

Militias in Myanmar

John Buchanan

July 2016



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Preface

Understanding the history and role of militias in Myanmar's armed conflicts is a critical element in the country's ongoing peace process, but the study of these groups has generally been neglected, relative to the analysis of the military (*Tatmadaw*) and ethnic armed groups. Militias take many different forms in Myanmar, varying in size, allegiances and modes of operation. Though estimates of their numbers vary, all indications are that militia groups are present throughout conflict-affected parts the country, and can be highly influential armed actors in their areas of operation.

In light of this situation, The Asia Foundation is pleased to present this research report on Myanmar's militias. It provides the historical background and evolution of militias over time, offers a typology of the different types of militias operating in the country, and reflects on their contemporary role. Given the militias' longstanding existence and their varied allegiances, how they will be taken into account in the peace process needs to be considered by both national and international actors working to support a durable peace in Myanmar. In concluding, the author also draws on examples of peacebuilding in other countries, to better illustrate some of the challenges that may arise in addressing the role of militias as the peace process moves forward. We hope that this report will provide a useful contribution to illuminate a lesser known but important piece of the complex conflict situation in Myanmar.

This research paper is authored by Mr. John Buchanan, an independent researcher and doctoral candidate at the University of Washington, who specializes in civil conflict, state formation, and the politics of Southeast Asia. The report was generously funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). The opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of DFID or The Asia Foundation.

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Acronyms

AA	Arakan Army
ABSDF	All Burma Students' Democratic Front
ALP	Arakan Liberation Party
ANC	Arakan National Congress
BGF	Border Guard Force
BNI	Burma News International
BNUP	Burma National United Party
CNF	Chin National Front
CPB	Communist Party of Burma
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DDSI	Directorate of Defense Services Intelligence
DKBA (Buddhist)	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
DKBA (Kloh Htoo Baw)	Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (Kloh Htoo Baw)
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organization
KAF	Kawthoolei Armed Forces
KDA	Kachin Defense Army
KIO/KIA	Kachin Independence Organization/Army
KMT	Kuomintang
KNDO	Karen National Defense Organization
KNDP	Karenni National Democratic Party
KNG	Kayan National Guard
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army
KNLP	Kayan New Land Party
KNPDP	Karenni National Peace and Development Party
KNPLF	Karenni National People's Liberation Front
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
KNSO	Karenni National Solidarity Organization
KNU	Karen National Union
KPC	Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army–Peace Council
KPF	Karen Peace Force
LDF	Lahu Democratic Front
MHH	<i>Mungshawa Hpyen Hpung</i>
MIS	Military Intelligence Services
MNDAA	Myanmar National Democracy Alliance Army
MTA	Mong Tai Army
NC	National Convention
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NDAA	National Democratic Alliance Army
NDA-K	New Democratic Army–Kachin
NLD	National League for Democracy
NMSP	New Mon State Party
NSCN-K	National Socialist Council of Nagaland–Khaplang
PMF	People's Militia Force
PNDF	Pawngyawng National Defense Force
PNLO	Pa-O National Liberation Organization
PNO	Pa-O National Organization
PSLA	Palaung State Liberation Army
PVO	People's Volunteer Organization
RCSS/SSA	Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council

SNPLO	Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organization
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SSA	Shan State Army
SSNA	Shan State National Army
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SSPP/SSA	Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army
TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
UEC	Union Election Commission
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
UWSA	United Wa State Army
WNO	Wa National Organization
YCDC	Yangon City Development Council

Glossary

Anti-insurgent groups, or ***Tha Ka Sa Pha*** (သောင်းကျန်းသူဆန့်ကျင်ရေး အဖွဲ့): Pro-government militias formed in areas where the government did not have strong local support. Some of these groups were preexisting armed groups established by local leaders as either volunteer defense forces or units of ethnic armed organizations. These groups received limited, if any, training from the national armed forces, known as the *Tatmadaw*, and operated relatively independently of it. This militia arrangement dates back to the period of rule by General Ne Win (1962-1988). They were formed by the *Tatmadaw*, and are active mainly in non-Burman areas where insurgents have been active, particularly Shan State.

Border Guard Forces (နယ်ခြားစောင့်တပ်): Battalion-size militias of 326 members, created by the *Tatmadaw* in 2009 and 2010. Their formation involved the integration of soldiers from the *Tatmadaw* with units that originally were either ethnic armed organizations or militia groups. There are 23 BGFs in Kachin, Shan, Kayah, and Kayin states.

Homeguards, or ***Ka Kwe Ye*** (ကာကွယ်ရေး): A term used in reference to pro-government militias in general, and referring specifically to a type of *Tatmadaw*-directed militia active from the early 1960s to 1973. Several *Ka Kwe Ye* units became powerful through their involvement in illicit economic activities, including the trade in opium and other black-market goods. Most, if not all, *Ka Kwe Ye* militias were based in northern and eastern Shan State and operated in areas outside of their zones.

People's Militia Forces: A term used by the government and others in reference to pro-government militias.

Pocket army: A term that emerged in the late 1940s and 1950s referring to the use of militias by politicians as their own armed forces.

Pyusawhti (ပျူစောထီး): A town and village defense scheme involving the use of paramilitary units, established in 1956. The name refers to a well-known warrior prince in early Burmese history.

Pyithusit (ပြည်သူစစ်): A term for militias introduced in conjunction with the *Tatmadaw's* doctrine of people's war in the 1960s. The term *pyithusit* literally means "people's war." It is often used in English in reference to *Tatmadaw*-supported local militia units. The term is also used generically to refer to many types of local armed groups.

Sitwundan (စစ်ဝန်တမ်း): A Burmese term (literally "military burden carrier") that refers to military units raised in the 1950s. These groups were initially known as Union Police Special Reserves.

Tat (တပ်): A Burmese term that means "military unit." *Tat* are paramilitary units formed in the late colonial period, a practice that continued into the 1950s. Their main activities included performing military drills and providing security. After independence in 1948, many of them became armed and began to play a more prominent role in Burma's politics.

Transformed militias, or ***athwin pyaun pyithusit*** (အသွင်ပြောင်းပြည်သူစစ်): This term refers to militias that have been integrated into the *Tatmadaw*. Many of them are former ceasefire groups. Indicators of their transformation are the adoption of standard-issue militia uniforms in place of their previous ones.

Map 1: Border Guard Forces and Militias (Selected)

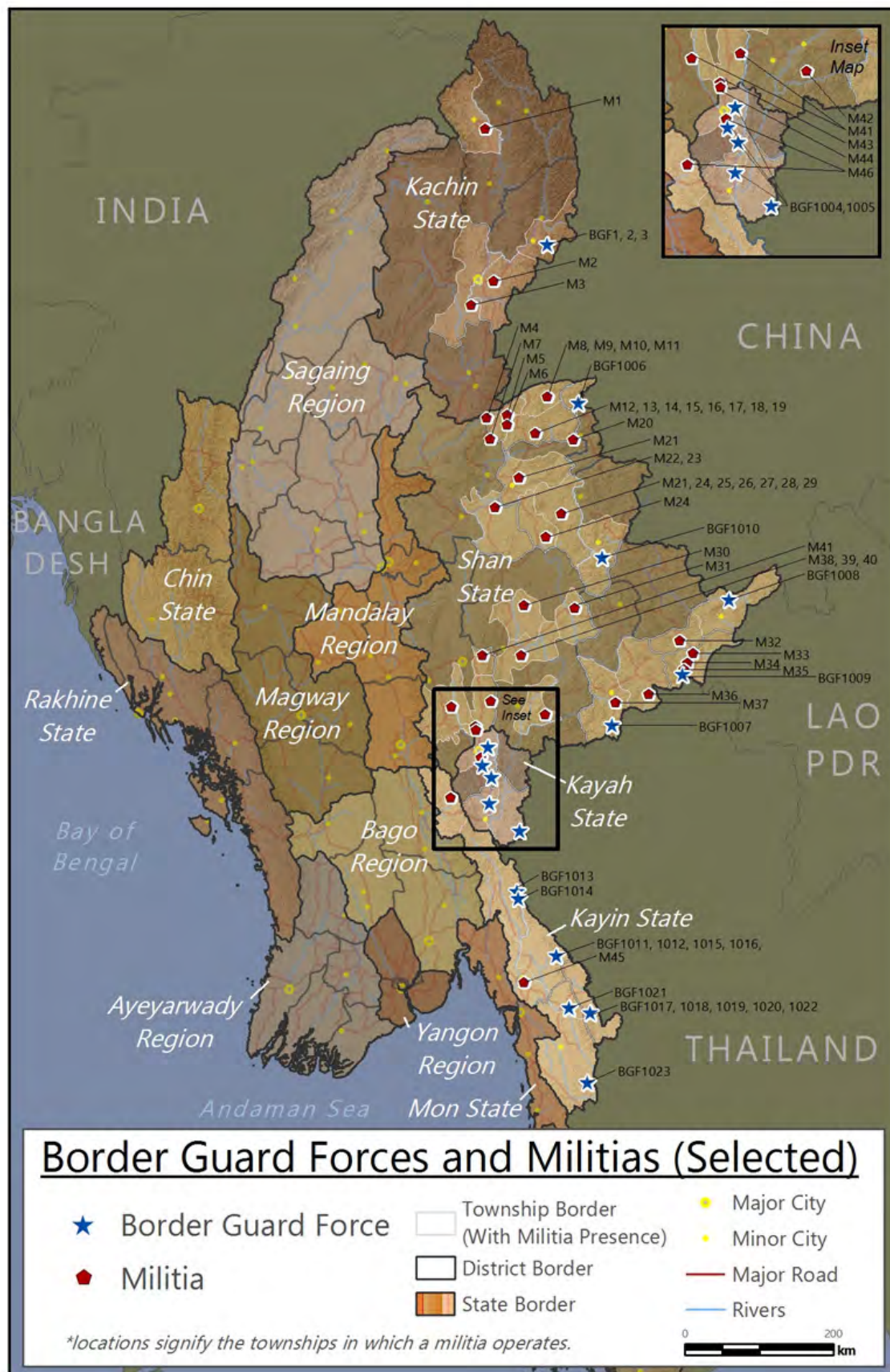


Table 1: Border Guard Forces and Militias (Selected)

Township	Unit(s)
Kachin State	
Chipwi	BGF 1001, BGF 1002
Tsawlaw	BGF 1001, BGF 1002
Waingmaw	BGF 1003, M2 Lawa Yang
Putao	M1 Rawang
Myitkyina	M3 Tarlawgyi (Red Shan)
Kayah State	
Loikaw	BGF 1004, BGF 1005
Hpasawng	BGF 1004, BGF 1005
Mese	BGF 1004, BGF 1005
Bawlakhe	BGF 1004, BGF 1005
Demoso	BGF 1004, BGF 1005
Shan State	
Laukkai	BGF 1006
Mongton	BGF 1007, M37 Mongton
Mongyawng	BGF 1008
Tachilek	BGF 1009, M33 Mong Hai, M34 Mekong Border Security Battalion, M35 Nampong/Lo Taw Khan
Matman	BGF 1010
Konkyan	BGF 1006
Kunlong	BGF 1006, M20 Kunlong Special Combat Police Force
Manton	M4 Manton
Namhkan	M5 Namhkan Myo Ma, M6 Pang Hsay (Pan Say)
Namtu	M7 Namtu Myo Ma
Muse	M8 Monekoe, M9 Kyu Koke, M10 Mong Yu, M11 Mong Paw
Kutkai	M12 Kutkai Special Militia Group, M13 Pang Hseng, M14 Tarmoenye, M15 Manje, M16 Shaw Haw, M17 Special Militia Group, M18 Nam Hpat Kar (Nampaka), M19 Kawng Kha
Lashio	M21 Manpang
Hsipaw	M22 Mong Khay, M23 Sein Kyawt (Hseng Keow)
Mong Yai	M24 Mong Hin Mong Ha

Tangyan	M21 Manpang, M24 Mong Hin Mong Ha, M25 Naung Mo, M26 Mong Kaung, M27 Naw Kaw, M28 Nawngpha, M29 Tangyan Myo Ma
Laikha	M30 Wantpan
Khunhing	M31 Kali
Mongphayak	M32 Mongphayak
Mong Hsat	M36 Punakok
Namsan	M38 Matkyan (Marrkieng), M39 Narpwe, 40 Nayai
Hopong	M41 Pa-O
Hsiseng	M41 Pa-O
Pinlaung	M41 Pa-O
Langkho	M42 Homong (Homein)
Pekon	M43 Shwe Pyi Aye, M44 Kayan National Guard
Kayin State	
Hlaingbwe	BGF 1011, BGF 1012, BGF 1015, BGF 1016
Hpapun	BGF 1013, BGF 1014, M45 Padoh Aung San Group
Myawaddy	BGF 1017, BGF 1018, BGF 1019, BGF 1020, BGF 1022
Kawkareik	BGF 1021
Kyain Sekgyi	BGF 1023
Thandaung	M46 Thandaung

Note: M = Militia, BGF = Border Guard For

Executive Summary

This report provides historical background on militias in Myanmar and discusses the challenges presented by militias to resolving the country's ongoing conflict. Most militias are allied with Myanmar's armed forces, known as the *Tatmadaw*. A few other militias support ethnic armed organizations. The primary duties of militias involve providing security for their communities, and some actively participate in Myanmar's armed conflicts. In 2011, a quasi-democratic government led by President Thein Sein came to power and initiated a peace process aimed at resolving over sixty-five years of armed conflict. The peace process has produced a significant number of ceasefires, and recently entered a stage of political dialogue involving a broad range of actors. Yet despite their role in Myanmar's ongoing conflicts, the issue of militias remains marginalized in analyses of conflict and the peace process.

Militias pose several challenges for peacebuilding efforts in Myanmar. First, only limited information is available about militias. In consequence, several basic features of militias, such as how they operate, their numbers, and the roles they play in conflicts, are not well understood. Second, militias are armed and numerous, and they play active roles in armed conflict, but engagement with militias and discussion of their roles has been limited in the peace process. Often they are considered subordinate to either the *Tatmadaw* or ethnic armed groups. Third, the *Tatmadaw's* incorporation of ceasefire groups into its militia system has made militias a political issue. The recent transformation of ceasefire groups into militias involved a decrease in the military strength of ethnic armed organizations. But several ethnic armed organizations did not accept the proposal to transform into militias, and have instead pushed for political dialogue with the military. Understanding these challenges is important for peacebuilding efforts.

Given the challenges presented by the multitude of militias operating outside of Myanmar's formal peace process, a more systematic look at militias and their role in the transition from conflict to peace is in order. To do so, this report begins with a brief overview of militias and the challenges that militias present for peacebuilding. The next section provides historical background on the roles played by militias in Myanmar's armed conflicts and political struggles. Section three presents a typology of militias, as an analytical tool for understanding the complexity of the current array of militias operating in Myanmar. The fourth section examines the roles played by militias in the economy, politics, conflict, and the communities in which they operate. The final section draws on instances of peacebuilding in other countries, and considers issues regarding militias in Myanmar's current period of reform.

Section One: Introduction

Myanmar's armed forces, known as the *Tatmadaw*, and dozens of ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) are often viewed as key actors in the country's longstanding conflicts. An enduring feature of Myanmar's security landscape, however, is the presence of a large number of smaller armed groups collectively known as militias. Little known and often less recognized as actors in conflict, the majority of militias in Myanmar are pro-government and operating under the command of the *Tatmadaw*. A few are associated with EAOs.

Militias have been part of armed conflict in Myanmar for over six decades. Despite their long-term presence, however, much basic information about militias is unavailable. Their exact number, for example, is unknown. Available estimates suggest that there are hundreds, or possibly even thousands.¹ Analyses of armed conflict in Myanmar often neglect the role of militias, which has also been only marginally addressed in Myanmar's peace process.

The lack of attention to militias is surprising. They have played a significant role in previous conflicts in Myanmar, and remain important actors in the country's ongoing armed struggles. Apart from the *Tatmadaw* and the police, militias are one of the few groups, if not the only group, sanctioned to carry arms by the government. In consequence, a better understanding of issues related to militias is important for efforts to resolve Myanmar's armed conflicts and political problems.

