still needed to overcome the resistance of the old leaders. Although they viewed the senior leaders' political stance as having 'become very soft', they were aware that some of them still wielded individual power and commanded small but strong units that were loyal to their own persona.[177] One insider tells that the young officers, therefore, developed 'a secret plan' to topple their superiors without a direct coup.[178] The faction of old ceasefire KIO leaders was, however, not a monolithic bloc but rather fragmented. Some of the old guard proved more resistant to change than others. The young officers therefore engaged three different kinds of leaders them with different means. Some were incorporated into the new order. Others were retired from the organisation. Again others were skill-fully side-lined without stripping them of their formal standing.

Many senior leaders actually agreed with the young officer's less compromising stance, particularly after the organisation has found back to former strength and popularity. They, therefore, allied with the junior officers and have remain part of the revived rebellion's leadership. KIO General-Secretary Brig.-Gen. Dr. La Ja, for instance was a proponent of the 1994 ceasefire negotiations and sought for significant rapprochement with the government during the ceasefire years. Yet, he asserted in an interview that he has long felt alienated himself by the conciliatory approach of the former KIO leadership. According to him, this was because a political solution did not materialise during the ceasefire:

> 'We have long waited for the political negotiations to be started with the government. But nothing came from it. So there is no way to have peace by political solution. So finally, we have to fight with the military means. Only by military means we can have the rights, the ethnic rights. If there

[177] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Myitkyina, Myanmar, 13 February 2014.
[178] Interview with co-founder of the EEDY, Maijayang, 14 April 2014.

> is no alternative solution, to have the ethnic rights we have to rely on military means.'[179]

Others were perceived as genuinely co-opted by Naypyidaw. One of the EEDY's co-founders described them to me as 'the ones who wanted to listen to the government, and join the government'[180]. These were given the opportunity "to retire" from the organisation. One prominent example was former KIO Vice-Chairman Dr. Manam Tu Ja, who was said to have been most inclined to give in to Naypyidaw pressure in 2008 and transform the KIO into a *Tatmadaw* controlled BGF-militia. After the young officers won this dispute and formally took power, he left the KIO with a group of confidants and formed a political party known as the Kachin State Democracy Party (KSDP) instead. According to him as well as one of the young officers, this decision was made unanimously as it was regarded to be in the best interest of everyone.[181]

Again others were incorporated into the new order. This happened to some of the movement's former strongmen whom the young officers deemed to be too powerful still to openly confront. One of them was the old general, the "bad gangster" turned "good gangster", whom I witnessed consoling the soldier's families in one of the movement's new consultative meetings in Laiza, described above.[182] He emerged triumphantly from the leadership's disastrous infights over competing business interests in the early 2000s and is said to have 'formerly decided all things in the KIO'.[183] While he did not enjoy much backing among the young rebel generation, he still commanded units loyal to him personally.[184] To prevent an open confrontation and more infighting, the young officers accommodated his personal interest whilst

[179] Interview with KIO General Secretary Brig.-Gen. Dr. La Ja, Chiang Mai, 14 November 2013.
[180] Interview with co-founder of the EEDY, Maijayang, 14 April 2014.
[181] Interview with Chairman of the Kachin State Development Party (KSDP) and former KIO Vice-Chairman Dr. Manam Tu Ja, Myitkyina, 10 February 2014. Interview with KIO Joint-General Secretary U La Nan, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[182] As above, I wish to anonymise this person's identity in light of his continued role within the KIO leadership.
[183] Interview with co-founder of the EEDY, Maijayang, 14 April 2014.
[184] Conversation with a member of the Kachin diaspora, London, 12 November 2014.

isolating him from the centre of decision-making. Hence, he was retained as the KIO vice-chairman, but placed far from actual power in the group's liaison office in Thailand's Chiang Mai, working with the UNFC ethnic armed alliance organisation. A close companion of the young officers explained how this has made the old general more susceptible to the revolutionary line or, as described above, at least to act accordingly:

> Yes, he has a lot of money. We can say we should remain the good things for him. We should give him the good things, so that he decides good things. But we should advise good things. Just now, Duba Gun Maw and Duba Gam Shwang, they advise him and organise him to act like that. In the UNFC they [Maj. Gen. Gun Maw and Lt. Gen. Gam Shwang] gave him [a position], so that he can learn from other people, other ethnic people. Now he knows the political side of our struggle more. Before that he didn't know this well.'[185]

These different ways in which different types of old leaders were retired or incorporated into the new order do not only expose the skill with which the aspiring faction took over control. They also highlight the multiplicity of interests within rebel groups and the fluidly changing relations between differently situated insurgents over time.

After the young officers took control of the helm, the KIO refused to transform the movement into a government militia, and the once intimate relation between the rebels and Naypyidaw deteriorated rapidly. Since then the KIO has rejected many of its formerly conciliatory policies. Having formerly consented to the 2008 constitution, the KIO now began to fiercely oppose it, instead making demands for federal reforms and political autonomy for ethnic minority groups. The new KIO leadership has also started to raise concerns about the detrimental effects of joint Myanmar-Chinese infrastructure projects in the region, an issue the former leaders have silently condoned

[185] Interview with co-founder of the EEDY, Maijayang, 14 April 2014.

to. In an open letter to China's then President Hu Jintao, it demanded an end to the construction of a mega-dam at Myitsone. This site lies at the confluence of two rivers, source of Myanmar's main stream, the Irrawaddy, and a sacred place in Kachin culture. The letter warned that the project could spark full-blown civil war as 'Burma (Myanmar) Military troops will not be allowed to invade the KIO area in this current situation [to secure the construction site]' (Kachin News Group, November 24, 2011). Only weeks afterwards, in June 2011, *Tatmadaw* troops attacked KIA positions at another, already operating, Chinese hydropower plant in Tarpein in an attempt to clear the site of rebel units. This incident triggered the new round of fighting, which has displaced more than 120,000 civilians up to date (Burma News International 2014, 23).

Despite this humanitarian toll, the KIO has gardened immense popularity across Kachin State as well as in other ethnic minority areas of Myanmar since the outbreak of conflict.[186] In contrast to the early 2000s, many Kachin again view the organisation as their legitimate representative. Thousands of Kachin civilians evidenced this in November 2013 by waving KIO flags and cheering at a KIO envoy arriving for negotiations in government-held Myitkyina (Yan, March 11, 2013). This new-found popular support, the return to ethno-nationalist agendas, and the re-established morale and loyalty within the organisation, have transformed a business-driven ceasefire group on the brink of collapse back into a capable and popular insurgent fighting force. These developments also impacted on the movement's negotiations with the government about a new ceasefire since the former's breakdown. As discussed in the previous section on youth mobilisation, the young officers' endeavour to rebuild the KIO has revived more than just organisational capacities. Their efforts have indeed produced the resurgence of a strong ethnonational identity and uncompromising insurgent political culture across wide parts of the Kachin public and Kachin youth in particular. According to one Kachin elder in Myitkyina, large parts of the Kachin public are therefore less willing to compromise with Naypyidaw

[186] This appeared to be the case in government and rebel-held parts of Kachin and Karen State as well as Thailand during field research conducted between September 2013 to April 2014.

than the KIO leadership.[187] This has also been noted by other analysts. David Dapice wrote that KIO leaders told him 'that the Kachin population was more radical than the Kachin army (KIA) and leadership' (Dapice 2012, 5).[188]

In negotiations between Naypyidaw and the KIO about a potential new ceasefire since 2011, the KIO grassroots, indeed, appeared to urge their new leadership to maximise demands for a political solution of the conflict. They also cautioned against settling for another ceasefire along similar lines as before. This was evidenced in various consultation meetings, which the KIO held with representatives of Kachin civil society after talks with the government.[189] One community leader, for instance, reportedly urged Maj. Gen. Gun Maw at a meeting:

> 'If there is a real need for KIO to sign a ceasefire agreement then ask Burmese military to pull back all its troops and frontline posts that have never been established in Kachin state. […] Unless a firm date has been set for political dialogue, please do not sign any agreement or make any commitment to Burmese government [sic.].' (Kachinland News, May 29, 2013)

The Kachin elder in Myitkyina explains these positions among the KIO's grassroots with their dire experiences of the past ceasefire. According to him, they have directly translated into present expectations for the new leadership. Regarding a future settlement he, therefore, warns:

> 'It is very dangerous for the Kachin leaders to agree to another ceasefire now. We have experienced this before you know: 17 years of ceasefire. This brought a lot of business opportunities and many leaders got involved with business. So they became rich but lost their target.'[190]

[187] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Myitkyina, 13 February 2014.
[188] This has also been noticed by other observers. David Dapice writes that today it might well be that 'the Kachin population [is] more radical than the Kachin army (KIA) and leadership' (Dapice 2012, 5).
[189] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Laiza, 29 March 2014.
[190] Interview with Kachin religious leader, Myitkyina, 13 February 2014.

This situation illustrates the dynamism and reciprocity that underpin the power relations within the social process of insurgency. It, therefore, highlights the importance to analyse the figurational pressures within which rebel leaders take decisions. By re-embedding the insurgency in wider social networks, including the powerful local churches, and by co-creating a vibrant youth movement, the young officers were able to rebuild legitimate authority relationship to the insurgency's grassroots. Yet, they also created new dependencies by empowering the KIO grassroots vis-à-vis the higher echelons of the movement. In their negotiations with the government they have to respond to these exerted pressures.

5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the 17 years-long ceasefire in Kachin State produced a façade of stability, which, however, contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Despite years of conciliatory policies and near organisational collapse, the KIO emerged strengthened and willing to fight. The main reason for this is the ripple effects that the co-optation of some KIO leaders sparked across the rest of the movement, most importantly the erosion of leadership legitimacy, which gave rise to a new faction determined to rebuild the movement.

Economic incentives drove cooperation between the KIO and the government after the ceasefire of 1994. Yet, this was limited to elite business deals and an unsustainable development agenda, while excluding discussions on fundamental political issues. This led to the incremental corruption of Kachin elites who initially followed a developmental agenda but soon rather collaborated for their personal interests rather than the interests of their movement as a whole or their acclaimed constituency. The co-optation of leaders with economic incentives factionalised the Kachin leadership to the extent that it sparked fierce infighting between individual strongmen. This led to a situation where the KIO leadership was primarily preoccupied with itself rather than with the situation of local communities or its own organisational base. The rampant social and environmental impacts of unsustainable

resource exploitation - in which KIO leaders have taken part – infringed on the livelihoods of ordinary Kachin. In combination with the lack of protection against land grabs and abuses at the hand of *Tatmadaw* soldiers, these new grievances eroded the movement's legitimacy among local communities. The erosion of local legitimacy, the disarray among KIO leaders, as well as their apparent greed and tight grip on power sparked a social identity crisis among the lower and middle ranks of the KIO.

This alienation of the movement's grassroots led to plunging morale and mass desertions to the extent that its armed wing almost collapsed. The situation also provided fertile grounds for a group of young KIA officers, to mobilise against their own superior's unpromising order. To do so they rebuilt legitimate authority relations by re-embedding insurgency within wider social networks by way of allying with the powerful and authoritative Kachin churches. In combination with the creation of a strong youth movement and new organisational institutions, the aspiring faction managed to recruit new members to the insurgency on a large scale and place them into key positions within the movement, creating their own power base within the KIO. By utilising this internal coalition for change and simultaneously side-lining or accommodating the losers of change, the internal opposition managed to take over leadership. Re-embedment within wider social alliances and the organisation of disillusioned Kachin youth, has not only rebuilt the movement's capacities to confront the state militarily but also its inclination to do so. The mobilisation of the KIO's grassroots has indeed, revived insurgent political culture to the extent that it created a momentum of its own. This has since made it more difficult for KIO leaders to negotiate an elite pact along similar lines as before.

Similar to the Karen case, the Kachin case highlights the importance of legitimate authority relations in the social process of insurgency, showing how change in these relations affects the collective outlook and conduct of armed groups. Testimonies showed that ruptured reciprocal exchange also dragged on perceptions of legitimacy among the Kachin grassroots. Yet again, it was suggested that this was not so much the result of conscious deliberations over distributional outcomes but had more to do with the threat it posed to the positive self-conception of Kachin insurgents,

not least because of their inability to protect local communities from external enemies. Social identification processes and challenges thereof, hence, seemed to play a major driver behind the building and erosion of authority. The Kachin case has also shown how a situation of eroding leadership authority can serve as a breeding ground for aspiring elites, who can build their own authority by conveying due and proper recognition to the movement's estranged grassroots, in effect, enabling the latter to (re-)derive a positive self-perceived social identity from affiliation with the insurgency. The successful construction of an internal force that enabled the aspiring Kachin leaders to take power and change the movement's trajectory, furthermore, illustrated the centrality of authority relations within the internal contestations driving collective armed group behaviour. It also served to show the reciprocal quality of power, which has created new interdependencies between rebel elites, their grassroots and other social forces. This has given additional spin to the social process of the Kachin insurgency, whose new leadership face additional grassroots pressures in their negotiations with the government. The next chapter will use the empirical insights uncovered in both case studies to compare the authority processes behind the shifting conduct of the Karen and the Kachin insurgencies.

CHAPTER VII - CONCLUSION

1 Introduction

This thesis analysed the ways in which social interaction processes between differently situated rebel leaders and insurgent grassroots drive the strategic choices of rebel groups to negotiate with the government or escalate conflict. It did so by investigating the puzzling dynamics of armed ethnic conflict that unfolded in Myanmar with the country's transition in 2011: the de-escalation of conflict in the country's eastern borderlands with Thailand and the concurrent escalation of conflict in the country's northern borderlands with China. It, hence, focused on the country's most important ethnic insurgent movements, asking why Karen rebel leaders, who were long known for their uncompromising stance, have become the champions of the country's peace process, while the previously conciliatory Kachin insurgents have spearheaded a new wave of ethnic armed resistance. In so doing it investigated why and how Karen leaders signed a ceasefire in 2012 and why and how the Kachin ceasefire broke down in 2011. The concluding chapter will concentrate on the main arguments put forward in this thesis, its key contributions to knowledge, and its implications.