Militias have been under-emphasized in the analyses of Myanmar's armed conflicts and the peace process. This report calls attention to the existence of armed organizations other than those formally involved in the peace process.² Given the complex array of militias in Myanmar, there is a need to examine their role more systematically. This report provides information and analytical tools to better understand that role. It presents a historical perspective on Myanmar's militias and a typology of militia groups.

A central feature of militias is their affiliation with either the *Tatmadaw* or EAOs. Militias affiliated with EAOs – *EAO militias* – constitute one type. Three other types of militia are under the supervision of the *Tatmadaw*. There is striking diversity among them, especially in their relationships with the *Tatmadaw*, which involve different levels and types of integration with its command structure. *Tatmadaw-integrated militias* are directly incorporated into the *Tatmadaw's* command structure, and include both former pro-government militias and former anti-government EAOs. These groups became integrated into the command structure of the *Tatmadaw* in 2009 and 2010, and are known as Border Guard Forces (BGFs). A distinguishing feature of BGFs is the presence of soldiers originally from the *Tatmadaw* in their ranks.

Unlike the BGFs, *Tatmadaw non-integrated militias* are not directly integrated into the *Tatmadaw*, but they are still under the *Tatmadaw's* command and supervision. Some of these groups were originally EAOs or breakaway factions, while others were formed independently. Nevertheless, *Tatmadaw* authorities supervise them.

A third type is the *Tatmadaw-supported community militia*. Unlike the other two types, these militias are recruited from the local population, and they tend to be smaller than the other groups. Many are unarmed, or armed with just a few weapons. They are trained and supervised by local *Tatmadaw* units.

Myanmar's militias are diverse, and they operate in different environments. Understanding their evolution and their role in Myanmar's continued ethnic violence and political instability will be important for any long-term solution to the conflict. Not much information is available about militias in Myanmar, and the systems of militias operated by the *Tatmadaw* and EAOs are not well understood.³ Scholars and journalists have tended to ignore these armed groups, or when they have examined

them, have tended to focus on a particular unit or issue.⁴ This report aims to provide a broader view. It examines the various roles militias play in economics, politics, society, and conflict; it draws on the experience of conflict involving militias in other countries, and it highlights the potential for militias to undermine the stability of post-conflict settlements.

1.1 What Is a Militia?

The term “militia” refers to a broad range of armed organizations and paramilitary groups. In this report, it is used in reference to a military force that serves another armed actor in maintaining security. These are militias that assist either the *Tatmadaw* or EAOs. In some cases, these militias may not be armed, but they have received training and may be armed on a case-by-case basis, depending on the threat situation.

In the Burmese context, journalists sometimes apply the term “militia” to EAOs that have reached ceasefire agreements with the *Tatmadaw*. Also often placed under the “militia” heading are a variety of civilian groups that have received *Tatmadaw* paramilitary training, generally referred to as “auxiliary forces” to the *Tatmadaw*.⁵ This report does not consider auxiliary forces or EAOs as militias.

Box 1: Definition of “Militia”

A *militia* is a body of armed fighters, often representing specific ethnic, religious, tribal, clan, or other communal groups or political parties. Militias may serve the government directly or indirectly, operate independently to combat other militias or insurgent groups, pursue criminal activity, or support an insurgency.

1.2 Militias: An Overview

Since Myanmar became independent in 1948, militias have served the security interests of the state by safeguarding the country from both domestic and internal threats. In that year, the *Tatmadaw* first encountered challenges from organizations pursuing armed struggle to advance their political demands. A few months after independence, armed movements broke out in many sectors of the population, including among the Burman (Bamar) majority. From 1948 to 1988, the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) pursued a long-running armed struggle. In the early 1970s, the deposed prime minister U Nu launched a short-lived, armed opposition movement, and after the suppression of the 1988 pro-democracy movements, a number of small armed struggles began among the Burman-majority population. In recent decades, armed organizations have been predominately ethnic nationalist in character, and their political goals have included greater autonomy from the central government. One response by the *Tatmadaw* to these challenges has been their employment of militias. The *Tatmadaw* and other government actors also employed militias to contain threats presented by the incursion of Chiang Kai-Shek’s Kuomintang (KMT) Army in the 1950s.

Government-allied militias have come to play a significant role in the national security plans of the *Tatmadaw*. In particular, the *Tatmadaw*’s doctrine of people’s war, developed in the 1960s, includes a central role for militias in combating both domestic insurgents and incursions by foreign armies.⁶ Militias remain an important pillar of the *Tatmadaw*’s national defense plans.⁷

During a period of direct military rule (1989-2011), the *Tatmadaw* adopted a ceasefire approach to deal with ethnic armed organizations. For powerful EAOs, the ceasefire agreements meant a cessation of hostilities and the acceptance of economic benefits. These ceasefires did not involve political dialogue leading to a political solution. *Tatmadaw* officials offered some EAOs the status of “peace groups,” with financial support and positions as government militias, under the rubric of economic development. In the period leading up to the transition to a quasi-civilian government (2009-2010),

Tatmadaw leaders pressured EAOs to transform themselves into government militias – BGFs and People’s Militia Forces (PMF).

The current array of government-allied militias is strikingly diverse in terms of the number of soldiers, their relationship with the *Tatmadaw*, and their backgrounds. They range in size from less than twenty soldiers to a few with several hundred.⁸ In some cases, militia members are inactive, and many are not armed. They remain in reserve until there is a situation that requires their involvement. The level of militia activity varies from one region to another.

The regions where the *Tatmadaw* conducts military operations also have the highest concentration of militia activity. These are places with predominately non-Burman populations, and sites of long-running armed conflicts pitting the *Tatmadaw* against EAOs. They include areas in Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, and Shan states with significant non-Burman ethnic populations. Even within these regions, however, there are noticeable differences among militias. Pro-government militias in areas where the *Tatmadaw* has engaged in combat with EAOs, such as northern Shan State, tend to be larger and more active than those in areas where recent conflict has been limited, such as Mon and Chin states. In some cases, their support for the *Tatmadaw* involves participation in *Tatmadaw*-led combat operations.

Pro-government militias also provide indirect support for the *Tatmadaw*. This assistance may include monitoring suspected members of EAOs, collecting information about potential threats, informing local *Tatmadaw* units about the presence of enemy armed groups, and guiding *Tatmadaw* units through unfamiliar terrain.⁹

In areas where security threats are negligible, militias are less active than in areas with active security threats posed by EAOs. In the case of *Tatmadaw*-supported community militias, they may not be armed.

Pro-government militias also engage in non-security activities to generate revenue. The economic activities that militias pursue to finance themselves vary significantly from one to another, as does the income earned. Many militias rely on taxes from the local population. Some militia leaders and their associates operate businesses, which can range from gas stations, transport companies, and hotels to natural resource projects such as agro-industry, logging, and mining, to investment in the real estate sector. Illicit activities are another source of income for some militias. The BGFs and EAO militias also receive support from their parent organizations.

A few militias operate in conjunction with EAOs. The arrangements vary, but one general trend is for large EAOs to coordinate with locally organized militia units that engage in self-defense of their villages. Some also employ local militias as reserve forces. Information about these groups is limited, however, and given the disparity among EAOs in their access to resources, their level of popular support, and the security environment in which they operate, these arrangements with local militias are likely to vary widely.

Some of the largest EAO militias are in areas under the control of two EAOs, the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), that formed in the late 1940s and early 1960s, respectively. The Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) is a militia that operates under the Defense Department of the KNU and alongside its formal armed wing, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). The *Mungshawa Hpyen Hpung* (MHH), or Kachin People’s Militia Group, is a militia organized by the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), the political wing of the KIA.¹⁰

In 2009 and 2010, *Tatmadaw* leaders pressured EAOs that had agreed to a ceasefire – so-called ceasefire groups – to join its BGF and PMF programs, in an attempt to bring Myanmar’s armed groups under its command as called for in the 2008 Constitution. Several EAOs refused to comply, arguing that political dialogue with the military was necessary before any changes or reductions in their armed

forces. The *Tatmadaw's* insistence that EAOs become militias, the refusal of some to comply, and the outbreak of fighting in the Kokang areas of Shan State against the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) raised tensions and deepened mistrust between the *Tatmadaw* and the EAOs. Despite the steps taken by the Thein Sein government (2011-2016) in initiating a peace process, the issue of a future role for militias remains uncertain.

1.3 Methodology

Research for this study includes information collected from October 2015 to March 2016. The research draws on English and Burmese language sources, including newspapers, books, and exhibits displayed at the Defense Services Museum in Nay Pyi Taw. The report also draws on over twenty-five interviews conducted in Thailand, Yangon, and Kayah, Kachin, and Shan states with a broad range of actors including members of civil society organizations, researchers, members of armed groups, and retired government officials.

The interviews focused on the following questions: What is the history of local militias? How and why were they created? What are the activities and responsibilities of militias in the area? How do they interact with the local community? These interviews draw the history of individual militias at a local level into a broader account of a militia system operating on a countrywide level.

The analysis of militias in Myanmar involves the use of several terms that are sometimes not clearly defined, which can lead to confusion. For instance, Chao Tzang Yawngwhe, a political scientist and former leader of the Shan State Army (SSA), uses the term *Ka Kwe Ye* to refer to a *Tatmadaw*-led militia arrangement prevalent in the period from 1967 to 1973. However, he also uses *Ka Kwe Ye* to describe government militias operating before 1967.¹¹ *Ka Kwe Ye* and several other terms, such as *pyithusit* and “people’s militia groups,” are often used without sufficient attention to their specific meaning.

That the *Tatmadaw*, EAOs, observers, and militias themselves often use different terms to describe militias is also a source of confusion.¹² The *Tatmadaw's* periodic reforms of its relationship with militias have involved changes in the terms used to characterize militias and their relationships with the *Tatmadaw*, further complicating the study of militia practices. Finally, the *ad hoc* arrangements between *Tatmadaw* regional commanders and militia units have often meant that the practices of a particular militia unit differ from other units. Consequently, identifying trends in the militia system can be quite complicated.

1.4 Structure of the Report

The remainder of this report is divided into four sections.

Section 2, Historical Background of Militias, traces the use of militias back to Myanmar/Burma’s colonial period. It also points to the initial proliferation of militias as a response by state security and civilian officials to armed threats in the 1950s. The formulation of the *Tatmadaw's* doctrine of people’s militias, and its rationale for the incorporation of militias into the *Tatmadaw*, are also examined. Finally, the section looks at the *Tatmadaw's* ceasefire agreements and the transformation of EAOs into militia units.

Section 3, A Typology of Militias, suggests an analytical framework for understanding the disparate array of militias in contemporary Myanmar by providing a typology. The typology examines the status of militias with respect to their alignment with either the *Tatmadaw* or EAOs. For the *Tatmadaw*-affiliated militias, the various levels of integration within the *Tatmadaw* are disaggregated into three types. Four types of militias are discussed:

- *Tatmadaw*-integrated militias
- *Tatmadaw* non-integrated militias
- *Tatmadaw*-supported community militias
- Ethnic armed organization militias

This section concludes with a discussion of the available estimates of the number of militias in Myanmar.

Section 4, Key Considerations for Understanding Militias, identifies four dynamics useful for understanding the significance of militias in contemporary Myanmar: how militias sustain themselves, their role in politics, their interaction with local communities, and their role in conflicts.

Section 5, Conclusion, examines the relationship of militias to the peace process. The analysis draws on other instances of peace processes involving militias, and discusses several issues of importance for peacebuilding in Myanmar.

Section TWO: Historical Background of Militias (1930 to Present)

The predominance of militias in contemporary Myanmar reflects processes and events that date as far back as the British colonial period. Over the last 85 years, militias have played far-reaching and diverse roles in Myanmar's civil wars and political struggles. During the late colonial period, militias operating in remote areas near Burma's border with China provided security from external threats. Paramilitary groups operating in areas inhabited by ethnic Burmans became conduits for expressions of nationalist sentiment. In the post-independence period, militias assisted the *Tatmadaw* in containing multiple security threats. During this period of conflict, the *Tatmadaw* developed the doctrine of people's war, which includes a role for militias in its national defense plans. Since 1989, the conferral of the status of militias to ethnic armed organizations has become a part of the *Tatmadaw's* approach to conflict management.¹³ Appreciating the complex history of militias is critical for understanding the present political situation in Myanmar. The history of militias is divided into the following five periods.

2.1 The Pre-Independence Period (1930 to 1948)

The antecedents of the current militias date back to the end of the British colonial period. Several ethnic Burman political leaders formed paramilitary organizations known as *tat*.¹⁴ In 1930, M.A. Maung Gyi formed the first *tat*, known as *Ye Tat* or "Brave Army." Other political and religious organizations followed suit. For instance, in 1939 the *thakin* – Burman, nationalist leaders – formed the *Bama Let Yon Tat* or Steel Corps.¹⁵ While members of *tat* engaged in military drills, colonial officials did not allow them to carry guns.¹⁶ In the 1930s, local leaders in the area of present-day Shan State also formed militia units, when the *sawbwa* of Hsenwi (or Hseni Township), a traditional leader, authorized local leaders to establish militias, also referred to as Home Guards, in the Kokang, Pang Hseng, and Mong Paw areas located near Burma's border with China.¹⁷

After World War II, the tradition of *tat* continued. Their expansion reflected the political and security concerns of British officials and local leaders. The deteriorating security situation in the ethnic Karen areas provided an impetus for the creation of militias. In the period between 1945 and 1948, the British government authorized the formation of small militias in these areas, known as peace guerillas. Nationalist leader Aung San formed the People's Volunteer Organization (PVO), or *Pyithu Yebaw Aphwe*. The organization became his political tool to enhance his leverage in negotiations with the British government over Burma's independence. U Saw, a politician implicated in masterminding the assassination of Aung San on July 17, 1947, was also the head of the *Galon Tat*, or Garuda Militia.¹⁸ During this time, *tat* groups associated with politicians from the Socialist party and with dacoits (armed bandits) also emerged.¹⁹

2.2 The Early Independence Period (1948 to 1962)

Following Burma's independence on January 4, 1948, militias proliferated. Their emergence reflected a combination of domestic political rivalries and a worsening security situation. The power struggles that surfaced among rival political factions led to the continued formation of *tat* by politicians. Popularly known as "pocket armies," they were used as personal security forces by politicians, and they engaged in violence and intimidation.²⁰ At the same time, the emergence of several security concerns, ranging from insurgencies, to mutinies by *Tatmadaw* units, to incursions by Chinese troops, led state officials at the local and national level to establish militias to counter these threats.

The diversity of the rebel groups that emerged in the late 1940s and 1950s led the government to refer to them as the "multi-colored insurgents." The scope of threats ranged from ethno-nationalist revolts by the KNDO, the Pawngyawng National Defense Force (PNDF), the Arakan People's Liberation Front, and the Mon People's Front, to leftist insurgencies by the White Flag and Red Flag branches of the CPB and the White Band faction of the PVO, to the *Mujahids*, a Muslim resistance army that launched

operations in the northern Arakan area in an attempt to join with the newly created Muslim state of East Pakistan.²¹

The *Tatmadaw* also experienced several debilitating mutinies by units within its ranks that defected en masse. Many mutineers either joined the insurgents or formed their own insurgent groups. For example, Captain Naw Seng, commander of the *Tatmadaw*'s 1st Kachin Rifles, led his unit to form the PNDF, which constitutes the first ethnic Kachin revolt. Other *Tatmadaw* and militia units also defected to either the leftist or ethno-nationalist insurgents. These included some units of the Peoples Volunteer Organization (PVO) created by the martyred national hero Aung San. The 1st and 2nd Karen Rifles, ethnic Karen units of the *Tatmadaw*, also mutinied. They formed the Kawthoolei Armed Forces (KAF) in June 1949, and became an armed wing of the KNU.²² After Aung San's assassination, attempts by state leaders to disarm the pro-communist faction of the PVO led them to revolt in July 1948.²³

In 1949, the end of the Chinese civil war introduced a new threat to newly independent Burma. Chinese troops from Chiang Kai Shek's defeated KMT army began crossing into Shan State to escape the advance of the Chinese communists in Yunnan province. The KMT leaders established contact with the emerging, regional, anti-communist alliance of Taiwan, Thailand, and the United States. From these allies, the KMT remnants received arms and supplies and became increasingly involved in Shan State's blossoming opium trade.²⁴

The rapid and successive emergence of armed threats portended the collapse of the newly independent government of Prime Minister U Nu. One government report cited in a study of the *Tatmadaw* notes that by 1949, "75 percent of the towns in Burma had fallen to one insurgent group or another."²⁵ Prime Minister U Nu's government became known as the "six-mile Rangoon government" in reference to the small area of Rangoon over which it exercised control. The emergence of threats to the security of the newly independent country outpaced the *Tatmadaw*'s capacity to contain them. Faced with the prospect of military over-extension and possible defeat, security leaders formed militias as part of their strategy to address the growing threats. The organization of these militias varied, and involved frequent changes in their structures.

In 1948, Prime Minister U Nu authorized the creation of the Union Police Special Reserve – later known as the *Sitwundan* (literally "military burden carrier"). Some local politicians formed their supporters into *Sitwundan* battalions, with the aim of defending against attacks by communists.²⁶ However, government officials proved incapable of controlling some of these units. Paul Keenan notes that the involvement of some *Sitwundan* units in killings of the Karen population helped precipitate the Karen rebellion.²⁷ Hundreds of *Sitwundan* members also defected to the rebel groups, including the Karen and communist insurgents, leading the government to disband units in nine districts. The remaining *Sitwundan* units were integrated into the army and were finally outlawed in 1955.²⁸

Security officials of the U Nu government also sanctioned the raising of paramilitary units called "levies" across Burma. In the Shan State, local rulers known in Burmese as *sawbwa* formed able-bodied men with limited training into units to counter the threat presented by insurgents and KMT forces. These units became known as the Shan levies. And by 1953, local officials began organizing local militias known as Volunteer Defense Forces in ethnic Shan and Kachin villages in the northern Shan State.²⁹

By 1956, the *Tatmadaw* had established the Directorate of National Guard Forces, a forerunner of later coordinating directorates, to coordinate militias (see Table 2). One of its responsibilities was training volunteers from among university students.³⁰

Table 2: Administration of Militia Units (1956 to Present)³¹

Directorate of National Guard Forces	January 1, 1956 (estimated)
Directorate of Public Relations and People's Militias	January 22, 1973
Directorate of People's Militias and Territorial Forces	April 1, 1990 to Present

In 1956, the government also introduced the *Pyusawhti* program, which was a town and village defense scheme intended to assist the *Tatmadaw* in counter-insurgency activities. The name came from a famous warrior prince in early Burmese history.³² The program involved the coordination of local militias, under local committees staffed by officials from the police, the *Tatmadaw*, and the civil administration, and featured a variety of arrangements. In villages, the committees formed two types of militias known as village defense forces: residential and mobile. In urban areas, they created city defense forces, which came under the command of local police officers.³³ However, some *Pyusawhti* units fell under the sway of influential politicians and became known as another “party army.”³⁴

By the late 1950s, the threats presented by the multicolored insurgents began to subside. In 1958, the U Nu government's Arms for Democracy initiative, offering amnesty for rebels, led to a significant decline in the number of insurgents. In 1958, the *Tatmadaw*, led by General Ne Win, took control of the government, initiating a period of military rule from 1958 to 1960 that became known as the “caretaker government.” During this period, the Ne Win government disbanded many of the militia units. Some units became part of a government-sponsored paramilitary formation known as Special Police Reserve Units.³⁵

The threat presented by the KMT also waned. In 1961, following the return of an elected government, the *Tatmadaw* and the People's Liberation Army of China engaged in a joint campaign along the Burma-China border, Operation Mekong River, that pushed most of the remaining KMT soldiers into northern Thailand. While a United Nations-led operation airlifted some of them to Taiwan, many stayed and continued operations along Thailand's border with Shan State.

2.3 The Ne Win Period (1962 to 1988)

In 1962, General Ne Win led a coup d'état against the elected government and established a political system featuring single party rule, initially by the military-led Revolutionary Council (RC), and subsequently by the new Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), which was dominated by serving or former *Tatmadaw* officers. By the early 1960s, a second wave of insurgent challengers emerged. The outbreak of armed revolt among ethnic Shans in 1959 and ethnic Kachins in 1961, and the CPB's push into eastern Shan State from China in 1968, posed new, serious challenges to the military government. During this period, the *Tatmadaw's* use of militias became widespread and formalized as part of its doctrine of people's war, and *Tatmadaw* commanders employed different militia arrangements on the basis of the local situation and requirements for security.

In the early 1960s, *Tatmadaw* commanders in Shan State began establishing militias to combat the growing threat posed by the growth of ethno-nationalist insurgents.³⁶ Maung Aung Myoe identifies three types of government militias that had emerged by the late 1960s. These are people's militias (or *pyithusit*), anti-insurgent groups (or *Ta Ka Sa Pha*) and *Ka Kwe Ye* militias.³⁷ (See Section 4 for classification of these militia arrangements.) The *pyithusit* are the forerunners of the *Tatmadaw* community-based militias, and the anti-insurgent groups are the predecessors of the *Tatmadaw* non-integrated militias.

In this context, the term “people's militias,” or *pyithusit*, refers to militias created by the *Tatmadaw* in the early 1960s under the Ne Win regime.³⁸ As Andrew Selth notes, the people's militias were:

“created in the 1960s as part of the regime’s national counter-insurgency strategy and, by the mid-1980s, consisted of an estimated 35,000 rural villagers. They tended to be poorly trained and armed, however, and were of limited use in any combat role. They assisted with village defense and served as guides and informers.”³⁹

Unlike some of the previous militias, these were coordinated by the *Tatmadaw* rather than politicians or local officials. Most initially operated in lower and central Myanmar, where government control was firm. In the early 1960s, *pyithusit* militias appear to have been used in areas that were under government control in the southwest part of the country.⁴⁰

Tatmadaw leaders also designated two other militia types – the *Ka Kwe Ye* militias, and the anti-insurgent groups also known as *Ta Ka Sa Pha* – for use in areas with limited government authority and insurgent activity. The anti-insurgent groups received little training, and the *Tatmadaw* had less control over them.⁴¹ Not much information is available about this type of militia, but various sources indicate that militias known as anti-insurgent groups, formed out of soldiers from ethnic armed groups, operated in southern Shan State and Karen State.⁴²

Another militia type is widely referred to as *Ka Kwe Ye*.⁴³ In Burmese, *Ka Kwe Ye* means “defense,” and the term sometimes refers to a particular militia arrangement utilized by the *Tatmadaw* from perhaps as early as the late 1950s until 1973.⁴⁴ The arrangement involved the *Tatmadaw* recognizing armed groups as *Tatmadaw*-allied militia forces and tacitly approving their illicit business activities.

During this period, local leaders built up small armed units on their own for purposes of self-defense. For many groups, the status as a *Ka Kwe Ye* militia offered the benefits of official recognition by the state and economic opportunities. Beginning in 1961, attempts by the leaders of the KIA to forcibly disarm groups headed by traditional ethnic Kachin leaders, known as *duwa*, led some of them to accept the status of pro-government militias.⁴⁵ A few units of the SSA also accepted the *Tatmadaw*’s offer of militia status.⁴⁶ Other armed groups involved in opium trafficking also became militias. After being arrested on drug trafficking charges in 1963, Lo Hsing Han, an ethnic Chinese from northern Shan State, formed a *Ka Kwe Ye* group in his home region of Kokang and helped the *Tatmadaw* establish control over it.⁴⁷ One of the most powerful of the *Ka Kwe Ye* units was the Loi Maw militia from Tangyan Township, Shan State, led by Khun Sa. By 1966, he had received recognition as the *de facto* leader of the *Ka Kwe Ye* groups. After *Tatmadaw* officials became suspicious of him, they detained him in 1969 (see Box 3).⁴⁸

In 1968, after units of the CPB began extending their influence in northeast Shan State, militias operating in that area assumed new strategic significance for the *Tatmadaw*. The militias became an important source of intelligence, and a bulwark against the CPB’s advance. At the same time, the CPB won over several local militias in eastern Shan State.⁴⁹ The leaders of two groups – Chao Ngi Lai and Pao Yu Chang – became party members and received leadership positions.⁵⁰ Later, in 1989, they joined a mutiny against the CPB’s ethnic Burman leadership that led to the party’s implosion. In that same year, they founded an organization known as the Burma National United Party (BNUP) – the forerunner of the United Wa State Army (UWSA) – and entered into a ceasefire agreement with the *Tatmadaw*.

The rise in opium production in Shan State in the early 1960s also posed an indirect threat to the *Tatmadaw*. As a valuable cash crop, it gave armed opposition groups a way to finance their military operations by taxing or trading opium. On the other hand, the involvement of the *Ka Kwe Ye* militias in the opium trade suited the *Tatmadaw*’s counterinsurgency goals. As government-allied militias, they could dispatch their units to transport opium via government-controlled roads and towns. The arrangement positioned them to export opiates and to import contraband goods for Burma’s burgeoning black market.⁵¹ And the militias absorbed opium revenues that might otherwise have gone to insurgents. By 1973, one estimate notes, the *Ka Kwe Ye* militias had taken over the trade and transported an estimated ninety-five percent of the opium produced in Shan State.⁵²

Box 2: The Institutionalization of Militias into the Tatmadaw – the Doctrine of People’s War

Like many national armed forces, the *Tatmadaw* employs militia units as part of its national defense plans. Although militias in Myanmar date back to the late colonial period, the institutionalization of militias within the *Tatmadaw* did not begin until the late 1960s. This process reflects the emergence of the *Tatmadaw*’s doctrine of people’s war, which borrows from the concept of total war and its emphasis on the participation of the population in countering external and internal threats.

In the 1950s, state officials, both civilian and military, turned to the use of various militia forces as a way to address a chaotic security situation.⁵³ The presence of CIA-supported remnants of Chiang Kai-Shek’s KMT forces, and their attempts to establish a base of operations in areas of China adjacent to Burma, heightened concerns among state leaders and the population that their presence might provoke an armed Chinese incursion into Burma.⁵⁴ At the same time, the spread of insurgents across Burma, and their adoption of new tactics, proved a threat to the *Tatmadaw*. By the mid-1950s, *Tatmadaw* leaders recognized the need to develop a national military doctrine appropriate to Burma’s changing security situation. Maung Aung Myoe, a scholar of the *Tatmadaw*, notes, “As the BCP changed its strategy from conventional to guerilla warfare in the mid-1950s, the military doctrine of the *Tatmadaw*, which emphasized positional warfare, was not suitable.”⁵⁵

Maung Aung Myoe identifies the annual meeting of *Tatmadaw* officers in 1964 as an “important landmark in shaping a new military doctrine and strategy.”⁵⁶ There, *Tatmadaw* officers adopted the doctrine of people’s war and devised a plan to form *pyithusit* militias.⁵⁷ Soon after the meeting, a delegation of *Tatmadaw* officers traveled to Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany to study their use of militias.⁵⁸

In 1966, the *Tatmadaw* experimented with the use of *pyithusit* militias in conjunction with *Tatmadaw* units in combat operations against units of the CPB in central Burma. Based on its success, the government formulated plans for training and procedures for introducing the use of militias on a larger scale. It was at this time that another development in the *Tatmadaw*’s counter-insurgency practices was taking place. In the mid-1960s, the *Tatmadaw* adopted the “four cuts,” or *pya leh pya*, a doctrine of counter-insurgency that aimed to weaken armed resistance groups by cutting their access to food, funds, intelligence, and recruits. The approach involved the creation of strategic villages under *Tatmadaw* control, and the designation of areas where the government did not have a strong presence as “black areas,” which were considered controlled by insurgents.⁵⁹ Local *Tatmadaw* commanders formed militias in these strategic villages.⁶⁰

In 1968, the *Tatmadaw* officers met to discuss the formalization of the doctrine of people’s war.⁶¹ They adopted guidelines that, among other things, prioritized the formation of people’s militias in areas with strong government presence and the mobilization of militias on an ideological basis. But for conflict areas, the *Tatmadaw* employed other types of militias, including anti-insurgent units (*Ta Ka Sa Pha*) and *Ka Kwe Ye* militias. By 1972, the BSPP, the political party of the *Tatmadaw*-led Revolutionary Council, formally endorsed the doctrine of people’s war.⁶²

Since their institutionalization, the configuration of the *Tatmadaw*’s arrangements with militias has undergone several changes. Nevertheless, the speeches and press releases annually issued by the Defense Services on Armed Forces Day emphasize the continued importance that *Tatmadaw* leaders place on militias and their role in safeguarding national security. In 2007, the address delivered by Senior General Than Shwe at the annual Armed Forces Day parade highlighted the importance of the people’s militia strategy in Myanmar’s history, noting that “during the time of [the] anti-fascist movement, our *Tatmadaw*, hand in hand with the entire people, practiced the people’s militia strategy.”⁶³ In a 2015 speech delivered by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, commander in chief of defense services, to commemorate Armed Forces Day, he emphasized the continued relevance of

militias, noting that “the national defense strategy of our country has been accepted as the militia strategy.”⁶⁴ A recent white paper issued by the *Tatmadaw* in February 2016 also indicates a continued role for militias in national security. According to a news report on the publication, one of the objectives of the *Tatmadaw* is “to further strengthen the strategy referred to in the paper as ‘national defense with the people’s war.’”⁶⁵

In 1974, the government promulgated Burma’s second constitution, and this change also involved revisions of the militia system. According to a display in the Defense Services Museum, during the time from when the Revolutionary Council took power in 1962 until it transferred power to the Parliament in 1974, the Regional Military Commands of the *Tatmadaw* formed *pyithusit* militia units in 212 townships and 1,831 villages, with 67,736 members, equipped with 15,227 firearms.⁶⁶

The year 1973 was a crossroads for the *Tatmadaw*’s use of militias. The *Tatmadaw* leaders created the Directorate of People’s Militias and Public Relations on January 23, 1973.⁶⁷ At the same time, *Tatmadaw* leaders also tried to rein in the *Ka Kwe Ye* militias in Shan State. After months of negotiations, *Tatmadaw* commanders set a deadline of April 1973 for the twenty-three *Ka Kwe Ye* militias to surrender their weapons and disband or join the *Tatmadaw*. The responses by the *Ka Kwe Ye* militias were mixed. The most powerful groups refused to obey the order, whereas many of the smaller groups complied. Of the twenty-three *Ka Kwe Ye* groups, nine refused to obey. Several of these militia leaders, including Lo Hsing Han and Mahasan, allied with the SSA.⁶⁸

Analysts have advanced different explanations for the *Tatmadaw*’s decision to restructure their militia arrangements and disband the *Ka Kwe Ye* militias. One is that it reflected concerns among *Tatmadaw* leaders that their association with militia groups engaged in both the opium trade and Burma’s emerging black market in consumer goods was a source of popular discontent.⁶⁹ Another explanation is that the decision reflected changes in Burma’s relations with the United States. In the early 1970s, with the Nixon administration’s declaration of a “war on drugs,” the US State Department began pursuing cooperation on counter-narcotics as part of its foreign policy. In the case of Burma, the US government created counter-narcotics assistance incentives for the *Tatmadaw* to take a tougher stance on the narcotics trade.⁷⁰

Another explanation is that the use of *Ka Kwe Ye* militia units proved inimical to the *Tatmadaw*’s counter-insurgency goals. Some *Ka Kwe Ye* units retained close ties to the insurgents.⁷¹ Moreover, the trade in opium and black-market goods had allowed a few of the militias to grow powerful. By 1972, for example, Lo Hsing Han headed a militia with an estimated strength of 1,500 men. The growing strength of the militias, and the possibility that the *Tatmadaw* could not control them, was a concern to its leaders. And earlier attempts by local *Tatmadaw* commanders to rein in powerful *Ka Kwe Ye* militias had failed, dramatizing the difficulty of regulating powerful militias in Shan State. For instance, in 1969, the government’s arrest of Khun Sa, at that time the unofficial leader of the *Ka Kwe Ye* militias in Shan State, prompted his militia to go underground and ally with insurgents.