The chapter will proceed by first summarising the main empirical findings from both case studies in comparison. This will highlight four mutual stages in their trajectories: partial leadership co-optation, group fragmentation, internal contestation,

and renewed resistance from within. It will then elaborate on the contribution of my findings to the study of Myanmar's armed conflict. The chapter will then summarise my theoretical arguments surrounding the social process of insurgency that drives the strategic decisions of rebel groups and the modalities of leadership authority within insurgency movements before it highlights the contributions of my thesis to the wider literature on Conflict and Peace Studies, particularly with regards to the emerging scholarships on the internal dynamics of non-state armed groups and rebel governance. Building on this, the chapter will elaborate on my thesis's implication for engaging insurgent movements, with particular regards to rebel fragmentation and violence as well as the pitfalls of economistic approaches to counterinsurgency, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. The concluding remarks will evaluate the most recent developments in Myanmar in the light of my findings.

2 Empirical Arguments and Contributions

This thesis forwarded two main empirical arguments that explain the puzzling conflict dynamics in Myanmar: 1) Internal contestations between rival rebel factions drove the strategies of both the Karen and the Kachin insurgencies with regards to negotiation and conflict vis-à-vis the state. 2) The Karen ceasefire has created challenges inside the movement which resemble the ones that led to the eventual breakdown of the Kachin ceasefire. The following sections will summarise both arguments.

2.1 Internal Contestations and Strategic Decisions

Internal contestation between rival rebel factions is essential for explaining why the KNU signed a ceasefire in 2012 and why the Kachin ceasefire broke down the year before. At the core of these contestations lay shifting internal authority and power relations that were largely driven by politico-economic changes in both borderlands.

In the case of the KNU, Chapter V showed that the 2012 ceasefire was the result of leadership contestation after power relations inside the movement had shifted

considerably from central to northern brigade territories within the Karen movement. The rapprochement with the government was led by central brigade leaders who sought to compensate for their declining power and authority, while leaders affiliated to northern units opposed the organisation's new conciliatory line. These changing power relations and the resulting factional split resulted in parts from increasing military and geopolitical pressures at the Thai-Myanmar border that have built up since the early 1990s and fragmented the organisation along its individual brigades. Importantly, these external pressures impacted central and southern rebel units more severely than the ones in the remote northern mountains of Karen State, also with regards to leadership authority among their grassroots. This has effectively shifted the KNU's internal power balance from its traditional backbone in central Karen State to the north and has, in turn, given rise to two competing factions in the KNU leadership and their diverging strategies towards the state. Leaders linked to central Karen brigades sought to compromise with the state in order to compensate for their loss of power and authority, signed the 2012 ceasefire with Naypyidaw.

In the case of the KIO, Chapter VI revealed that the breakdown of the 2011 ceasefire also followed internal contestations and leadership change. After the Kachin leaders pursued an accommodating strategy towards the government for most parts of its 17 years-long ceasefire, young rebel leaders began to oppose their own superiors in the early 2000s in order to remobilise a faltering movement that was characterised by eroding power and authority as well as waning revolutionary agenda. This generational split resulted from the modalities of the ceasefire. Tied to the changing political economy at the Chinese-Myanmar border, the ceasefire benefitted the higher echelons of the Kachin leadership but left the underlying grievances of the insurgent grassroots unaddressed. This eroded the authority of Kachin ceasefire leaders among their own rank-and-file and the movement's standing among local communities as a whole. It also gave rise to a faction of young leaders that set out revert these developments by mobilising against their own superiors' ceasefire policies. They re-embedded the insurgency into local networks and recruited a new generation of rebels with whom they managed to take over the leadership in the KIO. Since then the KIO

has refuted its previous conciliatory stance towards the state and remobilised militarily, which contributed to the re-escalation of conflict.

2.2 Between Co-optation and Resistance

Analysing dynamics inside both insurgencies revealed that the Karen ceasefire faces challenges similar to the ones that led to the breakdown of the Kachin ceasefire. In both cases the ceasefires involved the partial co-optation of rebel leaderships, which aggravated existing and caused new organisational fragmentation and internal contestation over authority. While the case of the KNU sheds light on the movement's fragmentation and contestation over authority following partial leadership co-optation, the case of the KIO shows how such processes can enfold over time and lead to renewed resistance from within the movement. Rather than contradicting each other, the case studies, therefore, illuminate different stages along a similar trajectory: a) partial leadership co-optation, b) group fragmentation, c) contestation over authority, and d) renewed resistance from within.

a) Partial leadership co-optation

Partial leadership co-optation seemed to be a central mechanism in both ceasefires analysed here. Co-opting rebel elites by way of economic incentives played a crucial role in the ceasefire politics of Myanmar's northern border areas in the 1990s, including Kachin State. The coalescing economic interests of state and rebel elites as well as outside business networks transformed decades-long violent conflict in these borderlands into a mutual enterprise. This was enabled by a rapid post-Cold War rapprochement between China and Myanmar, which was itself partly driven by commercial interests, with regards to natural resource exploitation, border trade, and infrastructure construction in these borderlands. While the KIO signed the 1994 ceasefire for a variety of reasons, economic benefits granted to its leaders have widely been cited as a key driver behind the movement's ceasefire and subsequent conciliatory stance towards the state (Smith 1999, 441; Sherman 2003; Woods 2011).

Political economy dynamics have featured less prominently in analyses on the Karen ceasefire. Outside observers and pro-ceasefire KNU leaders maintain that the Karen ceasefire of 2012 was the direct result of wider political transition in Myanmar (cf. Chapter 5, International Crisis Group 2011; Burke, December 02, 2012; Mydans, December 02, 2012). This notwithstanding, dynamics of co-optation by economic means seemed to play a significant role as well. Similar to developments at the Chinese border, large parts of the Karen borderlands have also witnessed significant commercialisation with regards to resource exploitation, border trade, and infrastructure developments. While these politico-economic changes were less fast paced during the 1990s, they have become more prominent since the turn of the millennium. Pro-ceasefire KNU leaders acknowledged these powerful forces and presented themselves as partners for regional economic development. They also established companies to tap into the expanding ceasefire economy. Business actors have also promoted and financed the ceasefire negotiations between the KNU and Naypyidaw. From this perspective, the political economy of the Karen ceasefire resembles previous settlements in northern Myanmar.[191] My field work has shown that many Karen insurgent grassroots are, indeed, worried that some of their leaders are negotiating with the government to maximise personal gains rather than bearing collective interests in mind.

b) Group fragmentation

In both cases under comparison, partial leadership co-optation aggravated already existing dynamics of group fragmentation and sparked new ones. In retrospective, it is difficult to assess the extent of fragmentation within the KIO at the time it signed the ceasefire in 1994. The previous break-away of its southern Brigade had certainly weakened the KIO and weighed heavy on the latter's decision to sign an armistice. Reports suggest that the Kachin organisation at the time was nevertheless more

[191] These parallels have also been drawn by long-term observers of Myanmar's ethnic conflict Bertil Lintner and Tom Kramer (Lintner, June 25, 2013).

coherent and centralised than the Karen insurgency in 2012 (South 2011). That said, this thesis has shown that the 1994 ceasefire has led to significant organizational fragmentation inside the KIO. On the one hand, it fragmented the movement's horizontal relations among its top leadership that was competing over rival business interests. This led to severe internal strife in the early 2000s. On the other hand, leadership co-optation eroded the vertical authority relations between KIO leaders and the grassroots of their movements. This was partly because the ceasefire ruptured reciprocal exchange relations between the insurgency and local communities. Rebel units, for instance, could not continue to provide security against state militarisation and investment-induced forced displacement without breaking the ceasefire. In addition to the business-focused rivalries of KIO leaders, whose behaviour was increasingly perceived as disrespectful among their grassroots, the powerlessness to protect Kachin communities undermined the ability of insurgent grassroots to derive a positive social insurgent identity from affiliation to the KIO, which ultimately led to their large-scale alienation.

The KNU was already highly fragmented when it signed the ceasefire in 2012. Eroding military strength and authority was indeed the main reason why part of the movement's leadership sought for accommodation with the government. The ceasefire concluded with the U Thein Sein government has, however, exacerbated organisational fragmentation along already pre-existent fault lines between different leaders as well as between rebel elites and grassroots. On the one hand, the ceasefire further increased horizontal fragmentation between more and less accommodating leaders, linked to central/southern and northern brigades respectively. On the other hand, the ceasefire also widened the vertical gap between pro-ceasefire leaders and the movement's grassroots. These authority relations between insurgent elites and non-elites in the central and southern brigades had already suffered after military and geopolitical pressures in the 1990s dis-embedded the insurgency from local communities in these areas. This ruptured the KNU's traditional reciprocal exchange relations with local communities in these areas, i.e. the insurgency's support networks. This explains why leaders linked to central and southern units, including the group's

Chairman Gen. Mutu Say Poe and its General Secretary Kwe Htoo Win, were more inclined to reach rapprochement with Naypyidaw in order to compensate for their declining authority among their grassroots. In contrast, the movement's remote northern units, which were less challenged by these military and politico-economic pressures at the Thai border, have remained more embedded within local communities, i.e. they maintained their vertical social ties to a much greater extent. Their relative power and authority explains why leaders affiliated with these units, including Vice-Chairperson Naw Zipporah Sein and its armed wing's Vice-Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Baw Kyaw Heh, have felt less of an urge to strive for accommodation with Naypyidaw. While it, hence, appears that group fragmentation has facilitated the co-optation of individual KNU leaders that lacked vertical social ties to their grassroots, their rapprochement with the state has, in turn, provoked further horizontal and vertical fragmentation of the Karen insurgency. It widened the rift between incumbent leaders and the KNU grassroots, while driving an even larger wedge between the two already existing internal, rival factions.

c) Contestation over authority

In both compared cases, partial leadership co-optation and group fragmentation stimulated internal contestation between incumbent and aspirant leaders. In both of these internal power struggles, one leadership faction sought alliances with state forces by promoting conciliatory ceasefire policies, while another mobilised their movements' grassroots from below against this cooperation. In the Kachin insurgency inter-generational grievances and inter-organisational divides between the political and military wing delineated the main fault lines along which an internal opposition materialised in the early 2000s when top KIO leaders were preoccupied with lining their pockets with the spoils of an unleashed ceasefire economy. This new oppositional faction initially emerged from within the organisation's armed wing at the initiative of young KIA officers, who themselves were largely excluded from the power and wealth enjoyed by their own superiors in a movement, which merged the top-down

hierarchies of a military organisation with the ones of a strictly age-based society. Their own subordinates, KIA foot soldiers, deserted in the hundreds at a time of rapidly eroding leadership authority due to wide-spread alienation among the movement's grassroots. Faced with the disintegration of their army, the young KIA officers, surrounding the young Brigadier Sumlut Gun Maw and the more senior Gen. Gam Shwang, set out to change this unpromising situation by rebuilding authority among the grassroots to mobilise against the group's incumbent leadership and to remobilise a coherent movement that was willing and able to resist the state again.

In the Karen insurgency, KNU leaders who were demoted to second rank after the 2012 ceasefire but remained backed by relatively coherent and strong northern brigade units, opposed the group's top leaders and their accommodating line by seeking to appeal to the wider Karen grassroots. At the time of field research, many traditional members and supporters of the KNU were indeed inclined to support these "hardliners", despite having borne the brunt of armed conflict in previous years. This was because the increasing rapprochement between the pro-ceasefire leadership and Naypyidaw has given rise to large-scale alienation among the movement's grassroots for several reasons. First, they perceived their pro-ceasefire leadership to be co-opted into the ceasefire by economic means, including personal gifts and benefits. Second, they regarded the KNU's post-ceasefire collaboration in economic development as opposed to their own interests due to investment-related social problems, including land grabs and environmental degradation. Third, the new leadership's rapid rapprochement with former *Tatmadaw* generals was viewed with deep suspicion, not least because militarisation has increased in ceasefire areas. Fourth, secretive negotiations between pro-ceasefire leaders and Naypyidaw sparked feelings of misrecognition among the KNU grassroots, who felt left out of the decision-making process. The internal opposition, in contrast, was perceived as more legitimate by many insurgent grassroots. This was mainly due to its leaders' outspoken disagreement with the new incumbent leadership and conciliatory policies with Naypyidaw, including their voiced resistance against economic development projects as well as against increasing militarisation. The high regard in which the internal opposition was

held by the movement's grassroots can, moreover, be attributed to its association with the movement's northern units that, at the time of writing, remained embedded within local communities.

d) Resistance from within

The Kachin and Karen ceasefires both involved the partial co-optation of rebel leaderships, which sparked organisational fragmentation and internal contestations over authority between rival rebel factions. In the case of the KNU, field research in 2013/14 took place amidst heightened tensions within the movement after it signed a ceasefire agreement in early 2012. When researching on the KIO in 2014, the Kachin ceasefire had already broken down after many years of fragmentation and contestation, which had brought a new generation of less conciliatory rebel leaders into power, such as Gen. Sumlut Gun Maw. During the time I spent with the KNU it was possible to observe first-hand how the ceasefire sparked significant internal contestation over authority. By comparison, the time spent with the KIO made it possible for me to trace how the ceasefire in practice had led to renewed resistance from within, both against pro-ceasefire leaders and the Myanmar state.

In the case of the KIO, disaffected young rebel officers managed to rebuild the insurgency's coherence from within. This enabled them to take power in order to reject the movement's conciliatory ceasefire policies and to remobilise resistance against the state. Essential for their success was the rebuilding of authority relations between the new leadership and the movement's grassroots. By tapping into the authority and reach of the local churches, the young officers had established consultative mechanisms with local communities that served to re-embed the insurgency in the wider Kachin society and to counter widespread feelings of alienation among the insurgency's traditional members and supporters. This in turn enabled them to recruit a new generation of rebels from among the disillusioned Kachin youth. Before too long, the young KIA officers, hence, managed to build stable support networks for their own faction, a crucial power resource that the factionalised old guard of the KIO

lacked at the time. When the contestation for group leadership erupted in 2008, the then aspiring leaders were able to mobilise a strong coalition bringing together young rebel soldiers, local communities, and the powerful Kachin churches. At the same time, these emerging leaders managed to convince, side-line, or retire potential opponents among the movement's old guard. As a result, the young officers took over the movement's helm without much resistance and steered the revitalised insurgency back into confrontation with the state.