In 1974, a new constitution promulgated by the Revolutionary Council provided a legal basis for militias. Article 171 stated that “every citizens shall in accordance with law – undergo military training, and undertake military service for the defense of the State.”⁷² After 1973, the *Tatmadaw* reconstituted some of the local defense forces, which had earlier surrendered their weapons, into people’s militias.⁷³ During this period, the *Tatmadaw* continued to establish new militias on an *ad hoc* basis with an arrangement guided by local security concerns. By the mid-1980s, a rough estimate placed the number of people in militia forces at 35,000.⁷⁴ The militia system featured two main arrangements: the people’s militia forces and the anti-insurgent forces. In Shan State, *Tatmadaw* commanders continued to form militias to fight the CPB, which had advanced across eastern Shan State and consolidated control. After being released as part of a general amnesty by the government in 1980, Lo Hsing Han reestablished a militia near Lashio.⁷⁵ In the 1980s, *Tatmadaw* commanders authorized the creation of the Kutkai

Rangers, a militia in Kutkai Township in northern Shan State, to assist in countering the threats presented by the CPB.⁷⁶

2.4 The Ceasefire Period (1989 to 2009)

A nationwide protest movement against the Ne Win-led BSPP government in 1988, and the collapse of the CPB in 1989, had far-reaching consequences for the *Tatmadaw's* use of militias. One was that the *Tatmadaw* began engaging EAOs through ceasefire agreements, in some cases leading to their transformation into pro-government militias.⁷⁷ At the same time, the *Tatmadaw* also restructured its use of militias as part of a broader military reform.

In 1988, the eruption of popular protests against the government of Ne Win's BSPP led the *Tatmadaw* to engage in a "self-coup" that involved the installation of General Saw Maung, a trusted Ne Win supporter, and later, in 1992, General Than Shwe, as leader of a newly established governing body known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). A promise by *Tatmadaw* leaders to hold elections in 1990 helped quell popular demands for further democratic reforms. At the same time, the *Tatmadaw* also took measures to shore up its authority that included its own reorganization.

Along with a dramatic increase in weapons procurement, an expansion of personnel, and reforms of its command and control structures, the *Tatmadaw* also engaged in a reconfiguration of its militia system.⁷⁸ The extent of the changes at that time is not clear, but reports indicate that in some non-Burman areas, such as Kachin State, the *Tatmadaw* disbanded militias.⁷⁹ In other non-Burman areas, however, such as Mon State, the *Tatmadaw* introduced militia training courses for civilians.⁸⁰ Andrew Selth, a scholar of Myanmar's security affairs, notes in his 2002 book on the *Tatmadaw*:

"According to the DDSI [Directorate of Defense Services Intelligence], there are no longer active PM [people's militia] units in each village, along the lines seen before 1988.⁸¹ In most rural areas, the arms issued to these units have been collected and placed in army stores. However, villagers are still required to perform certain security functions (particularly in specially created "strategic villages"), and to assist the *Tatmadaw* if required."⁸²

As Selth adds, the militias were "expected to contribute military service to the state when required."⁸³

Another change taking place in the *Tatmadaw's* management of militias was the formation of the Directorate of People's Militias and Territorial Forces on April 1, 1990. Its establishment was part of the reorganization of the Directorate of People's Militias and Public Relations (see Table 2).⁸⁴

Another significant development in the *Tatmadaw's* management of militias involved its conferral of militia status on EAOs formerly engaged in armed resistance against the government.⁸⁵ This began in 1989 with a mutiny within the ranks of the CPB that led to the rapid collapse of Burma's largest armed insurgency, which splintered into four groups. The CPB's demise provided SLORC leaders with the opportunity to adopt a new approach to managing EAOs. Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, head of the Military Intelligence Services (MIS) of the *Tatmadaw*, took the lead in coordinating the negotiation of ceasefire agreements with EAOs.⁸⁶ Ceasefire agreements with the four post-CPB groups, concluded in 1989, thwarted the attempts of EAOs to form an alliance with them against the *Tatmadaw*.

Table 3: Myanmar Government List of Ceasefire Groups (1989 to 2009)⁸⁷

Name	Location	Current Status
Major Armed Groups		
Palaung State Liberation Army (PSLA)	Mongton, Shan State	Militia
Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organization (SNPLO)	Naung Htaw, Shan State	Surrendered
Mong Tai Army (MTA)–Khun Sa	Langkho, Shan State	Surrendered
BCP (Rakhine State)	Maungdaw, Rakhine State	Surrendered
New Democratic Army–Kachin (NDA-K)	Pangwah, Kachin State	BGF
Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA)*	Laukkai, Shan State	BGF
Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Front (KNPLF)	Hoya, Kayah State	BGF
Shan State Army–North**	Sein Kyawt, Shan State	Militia
Kachin Democratic Army (KDA)	Kutkai, Shan State	Militia
Pa-O National Army (PNA)	Kyauk Ta Long, Shan State	Militia
Kayan National Guard (KNG)	Phekon, Shan State	Militia
Kayan New Land Party (KNLP)	Pyin Saung, Kayah State	Ceasefire Group
Kachin Independence Organization (KIO)	Laiza, Kachin State	EAO
United Wa State Army (UWSA)	Pansang, Shan State	EAO
National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA)	Mong La, Shan State	EAO
New Mon State Party (NMSP)	Ye Chaung Pya, Mon State	EAO
Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)	Shadaw, Kayah State	EAO
Shan State National Army (SSNA)	Shan State	Surrendered ⁸⁸
Minor Armed Groups		
MTA–Mong Hin Mong Ha	Mongyai, Tangyan, Shan State	Militia
MTA–Man Pan	Tangyan, Shan State	Militia
Mong Paw Militia Group	Muse, Shan State	Militia
Shan State National Army (SSNA)–Breakaway Group	Shan State	Dissolved, Merged with SSA-South ⁸⁹
MTA–Shwe Pyi Aye	Pekon, Shan State	Militia
Karenni National Democratic Party (KNDP)–Na Ga	Loikaw, Kayah State	Allied with BGF
Mon Peace Organization–Myeik Region	Myeik, Mon State	Surrendered

New Mon State New Party–Breakaway Group	Kawthaung, Tanintharyi	Surrendered
Arakan Army (AA) ***	Kyauktaw, Rakhine State	Dissolved
Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)****	Myawaddy, Kayah State	BGF
Karen Peace Force (KPF) (Haungthayaw)	Kyain Sekgyi, Kayin State	BGF
Lasang Awng Wa Group	Waingmaw, Kachin State	Militia
Homong (ex-MTA)	Langkho, Shan State	Militia
Matkyan (ex-MTA)	Namsan, Shan State	Militia
Nayai (ex-MTA)	Namsan, Shan State	Militia
Karenni National Peace and Development Party (KNPDP)	Loikaw, Kayah State	Allied with BGF
Shan State Army–South 758 th Brigade	Wanpan, Shan State	Militia
Karenni Solidarity Organization (KNSO)– <i>Ka Ma Sa Nya</i>	Kayah State	Allied with BGF
Karen Peace and Development Group (Padoh Aung San)	Hpaan, Kayin State	Militia
Than Daung Special Regional Peaceful Group ⁹⁰	Thandaunggyi, Kayin State	Militia
Northern Than Daung Special Region	Thandaung, Kayin State	Inactive
KNU/KNLA Peace Council (KPC)	Kawkareik, Kayin State	EAO

* After 2009, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) split. There remains a non-BGF faction.

** After 2009, the 3rd and 7th Brigades of the SSA became militias. The 1st Brigade, known as the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA), did not, and remains an EAO.

*** The Arakan Army is a breakaway group from the Arakan Liberation Party. The group is distinct from the Arakan Army that formed in the Kachin State in 2008 and is currently operating.

**** Units led by Saw Lah Pwe rejected the BGF proposal and formed the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army–Kloh Htoo Baw. In October 2015, DKBA–Kloh Htoo Baw became a signatory of the NCA.

During the period from 1989 to 2009, forty armed organizations entered into ceasefire agreements with the military government (see Table 3). The success of the ceasefire reflects a combination of military pressure from the *Tatmadaw* and incentives for a cessation of conflict, along with the promise of economic assistance and political dialogue. The agreements were military truces that suspended open hostilities, but they were not political solutions. The military government maintained that it was a transitional government drafting a new constitution through the National Convention (NC). The NC first convened in 1993. After fifteen years, the NC produced the 2008 Constitution. While representatives of some ceasefire groups attended the NC, some expressed disappointment that the NC did not involve substantive political dialogue, and that the 2008 Constitution did not address their political concerns.⁹¹

The ceasefire approach pursued by the *Tatmadaw* produced a two-tiered system of ceasefire groups. The first tier included EAOs, which the *Tatmadaw* has referred to as “major armed groups.” The second tier included splinter groups – breakaway factions of EAOs – which the *Tatmadaw* labeled “minor armed groups.”⁹² Ceasefire terms tended to be more favorable for the first tier than for the second. First-tier groups received economic assistance from the military government, and in some cases their territory was demarcated and designated a special region. In contrast, terms for some of the second-tier groups led to reduction in their arms and territory.

The second tier consists of EAOs that accepted ceasefires and then became militias.⁹³ Andrew Selth notes that “many of the insurgent groups which have negotiated ceasefire agreements with Rangoon have been given ‘militia’ status and sometimes act as surrogates for the *Tatmadaw*.”⁹⁴

The circumstances under which these groups achieved militia status vary. In some cases, EAOs engaged in negotiations with the *Tatmadaw* did not become ceasefire groups, but converted directly to militias. For instance, after the Mong Tai Army (MTA), an EAO led by Khun Sa, agreed to an unconditional surrender in 1996, several former commanders became leaders of pro-government militias (see Box 3).⁹⁵

Other EAOs signed ceasefire agreements and disarmed, and their membership then became militia units. For many, this conversion into pro-government militias took place in the period from 1989 to 2008. The experience of the Palaung State Liberation Army (PSLA) provides an example of a ceasefire group that became a pro-government militia after disarming. The PSLA became a ceasefire group in 1991, but disarmed on April 21, 2005. The *Tatmadaw* then began providing militia training and formed members of the PSLA into pro-government militias in Mongton Township in Shan State.⁹⁶ The 758th Brigade of the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA), or Shan State Army–South, is another example of a splinter group that left their parent organization and became a government militia in July 2006.⁹⁷ The Kayan National Guard (KNG), which served as part of the Kayan New Land Party, an EAO, broke away in 1991 and agreed to a ceasefire with the *Tatmadaw* in February 1992. The group is now a pro-government militia in Pekon Township of Shan State.⁹⁸

While Shan State has the highest number of EAOs and splinter groups that have become militias, they are also present in other areas of Myanmar. In Kayin State, several groups that broke away from the KNU, such as the Thandaung Peace Group and the Padoh Aung San Group, became militias. In Kayah State, several splinter groups served as militias. Several of them reportedly have become business groups affiliated with the two BGF units (nos. 1004 and 1005) operating in Kayah State.⁹⁹

The Lasang Awng Wa Peace Group is an example of a splinter group in Kachin State that became a ceasefire group and later a pro-government militia. The origins of this group go back to the KIO. In 2004, Colonel Lasang Awng Wa, then chief of the KIO’s Intelligence and National Security Department, split from the organization after reportedly launching an unsuccessful coup against the leadership of the KIA/KIO. After its apparent failure, Lasang Aung Wa and his supporters negotiated a ceasefire agreement with the military regime. They received the status of “peace group” and permission to operate in an area near Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State. This group was then known as the Lasang Awng Wa Peace Group until it was reportedly transformed into the Lawa Yang Militia on October 16, 2009.¹⁰⁰

While not formally militia per se, several ceasefire groups assisted the *Tatmadaw* in their security roles. The Democratic Buddhist Karen Army (DKBA), a group of armed soldiers and officers that broke from the KNU in 1994, previously supported *Tatmadaw* units in operations against the KNU.¹⁰¹

During this period, the *Tatmadaw* continued militia training programs for civilians. The training followed a pattern in which local *Tatmadaw* units directed villagers to form militias in communities inhabited by non-Burman ethnic groups. These areas included Chin,¹⁰² Shan,¹⁰³ Kachin,¹⁰⁴ Kayin,¹⁰⁵ and Mon states and Tanintharyi Division (currently referred to as Tanintharyi Region).¹⁰⁶

This ceasefire system operated from 1989 to 2008. Beginning in 2009, the *Tatmadaw* changed its approach to managing EAOs, which altered the ceasefire system. The changes involved the proposal by the *Tatmadaw* that EAOs become pro-government militias, and, later, the initiation of a peace process, which involved a new round of ceasefires.

Box 3: Khun Sa and His Legacy

Khun Sa (1934-2007) is the most famous of Myanmar's militia leaders. Despite his death in 2007, the legacy of his influence over the militia system in Shan State continues. Although his career as the country's most powerful militia leader is exceptional, it provides insights useful for understanding the evolution of Myanmar's current militia system.

Born in 1934, Khun Sa was of mixed Chinese-Shan-Palaung heritage and grew up in the Loi Maw region of Tangyan Township in Shan State. His authorized biography recounts that as a young man he formed a small, armed band with his boyhood friends for protection from the remnants of the KMT that had entered Burma. These KMT were to become his long-time adversaries. To obtain arms for his growing army, he organized a raid on a KMT unit and captured thirty of their weapons.¹⁰⁷

By the late 1950s, local *Tatmadaw* commanders had begun using local militias to help contain internal and external threats. According to Khun Sa's biography, "On January 6, 1960, Colonel Maung Shwe, the commander of the Eastern Strategic Command (Shan State), offered him the status of a volunteer militia chief and a free hand in the build-up of his strength in return for his pledge to fight the KMT and the Communist Party of Burma."¹⁰⁸ During this time, he parlayed opium into resources to build his militia, and extended his control beyond Loimaw into eastern Shan State.

Khun Sa's first stint as a militia leader was short-lived. In 1964, the military government ordered the demonetization of widely held bank notes as part of its socialist-oriented economic reforms, wiping out many people's savings. Some of the hardest hit were those in the cash-oriented, black-market economy, including opium traders such as Khun Sa. Outraged, Khun Sa led his militia underground, adopting "United Anti-Socialist Army" as the name of his group, and entered into an alliance with ethnic Shan resistance groups.