Within the heavily fragmented and deeply divided KNU, internal contestation between rival rebel factions had also surfaced at the time of research. This was evidenced by stark disagreements between the movement's pro-ceasefire leaders and leaders who oppose rapprochement with Naypyidaw. While these developments had already worried observers over a potential organisational split or internal coup within the KNU, growing internal opposition against the top leaders and their conciliatory stance had not translated into renewed resistance against the state at the time writing. This said, the Karen insurgent grassroots appeared inclined to support the "hard-line" faction of the KNU linked to its northern stronghold. Whether the internal opposition surrounding Gen. Baw Kyaw Heh and Vice-Chairperson Naw Zipporah Sein will be able use their authority to retake power and revitalise resistance against the state will, hence, depend on their ability to mobilise these Karen grassroots. It will also be contingent on whether the conciliatory incumbent leadership can accommodate the aspirants' claim to power within the current ceasefire order and the degree to which they can counter wide-spread alienation among their grassroots and regain authority among them. While the movement's future trajectory is highly uncertain, not least because of Myanmar's rapidly changing political environment, the Kachin case suggest that the likelihood of renewed KNU resistance should be taken seriously.

2.3 Contributions to the Scholarship on Myanmar

Since Myanmar embarked on its transition from military rule, the country has attracted renewed scholarly interest. While questions surrounding democratisation and political change in the country's central lowlands have become the primary focus

(Cheesman, Skidmore, and Wilson 2012; Cheesman, Farrelly, and Wilson 2014), many scholars with a long-term interest in Myanmar point out that solving ethnic conflict in the border areas is of central importance to the country's wider transition (cf. for instance Jones 2014a; Farrelly 2012; Sadan 2016b).

Empirically, this thesis contributed to our understanding of Myanmar's conflict and some of its main actors at a crucial time. It did so by providing an insight into the two most important ethnic insurgencies through combining a wealth of original data from extensive ethnographically-informed field research with an analytical framework that analyses the strategies pursued by rebel groups as the outcome of a social interaction process between differently situated insurgents. In doing so, the thesis showed how intramural relations drove wider dynamics of conflict, which offers an explanation that is better suited for understanding the puzzling conduct of the KNU and the KIO than approaches that infer their conduct from external incentive structures. Its findings are particularly significant as scholars and other analysts have struggled to explain the shifting tides of conflict since Myanmar's transition, including the breakdown of the Kachin ceasefire, which led to large-scale escalation of conflict between various ethnic armed groups and Myanmar's armed forces in the country's north at a time when other groups, such as the Karen, have entered negotiations.

To briefly recapture, the prisms through which the dynamics of ethnic armed conflict are conventionally viewed in Myanmar - i.e. the country's political transition and its changing borderland economies - are both unable to explain the country's conflict dynamics. Policy and media analysts have mostly highlighted political liberalisation in Naypyidaw when explaining why KNU leaders signed a ceasefire in 2012 and subsequently pushed for a peace process (International Crisis Group 2011; Burke, December 02, 2012; Mydans, December 02, 2012). According to this lens, Karen rebel leaders have seized the opportunity presented by an overall shift in the political incentive structure, which enabled to negotiate a peaceful settlement to their six decades of guerrilla war. Adherents of this narrative have, however, struggled to explain the concurrent outbreak of conflict with previous ceasefire groups at the

Chinese border, including the KIO, brushing this away as an anomaly to the wider trend towards peace and democracy (cf. Sadan 2016a for a critical discussion).

Scholars have long pointed to the effects of Myanmar's borderland economies on the conduct of Myanmar's ethnic rebel groups. This perspective has become particularly prominent since rapprochement between China, Thailand and Myanmar at the end of the Cold War has brought increased economic investments into Myanmar's borderlands since the early 1990s (Woods 2011; Sherman 2003; Jones 2014a). Following this train of thought, increased integration of borderland economies has not only created pressures on the ethnic insurgent armies, whose peripheral location had previously benefitted them militarily and financially for most parts of the Cold War. Incoming foreign investments have also allowed the state to co-opt rebel leaders with economic incentives. Political economy frameworks, thus, explained the previous stability on the Myanmar-Chinese border between the 1990s and 2011 with the economic benefits that these arrangements entailed for rebel leaders (Woods 2011; Sherman 2003; Jones 2014a). While the same logic might be applied to new ceasefires in eastern Myanmar, it cannot explain why "ceasefire capitalism" ceased to work in the case of the KIO in 2011 since when the Chinese-Myanmar border has again been embroiled in armed conflict.

To be sure, scholars studying Myanmar's ceasefire economies appreciate that economic incentives work in a complex interplay and rebel leaders had several motivations for signing ceasefire agreements, including battle fatigue, humanitarian purposes, developmental aspirations, and a genuine believe in solving the ethnic conflict with peaceful means (Jones 2014a, 792). They have also assessed the effects of "ceasefire capitalism" in a more critical way than scholars who have no background in Myanmar but used the country to exemplify how economic incentives can be conducive to finding peaceful solutions to conflict.[192] Woods, Jones, and Sherman, for instance, appreciate the shortcomings and potential pitfalls of Myanmar's ceasefire

[192] Scholarship that has used the case of Myanmar rather uncritically in large comparative analyses includes Le Billon and Nicholls 2007 and Wennmann 2009.

economies, including local grievances over unsustainable resource exploitation and corruption (Woods 2011; Sherman 2003; Jones 2014a). While their analysis point to the dangers inherent in the economistic engagement with Myanmar's ethnic armed groups, their political economy frameworks can neither explain the eventual breakdown of the Kachin ceasefire and remobilisation of the insurgency nor the mounting challenges within the ceasefire KNU.

To address these limitations, this thesis looked to dynamics internal to the Karen and Kachin movements in order to explain their divergent conduct vis-à-vis the state. To be sure, understanding the changing environment of insurgency is important in Myanmar as it is elsewhere. The point of this thesis was not to discard such structural factors altogether but to highlight their insufficiency for explaining the puzzling conflict dynamics in Myanmar. My account is, therefore, not meant as a fundamental critique of previous political economy scholarship on Myanmar, but as an important corrective that enables us to appreciate why "ceasefire capitalism" can lead to renewed conflict, despite yielding economic benefits to key elites from all sides. In forthcoming essays, Jones and Woods have both referred to some of my findings for understanding these non-linear developments in the case of the Kachin insurgency (cf. Jones 2016; Woods 2016; Brenner 2015). Jones writes:

> 'On the basis of extensive fieldwork, David Brenner persuasively argues that the social, political and economic grievances described in the previous section had, by the early 2000s, generated a support base for a younger generation of KIA officers seeking to remobilise the KIO. […] This outcome stemmed directly from the contradictions of 'ceasefire capitalism' in Kachin State, illustrating the importance of a dynamic and dialectical analysis of Myanmar's society, rather than assuming stasis and stagnation.' (Jones 2016)

The ability of my empirical findings to contribute significantly to our understanding of ethnic conflict in Myanmar is not least due to the ethnographic bend of my approach, without which I would not have gained an insider perspective into

Myanmar's most important ethnic armed groups. Immersion was not only essential for identifying how internal contestation within the Kachin and Karen movements has driven their external conduct vis-à-vis the state in ways that cannot be identified from the outside. Close-range research also provided a rare window into the everyday lives of insurgent grassroots, including the middle and lower ranks of both organisations and a variety of insurgent affiliates and supporters. This fostered my appreciation of the complex social fabric that underpins political violence in the Karen and Kachin borderlands, which pushed my analysis beyond a narrow focus on strategising elites and their decision-making. Most importantly, it revealed the interdependencies of rebel elites with their insurgent grassroots and how these often uneasy elite-grassroots relations have driven the strategies of both movements.

3 Theoretical Arguments and Contributions

This thesis drew inspiration from a small group of Political Sociology scholars working on armed conflict (cf. Schlichte 2009a; Bakonyi and Bliesemann de Guevara 2014b). Following in their footpath, it adopted the relational heuristics of Elias and Bourdieu (Elias 1978; Bourdieu 1990). This ontological perspective revealed intertwined and multi-causal social forces that are operating at different levels within the wider networks of insurgency in driving collective behaviour. Instead of analysing differently situated elite and grassroots actors as self-propelled individuals, they were, hence, understood as ontologically embedded within insurgent social figurations, which themselves are inextricably rooted within the wider socio-temporal spaces of insurgency. Despite these structural attributes, it was shown that insurgent figurations are by no means static. On the contrary, uneven and constantly shifting power relations continuously rework these figurations along chains of interdependencies between differently situated elite and non-elite actors who are part of or affiliated to the insurgent social network. This creates dynamics of its own in driving the collective conduct of rebel movements in ways that is unintended and unforeseen by any of its individual actors.

This focus on interdependencies highlighted the reciprocal nature of power located within social relations rather than viewing power as the sole property of rebel leaders. While insurgent grassroots might not direct or intend to direct the insurgent collective as do incumbent and aspirant rebel leaders, this understanding sheds light on their agency and indeed power, because their willing support and obedience is crucial for sustaining the movements' asymmetric struggle against the state as well as for rebel leaders to struggle against their internal rivals. Emphasising the reciprocal and dynamic nature of power relations, therefore, pointed to the most fundamental challenge that rebel elites face in their parallel struggle against incumbent states and against rival rebel elites: to build and maintain active support for or at least passive compliance with their insurgent social order among their insurgent grassroots. Questions of legitimate authority have, therefore, become the pivot for analysing the power dynamics driving the social processes of both insurgencies in question. Speaking with Weber, the thesis has, thus, focused on explaining the conditions under which insurgent grassroots take an interest in supporting, partaking, or obeying insurgent rulers and their social orders, and under which they do not (cf. Weber 1947, 324). On a theoretical level, the thesis hence investigated the modalities of leadership authority within rebel movements.

In contrast to contractualist approaches to non-state authority, which are grounded in methodological individualism and explain authority on the basis of distributional outcomes, this thesis has found two interlaced, relational processes at the core of leadership authority in both rebel groups under comparison: social embeddedness and social identification.

3.1 Embeddedness: Insurgency as Practice

My analysis showed that ethnonational insurgencies that command territory can engage in building sophisticated quasi-states. It was argued that this serves to embed their movements within local communities by way of reciprocal exchange relations, which can generate legitimacy for the insurgent collective among local communities as well as leadership authority of rebel elites among their rank-and-file.

Insurgencies do, hence, often not only comprise of guerrilla armies but also of political and administrative departments that are in charge of wide-ranging governance activities, including the provision of public goods, such as health care and education, as well as the creation and management of revenues through taxation. The thesis also demonstrated that the degree of embeddedness in and the reciprocal exchange relations with local communities can vary across time and space within the same movement. While an insurgency might be able to provide security and welfare to local communities at one point of time or in one certain area, it might struggle to do so at another time or in another region, for instance when losing territory. In regions or at times where reciprocal exchange relations are ruptured, the insurgents' legitimacy among local communities is threatened and leadership authority within the movement can be undermined.

The notion of embeddedness explains why authority relations between rebel elites and their own lower ranks suffer when established governance arrangements between the organisation and local communities are undermined. This is because embedding insurgency within the wider social field by way of basic public goods provision, including security and health care, shapes local social identities to the extent that the distinctions between rebels and civilians are increasingly blurred. In other words, insurgency itself becomes part of the wider social context, whose internalisation shapes identities, interests, and practices. This seems to be particularly important in decades-long protracted armed conflicts and conditions of limited statehood, where rebel movements are intertwined with other non-state governance arrangements. In such areas, the insurgency "proper" often relies on community-based organisations, e.g. relief, development, activist organisations, as well as traditional social institutions, e.g. local churches and village elders, for governing local communities. In addition, these institutions also fulfil crucial roles for the insurgency beyond service provision, including capacity building, legitimisation, and even mobilisation. Other non-state authorities can, thus, become important nodes of the wider insurgent social network themselves.

Commonly assumed distinctions, such as between civilians and combatants or between active support and passive obedience are, therefore, inherently blurred. In fact, the social spaces of insurgency and non-insurgency can sometimes be conflated to the extent that it is impossible to conceptually delineate strict in- and outgroup boundaries. Long-term embeddedness of rebel groups in local communities, hence, turns insurgency itself into an intrinsic part of the past and present social context, through whose internalisation an "insurgent habitus" evolves in local communities. In rebel-held territories of protracted armed conflicts, such as Myanmar's insurgent borderlands, people do then not *choose* to support or partake in rebellion because of the better quality of rebel operated hospitals and schools. In fact, studying and teaching at a rebel-operated school, nursing at a rebel-operated hospital, or joining ranks of the rebel army might often simply appear as the "right" or "normal" thing to do.

Material exchange by way of service provision can, hence, play an important role in establishing legitimate authority. This notwithstanding, my argument disputes that the link between reciprocity and authority is primarily or even necessarily based on material payoffs, as commonly suggested by contractualist takes of rebel governance, where local communities deliberately sell their allegiance to the highest bidder among local authorities (cf.Wickham-Crowley 1987; Weinstein 2006; Kalyvas 2006, 87–110). This is because many members and supporters of insurgency neither enter nor leave contractual arrangements in a conscious manner based on distributional outcomes. This seems particularly so in situations of protracted armed conflict and limited statehood where insurgency has become an intrinsic part of the social fabric. Grassroots affiliation to, their support of, and their partake in insurgencies can then better be understood as a pre-reflexive routinised practice, flowing from the "insurgent habitus", rather than as the result of conscious deliberations over material pay-offs.

This "insurgent habitus" matches the rebel grassroots' subjective expectations with their objective opportunities derived from their position within the insurgent social figuration (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 130; Elias 1994, 446). Shortcomings and injustices that underlie insurgent social orders are, therefore,

commonly naturalised and often remain unquestioned, which, in turn stabilises rebel authority. This explains why the existence of stark inequalities between wealthy leaders and impoverished grassroots alone does not necessarily undermine legitimate authority relations, which was for instance evidenced by the self-display of wealthy rebel generals that were perceived to be the "good gangsters" among their grassroots. When the matching mechanism between expectations and chances produced by the insurgent habitus breaks down, however, leadership authority is undermined. As witnessed in both cases, this happened when the self-perceived positive insurgent social identities were threatened by internal and external sources, which is linked to the second relational process this thesis found to be at the core of leadership authority within both rebel groups under comparison: social identification.

3.2 Social Identification: The Struggle for Recognition

This thesis argued that leadership authority in insurgency movements is inherently linked to social identities and the struggle for recognition. In ethnocratic states that discriminate against ethnic minorities, it is difficult or even impossible for ethnic minority communities to derive a positive self-perceived social identity from the affiliation to the dominant political order. As per Honneth, the struggle for due and proper recognition, hence, becomes the 'moral grammar' of social conflict and serves as the motivational basis of collective resistance (cf. Honneth 1996). Affiliation to the alternative, insurgent political order can then generate positive social identities for grassroots insurgents if the insurgent collective is associated with moral principles, as for instance the protection of a particular community, the struggle against unjust state structures, and the creation of political order that is perceived as more just. Feeling recognised as a valued member of an insurgent collective can, therefore, lead to feelings of self-esteem and self-worth among insurgent grassroots. This, in turn, generates legitimacy for the insurgent social order and authority for its leaders. If positive social identification with the insurgent collective is threatened though, the authority of rebel leaders is undermined. In line with Social Identity Theory (cf. Branscombe et al. 1999, 46–55), social insurgent identities are threatened when a) the moral principles and social standing of the insurgent collective are questioned from

sources both within and without the group and/or b) elite interactions are perceived as unjust and disrespectful, thus, conveying misrecognition rather than recognition of valued group membership to their grassroots.

As was shown, external social identity threat that questions the moral standing and social status of the insurgent collective can, for instance, occur when rebel soldiers fail to protect their own local communities. This does not only undermine the insurgency's standing among members of the local communities. It also estranges the movement's own soldiers. This is because their feelings of powerlessness counteract their sense of self-esteem derived from being part of collective that is associated with the ability to effectuate political agency against powerful and unjust structures. Speaking with Wood, rebel soldiers who are unable to protect their own communities are threatened in their insurgent identities exactly because they are inhibited in taking 'pleasure in agency', which is 'the positive affect associated with self-determination, autonomy, self-esteem, efficacy, and pride that come from successful assertion of intention' (Wood 2003, 235). It is important to note that, similar to Wood's observations in El Salvador, my own observations in Myanmar suggest that insurgent grassroots are not seeking to assert just any intention, but intention that is specifically aimed at 'making history, and not just any history but a history they perceived as more *just.'* (Wood 2003, 235). Losing this sense of insurgent agency thus severely challenges the perceived moral principles and social standing of the insurgent collective among its grassroots. This threatens their self-perceived positive social identities derived through affiliation to the movement, which, in turn drags on the authority of rebel leaders.

The thesis, moreover, showed how social identity threats can also emerge from within the rebel group itself. It was observed how rebel leaders, for instance, undermine the ability of their grassroots to associate the collective movement with moral principles and social standing if their behaviour is perceived to be motivated by personal gains rather than the interest of the insurgent collective and its claimed constituency. In addition, self-perceived positive social identification with the insurgent collectives can be hampered by elite interaction and communication that is

perceived as disrespectful by the insurgent grassroots. This is because the recognition as a respected member of an insurgent movement is communicated by rebel leaders in their interactions with their grassroots. To be perceived as respectful by their grassroots, rebel elites need to behave in accordance to certain beliefs, norms and practices that are considered as proper conduct in the wider social context within which the insurgency is embedded. If they do not, rebel elites undermine the feelings among their insurgent rank-and-file of being recognised as valued group members. Analogous to the ways in which the struggle for due and proper recognition can form the motivational bedrock for collective resistance against the state, it can, thus, also form the moral context for insurgent grassroots to rebel against their own rebel leaders. If rebel leaders manage to satisfy their grassroots claim to recognition, their insurgent social orders are stable. If they do not, their authority erodes and is likely to be challenged from below.

3.3 Contributions to Conflict and Peace Studies

My analysis contributed to the field of Conflict and Peace Studies in theoretical and methodological respects.

First, it contributed to the literature on non-state armed groups in the field of Conflict and Peace Studies by looking at the ways in which internal contestation over authority drives the strategies of insurgency movements vis-à-vis the state. In doing so it joined an emerging literature on the micro-level dynamics of armed conflict, highlighting the insufficiency of aggregate country-level analyses for explaining dynamics of civil war (cf. for instance Kalyvas 2003; Justino, Brück, and Verwimp 2013; Korf 2011). Tracing the effects of changing politico-economic structures on the social relations within armed groups, moreover, shed light on the ways in which micro and macro-levels of conflict interact. Most importantly, my thesis has advanced our understanding of the role that authority relations between differently situated rebel elites and their grassroots play in the internal contestation within armed groups. Although Scott argued years ago that students of revolutionary movements need to

focus on the often uneasy relations between rebel leaders and their rank-and-file for understanding dynamics of political violence (Scott 1979), scholarship has hitherto seen little advance in this respect. While the literature on armed group fragmentation mostly focuses on the horizontal relations between rival rebel leaders (Pearlman 2009; Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour 2012; Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour 2012), the literature on rebel governance is primarily concerned with the vertical relations between insurgents' and local communities (Wickham-Crowley 1987; Mampilly 2011; Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015). In contrast, this thesis has analysed the vertical relations within insurgency movements themselves - i.e. between differently situated leaders, their rank-and-file soldiers and affiliated supporters. In analysing how rival rebel leaders capture and lose legitimacy within their own movements, the thesis has addressed an important but under-researched issue in the scholarship on non-state armed groups.

Second, the thesis has contributed to the Political Sociology literature in Conflict and Peace Studies by focusing on the social dynamics of armed conflict and collective violence (Wood 2008; Schlichte 2009a; Beck 2009; Bakonyi and Bliesemann de Guevara 2014a). In order to understand the politics of legitimacy and authority within armed groups, I have drawn inspiration from other conflict scholars and built on the relational sociologies of Elias and Bourdieu (Schlichte 2009a; Bakonyi and Bliesemann de Guevara 2014b). I combined this approach with the insights from Honneth's recognition theory for understanding political conflicts. Scholars of International Relations have already demonstrated the relevance of recognition for explaining dynamics of inter-state conflict (Haacke 2005; Gustafsson 2015; Lindemann and Ringmar 2015). Understanding the struggle for recognition as a core motivation of social conflict also dovetails with early scholarship in the field of Conflict and Peace Studies, as for instance Edward Azar's perspective that views the 'denial of separate identity of parties involved in the political process' as the core driver of protracted social conflicts (Azar 1986, 30). This notwithstanding, the use of recognition theory in the sub-field of Conflict and Peace Studies has hitherto been surprisingly limited (Strömbom 2014). By grounding itself within this understanding,

my thesis forwarded an understanding of the internal dynamics of armed group that goes beyond rationalistic elite politics. While the literature on micro-conflict dynamics has shifted our analytical focus to a lower spatial level, most of it remains grounded within the framework of methodological individualism, an ontology that has also underpinned the aggregate unitary actor models of civil war. Instead of understanding strategic choices of armed groups as the sum of self-propelled insurgent leaders, in rather technical, ahistorical, and non-contextual accounts, my own analysis has analysed insurgency as a social process between differently situated but interdependent elite and non-elite actors. This relational understanding of violence stressed the reciprocal nature of power within constantly fluctuating social figurations that are embedded within their wider socio-temporal space. In contrast to rationalist perspectives, this thesis emphasised process over outcome and identity over interests for explaining leadership authority in rebel movements.

Third, my thesis has contributed to our understanding of insurgency and armed conflict with extensive field research and an ethnographically-informed qualitative methodology. By doing so it addressed one of the biggest challenges for studying the internal politics of armed groups: the lack of empirical data, which is why most studies on the topic have hitherto relied on secondary material (Kalyvas 2003; Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour 2012; Pearlman 2009). While some scholars have based their analyses of armed groups on interviews (Reno 2009; Mampilly 2011; Staniland 2014), ethnographic approaches to the study of insurgency remain the exception (Wood 2003; Beck 2009; Shah 2013). This study thus contributed to our understanding of non-state armed groups through ethnographic immersion and sensitivity, which provided a rare window into the everyday lives of insurgent grassroots, including the middle and lower ranks and a variety of insurgent affiliates and supporters. This fostered an appreciation of the complex social fabric that underpins political violence. Most importantly, it revealed the agency of insurgent grassroots and their interdependencies with rebel elites, i.e. the social process of insurgency that develops a momentum of its own in driving political violence. That said, the same ethnographically-informed approach also points to the existence of many more

unidentified political objects that remain concealed in Myanmar's restive borderlands as well as in other conflicts. To be sure, close-range field research on armed conflict in general, and on non-state armed groups in particular, entails practical and ethical challenges. It also needs to be noted that while getting access to ethnic armed groups in Myanmar turned out to be feasible for this research, this might not be the case in many other non-state armed groups, particularly when the researcher her- or himself is perceived as part of the immediate conflict. Yet, there seem to be little alternatives for generating knowledge about the actual people involved in political violence. While my thesis, hence, contributed to the emerging interest in ethnographic inquiry in International Relations (Vrasti 2008; I. B. Neumann 2012; Nair 2015), it also suggests that the potentials of Ethnography for adjusting the discipline's traditional birds-eye perspective remain far from exhausted.

4 Implications

The thesis's findings have two main implications for engaging insurgent movements in Myanmar and elsewhere: 1) Counterinsurgency approaches that aim at fragmenting rebel groups and eroding rebel authority might weaken insurgency, but are likely to be counterproductive to finding peaceful solutions to civil war and might even reproduce violence. 2) In a similar vein, economic development is no silver bullet for ending civil wars. While an economistic approach to counterinsurgency, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding can achieve temporary stabilisation of armed conflict, it is inapt to address the root causes of political violence and might instead exacerbate already existing grievances.

4.1 Fragmentation and Violence

The first implication of my thesis is that a counterinsurgency approach aimed at fragmenting rebel groups is undesirable for finding a durable peaceful solution to armed conflict. On the contrary, organisational coherence and leadership authority within rebel groups is pivotal for transforming violent into non-violent organisations.

States and international stakeholders involved in peace processes, therefore, need to be careful not to erode their negotiations partners' authority within the latter's' own movements. This means that inclusivity in peace negotiations cannot be limited to inviting representatives of all warring parties to the negotiation table. In order to prevent spoiling dynamics by excluded actors, more care needs be taken to also engage factions internal to those armed groups that are already negotiating in order to ensure that their leaders can garner support for a peaceful settlement within their movement.

This stands in stark contrast to common counterinsurgency practices that aim at breaking the organisational structures of insurgency by decapitating key leaders via targeted killings as well as dis-embedding insurgency from local support networks by denying them access to local communities (Staniland 2014, 39–41). While this approach might be able to weaken insurgencies militarily, it is ill-suited to end conflict and is instead likely to produce new violence. This is because group fragmentation incites outbidding and spoiler dynamics, which prolong rather than shorten civil wars.[193] The ongoing civil war in Syria is a case in point. Part of its intractability stems from the extremely fragmented actor landscape, where rebel groups have proliferated as a result of organisational splintering. Competing for local support, these multiple groups resort to outbidding, i.e. the increased use of violence in order to sway local communities by signalling their strength and resolve (Perkoski, July 30, 2015). At the same time, the multiplicity of warring factions complicates peace negotiations by increasing the likelihood of spoiling dynamics, i.e. hard-line factions using violence to derail talks between moderates (Berti, August 11, 2013).

This thesis has shown that the internal fragmentation of rebel groups further exacerbates these dynamics. Its findings also demonstrated that settlements that seem stable from the outside might be highly contested from within fragmented movements. This is because leaders of fragmented groups only represent part of their insurgent collective. Even though they might enter peace negotiations with the state, their contentious relationship with rival co-leaders and their limited authority among their

[193] For a theoretical discussion on outbidding and spoiling cf. Kydd and Walter 2006.

own rank-and-file puts their actual ability to implement decisions reached on the negotiation table into question. In addition, taking an accommodating stance towards the state can further the erosion of moderate rebel leaders' authority among their rank-and-file and exacerbate factional tensions with less accommodating elements within the same movement. While rebel fragmentation, hence, complicates peace negotiations, it might also derail already agreed settlements at a later point in time.

In the case of Myanmar, peace negotiators should, therefore, not only expand negotiations to include all ethnic armed groups, including the ones previously excluded from the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, as for instance the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) negotiations, and the ones that did not sign the accord in 2015, as for instance the KIO. They also need to secure the participation of factions internal to the groups that are officially negotiating already, such as the internal opposition of the KNU, surrounding the KNLA's Fifth Brigade. These findings are, however, also relevant for peace negotiations beyond the Myanmar context. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for instance, negotiations have not least been complicated due to the leadership competition between Fatah and Hamas (Pearlman 2009). Factional tensions within both organisations, as for instance between the political and armed wings of Hamas as well as its Gaza and diaspora-based arms, have further complicated negotiations and contributed to the escalation of conflict on several occasions (Berti 2013, 125, 2014). In the run-up to the 2016 peace accord between the Colombian Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the Colombian government, political commentators were also worried that fragmentation would lead to internal spoiling dynamics of disaffected elements within the movement (Findley, Ponce de Leon, and Denly, September 05, 2016). While this has eventually not derailed the historic signing of Colombia's peace accord, rebel fragmentation still poses one of the greatest challenges to the country's fragile peace.

4.2 The Pitfalls of Economistic Approaches to Peace

The second major implication of this thesis is linked to the above: attempts to buy rebel leaders out of violence with economic incentives can be contra-productive to peace. This is because they can spark organisational fragmentation and erodes the authority of moderate rebel leaders that are engaging in negotiations. Following the argument above, organisational coherence and leadership authority are, however, pivotal for ensuring the stability of peace agreements and for facilitating the transformation of violent political organisations into non-violent political organisations.