Khun Sa's first stint as a rebel, however, was also brief.¹⁰⁹ His initial experience with the Shan insurgents did not go well. Despite his efforts to assist the various ethnic Shan resistance armies, he became entangled in a conflict with Bo Dewing, one of the first leaders of the Shan rebellion, which Khun Sa attributed to manipulation by his rivals, the KMT. By 1966, Khun Sa had resumed his position as head of a militia force, one known as the Loi Maw *Ka Kwe Ye*.¹¹⁰

On October 20, 1969, state authorities detained Khun Sa in Taunggyi, where he was attending a meeting. A government account of the *Tatmadaw's* perceptions of Khun Sa's militia notes, "in view of their military buildup and frequent violations of the law, it was conceivable that they would no longer be loyal to the government." Authorities arrested Khun Sa under section five of the Public Tranquility Law.¹¹¹ His lieutenants led the organization underground and cooperated with the Shan State Army, changing their name from the Loi Maw *Ka Kwe Ye* to the Shan United Army (SUA) in an attempt to demonstrate their political reorientation.¹¹²

In 1973, Khun Sa's officers abducted two Soviet doctors from a hospital in Taunggyi. In exchange for their release, Burmese authorities agreed to free Khun Sa from Mandalay prison. According to his biography, after his release in 1974, he came under the watchful eye of Burmese Military Intelligence Services. Nevertheless, Khun Sa managed to rejoin his army based along the Thai-Shan border.¹¹³

By 1976, Khun Sa had returned to his men and slowly rebuilt the military strength of his force. He expanded his control over the Thai-Shan border so that he could tax the flow of opium entering Thailand. In the mid-1980s, he brought two other ethnic Shan armies under his command and renamed his organization the Mong Tai Army (MTA). He continued to increase the strength of his army, to more than twenty thousand troops, and his control over Shan State's opium trade.¹¹⁴

By the mid-1990s, the walls began closing in on Khun Sa. Ceasefire agreements with many of Shan State's EAOs now allowed the *Tatmadaw* to concentrate its resources on pressuring the MTA to surrender. And there was dissension in the ranks, epitomized by a mutiny led by one of Khun Sa's trusted officers, who established the Shan State National Army (SSNA). Khun Sa now faced encirclement by forces of the *Tatmadaw* and the UWSA. The establishment of fixed headquarters at Homong near the Shan State border with Thailand had limited his maneuverability. Khun Sa directed his most trusted aides to secretly open negotiations with the *Tatmadaw* about surrendering.¹¹⁵

In January 1996, the *Tatmadaw* neutralized the threat of Khun Sa's MTA, one of the largest EAOs in Myanmar at that time. Its demise came through political negotiations rather than bloody conflict. Despite the strength of its estimated 15,000 troops, the terms of the MTA's agreement were different from most of the ceasefires with other large EAOs. Rather than accepting a ceasefire, Khun Sa surrendered. *Tatmadaw* officials allowed Khun Sa to retire to Yangon and live in the protective custody of the government. The MTA did not become a ceasefire organization. Rather than keep their massive arsenal, MTA leaders delivered it to the *Tatmadaw* as part of the surrender.¹¹⁶ As for the thousands of former MTA soldiers, the *Tatmadaw* formed many of them into militias (see Table 4).¹¹⁷

Not all of the MTA soldiers accepted the surrender. Yawd Serk, a young officer, rejected the surrender, broke away, and set up an EAO to oppose the government. He attracted several thousand soldiers and formed the Shan State Army–South, which later became known as the RCSS/SSA.

Table 4: Ex-MTA Militias (1996 to Present)¹¹⁸

Leader	Township(s)	Name(s)	Comments
Mahaja	Langhko	Southern Shan State Company; Homong Region Development and Welfare Group	Militia
Bo Mon	Tangyan/Lashio	Manpang (Manpan)	Militia
Lt. Col. Yishay, Wilson Moe ¹¹⁹	Nampong/Mongton	Nampong/Loi Taw Khan People's Militia Force	Militia
Zhou Sang	Namsan	Nayai	Militia
Sai Khun Mein	Petkon	MTA Shwepyiaye; Former MTA Members Development Group	Militia
Ma Guowen	Tangyan/Mongyai	Mong Hin Mong Ha	Militia
Ekka–Ai Ya	Mongkerng	Mongyawn	Militia
Naw Kham*	Tachilek	Hawngleuk Militia	Dissolved

*The formation of the Hawngleuk militia was not part of the 1996 surrender agreement.

Of the former MTA militia leaders, Naw Kham, a former supply officer, became one of the most well known for his campaign of piracy along stretches of the Mekong River adjacent to the Laos and Myanmar borders. Sometime after the MTA surrender, Naw Kham became the head of a government militia in Tachilek Township.¹²⁰ After the removal from office of Prime Minister Khin Nyunt in 2004, Naw Kham came into conflict with state security authorities and fled Tachilek. He relocated to the banks of the Mekong River, where he set up a protection racket involving the taxation of commercial river traffic. During this time, he established close ties with the communities along the river in both Laos and Myanmar. When a boat with twelve murdered Chinese sailors washed up on the Thai banks of the Mekong River on February 25, 2008, Naw Kham became the target of an international manhunt led by Chinese officials. Naw Kham evaded the dragnet for months by maneuvering between hideouts in Laos and Myanmar. Eventually, authorities apprehended him in Laos, and he was tried and executed in China.¹²¹

2.5 The Transformation and the Peace Process (2009 to Present)

In the period since 2009, as the political system changed from direct military rule to a more open, quasi-democratic government, the militia system also experienced changes. In 2009 and 2010, this involved the *Tatmadaw's* initiative to transform ceasefire organizations into militias, and an increase in the training of civilians for militia service. After 2011, when President Thein Sein took power, his government initiated a peace process. One step made by the new government was to delink the issue of militia transformation from participation in the peace process. Nevertheless, some non-Burman areas have become more militarized as a result of the *Tatmadaw's* formation of new militias.

In 2006, the *Tatmadaw* announced its intention to hold a referendum on a proposed constitution in May 2008 as a step in its proposed roadmap for political reform.¹²² The passage of the referendum signaled the beginning of a period of uncertainty in Myanmar's political system. In the period after the approval of the constitution, but before the general elections scheduled for November 2010, *Tatmadaw* leaders took steps to push ceasefire groups to transform into pro-government militia units.

On April 27, 2009, the *Tatmadaw* announced its intention to transform ceasefire organizations into pro-government militias. To coordinate this process, Lieutenant General Ye Myint, head of Military Security Affairs (MSA), became the head of the Committee for the Transformation of the Border Guard Forces. In the lead-up to the November elections, he met with leaders of ethnic armed ceasefire organizations in an attempt to persuade them to accept the order.¹²³

The militia proposal involved two different arrangements. The first was the BGF scheme, which included the following procedures: First, *Tatmadaw* soldiers would integrate into the unit and make up 3 percent of its force composition. Second, each group would form into battalion-size units of 326 men. The allotment of units for the larger armed groups was greater than the allotment for the smaller ones. For instance, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) transformed into eleven individual BGF units. By contrast, the two ethnic Lahu militias, led by Jakuni and Ja Pikwe, combined to form a single BGF unit.

Five ethnic ceasefire groups and four local militia units become BGFs (see Table 5). The ceasefire groups were from the National Democratic Army–Kachin (NDA-K) in Kachin State, the Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF) in Kayah State, the DKBA (Buddhist) in Kayin State, and the MNDA in northern Shan State. The militia groups that became BGFs were all in Shan State, and included an ethnic Lahu militia group in Mongton and Mong Hsat townships headed by Major Japi Kwe, a former member of the Lahu Defense Force (LDF), an EAO; a militia group in Tachilek headed by Maj. Sai Aung; the Makman militia group located in Mong Ping (Mong Pyin) Township; and a group of militias in Talay Township. Their origins trace back either to EAOs that were ceasefire groups, or to government militias.¹²⁴ These are areas with predominately non-Burman populations, and most militia members

are also non-Burman. The ethnicity of the *Tatmadaw* soldiers appointed to serve in BGF units is not known, but they likely include ethnic Burmans.

Table 5: Border Guard Forces (2009 to Present)¹²⁵

BGF No.	Township	Commander	Date	Previous Status
Kachin State				
1001	Chipwi and Tsawlaw	Maj. Deltan Khaung Lum	8-Nov-09	NDA-K
1002	Chipwi and Tsawlaw	Maj. Lanjaw Saung Taint	8-Nov-09	NDA-K
1003	Waingmaw	Maj. Wamthe Dai Khaun	8-Nov-09	NDA-K
Kayah State				
1004	Hpasawng and Loikaw	Maj. Ree Samar	8-Nov-09	KNPLF
1005	Mese and Bawlakhe	Maj. Se Moenel	8-Nov-09	KNPLF
Shan State				
1006	Laukkai	Maj. Yang Xao Kying	4-Dec-09	MNDAA
1007	Mongton	Maj. Japi Kwe	30-Mar-10	Lahu militia (formerly LDF)
1008	Mongyawng	Unknown	30-Mar-10	Combined forces of Lahu militia and Jakuni militia
1009	Tachilek	Maj. Sai Aung	18-May-10	Lahu militia
1010	Metman/Markmang	Unknown	20-May-10	Metman militia
Kayin State				
1011	Hlaingbwe	Maj. Henry	18-Aug-10	DKBA
1012	Hlaingbwe	Maj. Than Shwe	18-Aug-10	DKBA
1013	Phapun	Maj. Saw Hla Kyaing	18-Aug-10	DKBA
1014	Phapun	Maj. Saw Maung Chit	18-Aug-10	DKBA
1015	Hlaingbwe	Maj. Saw Win Naing Sein	20-Aug-10	DKBA
1016	Hlaingbwe	Maj. Saw Myat Khaing	20-Aug-10	DKBA
1017	Myawaddy	Maj. Dee Dee	20-Aug-10	DKBA
1018	Myawaddy	Maj. Saw Maung Win	20-Aug-10	DKBA
1019	Myawaddy	Maj. Saw Like Theik	20-Aug-10	DKBA
1020	Myawaddy	Maj. Saw San Lin	21-Aug-10	DKBA
1021	Kawkareik	Maj. Saw Beelu	21-Aug-10	DKBA
1022	Myawaddy	Maj. Moe Tho	21-Aug-10	DKBA
1023	Kyain Sekgyi	Maj. Saw Eh Htoo	21-Aug-10	KPF

A second arrangement offered to ceasefire groups was to transform them into militias, referred to by the *Tatmadaw* as People's Militia Forces (PMF). The procedures are less strict for becoming a PMF than a BGF. PMFs are required to assist the *Tatmadaw* by collecting information about other armed groups, helping them navigate the difficult local terrain, and supporting them in combat operations. Like the BGF proposal, it involved the downsizing of forces. However, unlike the BGF, this militia arrangement did not require the integration of soldiers from the *Tatmadaw*.

The PMF proposal led several ceasefire groups that had not earlier become militias to join the *Tatmadaw's* militia program. According to a government press release in 2011, fifteen ceasefire groups became militias in the period from 1989 to 2010.¹²⁶ These included not just EAOs, such as the Kachin Defense Army (KDA) and the Pa-O National Army (PNA),¹²⁷ but also the splinter groups, including the 3rd and 7th brigades of the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA), and others.¹²⁸

During a 2011 press conference, Minister of Information U Kyaw Hsan explained the rationale behind the proposal:

"During negotiations, ethnic leaders said that their subordinates would face a lot of difficulties in trying to adapt themselves to ordinary civilian life, asking permission to hold arms and also jobs and food, clothing and shelter.

Consequently the government, taking into account laws, rules, and agreements, has transformed ethnic armed organizations into border guard forces – BGFs – or people's militia forces – PMFs – so that members could enjoy jobs and life security and serve the nation with dignity. As these forces become units under *Tatmadaw's* command, matters concerning their monthly salaries, rations, uniforms, and arms and ammunition have to be carried out according to rules and regulations and proper bookkeeping system."¹²⁹

Not all of the ceasefire organizations complied with the *Tatmadaw's* request to transform into militias. Several of the more powerful ones rejected the order, including the UWSA, the KIO, and the New Mon State Party (NMSP). The RCSS/SSA split over the issue: the 3rd and 7th brigades became *Tatmadaw* militias, while the 1st Brigade did not. A common objection was that the proposal required changes in their armed forces in advance of the anticipated political dialogue with the *Tatmadaw*.¹³⁰ The KIO made counter-proposals that included becoming a national guard force not under *Tatmadaw* command, but the *Tatmadaw* did not agree.¹³¹

Efforts by the *Tatmadaw* to form BGF units in Kayin State and the Kokang area of northern Shan State led to armed conflicts between *Tatmadaw* units and two EAOs – the MNDAA and the units of the DKBA led by the late Saw Lah Pweh – that refused to abide by the *Tatmadaw's* request to become BGFs. The outbreak of fighting over the BGF program highlights the political challenges of integrating ceasefire groups into the militia system (see Section 4.4).

During this transition period, the military government was expanding its recruitment and training of civilians for local government militias. In 2009 and 2010, reports indicate that the *Tatmadaw* stepped up its efforts to form militias in Arakan,¹³² Chin,¹³³ Shan,¹³⁴ Kayin,¹³⁵ and Mon¹³⁶ states, and Tanintharyi Division (now Region).¹³⁷

Table 6: Bilateral Ceasefire Agreements between the Government and Ethnic Armed Organizations (2011 to Present)

Name	Date of New Ceasefire	Date of Previous Ceasefire
1. National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA) Mongla	September 2011	1989
2. United Wa State Army (UWSA)	October 2011	1989
3. Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA)*	December 2011	None
4. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)–Htoo Baw*	December 2011	1995 (Signed as part of Democratic Karen Buddhist Army)
5. Chin National Front (CNF)*	January 2012	None
6. Karen National Union (KNU)*	January 2012	None
7. Shan State Progressive Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/Shan State Army)	January 2012	1989
8. New Mon State Party (NMSP)	February 2012	1995
9. KNU/KNLA Peace Council (KPC)*	February 2012	2007
10. Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)	March 2012	1994
11. Arakan Liberation Party (ALP)*	April 2012	None
12. National Socialist Council of Nagaland–Khaplang (NSCN-K)	April 2012	None
13. Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO)*	August 2012	None
14. All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF)*	August 2013	None

*Indicates signatory of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (2015).

The quasi-democratic government led by President Thein Sein (2011-2016) initiated a peace process to resolve the conflict between the *Tatmadaw* and EAOs. A pledge by President Thein Sein on August 18, 2011, to make ethnic issues a national priority signaled that the new government was willing to drop the issue of militia transformation.¹³⁸ This gesture removed the impediment posed by the *Tatmadaw's* militia transformation proposal and created an atmosphere conducive to negotiations between EAOs and the government. The government succeeded in negotiating new bilateral ceasefire agreements with fourteen armed organizations (see Table 6). On October 15, 2015, after three years of negotiations among the *Tatmadaw* and at least seventeen active armed groups, a multilateral agreement, known as the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), was signed. Significantly, the NCA calls for political dialogue between the military and the EAOs.

The NCA is a multilateral ceasefire agreement signed by eight armed organizations, including the country's oldest ethnic armed opposition group, the Karen National Union (KNU). But seven other EAOs that had concluded bilateral ceasefires with the Thein Sein-led government did not sign the NCA. And another four ethnic organizations, which have no ceasefire agreement with the government and are involved in ongoing conflicts with the *Tatmadaw*, did not join the process. These groups include both the recently established Arakan Army (AA) and Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and the much older Myanmar National Alliance Army (MNDAA), established in 1989, and KIA, formed in 1961. The KIA accepted a ceasefire agreement in 1994, which broke down in 2011.¹³⁹ Despite participating in

the early stages of drafting the NCA, the KIA did not become a signatory.¹⁴⁰ A few smaller armed groups without bilateral ceasefires have agreements that will allow them to participate in the political dialogue. They include the Wa National Organization, the Lahu Democratic Union, and the Arakan National Congress.¹⁴¹

In the lead-up to the 2010 election, the steps taken by the SPDC to transform ceasefire organizations into militias, and its expansion of civilian training for militia service, had several far-reaching effects. One was that the formation of militias led to the further militarization of some areas. Another is that the transformation of units from the SSPP/SSA and MNDAA into pro-government militias weakened them militarily. The BGFs and the newly formed militias served as proxy forces for the *Tatmadaw* to exercise influence in areas not under their direct control, and enhanced their ability to apply indirect pressure on EAOs. From a political perspective, the conferral of militia status on EAOs represents an expansion of the militias system's function to include the integration of EAOs into the *Tatmadaw*. However, several EAOs have been unwilling to accept this arrangement. The issue of militias and the prospect of transforming EAOs into militias remain politically contentious because of uncertainty and a lack of consensus about the role of militias in Myanmar's future.

Box 4: The Legal Basis for Militias in the Constitution

The long-standing use of militias by the *Tatmadaw* is reflected in law and in both the 1974 and 2008 constitutions.

Article 171 of the 1974 Constitution assigns duties to citizens that involve their preparation to defend the country, but it does not explicitly provide a role for militias. The article states, "Every citizen shall, in accordance with law (a) undergo military training, and (b) undertake military service for the defense of the State."¹⁴²

The 2008 Constitution charges the Defense Services of Myanmar with the administration of militias. Article 340, which came into effect in 2010, states:

"With the approval of the National Defense and Security Council, the Defense Services has the authority to administer the participation of the entire people in the security and defense of the Union. The strategy of the people's militia shall be carried out under the leadership of the Defense Services."¹⁴³

The 2008 Constitution also identifies duties for citizens regarding the defense of the country, which include undergoing military training. Article 385 states, "Every citizen has the duty to safeguard independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar." Moreover, Article 386 adds, "Every citizen has the duty to undergo military training in accord with the provisions of the law and to serve in the armed forces to defend the Union."