Contemporary practices of counterinsurgency, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding have, however, often taken an economistic approach. This is not least because scholars and policy-making have increasingly viewed economic profiteering rather than ideology or political grievances as the main driving force behind contemporary civil wars, which effectively depoliticised political violence (Collier and Hoeffler 1998; Duffield 2002; Kaldor 1999).[194] The development of the spoiler concept is particularly telling. Originally proposed by Stephen Stedman, spoilers attempt to sabotage peace negotiations for their own self-interest (Stedman 1997). With the increasing popularity of economistic explanations for violence, spoilers have also become understood as having vested interests in maintaining their assets in war economies (Zahar 2008). Scholars have since asked how peace can come about if conflict is so profitable. One seemingly obvious answer is to buy "greedy" spoilers off with economic incentives (Le Billon and Nicholls 2007; Wennmann 2009). In addition to the idea that insurgents can be corrupted into peace with economic incentives, the

[194] Since then, Collier's famous proposition that present-day insurgency is motivated by economic "greed" rather than political grievances (Collier and Hoeffler 1998), has been criticized on theoretical, methodological, and normative grounds (Cramer 2002; Keen 2012). While this discussion cannot dwell at length upon this debate, it is important to note that more recent quantitative research has refuted Collier's founding argument, showing that grievances – if measured differently - are indeed a major driver of civil wars (Stewart and Fitzgerald 2001). Nevertheless, economistic understandings of conflict have become deeply engrained in conflict studies, while identity explanations have taken a backseat. As Siniša Malešević points out, contemporary conflict analyses, thus, rarely features identity as an 'original generator of social action, but always a second order reality, a reactive force to some other supposedly primary cause' (Malešević 2008, 107).

economistic strand of conflict studies has shaped the practice of peacebuilding. Goodhand criticised this 'economization of peace-building (and counter-insurgency) efforts' before, writing that

> 'from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)'s promotion of quick-impact projects to win hearts and minds in Afghanistan, to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's declared ambition to foster economic peace with the Palestinians, there is an assumption that economic incentives can somehow override or short-circuit complex political processes.' (Goodhand 2013, 234)

The idea that rebel leaders can be co-opted with business opportunities, and marginalised communities swayed with the fruits of economic development, has indeed taken root in counterinsurgency doctrine around the world. This thesis has shown how Myanmar's generals have based their ceasefire politics around mutual business collaboration with rebel leaders and securitised development of borderland peripheries. Analogously, Turkish state officials have long viewed economic underdevelopment and societal backwardness as the core causes of conflict in its Kurdish periphery (Aydin and Emrence 2015, 89–106). This framing therefore invited a two-pronged counterinsurgency approach against the insurgent Kurdish Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê *(*PKK). Similar to Naypyidaw's engagement with restive ethnic minorities in its borderlands, Ankara has committed simultaneously to the co-optation of Kurdish elites by material benefits and a 'developmentalist agenda that would civilize the Kurds and bring peace and prosperity to these backward regions' (Aydin and Emrence 2015, 89-106: 90). Sri Lanka's government also attempted to co-opt leaders of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and garner support among local Tamil communities during the country's failed peace process in the early and mid-2000s, wrongly believing that 'the fruits of economic development would corrupt the LTTE and undermine Tamil nationalism' (Goodhand 2013, 234). When distilling his lessons from Iraq, US counterinsurgency mastermind Lt.-Gen. David Petraeus stressed the importance of economic strategies to win civil wars by stating that: 'Money

is ammunition. In fact, depending on the situation, money can be more important than real ammunition' (Petraeus 2006).

The implications of his thesis, however, illustrate the pitfalls of an economistic engagement with insurgency. While some political economy scholars referred to the economic dimensions of Myanmar's ceasefires as examples that show how economic interests can be harnessed for fostering accommodation between warring factions (Sherman 2003; Snyder 2006; Le Billon and Nicholls 2007), my findings demonstrate that they have become part of the conflict's intractability. This is because the co-optation of rebel leaders with business incentives tends to undermine their leadership authority by alienating their own grassroots. This is likely to drive dynamics of organisational fragmentation leading to further violence. Economic development can, moreover, not override political grievances centred on political marginalisation and competing nationalisms. On the contrary, if the political demands and grievances of rebel movements and their support base are not appreciated, the economistic engagement of armed groups is likely to cause new violence, as was evidenced in the case of the KIO.

In order to end this cycle of conflict, Myanmar's new NLD-led administration needs to strengthen moderate elements within ethnic armed movements by creating trust among ethnic minority communities in a genuine peace process. It, therefore, needs to break with the country's overly economistic engagement with insurgency and focus on the political solution of conflict, including negotiations of federal constitutional amendments, that addresses the claims to due and proper recognition of minority rights and identities which have long been the core driver behind ethnic minority nationalism and armed rebellion against an authoritarian and ethnocratic state. That said, economic issues are still of major importance to end a conflict that is as much about the political sources of economic marginalisation as it is about ethnicity. This, however, means inclusive economic development and the institutionalisation of revenue-sharing that contributes towards overcoming the grievances of local communities rather than business agendas surrounding resource extraction for the profit of a small elite.

5 Concluding Remarks

When I started this project in 2012, it was unclear where Myanmar's transition process was heading to and how this would affect the country's decades-old ethnic conflict. Four years down the road, there are still no easy answers to these questions. Since Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her NLD came to power in March 2016, she has pushed for a remake of the country's peace process. Her efforts have thus far culminated in a large peace conference, which was styled as the "21st century Panglong conference". In contrast to the relatively small original Panglong conference of 1947, the meeting that was held in August and September 2016 in Naypyidaw featured some 1,800 delegates from government, the *Tatmadaw* and 17 ethnic armed organisations. Unsurprisingly then, it did not end with a binding agreement. At best, it marked the beginning of a long and windy road towards national conciliation. Progression on this road however, remains uncertain. At the time of writing, fierce battles are taking place in Kachin State with the *Tatmadaw* pushing against KIA positions with heavy artillery shelling and aerial bombardments. Moreover, ongoing clashes between a Karen splinter group and Myanmar's armed forces threaten the embryonic stability at the Thai border (Nyein Nyein, September 23, 2016; Yan Naing, September 12, 2016).

To be sure, one major reason for the continuation of armed conflict is the limited control that Myanmar's new democratic government exerts over the country's armed forces. As *Tatmadaw* generals have long profited from perpetuating conflict, it was naïve to belief that they would simply give up their sources of power and wealth. At the same time, Myanmar's rebel groups do not exhibit much willingness to demobilise either. In fact, many of them seem determined to continue with their armed struggle. In order to end this cycle of violence, the findings of this thesis suggest that we need to reconceptualise the phenomenon of insurgency. The strategies of rebel groups are not driven by presumably self-propelled rebel leaders who act according to fixed preference sets but by a social interaction process between differently situated rebel leaders and their grassroots. The latter include rebel soldiers on the frontline, teachers in rebel-held schools, and local youth singing revolutionary songs in karaoke

bars. Their motivation is driven by the struggle for due and proper recognition. In order to find peaceful solutions to Myanmar's civil war as well as other comparable conflicts, policy-makers need to push for settlements that address the identity needs of insurgent grassroots. As scholars we can contribute to this endeavour by developing a better understanding of political violence and its social foundations. This thesis has shown that listening to insurgents themselves is an important first step into this direction.

Interviews

Karen National Union (KNU)

1. Colonel, KNLA central command, Mae Sot, Thailand, 12 October 2013
2. P'doh Saw Dot Lay Mu, Head of Agriculture Department, Mae Sot, Thailand, 12 October 2013
3. KNLA officer, Mutraw (Brigade 5), 21 October 2013.
4. KNU education workers (group interview), Mutraw (Brigade 5), Karen State, Myanmar, 21 October 2013
5. KNU administrator, Mutraw (Brigade 5), 23 October 2013.
6. Karen leader, Executive Committee member (asked not to be identified), Mae Sot, Thailand, 25 October 2013
7. P'doh Saw David Tharckabaw, Head of Alliance Affairs Department, Mae Sot, Thailand, 08 November 2013
8. P'doh Saw Lah Say, Head of Education and Culture Department, Mae Sot, Thailand, 15 November 2013
9. Chairman of Thaton District (Brigade 1), Mae Sot, Thailand, 24 November 2013
10. Chairman of Duplaya District (Brigade 6), Law Keeh Lah, Karen State, Myanmar, 04 December 2013
11. Saw Mahn Nyei Maung, Executive Committee, Law Keeh Lah, Karen State, Myanmar, 04 December 2013
12. Saw Roger Khin, Executive Committee, Law Keeh Lah, Karen State, Myanmar, 04 December 2013
13. P'doh Saw Hkwe Htoo Win, General Secretary, Law Keeh Lah, Karen State, Myanmar, 04 December 2013
14. Chairman of Toungoo District (Brigade 2), Law Keeh Lah, Karen State, Myanmar, 05 December 2013
15. P'doh Saw Mahn Ba Tun, Head of Forestry Department, Law Keeh Lah, Karen State, Myanmar, 05 December 2013
16. P'doh Saw Ker Ler, Head of Mining Department, Law Keeh Lah, Karen State, Myanmar, 05 December 2013
17. Lt.-Gen. Baw Kyaw Heh, KNLA Vice-Chief of Staff, Law Keeh Lah, Karen State, Myanmar, 06 December 2013

Other Karen

1. Activist, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 30 October 2014
2. Activist, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 31 October 2014

3. Col. Saw Dah, KNU/KNLA Peace Council (KPC), Mae Sot, Thailand, 11 November 2013
4. Teacher, Mae La refugee camp, Thailand, 10 December 2013
5. Headmaster, Mae La refugee camp, Thailand, 10 December 2013
6. Activist, Yangon, Myanmar, 22 January 2014
7. NGO worker, Yangon, Myanmar, 22 January 2014
8. Priest, Dawei, Karen State, Myanmar, 28 January 2014
9. NGO worker, Dawei, Karen State, Myanmar, 28 January 2014

Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO)

1. Dr La Ja, General Secretary, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 14 November 2014
2. Member of Technical Advisory Team, Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar, 10 February 2014
3. Member of Technical Advisory Team, Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar, 12 February 2014
4. Deputy Manager, Buga Company, Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar, 14 February 2014
5. Salang Kaba Doi Pisa, Head of Humanitarian Affairs, Laiza, Kachin State, 14 March 2014
6. Sara Kaba Sum Lut Gam, Senior Negotiator, Laiza, Kachin State, 17 March 2014
7. KIA Officer, officer school outside Laiza, Kachin State, Myanmar, 17 March 2014
8. Zawng Buk Than, Head of Economics Department, Laiza, Kachin State, 25 March 2014
9. KIA Officer, drug eradication centre outside Laiya, Kachin State, Myanmar, 27 March 2014
10. U La Nan, Joint General Secretary, Laiza, Kachin State, 29 March 2014
11. Co-founder of the Education and Economic Development for Youth, Maijayang, Kachin State, Myanma, 04 April 2014

Other Kachin

1. Kachin elder, Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar,07 February 2014
2. Dr. Manam Tu Ja, Chairman of the Kachin State Development Party (KSDP), Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar, 10 February 2014
3. Staff, Kachin Baptist Convention, Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar, 10 February 2014
4. Religious leader, Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar, 13 February 2014

5. Kachin businessmen and members of Peace Talk Creation Group (group interview), Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar, 13 February 2014
6. Humanitarian worker, Laiza, Kachin State, Myanmar, 12 March 2014
7. Activist, Laiza, Kachin State, Myanmar, 28 March 2014
8. Religious Leader, Laiza, Myanmar, 29 March 2014
9. Journalist, Maijayang, Kachin State, Myanmar, 03 April 2014

Other

10. Paul Keenan, Independent Researcher, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 31 October 2013
11. Chairmen of the Tak Chamber of Commerce (group interview), Mae Sot, Thailand, 03 December 2013
12. Tim Schröder, Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI), Yangon, Myanmar, 22 January 2014

References

41 Karen Civil Society Organisations. 2015. "Karen Civil Society Has Lost Trust in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) Negotiations as a Gateway to Political Dialogue." News release. April 10. Accessed July 05, 2016. http://www.burmapartnership.org/2015/10/karen-civil-society-has-lost-trust-in-the-nationwide-ceasefire-agreement-nca-negotiations-as-a-gateway-to-political-dialogue/.

Adam Smith International. 2015. "Institutional Regulatory Assessment of the Extractive Industries in Myanmar." Accessed October 14, 2015. http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2015/05/14/090224b082e8301f/1_0/Rendered/PDF/Main0report.pdf.

AFP, Thomas Kean, and Zaw W. Than. 2012. "Govt, KNU sign ceasefire." *Myanmar Times*, January 16. Accessed January 19, 2016. http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/1258-govt-knu-sign-ceasefire.html?start=1.

Allina-Pisano, Jessica. 2009. "How to Tell an Axe Murderer: An Essay on Ethnograghy, Truth, and Lies." In Schatz 2009, 53–75.

Almond, Gabriel A., and G. B. Powell. 1978. *Comparative Politics: System, Process, and Üolicy.* London: Little, Brown.

Anderson, Robert, and Mandy Sadan. 2016. "Historical perspectives on war and peace in Kachin space: The First Kachin Ceasefire, 1944-1961." In Sadan 2016b, 34–53.

Apter, David. 1997. "Political violence in analytical perspective." In *The legitimization of violence*, edited by David Apter and M. Nicholson, 1–32. New York: NYU Press.

Arjona, Ana, Nelson Kasfir, and Zachariah Mampilly. 2015. *Rebel Governance in Civil War.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Asad, Talal. 1972. "Market model, class structure and consent: a reconsideration of Swat political organisation." *Man* 7 (1): 74–94.

Asian Development Bank. 2010. "Strategy and Action plan for the Greater Mekong Subregion East–West Economic Corridor." Accessed January 19, 2016. https://openaccess.adb.org/bitstream/handle/11540/1035/gms-action-plan-east-west.pdf?sequence=1.

Aung Naing Oo. June 5, 2014. "Myanmar's Labyrinthine Peace Process." *The Irrawaddy*, June 5, July 2014. Accessed July 10, 2014. http://www.irrawaddy.org/contributor/myanmars-labyrinthine-peace-process.html.

Aydin, Aysegul, and Cem Emrence. 2015. *Zones of Rebellion: Kurdish Insurgents and the Turkish State.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Azar, Edward E. 1986. "Protracted International Conflicts: Ten Propositions." In *International Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, edited by Edward E. Azar and Tom W. Burton, 28–39. Brighton: Wheatsheaf.

Bakke, Kristin M., Kathleen G. Cunningham, and Lee J. M. Seymour. 2012. "A plague of initials: Fragmentation, cohesion, and infighting in civil wars." *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (02): 265–83.

Bakonyi, Jutta, and Berit Bliesemann de Guevara, eds. 2014a. *A micro-sociology of violence: Deciphering patterns and dynamics of collective violence.* London: Routledge.

———. 2014b. "The Mosaic of Violence: An Introduction." In *A micro-sociology of violence: Deciphering patterns and dynamics of collective violence*, edited by Jutta Bakonyi and Berit Bliesemann de Guevara, 1–17: London: Routledge.

Barth, Fredrik. 1959. *Political leadership among Swat Pathans.* London: Athlone Press.

Baruah, Sanjib. 2003. "Confronting constructionism: ending india's naga war." *Journal of Peace Research* 40 (3): 321–38.

Bayard de Volo, Lorraine, and Edward Schatz. 2004. "From the inside out: Ethnographic methods in political research." *Political Science and Politics* 37 (02): 267–71.

Beck, Teresa K. 2009. "Staging Society: Sources of Loyalty in the Angolan UNITA." *Contemporary Security Policy* 30 (2): 343–55.

Beech, Hannah. 2012. "A Cease-Fire in Burma: Is One of the World's Oldest Insurgencies About to End?" *Time*, December 1. Accessed May 07, 2012. http://world.time.com/2012/01/12/a-ceasefire-in-burma-is-one-of-the-worlds-oldest-insurgencies-about-to-end/.

Berti, Benedetta. 2013. *Armed political organizations: From conflict to integration.* Boston: JHU Press.

———. 2013. "Syria' Rebels: Between Talks and a Hard Place." *The National Interest*, August 11. Accessed October 08, 2015. http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/Syria's%20Rebels-

%20Between%20Talks%20and%20a%20Hard%20Place%20-%20An%20article%20By%20Benedetta%20Berti%20in%20The%20National%20Interest.pdf.

———. 2014. "Hamas and Israel at the Brink." Accessed November 07, 2014. http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2014/07/08/hamas-and-israel-at-brink/hfe3.

Boehler, Patrick. 2012. "The Kachin borderlands." *Le Monde diplomatique (English Edition)*, 06/2012. Accessed January 22, 2016. http://mondediplo.com/2012/06/12kachin.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Loïc J. D. Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Branscombe, Nyla R., Naomi Ellemers, Russell Spears, and Bertjan Doosje. 1999. "The context and content of social identity threat." In Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1999, 35–58.

Brenner, David. 2015. "Ashes of co-optation: from armed group fragmentation to the rebuilding of popular insurgency in Myanmar." *Conflict, Security & Development* 15 (4): 337–58.

Buchanan, John, Tom Kramer, and Kevin Woods. 2013. "Developing Disparity: Regional Investment in Burma's Borderlands." Accessed April 28, 2013. http://www.tni.org/sites/www.tni.org/files/download/tni-2013-burmasborderlands-def-klein-def.pdf.

Burke, Jason. 2012. "Burma signs ceasefire with Karen rebels in step towards ending isolation." *The Guardian*, December 2. Accessed August 03, 2016. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/12/burma-ceasefire-karen-rebels-isolation.

Burma News International. 2013a. "Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process." Accessed October 05, 2015. http://mmpeacemonitor.org/images/pdf/deciphering_english_2013.pdf.

———. 2013b. "Economics of Peace and Conflict." Accessed July 21, 2014. http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/images/pdf/economics_peace_and_conflict_eng.pdf.

———. 2014. "Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process." Accessed October 05, 2015. http://mmpeacemonitor.org/images/pdf/deciphering_myanmar_peace_process_2014.pdf.

———. 2015. “Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process.” Accessed September 05, 2016. http://mmpeacemonitor.org/images/2015/august/deci-myan-peace-process-2015-eng.pdf.

Callahan, Mary P. 2003. *Making enemies: War and state building in Burma.* Ithaca, N.Y., London: Cornell University Press.

Callahan, Mary P. 2007. *Political authority in Burma's ethnic minority states: devolution, occupation and coexistence.* Washington: East-West Center; Singapore: ISEAS.

Chachavalpongpun, Pavin. 2011. “Look East Meets Look West: Indian–Southeast Asian Relations in Flux.” *The International Spectator* 46 (2): 91–108.

Chandra, Kanchan. 2006. “What is ethnic identity and does it matter?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 9: 397–424.

Cheesman, Nick, Nicholas Farrelly, and Trevor Wilson, eds. 2014. *Debating democratization in Myanmar* 233: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Cheesman, Nick, Monique Skidmore, and Trevor Wilson, eds. 2012. *Myanmar's Transition: Openings, Obstacles and Opportunities.* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Chenoweth, Erica, and Adria Lawrence, eds. 2010. *Rethinking Violence: States and Non-State Actors in Conflict.* Belfer Center studies in international security. Edited by Adria Lawrence. Cambridge Mass. MIT Press. Conference Proceeding.

Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud. 2009. *Opium: uncovering the politics of the poppy:* Harvard University Press.

Christie, Clive J. 2001. *Ideology and Revolution in Southeast Asia 1900-80.* Richmond: Curzon.

Clifford, James. 1996. “Anthropology and/as Travel.” *Etnofoor* (2): 5–15.

———. 1997. “Spatial practices: fieldwork, travel, and the disciplining of anthropology.” In *Anthropological locations: Boundaries and grounds of a field science*, edited by Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, 185–222. Berkeley: Univ of California Press.

Clifford, James, and George E. Marcus. 1986. *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography: a School of American Research advanced seminar:* Univ of California Press.

Collier, Paul. 1999. “Doing Well out of War: Paper prepared for Conference on Economic Agendas in Civil Wars, London, April 26-27, 1999.”

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTKNOWLEDGEFORCHANGE/Resources/491519-1199818447826/28137.pdf.

Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. 1998. "On economic causes of civil war." *Oxford Economic Papers* 50 (4): 563–73. doi:10.1093/oep/50.4.563.

———. 2004. "Greed and grievance in civil war." *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (4): 563–95. doi:10.1093/oep/gpf064.

Connor, Walker. 1994. *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding.* New York: Princeton University Press.

Core, Paul. 2009. "Burma/Myanmar: Challenges of a Ceasefire Accord in Karen State." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 28 (3): 95–105.

Cramer, Christopher. 2002. "Homo Economicus Goes to War: Methodological Individualism, Rational Choice and the Political Economy of War." *World Development* 30 (11): 1845–64.

Cramer, Christopher J. 2006. *Civil War Is Not a Stupid Thing: Accounting for Violence in Developing Countries.* London: Hurst & Co.

Cunningham, David E., Kristian S. Gleditsch, and Idean Salehyan. 2009. "It takes two: A dyadic analysis of civil war duration and outcome." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

Cunningham, Kathleen G., Kristin M. Bakke, and Lee J. M. Seymour. 2012. "Shirts Today, Skins Tomorrow Dual Contests and the Effects of Fragmentation in Self-Determination Disputes." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56 (1): 67–93.

Dapice, David. 2012. "China and Yunnan Economic Relations with Myanmar and the Kachin State: Powering the Peace Process." Harvard Ash Center. Accessed April 30, 2016 http://www.ash.harvard.edu/extension/ash/docs/chinayunnan.pdf.

Dean, Karin. 2005. "Spaces and territorialities on the Sino–Burmese boundary: China, Burma and the Kachin." *Political Geography* 24 (7): 808–30.

———. 2012. "Struggle over Space in Myanmar: Expanding State Territoriality after the Kachin Ceasefire." In *Autonomy and armed separatism in South and Southeast Asia*, edited by Michelle A. Miller, 113–35: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Deignan, Herbert G. 1943. *Burma: Gateway to China.* War Background Studies 17. Washington D.C.: The Smithsonian institution.

Driscoll, Jesse. 2012. "Commitment Problems or Bidding Wars? Rebel Fragmentation as Peace Building." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56 (1): 118–49.

Duffield, Mark. 2002. "War as a network enterprise: the new security terrain and its implications." *Cultural Values* 6 (1-2): 153–65.

Duffield, Mark R. 2001. *Global Governance and the New Wars: The merging of development and security.* London: Zed books.

Duncan, Christopher R., ed. 2008. *Civilizing the margins: Southeast Asian government policies for the development of minorities.* Singapore: NUS Press.

———. 2008. "Legislating Modernity among the Marginalized." In Duncan 2008, 1–23.

Egreteau, Renaud. 2006. "Instability at the Gate: India's troubled Northeast and its external connections." CSH India Occasional Papers. Accessed April 30, 2016. http://egreteau.com/images/Documents%20PDF/CSH%20OP%20-%20n%B016.pdf.

Eh, Na. 2013. "KNU Gen. Baw Kyaw Heh Exposes How Ceasefire Agenda has Shifted to Business." *Karen News*, May 9. http://karennews.org/2013/09/knu-gen-baw-kyaw-heh-exposes-how-ceasefire-agenda-has-shifted-to-business.html/.

Elias, Norbert. 1978. *What is Sociology?* New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 1983. *The Court Society.* Oxford: Blackwell.

———. 1994. *The Civilizing Process.* New ed. Edited by Edmund Jephcott. Oxford: Blackwell.

Ellemers, Naomi, Russell Spears, and Bertjan Doosje, eds. 1999. *Social identity: Context, commitment, content.* Malden, MA: Malden, MA : Blackwell Publishers.

Emirbayer, Mustafa. 1997. "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 103 (2): 281–317.

Farrelly, Nicholas. 2012. "Ceasing Ceasefire? Kachin Politics Beyond the Stalemate." In *Myanmar's Transition: Openings, Obstacles and Opportunities*, edited by Nick Cheesman, Monique Skidmore, and Trevor Wilson, 52–71. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Findley, Mike, Alejandro Ponce de Leon, and Mike Denly. 2016. "Spoiler Alert: Combatant Fragmentation and the Colombian Peace Process." *Political Violence @ a Glance*, September 5. Accessed September 08, 2016.

https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2016/05/09/spoiler-alert-combatant-fragmentation-and-the-colombian-peace-process/.

Formoso, Bernard. 2010. "Zomians or zombies? What future exists for the peoples of the Southeast Asian Massif?" *Journal of Global History* 5 (02): 313–32.

Geertz, Clifford. 1974. "" From the Native's Point of View": On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding." *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 26–45.

Gerring, John. 2007. *Case Study Research: Principles and practices:* Cambridge: University Press Cambridge.

Global Witness. 2003. "A Conflict of Interest: The Uncertain Future of Burma's Forests." Accessed January 22, 2016. https://www.globalwitness.org/en-gb/archive/conflict-interest-english/.

———. 2005. "A Choice for China: Ending the destruction of Burma's northern frontier forests." Accessed January 22, 2016. https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/11694/a_choice_for_china_low_res.pdf.

———. 2009. "A Disharmonious Trade: China and the continued destruction of Burma's northern frontier forests." A Review by Global Witness 2006-2009. Accessed September 30, 2014. http://www.globalwitness.org/library/disharmonious-trade-china-and-continued-destruction-burmas-northern-frontier-forests.

———. 2014. "What Future for Rubber Production in Myanmar?" Accessed January 19, 2016. https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/10527/what_future_english_version_april_2014_0.pdf.

———. 2015. "Jade: Myanmar's "Big State Secret"." Accessed January 22, 2016. https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/18153/Jade_full_report_online_hi_res_xDRGxt7.pdf.

Goodhand, Jonathan. 2000. "Research in Conflict Zones: Ethics and Accountability." *Forced Migration Review* 8 (4): 12–16.

———. 2005. "Frontiers and Wars: The Opium Economy in Afghanistan." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 5 (2): 191–216.

———. 2008. "War, peace and the places in between: Why borderlands are central." In *Whose peace? Critical perspectives on the political economy of peacebuilding*, edited by Michael Pugh, Neil Cooper, and Mandy Turner, 225–44: Springer.

———. 2013. "Stabilising a Victor's Peace." In *Stabilization operations, security and development: States of fragility*, edited by Robert Muggah, 215–43: Routledge.

Gravers, Mikael. 1999. *Nationalism as political paranoia in Burma: An essay on the historical practice of power.* 2nd. Richmond: Curzon.

———. 2016. "The Karen and the Ceasefire Negotiations: Mistrust, Internal Segmentation, and Clinging to Arms." In Sadan 2016b.

Guevara, Ernesto. 2002. *Guerrilla Warfare.* London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Guha, Ranajit. 1988. "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency." In *Selected Subaltern Studies*, edited by Ranajit Guha and Gayatri C. Spivak, 45–88. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gustafsson, Karl. 2015. "Recognising recognition through thick and thin: Insights from Sino-Japanese relations." *Cooperation and Conflict*, 0010836715610594.

Haacke, Jürgen. 2005. "The Frankfurt School and International Relations' on the centrality of recognition." *Review of International Studies* 31 (01): 181–94.

Haacke, Jürgen. 2006. "Myanmar's foreign policy towards China and India." *Adelphi Paper* 46 (381): 25–39.

Haacke, Jürgen. 2010. "China's role in the pursuit of security by Myanmar's State Peace and Development Council: boon and bane?" *The Pacific Review* 23 (1): 113–37.

Hagmann, Tobias, and Didier Péclard. 2010. "Negotiating statehood: dynamics of power and domination in Africa." *Development and Change* 41 (4): 539–62.

Hedström, Jenny. 2016. "'Before I joined the armey I was like a child': Militarism and Women's Rights in Kachinlandsaa." In Sadan 2016b.