The Thein Sein government has cited the 2008 Constitution as a legal basis for the transformation of ethnic armed groups into militias. For instance, a government spokesperson indicated that armed groups must assume "the State's duties as border guard forces and regional militia forces in compliance with the Constitution under the command of the *Tatmadaw*."¹⁴⁴ Article 337 of the 2008 Constitution provides justification for this, as it holds that, "All the armed forces in the Union shall be under the command of the Defense Services."

Myanmar's legal code has provisions regarding militias, but these laws do not yet appear to have been legally promulgated. In November 2010, before the transition to the Thein Sein government, the military regime of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) enacted the People's Military Service Law. Its provisions allow the government to recruit civilians for military service. However, the

government does not yet appear to have implemented the provisions.¹⁴⁵ Legal precedents for this law include the National Service Law and People's Militia Act of 1959. As Selth notes, while this law permitted conscription for military service, "it is not clear whether this law ever formally entered into force, as no official notification appears to have been made as required by Section 1(2) of the Act."¹⁴⁶

Several commentators have noted that while the 2008 Constitution acknowledges a role for militias in the security and defense of the country, important details are not included.¹⁴⁷ For instance, a report from Burma News International (BNI) notes, "There is no official government document about the BGF policy. The people's militia force is mentioned in the Defense Service, Chapter 7, of the 2008 Constitution. However, the wording is vague, and no details about the role of the people's militias are provided."¹⁴⁸

Section THREE: A Typology of Militias

This section offers a framework for understanding the current militia system by providing a typology of four types of militias that identifies their different roles and positions within civil-military relations. The primary feature assessed in the typology is the status of militias. “Status” refers to whether they are allied with the *Tatmadaw* or with EAOs, and the ways pro-government militias are integrated into the *Tatmadaw*’s command structure. There are three other secondary features: (1) the extent of their influence, which involves the number of members, their area of operation, and other factors related to their strength and pervasiveness; (2) their origins, such as their previous interactions with their communities and the *Tatmadaw*; and (3) their source of revenue – how they support themselves financially. The militias are broken down and classified into four types:

- *Tatmadaw*-integrated militias
- *Tatmadaw* non-integrated militias
- *Tatmadaw*-operated community militias
- ethnic armed organization militias

This typological framework is useful because any aggregate estimate of the number of militia groups without proper contextualization can easily conflate militias with as few as five civilian members, recruited by the *Tatmadaw* and with only minimal training, with others comprising hundreds of well-armed, veteran soldiers belonging to an EAO that joined the peace process after armed conflict with the government. One caveat is that there may be militias included in one type that do not meet all of the criteria.

3.1 Type I: Tatmadaw-Integrated Militias

Tatmadaw-integrated militias, officially known as the Border Guard Forces, operate under the command of the *Tatmadaw* and are integrated into its formal command structure. At present, there are twenty-three battalions of BGFs (see Table 5). The primary characteristics of *Tatmadaw*-integrated militias are as follows: The units are integrated into the formal command structure of the *Tatmadaw*. The *Tatmadaw* issues standard uniforms and provides direct financial and material support. The units have soldiers from the *Tatmadaw* serving in their ranks.¹⁴⁹ Each unit receives arms and supplies from the *Tatmadaw*.

Tatmadaw-integrated militias are responsible for assisting the *Tatmadaw* in maintaining security and are part of its national defense plans. Their activities range from providing information on the activities of EAOs in their areas and serving as guides to navigate the local terrain, to combat operations against EAOs. BGF units have engaged in fighting with the KIA, the KNLA, and, prior to the NCA, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)–Kloh Htoo Blaw.¹⁵⁰

Under the official guidelines, each BGF unit has 326 members, including eighteen officers. As part of the *Tatmadaw*, the BGFs have access to heavy weapons.¹⁵¹

As their name suggests, BGFs are located in townships that are near, but not necessarily adjacent to, international borders. BGF units operate in Kachin, Shan, and Kayah states. The areas of BGF operations appear to correspond roughly to those where armed groups wielded influence prior to becoming a BGF.¹⁵² The details concerning their freedom of movement are unclear, but BGFs appear to be more restricted than some *Tatmadaw* battalions. As one reports notes, “a Myanmar army battalion under LID [Light Infantry Division] 88 in Magway region can be deployed in Kachin state, while a Karen BGF cannot be deployed in Kachin state.”¹⁵³

One of the most significant aspects of *Tatmadaw*-integrated militias is the inclusion of *Tatmadaw* soldiers in the ranks of what were previously militias and EAOs engaged in ceasefire agreements with

the government.¹⁵⁴ The guidelines for the formation of BGF units call for the integration of thirty soldiers from the *Tatmadaw*, of which three must be officers. As Kyaw San, the former minister of information, notes, “Normally, a BGF unit has three officers and 27 from other ranks of the *Tatmadaw* to help run its organizational functions smoothly and correctly. You see, a small number of servicemen have to be included in the organizational set-up of every BGF.” The commander of the unit holds the rank of major and is from the original group. Commanders have the authority to issue promotions. There are two deputy commanders, one of which is an officer from the *Tatmadaw*. *Tatmadaw* officers hold positions that control supplies and logistical planning (see Table 7 and Annex I).¹⁵⁵

The guidelines for the transformation into BGFs reportedly include a provision that requires the retirement of militia members over the age of fifty years. This regulation has led to new patterns of accommodation between the *Tatmadaw* and the leaders of the transformed armed groups. Several former leaders have become members of state-level advisory committees for Border Guard Forces. The *Tatmadaw* has taken steps to address their formal separation by appointing them as honorary gazetted officers in the *Tatmadaw*. At a ceremony held in May 2014, *Tatmadaw* officers conferred these honorary appointments on several leaders from units in Kayin and Kayah States. According to one analyst, “Appointing some leaders of these groups as honorary gazetted officers is a means of reminding them where their loyalties lie.”¹⁵⁶

Financial support for *Tatmadaw*-integrated militias comes from the *Tatmadaw* and their own income-generating activities. According to a report in the state-run *New Light of Myanmar*: “The government provides members of the border guard force with the same supplies as that for a *Tatmadaw* member: salary, rations, military uniforms, and health care.”¹⁵⁷ Moreover, a BGF recruitment pamphlet indicates that members of BGFs and their families also receive other benefits, such as discounted travel on buses, railways, and air flights (see Annex II).¹⁵⁸

A public statement issued in 2011 by U Kyaw Hsan, a government spokesperson at that time, indicates that one of the objectives of the BGFs was to provide members of EAOs with alternative livelihoods (see earlier discussion in sec. 2.5).¹⁵⁹ This statement indicates that the provision of economic assistance by the government is to support the integration of soldiers into units under the command of the *Tatmadaw*.

The economic activities of BGFs are diverse. Members of BGF units tax the population and commerce, and operate businesses, including industrial agriculture projects, real estate, mining, logging and others.¹⁶⁰ In some cases, reports indicate that members of BGFs are also involved in narcotics trafficking.¹⁶¹

Table 7: Official Distribution of Soldiers by Rank from the Tatmadaw and Original Unit(s) in a Border Guard Force Unit¹⁶²

Tatmadaw	Number (Rank)	Original Unit(s)	Number (Rank)
		Commander	1 (Major)
2 nd Commander (admin)	1 (Major)	2 nd Commander	1 (Major)
Captain (Adjutant)	1 (Captain)		
Captain (Quarter Master)	1 (Captain)		
		Company Commander	3 (Captain)
		Platoon Commander	10 (Lieutenant and 1 st Lieutenant)
Regimental Sergeant Major	1		
Warrant Officer – II (Office)	1	Warrant Officer - II	4
Warrant Officer – II (Quarter)	1		
Sergeant (Clerk)	8	Sergeant (C.Q.)	1
Sergeant	6	Sergeant	10
Corporal	9	Corporal	35
Medic	1		
		Lance Corporal	33
		Private	198
Total	30	Total	296

3.2 Type II: Tatmadaw Non-Integrated Militias

Tatmadaw non-integrated militias are remarkably diverse in size, strength, command structure, history, and sources of revenue.¹⁶³ Despite these differences, a common feature of these militias is that they are under the command of the *Tatmadaw*, but are not fully integrated into the *Tatmadaw* like the BGFs. In addition to having no *Tatmadaw* soldiers in their ranks, *Tatmadaw* non-integrated militias have no uniform system of rank, and no prescribed number of soldiers like the BGFs. They are not required to attend training programs conducted by the *Tatmadaw*, or obligated to operate full time. Finally, they do not receive salaries from the *Tatmadaw*.¹⁶⁴ These features distinguish them from the *Tatmadaw*-integrated militias (type I).

Other features of *Tatmadaw* non-integrated militias are as follows: Like the BGFs, many have taken part in transformation ceremonies, in which *Tatmadaw* officials recognize them as government militias.¹⁶⁵ These militias perform security roles for the *Tatmadaw* that include assisting in protecting their communities from internal threats such as EAOs. The extent and type of assistance vary, and reflect the security situation on the ground. Some of these units have supported *Tatmadaw* operations and have come into conflict with EAOs such as the TNLA, KIA, and SSPP/SSA.

The influence of *Tatmadaw* non-integrated militias varies considerably. Most comprise fewer than one hundred men, and some may have fewer than ten. A few may have more than one hundred, and even as many as several hundred. For example, the Manpang (Man pan) militia group led by Bo Mon (formerly of the MTA), the Pan Hsay militias, and the militias formed out of the KDA and the PNA reportedly have several hundred men.¹⁶⁶ The number of men in a unit can be greater than the number of weapons issued by the *Tatmadaw*, a discrepancy that appears to be common among these militias.¹⁶⁷

The membership of *Tatmadaw* non-integrated militias consists largely of non-Burmans from nearby communities, and they appear to operate within the confines of their regions of origin, which are non-Burman areas. The designated zones of operation for militias that were formerly ceasefire organizations correspond roughly to the areas covered by their ceasefire agreements. One report indicates that some militias “are not allowed to patrol outside their active area and are not allowed to use heavy weapons.” However, other reports show that members of this type of militia support combat operations by the *Tatmadaw* in areas beyond their normal areas of operation. Their support often involves serving as guides for *Tatmadaw* troops, particularly in difficult-to-navigate, mountainous regions.¹⁶⁸

The *Tatmadaw* non-integrated militias are made up of units with different origins and backgrounds. Some were initially EAOs that fought against the *Tatmadaw*. These groups signed ceasefire agreements with the *Tatmadaw* during the SLORC/SPDC period, and then became militias. Other *Tatmadaw* non-integrated militias were originally organized by local leaders for self-defense, and joined one or more of the various militia arrangements created by the *Tatmadaw* over the last few decades. Some militia units can trace their origins back to the 1950s.¹⁶⁹ Most other *Tatmadaw* non-integrated militias that are not ceasefire groups were established later (see Section 2.4).¹⁷⁰

Like other features of *Tatmadaw* non-integrated militias, how they support themselves varies significantly. Many rely on some form of taxation to raise revenue. A few also operate businesses and receive business concessions from the government.¹⁷¹ Militia leaders are permitted to operate their own businesses to generate revenue, and several have connections with business people.¹⁷² Some of their business activities involve the transport sector, real estate development and agribusiness,¹⁷³ and some have resource concessions for timber, mining, farmland, and jade.¹⁷⁴ Several reports also allege involvement in illicit activities such as narcotics.¹⁷⁵

3.3 Type III: Tatmadaw-Supported Community Militias

Tatmadaw-supported community militias are made up of civilians recruited from a community, trained, and armed by the *Tatmadaw*. Local *Tatmadaw* units supervise and coordinate their activities. The role played by the *Tatmadaw* in organizing these militias is one of the features that distinguish them from the *Tatmadaw*-integrated and non-integrated militias (types I and II). In some cases, village headmen select members of a community to attend a *Tatmadaw* militia-training course. By contrast, the militias of types I and II were already formed when they came under *Tatmadaw* command. Another difference is that these groups tend to be smaller than the other types.¹⁷⁶

Tatmadaw-supported community militias operate in both villages and towns. In municipal areas they are designated as *myo ma* (Burmese), and sometimes serve where there is limited or nonexistent police or *Tatmadaw* presence.¹⁷⁷ In other instances they work with local civilian officials such as the police and local administrators.¹⁷⁸

The primary role of *Tatmadaw*-supported community militias is providing security. An earlier report on armed groups in Mon State, published in 2007, notes:

“These Pyi Thu Sit militiamen are active in their home villages, providing security against ‘bandits’ and other subversive elements. Moreover, they must patrol along with SPDC columns that arrive at their village and serve as guides so long as the soldiers remain active in the

surrounding area.”¹⁷⁹

Their duties vary, depending on the local security conditions, and may include serving as sentries – watching for suspicious activities by strangers and filing reports with local security officials. In some villages, where the presence of either the *Tatmadaw* or the Myanmar Police Force is negligible or nonexistent, these militia forces may have greater security responsibilities.¹⁸⁰

The strength of an individual *Tatmadaw*-supported community militia unit reflects at least two factors. One is the size of their community. In areas with small populations, militias may have as few as five active-duty members. In more populous areas, the community militia is likely to be larger.¹⁸¹ A second factor is whether or not there are security threats in the area. As a senior officer of an ethnic armed group in Kayah State explains, “The militias are civilians. In times of need, they put on uniforms and the military gives them guns.”¹⁸² Local *Tatmadaw* units issue weapons to these militias. In areas where EAOs are not active, however, they may be unarmed.

Like other armed groups in Myanmar, taxation supports these militias, whether formally or informally. The forms of taxation vary. For instance, one method appears to be that local government officials collect taxes from households to support militia activities. Militias may also collect these taxes directly, paid in currency or in kind, for example in rice.¹⁸³

The use of community militias under the direct control of local *Tatmadaw* units is a practice that began in the late 1960s.¹⁸⁴ *Tatmadaw*-supported community militias represent a continuation of the earlier *pyithusit* militia arrangement devised by the *Tatmadaw* under the doctrine of people’s war in the 1960s, and are part of the *Tatmadaw*’s national defense strategy. When necessary, the *Tatmadaw* may mobilize this type of militia to fight against foreign and local threats.¹⁸⁵

While *Tatmadaw*-supported community militias are probably the most widespread, they are also the ones about which the least information is available.¹⁸⁶ Part of the reason that not much is known about these militias is that they are small and often inactive, and tend to keep a low profile. Several accounts in the early 2000s quoted the DDSI, a now-defunct intelligence arm of the *Tatmadaw*, to the effect that village militias had been disbanded and their arms put in storage, adding to the confusion about their status and prevalence.¹⁸⁷

Nevertheless, villagers in many areas of Myanmar have received militia training from local *Tatmadaw* units. Reports indicate that *Tatmadaw* commanders have continued to recruit and train civilians for community militias in Rakhine,¹⁸⁸ Kayin,¹⁸⁹ Mon,¹⁹⁰ Shan,¹⁹¹ Chin,¹⁹² and Kachin¹⁹³ states, and in Tanintharyi and Bago regions.¹⁹⁴ How many of these trained civilians are active is unclear, however, as many may remain as reserves. Their activation appears to depend on how *Tatmadaw* officials view the local security situation, and in areas with minimal threats, militias may remain inactive and unarmed.

3.4 Type IV: Ethnic Armed Organization Militias

EAO militias support ethnic armed organizations. Their roles may include protecting their communities from the *Tatmadaw*, government militias, or other EAOs, but these militias also may have reservists who can be mobilized to support the EAO’s military operations. Their membership includes civilians and retired soldiers.