Honneth, Axel. 1996. *The struggle for recognition: The moral grammar of social conflicts:* MIT Press.

Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. *Ethnic groups in conflict.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Human Rights Watch. 2002. "My Gun Was As Tall As Me: Child Soldiers in Burma." Accessed January 19, 2016. https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/burma/Burma0902.pdf.

———. 2005. “They Came and Destroyed Our Village Again': The Plight of Internally Displaced Persons in Karen State.” Accessed January 19, 2016. http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/burma0605/burma0605.pdf.

International Crisis Group. 2003. “Myanmar Backgrounder: Ethnic Minority Politics.” Accessed January 10, 2014. http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/052%20Myanmar%20Backgrounder%20Ethnic%20Minority%20Politics.pdf.

———. 2004. “Myanmar: Aid to the Border Areas.”.

———. 2011. “Myanmar: A New Peace Iniative.” Accessed July 21, 2014. http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/214%20Myanmar%20-%20A%20New%20Peace%20Initiative.pdf.

———. 2012. “A Tentative Peace in Myanmar’s Kachin Conflict.” Accessed September 30, 2014. http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/b140-a-tentative-peace-in-myanmars-kachin-conflict.pdf.

———. 2014. “Myanmar's Military: Back to the Barracks.” Accessed October 14, 2015. http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/b143-myanmar-s-military-back-to-the-barracks.pdf.

Jones, Lee. 2014a. “Explaining Myanmar's regime transition: the periphery is central.” *Democratization* 21 (5): 780–802.

———. 2014b. “The political economy of Myanmar’s transition.” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 44 (1): 144–70.

———. 2016. “Understanding Myanmar's Ceasefires: Geopolitics, Political Economy and State-Building.” In Sadan 2016b.

Jost, John T., and Brenda Major. 2001. “Emerging Perspectives on the Psychology of Legitimacy.” In Jost and Major 2001, 3–32.

———, eds. 2001. *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging perspectives on ideology, justice, and intergroup relations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jourde, Cédric. 2009. “The Ethnographic Sensibility: Overlooked Authoritarian Dynamics and Islamic Ambivalences in West Africa.” In Schatz 2009, 201–16.

Justino, Patricia, Tilman Brück, and Philip Verwimp. 2013. *A micro-level perspective on the dynamics of conflict, violence, and development.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kachin Development Networking Group. 2007. "Valley of Darkness: Gold Mining and Militarization in Burma's Hugawng Valley." Accessed February 10, 2014. http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/reports/ValleyofDarkness.pdf.

———. 2012. "Sham Tiger Reserve in Burma: A lesson on American aid in Myanmar." Accessed January 10, 2014. http://www.kdng.org/publication/286-sham-tiger-reserve-in-burma-a-lesson-on-american-aid-in-myanmar-.html.

Kachin News Group. 2011. "KIO appeals to China to stop Myitsone dam construction." *Kachin News Group*, November 24. Accessed February 10, 2014. http://www.kachinnews.com/news/1916-kio-appeals-to-china-to-stop-myitsone-dam-construction.html.

Kachinland News. 2013. "No ceasefire agreement without reaching the stage for political discussions, said Kachin public." *Kachinland News*, May 29. Accessed January 22, 2016. http://kachinlandnews.com/?p=23286.

Kaiser, Tania. 2013. "Researching Social Life in Protracted Exile: Experiences with Sudanese Refugees in Uganda 1996-2008." In Mazurana, Jacobsen, and Gale 2013, 106–28.

Kaldor, Mary. 1999. *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2003. "The ontology of "political violence": action and identity in civil wars." *Perspective on Politics* 1 (03): 475–94.

———. 2006. *The Logic of violence in civil war.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2010. "Foreword: Internal Conflict and Political Violence: New Developments in Research." In Chenoweth and Lawrence 2010, xi–xiii.

Karen Human Rights Group. 2014. "Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response in southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire." Accessed October 14, 2015. http://khrg.org/sites/default/files/khrg_-_truce_or_transition_-_english.pdf.

———. 2015. "'With only our voices, what can we do?': Land confiscation and local response in southeast Myanmar." Accessed August 30, 2015. http://www.khrg.org/2015/06/with-only-our-voices-what-can-we-do-land-confiscation-and-local-response.

Karen News. 2013. "KNU leader - Govt's Labels Nationwide Ceasefire 'untimely'…: Interview with Padoh Naw Ziporah Sein." July 10. Accessed

January 19, 2016. http://karennews.org/2013/10/knu-leader-govts-labels-nationwide-ceasefire-untimely.html/.

———. 2014. "KNU Decision to Withdraw from UNFC Undemocratic Claims Karen Women's Organisation." *Karen News*, March 10. Accessed January 19, 2016. http://karennews.org/2014/10/knu-decision-to-withdraw-from-unfc-undemocratic-claims-karen-womens-organisation.html/.

———. 2014. "Karen Army General explains rational behind reformation of ethnic alliance and recent conflict with govt troops." *Karen News*, October 21. Accessed October 21, 2014. http://karennews.org/2014/10/karen-army-general-explains-rational-behind-reformation-of-ethnic-alliance-and-recent-conflict-with-govt-troops.html/.

Keen, David. 2005. *Conflict and collusion in Sierra Leone:* James Currey/Palgrave Macmillan.

———. 2012. "Greed and grievance in civil war." *International Affairs* 88 (4): 757–77. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2346.2012.01100.x.

Keyes, Charles F. 2004. "Afterword: The politics of 'Karen-ness' in Thailand." In *Living at the edge of Thai society: The Karen in the highlands of northern Thailand*, edited by Claudio Delang, 210–18. London: RoutledgeCurzon.

King, Gary, Keohane O. Robert, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research.* Princeton N.J: Princeton University Press.

Kolås, Åshild. 2007. "Burma in the Balance: The Geopolitics of Gas*." *Strategic Analysis* 31 (4): 625–43.

Korf, Benedikt. 2011. "Resources, violence and the telluric geographies of small wars." *Progress in Human Geography*, 0309132510394120.

Korf, Benedikt, and Timothy Raeymaekers. 2013. *Violence on the margins: States, conflict, and borderlands.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kramer, Tom. 2009. "Neither War Nor Peace: The Future Of The Cease-Fire Agreements In Burma." Accessed January 22, 2013. http://www.tni.org/sites/www.tni.org/files/download/ceasefire.pdf.

Krause, Keith, and Jennifer Milliken. 2009. "Introduction: the challenge of non-state armed groups." *Contemporary Security Policy* 30 (2): 202–20.

Kudo, Toshihiro. 2013. "Border Development in Myanmar: The Case of the Myawaddy-Mae Sot Border." In *Border Economies in the Greater Mekong Sub-region*, edited by Masami Ishida, 186–206. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kydd, Andrew H., and Barbara F. Walter. 2006. "The strategies of terrorism." *International Security* 31 (1): 49–80.

Lambrecht, Curtis W. 2000. "Destruction and violation: Burma's border development policies.".

———. 2008. "Oxymoronic Development: The Military as Benefactor in the Border Regions of Burma." In Duncan 2008, 150–81.

Le Billon, Philippe, and Eric Nicholls. 2007. "Ending 'Resource Wars': Revenue Sharing, Economic Sanction or Military Intervention?" *International Peacekeeping* 14 (5): 613–32. doi:10.1080/13533310701753941.

Leach, Edmund. 1954. *Political systems of highland Burma: A study of Kachin social structure.* Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Leach, Edmund R. 1960. "The frontiers of "Burma"." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3 (01): 49–68.

Lian Hmung Sakhong. 2003. *In Search of Chin Identity: A study in religion, politics and ethnic identity in Burma.* Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies.

Lieberman, Victor. 2010. "A zone of refuge in Southeast Asia? Reconceptualizing interior spaces." *Journal of Global History* 5 (02): 333–46.

Lindemann, Thomas, and Erik Ringmar, eds. 2015. *International politics of recognition:* Routledge.

Lintner, Bertil. 2013. "Rain for Myanmar's peace parade." *Asia Times Online*, June 25. Accessed April 10, 2014. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/SEA-01-250613.html.

———. 2015. *Great Game East: India, China, and the Struggle for Asia's Most Volatile Frontier.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

———. 2015. "The core issues not addressed." *The Irrawaddy*, May 5. Accessed August 30, 2015. http://www.irrawaddy.org/magazine/the-core-issues-not-addressed.html.

Lintner, Bertil, and Hseng N. Lintner. 1990. *Land of Jade: A journey through insurgent Burma.* Edinburgh: Kiscadale.

Lwin, Ei Ei Toe. 2014. "Will Karen National Union stay in UNFC?" *Myanmar Times*, August 9. Accessed January 19, 2016. http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/in-depth/11574-will-karen-national-union-stay-in-unfc.html.

———. 2014. "KNU to meet amid split fears." October 17. Accessed January 19, 2016. http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/11982-knu-calls-urgent-meeting-for-reunification.html.

MacGinty, Roger, and Oliver Richmond. 2013. *The liberal peace and post-war reconstruction: myth or reality?* London: Routledge.

Malešević, Siniša. 2008. "The Sociology of New Wars? Assessing the causes and objectives of contemporary violent conflicts." *International Political Sociology* 2 (2): 97–112.

Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism.* N.Y.: Princeton University Press.

Mampilly, Zachariah C. 2011. *Rebel rulers: Insurgent governance and civilian life during war.* Ithaca, N.Y. Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press.

Marcus, George E. 1995. "Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography." *Annual review of anthropology*, 95–117.

Marx, Karl, Friedrich Engels, and Robert C. Tucker, eds. 1978. *The Marx-Engels reader.* 2nd ed. New York, London: W.W. Norton.

Maton, Karl. 2014. "Habitus." In *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, edited by Michael J. Grenfell, 48–64. London: Routledge.

Mazurana, Dyan, Lacey Gale, and Karen Jacobsen. 2013. "A View from Below: Conducting Research in Conflict Zones." In Mazurana, Jacobsen, and Gale 2013, 3–26.

Mazurana, Dyan, Karen Jacobsen, and Lacey Gale, eds. 2013. *Research methods in conflict settings: A view from below.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCargo, Duncan. 2008. *Tearing apart the land: Islam and legitimacy in Southern Thailand.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

McCoy, Alfred W. 1972. *The politics of heroin in Southeast Asia.* New York: Harper & Row.

Meehan, Patrick. 2011. "Drugs, insurgency and state-building in Burma: Why the drugs trade is central to Burma's changing political order." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 42 (03): 376–404.

———. 2015. "Fortifying or Fragmenting the State? The Political Economy of the Opium/Heroin Trade in Shan State, Myanmar, 1988–2013." *Critical Asian Studies* 47 (2): 253–82.

Menkhaus, Ken. 2007. "Governance without government in Somalia: Spoilers, state building, and the politics of coping.".

Michaud, Jean. 2010. "Editorial–Zomia and beyond." *Journal of Global History* 5 (02): 187–214.

Millen, Raymond A., and Steven Metz. 2004. *Insurgency and counterinsurgency in the 21st century: reconceptualizing threat and response:* Strategies Studies Institute.

Moore, Barrington. 1978. *Injustice: The social bases of obedience and revolt.* London: Macmillan.

Muckian, Martin J. 2006. "Structural vulnerabilities of networked insurgencies: Adapting to the new adversary." *Parameters* 36 (4): 14.

Mutu Say Poe. 2015. "KNU Chairman Speech At The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement Signing Ceremony." News release. October 15. Accessed July 05, 2016. http://www.knuhq.org/knu-chairman-speech-at-the-nationwide-ceasefire-agreement-signing-ceremony/.

Myanmar Peace Monitor. n.d. "DKBA-5: Democratic Karen Benevolent Army." Accessed October 01, 2016. http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/background/ethnic-grievances/159-dkba-5.

Mydans, Seth. 2012. "Burmese Government and Ethnic Rebel Group Sign Cease-Fire." *The New York Times*, December 2. Accessed July 05, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/13/world/asia/myanmar-signs-truce-with-ethnic-rebel-group.html?_r=0.

Myers, Steven L., and Seth Mydans. 2012. "U.S. Restores Full Ties to Myanmar After Rapid Reforms." *The New York Times*, January 13. Accessed May 07, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/14/world/asia/united-states-resumes-diplomatic-relations-with-myanmar.html.

Myoe, Maung A. 2009. *Building the Tatmadaw: Myanmar armed forces since 1948.* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Nair, Deepak. 2015. "Saving the States' Face: An Ethnography of the ASEAN Secretariat and Diplomatic Field in Jakarta." PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Neumann, Cecilie B., and Iver B. Neumann. 2015. "Uses of the self: two ways of thinking about scholarly situatedness and method." *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 43 (3): 798–819.

Neumann, Iver B. 2012. *At home with the diplomats: inside a European foreign ministry.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Nyein Nyein. 2016. "Burma Army Offensive Continues in Kachin State: KIA Spokesman." *The Irrawaddy*, September 23. Accessed September 26, 2016. http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/burma-army-offensive-continues-in-kachin-state-kia-spokesman.html.

Obama, Barack. 2012. "Statement by the President on the Release of Burmese Political Prisoners." News release. January 13. Accessed May 07, 2016. https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/13/statement-president-release-burmese-political-prisoners.

Pachirat, Timothy. 2009. "The Political in Political Ethnography: Dispatches from the Kill Floor." In Schatz 2009, 143–62.

Paulle, Bowen, Bart van Heerikhuizen, and Mustafa Emirbayer. 2012. "Elias and Bourdieu *." *Journal of Classical Sociology* 12 (1): 69–93. doi:10.1177/1468795X11433708.

Peace Donor Support Group. 2013. "Myanmar Joint Peacebuilding Needs Assessment." Accessed September 26, 2016. http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Ref_Doc_Desktop_Review_of_Needs_and_Gaps_in_Conflict-Affected_Parts_PDSG_Jul2013.pdf.

Pearlman, Wendy. 2009. "Spoiling inside and out: internal political contestation and the Middle East peace process." *International Security* 33 (3): 79–109.

———. 2010. "A Composite-Actor Approach to Conflict Behavior." In Chenoweth and Lawrence 2010, 212–35.