The large number of EAOs operating in Myanmar over the last sixty-five years makes characterizing this type of militia complicated.¹⁹⁵ Not only are there several armed groups, but they also appear to have developed different militia arrangements based on local needs and their varying capacities.¹⁹⁶

Among EAOs, the ones with greater resources and larger areas of control are the ones that have militias.¹⁹⁷ For instance, the KIO, which is the political wing of the KIA, operates the *Mungshawa Hypen*

Hpung (MHH). Lack of resources constrains many smaller EAOs from equipping militia members with the weapons needed to exercise coercive force.¹⁹⁸

The KNDO is Myanmar's oldest EAO militia, dating back to 1947. At present, it operates in conjunction with the KNLA, which is the armed wing of the KNU. They are one of at least two armed groups that function as militia in KNU-controlled areas. The KNU also cooperates with village-based militias known in Karen as *Gher Khaw* – involving part-time soldiers based in their own villages who often arm themselves.¹⁹⁹

The KNDO is more formalized than the *Gher Khaw*. The KNDO operates under the command of the KNU's Department of Defense.²⁰⁰ The Karen Human Rights Group describes the KNDO as a "militia force of local volunteers trained and equipped by the Karen National Liberation Army and incorporated into its battalion and command structure; its members wear uniforms and typically commit to two-year terms of service."²⁰¹ The KNDO has a headquarters and seven battalions, one in each of the KNLA's seven brigade areas, each of which has an estimated strength of between 130 to 150 trained troops.²⁰²

The KNDO has some of the oldest roots among all of Myanmar's EAO militias. When the KNU first formed in 1947, its armed forces were called KNDOs. In 1949, a mutiny by ethnic Karen units of the *Tatmadaw* led to a reorganization of the Karen armed groups into the KAF, but many of the units continued to be known as KNDOs. The KNU's official armed wing was later renamed the KNLA, and the KNDO became a militia force of the KNU's seven districts in southeast Myanmar in the 1970s.

The data on EAO militias is also scarce. One of the main constraints is that many EAOs, especially the smaller ones, may lack resources for financing these groups. Nevertheless, they appear to operate on a decentralized level, with the primary objective of self-protection.

3.5 The Number of Militias?

In an article published in 2015, Andrew Selth, a veteran analyst of the *Tatmadaw*, notes:

"Despite its dominance of Burma's national affairs for decades, the *Tatmadaw* remains in many respects a closed book. Even the most basic data is beyond the reach of analysts and other observers. For example, the *Tatmadaw's* current size is a mystery, although most estimates range between 300,000 and 350,000."²⁰³

In the case of militias, much basic data is also beyond reach.²⁰⁴ The exact number of militias and militia personnel is unknown and perhaps unknowable. There are hundreds if not thousands of militia groups operating in Myanmar. A comparison of available estimates and analyses provides the basis for understanding their significance.

Available estimates of militia strengths and numbers are unofficial and vary significantly. In 2010, Major General Maung Maung Ohn, then head of the Directorate of People's Militias and Territorial Forces, reportedly estimated that the total strength of the militias is over 80,000. The report also noted that only 30,000 of them are armed.²⁰⁵ A report by the *Shan Herald Agency for News* that cites a government document indicating the presence of 396 militias in northern Shan State alone lends credence to the scale of the previous estimate. It also reports that the militias in this area have a "core strength numbering 8,365 and reserve strength of up to 16,320."²⁰⁶ One of the highest estimates puts the number of militia members at over 180,000 serving in 5,023 militia groups.²⁰⁷ One media account reports that after 2008, *Tatmadaw* leaders planned to establish militia groups in each of the country's 13,725 village tracts.²⁰⁸

When weighing these unofficial estimates, it is useful to take into account that they do not precisely define "militia." In many areas, militias are not only small, but may be inactive. It is unclear whether

these estimates take into account that civilians who have received *Tatmadaw* militia training may also be inactive. Nevertheless, reports indicate that Defense Services continues to make use of militia units, and that they play a role in the *Tatmadaw*'s national defense plans.²⁰⁹

Section FOUR: Key Considerations for Understanding Militias

In addition to their security roles, militias are involved in other types of activities. This section examines how militias sustain themselves, their interaction with communities, and their roles in both politics and conflict.²¹⁰

4.1 How Do Militias Sustain Themselves?

A significant feature of the *Tatmadaw's* arrangement with militias is that militias wholly or partly finance themselves. This setup allows the *Tatmadaw* to employ militias on a widespread basis with minimal administrative or financial commitments. This self-financing arrangement dates back to the turbulent 1960s. Given the government's lack of resources at that time, *Tatmadaw* officials permitted militias to engage in economic activities. In the 1960s and 1970s, the *Ka Kwe Ye* militias in Shan State trafficked opium to Thailand and returned with contraband goods for Myanmar's black market.²¹¹ The present arrangement continues the involvement of militias in revenue generating activities that include not only taxation and legal businesses, but also illicit activities. And while BGF units receive direct support from the *Tatmadaw*, their leaders also engage in these income-generating activities.

Taxation is one of the most ready means for militias to generate revenue. It requires fewer inputs than many other business activities. How militias levy taxes vary from one to another. Some collect transit fees from people passing through their checkpoints. For militias in border areas, cross-border trade presents a lucrative source of income.²¹² In other instances, militias may tax households and businesses.²¹³

A few government militias have engaged in business activities. Militias operating in areas where the *Tatmadaw* has regularly conducted military operations against EAOs are more likely to be involved in business ventures than those in areas with limited *Tatmadaw* activity. The members of some militias are involved in real estate and agro-industry projects. Some run bus lines, hotels, restaurants, gem stores, sawmills, or gas stations. A few militias have received natural resource concessions from the government for logging,²¹⁴ gold and jade mining,²¹⁵ and land for commercial agriculture projects.²¹⁶ A few militias have opened offices in Yangon and other cities across Myanmar. The government has also issued car import permits to BGFs, militias, and EAOs.²¹⁷ In some instances, business-oriented militias have come to resemble businesses with a few armed employees rather than armed groups with business interests. However, in some cases, such as the BGF units of the *Tatmadaw*-integrated militias, the *Tatmadaw* provides direct assistance, such as salaries and material support. Similarly, EAO militias like the KNDO receive support from their parent organizations.²¹⁸

While some militias have benefited from their business ties, others have not. For instance, infrastructure and resource-extraction projects have impinged on the authority of some militias. In 2002 and 2003, a project to remove rapids in the Mekong River by blowing them up led the *Tatmadaw* to increase deployments in areas of Shan State adjacent to the river. Local *Tatmadaw* commanders ordered local militias, who had taxed riverine trade, to withdraw from their outposts along the river, denying them their tax revenues. The *Tatmadaw* ordered a few militias to disarm.²¹⁹

Drug trafficking is another way some militia leaders have enriched themselves. The areas of opium cultivation in Myanmar have also experienced some of the most intense conflict, and have some of the highest levels of militia activity. Several reports have indicated, for example, that militias in Shan State, where the *Tatmadaw* has worked with local militias to combat EAOs, are engaged in trafficking and taxation of illegal narcotics, including opiates and methamphetamines,²²⁰ and media coverage has emphasized the links between Shan State militias and narcotics trafficking.²²¹

In the opium-producing areas of Shan and Kachin states, where pro-government militias operate, several community organizations and EAOs have launched counter-narcotics activities, including the

KIA and TNLA and community groups such as *Pat Jasan*, a civilian-led, ethnic Kachin, anti-narcotics organization. In their efforts to eradicate opium production, *Pat Jasan* and the KIA have come into armed conflict with pro-government militias, including the former NDA-K BGFs and the Pan Hsay militia.²²²

The far-reaching economic reforms implemented during President Thein Sein's regime have created new business opportunities for militias. The development of transportation infrastructure and the increase in cross-border trade have allowed militias operating along trade routes to raise revenue through taxation. In Kayin State, the increased volume of trade facilitated by the improvement of transportation infrastructure, coupled with the decline in armed conflict, presents new opportunities for armed groups to tax trade.²²³ In July 2015, attempts by the *Tatmadaw* to restrict taxation along the Asia Highway precipitated an outbreak of conflict involving BGFs, the DKBA (Kloh Htoo Baw) and the KNU. The fighting led to the displacement of several communities.²²⁴

Recent government-led economic reforms involving new land classification laws have also provided militias and others businesses with economic prospects in the agricultural sector. The new procedures for granting land-use rights have made large-scale agricultural projects a lucrative business.²²⁵ But at the same time, the involvement of militia-connected businesses in industrial agriculture has led to the dispossession of farmers from their land, and in some cases triggered protests.²²⁶

While economic reforms have unleashed new business opportunities, others have been reined in by changes in the political system. The post-2011 political reforms include measures promoting better governance through improved government regulation and greater emphasis on the rule of law, and some militias have recently found their business activities being regulated by non-military officials. In 2016, the Yangon City Development Council (YCDC) issued an order to temporarily suspend construction of a high-rise development near Inya Lake in Yangon on property owned by Kyaw Myint, head of the militia based in the Pang Hsay area of northern Shan State. The suspension order was issued after Khin Hlaing, an elected member of the YCDC, and May Win Myint, an NLD Member of Parliament, spoke out against high-rise construction projects taking place in Myanmar without proper legal authorization.²²⁷

Under the Thein Sein government, state-level officials also took steps to limit taxation by militias in some areas. In southern Shan State, one NGO worker notes, "Some militias get permission from the local officials to collect taxes from the people. But not after the new [Thein Sein] government came to power."²²⁸ And in northern Shan State, state-level officials succeeded in disbanding a string of toll gates operated by militias along the highway connecting the border town of Muse, a primary conduit for cross-border trade with China, with Lashio, one the commercial centers of northern Shan State.²²⁹

The growth of militias in tandem with changes in the political and economic landscape has led to new patterns of militia business activities as well as the continuation of earlier practices. Their involvement in business allows for the replication of the militia system on a widespread basis. And the limited oversight that militias receive creates opportunities for predatory and illicit economic activities.

4.2 How Do Communities Interact with Militias?

Militias are local organizations, and local conditions structure their interactions with their communities. As local conditions and the interests of local communities differ, patterns of interaction between militias and society may also differ dramatically from one militia to another. These differences fall along three principal axes of interaction between militias and communities: recruitment, taxation, and the provision of goods by militias.

Militia recruitment is one critical dimension of interaction between militias and society. The recruitment practices of militias range from voluntary enlistment to forced conscription. The attitudes among communities towards militias and their recruitment practices also vary.²³⁰ For instance, the Tarlawgyi

community in Myitkyina Township of Kachin State is primarily composed of ethnic Tai Leng (or Red Shan). They live in an area where renewed fighting has taken place over the last few years between the *Tatmadaw* and the KIA. They have endured forced recruitment and taxation by armed groups, including the KIA.²³¹ In February 2013, the *Tatmadaw* conducted a militia training course for 200 Tai Leng villagers in Tarlawgyi.²³² The Tai Leng community's support for the formation of a local militia indicates that *Tatmadaw*-supported community militias may receive backing from a non-Burman community.

In other instances, members of communities have expressed resentment towards militia service.²³³ In a reported incident from September 2013, members of a militia in Kyaikto Township in Mon State attempted to hand over their weapons to the local *Tatmadaw* unit and end their service. According to reports, villagers, following the KNU ceasefire, no longer wanted to serve in the militia, because it "prevents them from sustaining their livelihood."²³⁴ This incident indicates that under some conditions, villagers may not feel the need to maintain militias for protection.

Another dimension of militia-society relations is taxation. One of the most widespread effects of the militarization of Myanmar is the spread of arbitrary taxation by armed groups. In many non-Burman areas, taxation by the *Tatmadaw*, militias, and EAOs severely impinges on people's livelihoods.²³⁵ Methods of taxation by militias vary. Sometimes taxation is direct, as when militias have set up tollgates in their areas of control and collected fees from travelers and traders. Taxation may also be indirect,²³⁶ as when local officials collect taxes on behalf of militias for expenses related to militia training.²³⁷

A third dimension of interaction involves militias' provision of goods for a community. Militias offer communities protection and security, but the provision of this public good requires material support – again, taxation – whether in kind, such as rice, or in cash. During the decades of civil war, the *Tatmadaw*, EAOs, and militias have engaged in a "tax for protection" arrangement. A well-known reference to this phenomenon is *seh kyei*, a Burmese term for protection money paid to armed groups. But when the people paying the taxes do not perceive the threat from which they need "protection," it breeds resentment towards the armed group collecting the tax.²³⁸ And when a community finds itself paying taxes to multiple armed groups, the burden creates resentment towards all the groups involved.²³⁹

Protection is one good that militias can provide. However, a few capable militias leaders have expanded their provision of public goods to include patronage of public works and community development. The case of Khun Sa offers one of the most striking examples. As a *Ka Kwe Ye* militia leader, his patronage included the high-profile donation of expensive medical equipment to the Lashio General Hospital in 1969. Later, as the leader of an insurgency, he built several hospitals.²⁴⁰ His patronage established him as a benefactor of the community. A few currently serving militia leaders have adopted this approach, engaging in civic activities²⁴¹ and serving as patrons of community cultural organizations,²⁴² religious ceremonies,²⁴³ and programs for people displaced by conflict.²⁴⁴

4.3 What Role Do Militias Play in Politics?

Militias are directly and indirectly involved in politics. The ongoing reforms in Myanmar's political system signal an opening for individuals, including militia leaders, to participate in formal politics. At the same time, the change and uncertainty of the informal rules of the game create opportunities for militia leaders to exercise informal political influence. And militias are themselves a political issue. While the Thein Sein government dropped the issue from negotiations, the 2008 Constitution maintains that all armed forces are under the control of the *Tatmadaw*.

As the political system opens up, parliamentary elections at the national and subnational level have become a formal means for people to exercise political influence. Several militia leaders have contested seats and been elected to Parliament.²⁴⁵ One is T Khun Myat, who reportedly served from 1990 to 2010 as head of a militia group in Kutkai Township under the control of the Northeast Command of the

Tatmadaw.²⁴⁶ Twice elected to Parliament from Kutkai as a member of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), he became deputy speaker of the lower house of Parliament in February 2016 after receiving the NLD's nomination.

Militia leaders also play indirect and informal roles in politics. In 2009, Zahkung Ting Ying, founder of the NDA-K, transformed his ceasefire group into three BGF units. In 2010, he was elected as an independent to the upper house of Parliament. In the lead-up to the 2015 election, Zahkung Ting Ying issued a letter to members of the opposition NLD, warning them not to campaign in his constituency. The local NLD officials filed a complaint with the Kachin State Union Election Commission (UEC) alleging interference in their campaign activities. UEC officials met with Zahkung Ting Ying and reached an agreement, which allowed parties to "campaign peacefully" in the former NDA-K territory.²⁴⁷

The militia system itself, rather than individual militias, has become a political issue and plays an indirect role in politics. The *Tatmadaw's* insistence that EAOs transform into militias politicized the issue of militias. Many EAOs and ceasefire groups balked at the *Tatmadaw's* plan to integrate them into its command structure.²⁴⁸ In 2011, the new Thein Sein government changed tack and dropped its insistence that ethnic armed organizations transform into militias. Nevertheless, the issue of militia transformation remains a concern for EAOs in the peace process. The KNU is one of the largest armed organizations to join the NCA. In conjunction with its signing of the agreement, the KNLA, the KNU's armed wing, released a statement on October 14, 2015, declaring, "We shall never accept the transformation of the KNLA into the Border Guard Force or Civil Police, but shall remain as the Karen National Liberation Army."²⁴⁹

4.4 What Role Do Militias Play in Conflicts?

Militias play both direct and indirect roles in Myanmar's ongoing conflicts. One obvious role is that pro-government militias have battled EAOs, and EAO militias have fought against *Tatmadaw* troops. For instance, pro-government militias in Kachin, Kayin, and Shan States have come into direct violent conflict with EAOs, including the KIA, TNLA, MNDAA, KNU, SSPP/SSA–North, RCCS/SSA–South, and the DKBA (Kloh Htoo Baw).²⁵⁰ Militias also play indirect roles in conflict through their support for either the *Tatmadaw* or EAOs. Militias have assisted *Tatmadaw* units in military operations against several ethnic armed groups by providing information and accompanying them on patrols.²⁵¹

The *Tatmadaw's* proposal to transform EAOs into either BGFs or PMFs has also played an indirect role in catalyzing conflict. Following the proposal, and escalating tensions between the *Tatmadaw* and several of the larger EAOs, conflict erupted in the Kokang area of northern Shan State in 2009 between the *Tatmadaw* and the MNDAA. The MNDAA is an ethnic armed group established in the Kokang area of northern Shan State by Peng Kya Shin in 1989. Peng Kya Shin is one of the few active leaders from the early period of resistance in Shan State. He served with the Kokang Resistance Force in the early 1960s, and later with the CPB. After leading a mutiny against the CPB that precipitated its collapse in 1989, Peng formed the MNDAA and engaged with the SLORC government in its first ceasefire agreement.