Perkoski, Evan. 2015. "Militant Proliferation and the Consequences of Fragmentation." *Political Violence @ a Glance*, July 30. Accessed September 08, 2016. https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2015/07/30/militant-proliferation-and-the-consequences-of-fragmentation/.

Petraeus, David. 2006. "Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq." http://www.army.mil/professionalWriting/volumes/volume4/april_2006/4_06_2.html.

Phan, Zoya. 2013. "Listen to us: Stop ignoring our concerns." *Karen News*, December 10. Accessed April 28, 2014. http://karennews.org/2013/10/listen-to-us-stop-ignoring-our-concerns.html/.

Rabinow, Paul. 2007. *Reflections on fieldwork in Morocco.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Radio Free Asia. 2012. "Three Karen Officials Removed." *Radio Free Asia*, April 10. Accessed January 19, 2016. http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/karen-10042012152054.html.

Rampton, Dave. 2016. "Social Orders, State Formation and Conflict: Buddhist Nationalism in Sri Lanka and Myanmar." Working Paper.

Ranger, Terence O. 1983. "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa." In *The invention of tradition*, edited by Terence O. Ranger and Eric J. Hobsbawm. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reno, William. 2009. "Explaining Patterns of Violence in Collapsed States." *Contemporary Security Policy* 30 (2): 356–74.

Richmond, Oliver. 2012. *A post-liberal peace.* London: Routledge.

Richmond, Oliver P., Stefanie Kappler, and Annika Björkdahl. 2015. "The 'Field'in the Age of Intervention: Power, Legitimacy, and Authority Versus the 'Local'." *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, 0305829815594871.

S' PhanShaung. 2013. "KNU 7th Brigade – open for business." *Karen News*, September 7. Accessed January 19, 2016. http://karennews.org/2013/07/knu-7th-brigade-open-for-business.html/.

Sadan, Hkpankha T. 2016. "Kachin Student Life at Yangon University in the Mid-1990s." In Sadan 2016b.

Sadan, Mandy. 2007. "Constructing and Contesting the Category "Kachin" in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Burmese State." In *Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Burma*, edited by Mikael Gravers, 34–73. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

———. 2013. *Being and Becoming Kachin: Histories Beyond the State in the Borderworlds of Burma.* Oxford: British Academy and Oxford University Press.

———. 2016a. "Introduction." In Sadan 2016b.

———, ed. 2016b. *War and Peace in the Borderlands of Myanmar: The Kachin Ceasefire 1994-2011.* Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

Sai Wansai. 2015. "Panghsang Summit Meeting, Joint Monitoring Committee and Military Offensives." November 4. Accessed July 05, 2016. http://english.panglong.org/?p=13087.

San Juan, Epifanio. 2006. "Ethnic Identity and Popular Sovereignty Notes on the Moro Struggle in the Philippines." *Ethnicities* 6 (3): 391–422.

Schatz, Edward. 2009. "Introduction: Ethnographic Immersion and the Study of Politics." In Schatz 2009, 1–22.

———, ed. 2009. *Political ethnography: What immersion contributes to the study of power:* University of Chicago Press.

Schlichte, Klaus. 2009a. *In the Shadow of Violence: the politics of armed groups.* Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

———. 2009b. "With the State against the State? The formation of armed groups." *Contemporary Security Policy* 30 (2): 246–64.

———. 2012. "The Limits of Armed Contestation: power and domination in armed groups." *Geoforum* 43 (4): 716–24.

Schlichte, Klaus, and Ulrich Schneckener. 2015. "Armed Groups and the Politics of Legitimacy." *Civil Wars* 17 (4): 409–24.

Scott, James C. 1979. "Revolution in the Revolution." *Theory and Society* 7 (1-2): 97–134.

———. 1985. *Weapons of the weak everyday forms of peasant resistance.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

———. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia.* Yale agrarian studies. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Scott, James G. 1900. *Gazetter of Upper Burma and the Shan States.* 1 vol. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma. Assissted by J.P. Hardiman.

Shah, Alpa. 2013. "The intimacy of insurgency: beyond coercion, greed or grievance in Maoist India." *Economy and Society* 42 (3): 480–506. doi:10.1080/03085147.2013.783662.

Shaw, Rosalind. 2007. "Memory frictions: localizing the truth and reconciliation commission in Sierra Leone." *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1 (2): 183–207.

Sherman, Jake. 2003. "Burma: Lessons from the Ceasefires." In *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance*, edited by Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, 225–55. London: Boulder Co. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Smith, Martin. 1999. *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity.* 2nd ed. Dhaka: Dhaka University Press.

———. 2007. *State of Strife: The Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict in Burma.* Policy Papers 36. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

———. 2016. "Reflections on the Kachin Ceasefire: A Cycle of Hope and Disappointment." In Sadan 2016b.

Smith, Nicholas H. 2012. "Introduction: A Recognition-Theoretic Research Programme for the Social Sciences." In *Recognition theory as social research: investigating the dynamics of social conflict*, edited by Shane O'Neill and Nicholas H. Smith, 1–20. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Snyder, Richard. 2006. "Does lootable wealth breed disorder? A political economy of extraction framework." *Comparative Political Studies* 39 (8): 943–68.

South, Ashley. 2008. *Ethnic Politics in Burma: States of Conflict.* Routledge contemporary Southeast Asia series. Abingdon: Routledge.

———. 2011. "Burma's Longest War: Anatomy of the Karen Conflict." Accessed January 22, 2013. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute. http://www.tni.org/sites/www.tni.org/files/download/Burma's%20Longest%20War.pdf.

———. 2013. *Mon Nationalism and Civil War in Burma: the golden sheldrake:* Routledge.

Staniland, Paul. 2014. *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Stedman, Stephen J. 1997. "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes." *International Security* 22 (2): 5–53. doi:10.2307/2539366.

Steinberg, David I., and Hongwei Fan. 2012. "Modern China-Myanmar relations: dilemmas of mutual dependence.".

Stewart, Frances, and Valpy Fitzgerald. 2001. *War and Underdevelopment.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Strömbom, Lisa. 2014. "Thick recognition: Advancing theory on identity change in intractable conflicts." *European Journal of International Relations* 20 (1): 168–91.

Tajfel, Henri E. 1978. *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations.* London: Academic Press.

Taw, David. 2005. "Strategic considerations for the Karen National Union." In *Choosing to engage: Armed groups and peace processes*, edited by Robert Ricigliano, 40–43. Accord 16. http://www.c-r.org/downloads/Accord16_9Choosingtoengage_2005_ENG.pdf. Accessed October 01, 2015.

Taylor, Robert H. 1982. "Perceptions of Ethnicity in the Politics of Burma." *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 10 (1): 7–22.

———. 1987. *The State in Burma.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

———. 2006. "Colonial forces in British Burma: A national army postponed." In *Colonial Armies in Southeast Asia*, edited by Karl Hack and Tobias Rettig, 185–200. London: Routledge.

Thant Myint-U. 2011. *Where China meets India: Burma and the new crossroads of Asia:* Macmillan.

The Border Consortium. 2012. "Changing Realities, Poverty and Displacement in South East Burma/Myanmar." Accessed July 09, 2016. http://www.theborderconsortium.org/media/10374/report-2012-idp-en-1-.pdf.

Tilly, Charles. 2003. *The Politics of Collective Violence.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2008a. *Contentious Performances.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2008b. *Explaining Social Processes.* Boulder CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Transnational Institute. 2015. "Political Reform and Ethnic Peace in Burma/Myanmar: The Need for Clarity and Achievement." Accessed October 14, 2015. https://www.tni.org/files/download/bpb14-web-042015.pdf.

Turner, John C. 1999. "Current issues in research on social identity and self-categorization theories." In Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1999, 6–34.

Tyler, Tom R. 2001. "A Psychological Perspective on the Legitimacy of Institutions and Authorities." In Jost and Major 2001, 416–36.

U.S. Army. 2014. "Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies: FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, C1." Accessed October 05, 2015. https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2014. "Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2014: Lao PDR, Myanmar." Accessed October 14, 2014.

https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/sea/SE-ASIA-opium-poppy-2014-web.pdf.

Uphoff, Norman. 1989. "Distinguishing Power, Authority & Legitimacy: Taking Max Weber at His Word by Using Resources-Exchange Analysis." *Polity* 22 (2): 295–322. doi:10.2307/3234836.

Van Maanen, and John. 1991. "Playing Back the Tape: Early Days in the Field." In *Experiencing fieldwork: An inside view of qualitative research*, edited by William Shaffir and Robert A. Stebbins 124. London: Sage Publications.

Van Schendel, Willem. 2002. "Geographies of knowing, geographies of ignorance: jumping scale in Southeast Asia." *Environment and planning D: society and space* 20 (6): 647–68.

Vrasti, Wanda. 2008. "The Strange Case of Ethnography and International Relations." *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 37 (2): 279–301.

Wallensteen, Peter, and Margareta Sollenberg. 1998. "Armed conflict and regional conflict complexes, 1989-97." *Journal of Peace Research* 35 (5): 621–34.

Walton, Matthew J. 2008. "Ethnicity, conflict, and history in Burma: The myths of Panglong." *Asian Survey* 48 (6): 889–910.

———. 2013. "The "Wages of Burman-ness:" Ethnicity and Burman privilege in contemporary Myanmar." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 43 (1): 1–27.

———. 2016. "Reflections of Ceasefires Past, Present, and Future." In Sadan 2016b.

Weber, Max. 1947. *The theory of economic and social organization.* London: W. Hodge. Part I of Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, translated from German by A. R. Henderson and Talcott Parsons.

———. 1980. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie.* Tübingen: Mohr.

Wedeen, Lisa. 2009. "Ethnography as Interpretive Enterprise." In Schatz 2009, 75–94.

Weinstein, Jeremy M. 2006. *Inside Rebellion: The politics of insurgent violence.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weng, Lawi. 2015. "Karen Leader: 'If They Keep Attacking Us, There Will Be No Peace': Interview with David Tharckabaw." *The Irrawaddy*, May 11. Accessed July 05, 2016. http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/karen-leader-if-they-keep-attacking-us-there-will-be-no-peace.html.

———. 2015. “Kachin Group Questions Govt Murder Probe, Forms Investigation Team.” *The Irrawaddy*, November 2. Accessed January 22, 2016. http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/kachin-group-questions-govt-murder-probe-forms-investigation-team.html.

———. 2015. “A Taxing Trip in Karen State.” *The Irrawaddy*, December 6. Accessed January 19, 2016. http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/a-taxing-trip-in-karen-state.html.

Wennmann, Achim. 2009. “Getting Armed Groups to the Table: Peace processes, the political economy of conflict and the mediated state.” *Third World Quarterly* 30 (6): 1123–38.

Wickham-Crowley, Timothy. 1987. “The rise (and sometimes fall) of guerrilla governments in Latin America.” *Sociological Forum* 2 (3): 473–99. doi:10.1007/BF01106622.

Wimmer, Andreas. 1997. “Who Owns the State? Understanding Ethnic Conflict in Post-Colonial Societies.” *Nations and Nationalism* 3 (4): 631–66.

Wood, Elisabeth J. 2003. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2006. “The ethical challenges of field research in conflict zones.” *Qualitative Sociology* 29 (3): 373–86.

———. 2008. “The social processes of civil war: The wartime transformation of social networks.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11: 539–61.

———. 2009. “Ethnographic Research in the Shadow of Civil War.” In Schatz 2009, 119–42.

Woods, Kevin. 2011. “Ceasefire capitalism: military–private partnerships, resource concessions and military–state building in the Burma–China borderlands.” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (4): 747–70.

———. 2016. “The Commercialisation of Counterinsurgency: Battlefield Enemies, Business Bedfellows in Kachin State, Burma.” In Sadan 2016b.

Yan, Naing. 2012. “KNU Bridges Internal Rift.” October 29. Accessed January 19, 2016. http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/knu-bridges-internal-rift.html.

———. 2013. “Thousands Greet Convoy of Ethnic Leaders in Myitkyina.” *The Irrawaddy*, March 11. Accessed February 10, 2014. http://www.irrawaddy.org/kia/thousands-greet-convoy-ethnic-leaders-myitkyina.html.

———. 2013. "Who's Behind the Bombings in Burma?" *The Irrawaddy*, October 18. Accessed August 30, 2014. http://www.irrawaddy.org/news-analysis/whos-behind-bombings-burma.html.

———. 2014. "Is Naypyidaw Learning From Sri Lanka to End Civil War?" *The Irrawaddy*, January 29. Accessed January 19, 2016. http://www.irrawaddy.com/interview/naypyidaw-learning-sri-lanka-end-civil-war.html.

———. 2014. "The Growing Friendship Between Naypyidaw and the KNU." *The Irrawaddy*, June 6. Accessed June 18, 2014. http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/multimedia-burma/growing-friendship-naypyidaw-knu.html.

———. 2014. "Karen Rebel Groups Plan Military Cooperation." *The Irrawaddy*, October 14. Accessed January 10, 2015. http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/karen-rebel-groups-plan-military-cooperation.html.

———. 2016. "More Than 3,000 Villagers Flee Escalating Conflict in Karen State." *The Irrawaddy*, September 12. Accessed September 26, 2016. http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/more-than-3000-villagers-flee-escalating-conflict-in-karen-state.html.

Yanow, Dvora. 2009. "Dear Author, Dear Reader: The Third Hermeneutic in Writing and Reviewing Ethnography." In Schatz 2009.

Zahar, Marie-Joelle. 2008. "Reframing the Spoiler Debate in Peace Processes." In *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Peace Processes and Post-War Reconstruction*, edited by Darby John and Roger Mac Ginty. 2nd ed., 159–77. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Zartman, I. W. 1989. *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa.* Updated ed. Council on Foreign Relations books. New York: Oxford University Press.

Zedong, Mao. 1961. *On Guerrilla Warfare.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Zelditch, Morris. 2001. "Theories of Legitimacy." In Jost and Major 2001, 33–53.

Zaw Oo and Win Min. 2007. *Assessing Burma's ceasefire accords.* Washington: East-West Center; Singapore: ISEAS.