In 2009, the MNDAA joined other armed groups in rejecting the military government's proposal. In August, a standoff between state security forces and MNDAA troops occurred when state officials launched an investigation into reported drug and weapons manufacturing in Kokang. A bloody conflict involving the *Tatmadaw*, police, and MNDAA troops broke out, in which MNDAA troops were driven from their positions. A faction within the MNDAA led by Bai Xiaoqian split from Peng and agreed to form a BGF.²⁵² Six years later, in February 2015, the MNDAA launched a surprise attack against the *Tatmadaw* in Kokang.²⁵³

In 2010, the DKBA transformed into twelve BGF units (nos. 1011-1022) in Kayin State. The former DKBA troops that have become BGFs are among five ceasefire groups that acceded to the government's

request that they become BGFs. On election day in November 2010, the DKBA's Kloh Htoo Baw battalion, a unit led by Saw Lah Pwe, rejected the government's order and launched a surprise attack on the town of Myawaddy in Kayin State. This move signaled its break with other DKBA commanders. The group took the name of the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army–Kloh Htoo Baw. In October 2015, the organization became a signatory to the NCA.

At present, some of the most intense fighting in Myanmar, in northern Shan State, involves militias.²⁵⁴ In particular, the pro-*Tatmadaw* Pang Hsay militia and the TNLA have had ongoing clashes over the last several years, and units composed of *Tatmadaw* troops and pro-government militias engaged in brutal treatment of villagers.²⁵⁵ In Kachin State, the BGF units formerly of the NDA-K have also battled the KIA.²⁵⁶

Section FIVE: Conclusion – Considerations for Militias in a Period of Reform

Collectively, militias represent a sizeable force and play influential roles, including their involvement in armed conflicts. Despite the participation of militias in violent conflict, they are largely absent from the peace process, and discussions of the prospects for a transition from conflict to peace neglect militia-related issues.²⁵⁷ This section has two parts. The first discusses the role played by militias in peace processes in other countries, and the second considers militia-related issues relevant to the current peacebuilding efforts in Myanmar.

The experience of other conflict settlements highlights the difficulties that militias pose for transitions from conflict to peace, and the critical importance of taking militias and the localized conditions in which they operate into consideration. Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sudan, and Timor-Leste are all instances in which militias have played a role in armed conflict. The experience of militias in peace processes in these countries provides a useful perspective for examining the role of militias in Myanmar's ongoing transition from conflict to peace.

One concern raised in a comparative study of militias operating in conflict zones in Afghanistan, DRC, Sudan, and Timor-Leste is that there are "strong risks accompanying the imposition of security-promotion interventions from above, particularly if they are divorced from the political, social, and economic context in which such activities are embedded." In particular, concerns are that conflict-resolution practices and peace efforts, at times drawing on Security Sector Reform (SSR) or Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) models, and involving changes in the structure and strength of armed groups, are too often approached in a "cookie cutter" fashion and executed in a way that does not take into account the specifics of local context and critical issues distinct to a particular area or armed group. As security concerns are one of the justifications for militias to hold arms, a key prescription is that post-conflict stability is best served by taking into account the specific motivations and characteristics of individual militias and the contexts in which they operate.²⁵⁸

Drawing on the experience of peace processes in other countries, another concern is that militias often occupy a political space in which their political concerns are often either ignored or denigrated by other actors. For instance, armed opposition organizations often dismiss the political interests of government-allied militias because of their association with the national military, and sometimes resent their cooperation with its units in combat operations against them. Government officials may share this view that militias are already part of the national military and do not require a role in political dialogues. In some instances, the engagement of militias in illicit economic activities undermines the legitimacy of their political interests.

These dynamics are present in Myanmar. The political interests of pro-government militias have become depoliticized. The decision by leaders of armed groups formerly advocating political change to become pro-government militias is viewed by others as a sign that they have also surrendered their status as a political group. And the involvement of some militias in trafficking narcotics, extraction of natural resources, and predatory taxation supports a perception that they are profit-seeking actors. These views of militias overshadow and function to delegitimize their political interests. Nevertheless, they are armed organizations that participate in conflict, and their possession of coercive capacity makes consideration and discussion of their roles in a post-conflict Myanmar important.

Militias and the issue of militias are marginalized from the current process of political dialogue in Myanmar. Militias themselves are not involved in discussions about key issues regarding their post-conflict role, nor has the issue of the future of militias received much attention. These dynamics are not unique to Myanmar. A view common to governments, armed opposition, and conflict mediators involved in peacebuilding efforts in other conflicts is that including militias and other newly formed armed groups in peace negotiations is unnecessary, and that their inclusion in political dialogue creates

incentives for groups to take up arms and engage in violence.²⁵⁹ As one participant in Myanmar's peace process explains, "The predicament for the [Government of Myanmar] is that by allowing groups not on the list [of recognized groups] to be around the table may encourage proliferation of armed groups. Likewise, their exclusion may also be a source of continuing conflict."²⁶⁰

The marginalization of groups or actors from peace processes is not unusual. Other types of stakeholders in Myanmar share this political no man's land and are not directly involved in peace negotiations. In peace processes taking place in other countries, militias have also been excluded from conflict settlements. The inattention to militia-related issues appears to be premised on an assessment, or perhaps a hope, that they will not pose problems in a peace settlement. But a combination of their marginalization from the peace process and their possession of coercive capacity creates a situation in which their use of violence may become one of the few ways to bring attention to their interests and concerns. In some peace processes, their neglect has proven detrimental to long-term peace. In the case of Sudan, militias disrupted a peace process and brought a return to violence.²⁶¹

The NCA of October 2015 signaled the beginning of a new phase for Myanmar's peace process, which calls for political dialogue. The political dialogue involves a broad range of actors, including representatives of the government, the *Tatmadaw*, Parliament, EAOs, political parties, ethnic groups, and civil society.²⁶² At this point, discussions of the role of militias in Myanmar's future are largely marginalized from the peace process. Their neglect is puzzling. Militias are not only armed, but also involved in armed conflicts. As mentioned earlier (see Section 1.1), aside from the *Tatmadaw* and the Myanmar Police Force, government militias are one of the few groups, if not the only other group, permitted by the government and the Constitution to hold weapons.²⁶³ A few issues for consideration are listed below.

Militias are conflict actors. Their continued, direct involvement in armed conflicts and their possession of weapons make discussion of their role in post-settlement Myanmar important.

Along with their security roles, militias engage in self-financing. This arrangement allows for the widespread use of militias. However, in some cases, their engagement in economic activities lacks oversight. In the absence of adequate supervision, some militias have engaged in illicit and predatory economic activities in their areas of operation.

Militias also display a striking diversity. A few operate with EAOs, but most militia units are aligned with the *Tatmadaw*. Even among the *Tatmadaw* militias, there are significant differences in their strength, their economic activities, and the circumstances in which they formed. The strength of a militia unit can vary from fewer than a dozen members to several hundred. The range of economic activities can also vary. Some may receive economic support from the state officials, whereas others may be involved in illicit narcotics. Several militias were formerly EAOs, established with specific objectives such as self-determination, political reforms involving federalism and equitable control of resources, and security for their communities. Their transformation from EAOs into *Tatmadaw* militias has meant their marginalization from a direct role in political dialogues.

The possession of arms is a means by which all armed groups, including militias and EAOs, protect themselves and their interests. Discussions about changes in the structure and size of armed groups in Myanmar have drawn on models for DDR and SSR developed from the experiences of peace processes in other conflict-affected countries. The earlier transformation of EAOs into pro-government militias is one model for downsizing EAOs. Other proposals involve converting EAOs into local police forces or including their units in a federal army.²⁶⁴ In 2014, several EAOs presented a federal army proposal, sometime referred to as the "Union army," at a meeting involving representatives of the government and EAOs. But *Tatmadaw* leaders did not accept the proposal.²⁶⁵ A consensus on whether or not to change the structures of armed groups, and to what, has not emerged. In part, this is because EAOs maintain that holding a political dialogue involving the *Tatmadaw* is necessary before changing the

structures of their forces. Any steps involving the features of DDR and SSR will benefit from taking into account the differences among various types of militias, and considering the context in which they operate, particularly their security and political concerns.

The degree and source of threats encountered by militias differ from place to place and from militia to militia. The recent support for the formation of militias in Tarlawgyi, in Kachin State, indicates that security threats remain a concern for some communities (see Section 4.4).²⁶⁶ By contrast, the reported attempt by members of a militia in Mon State to hand over their weapons to the *Tatmadaw* and end their duties suggests that some militia members feel that they no longer need to be active (see Section 4.2).²⁶⁷ These incidents dramatize the different conditions in which militias operate, and these differences are important in understanding their role in post-conflict settlements.

The experience of conflicts in other countries shows that taking militias and their diversity into account can be important for successful conflict resolution. In particular, the neglect of the issue of militias in peace processes has proven detrimental to peacebuilding efforts.

The resolution of Myanmar's decades-long ethnic conflict is a priority for the newly formed government led by the NLD. The recent focus of peacebuilding efforts has involved addressing concerns of both EAOs and the *Tatmadaw*. But building a durable peace will require a broader approach that recognizes the role played by militias in conflicts, and the challenges that they pose to long-term stability.

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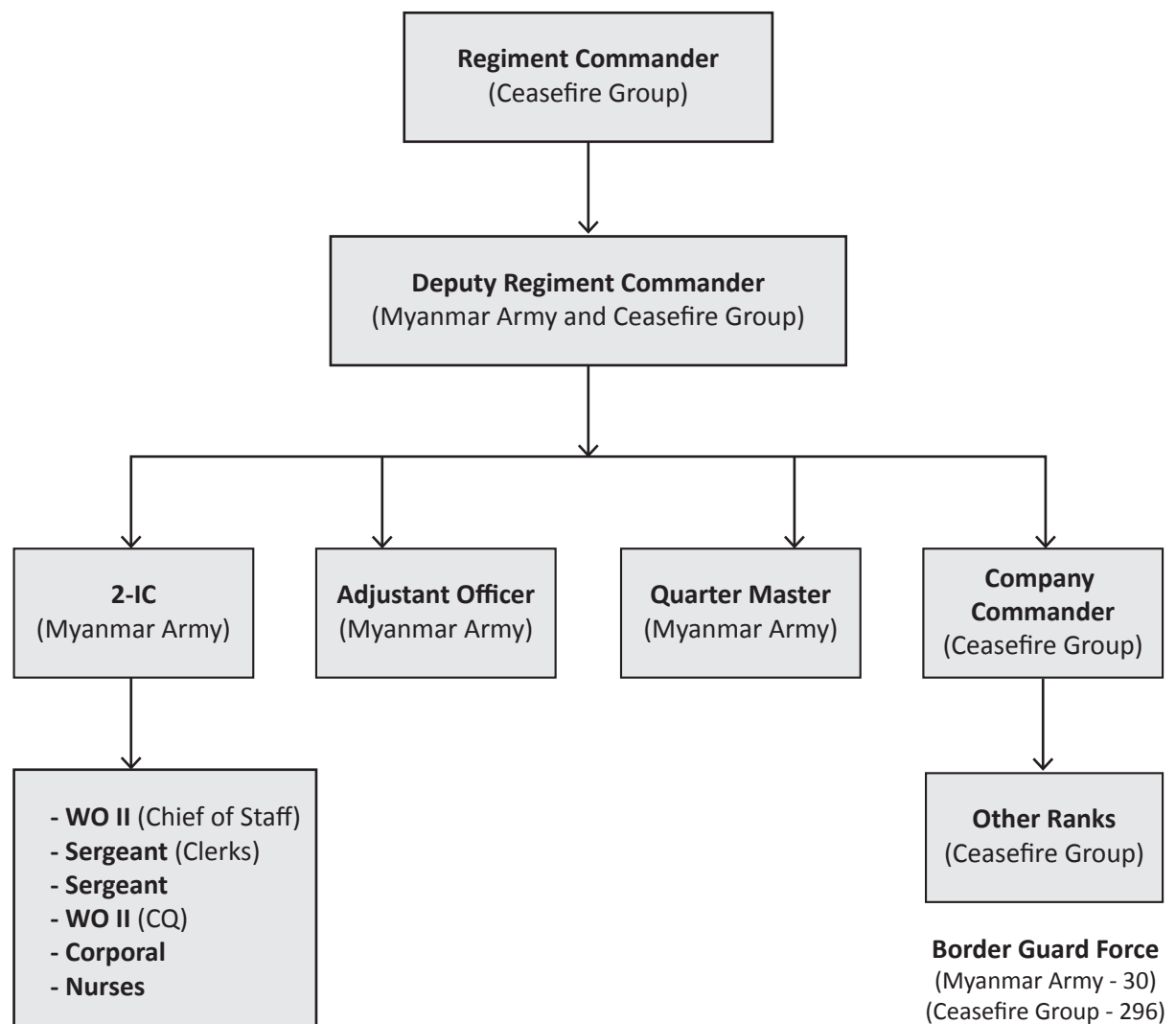
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Annex I: Command Structure of Border Guard Force (BGF)²⁶⁸



အိမ်ထောင်သည်စစ်သည်များ စားသောက်မှုနှင့် နေထိုင်မှု အတွက်

(၁) နိုင်ငံတော်မှ ဆန်၊ သီး၊ ဆား၊ ပဲ၊ ငရုတ်၊ ငပိ၊ နုခွင်းမှုန့်၊ နို့သီး၊ သကြားနှင့် ထောက်ပံ့ကြေးများကို ထုတ်ယူစားသုံး နိုင်ပါသည်။

(၂) မိသားစုများအတွက် အိမ်ထောင်သည်လှိုင်းခန်းများတွင် ရေ၊ ပိး၊ ပရိဘောဂများ ပုံလင်စွာဖြင့် နေထိုင်နိုင်စေရန်အတွက် စီစဉ်ဆောင်ရွက်ပေးပါသည်။

ခရီးသွားလာရေးအတွက်

ယာယီကာဝန်နှင့် သာမန်ခွင့်သွားလာစဉ် မော်တော်ယာဉ်၊ မီးရထား၊ လေယာဉ်၊ သင်္ဘောတို့ကို တပ်မတော်မှထုတ်ပေးသည့် ယာဉ်စီးဝရမ်းဖြင့် အခမဲ့စီးနင်းခွင့်ရှိသည်။

တပ်မတော်အင်အားရှိမှု ကိုင်းပြည်အင်အားရှိပည့်



မြန်မာ့နိုင်ငံတော်ကို ကာကွယ်ဖို့ နိုင်ငံခမ်ကိုးလေးလက်မညွှန်

နယ်ခြားစောင့်တပ်



တပ်မတော်နှင့်နေသောလက်မညွှန်

တပ်မတော်နှင့်လက်တွဲ တပ်ထပ်တည်း စိတ်နှလုံးနှင့် ညီအစ်ကို တိုင်းရင်းသားတို့ နယ်ခြားစောင့် အသွင်ပြောင်းကာ လက်တွဲညီညွတ် ခိုင်မြဲစွာဖြင့် အေးချမ်းသာယာ ပြည်ငြိမ်ဖာသို့ အရောက်လှမ်းကာ လျှောက်လှမ်းလာပြီ တမ်းလင့်နေသည့် ပြည်သူ့မိသ်း -----။



ခေတ်ယဉ်စွာ မြို့တော်တက်ရောက်ပတ် ဖြန့်ပြည်ထောင်စွာ

ခေတ်ယဉ်စွာ မြို့တော်တက်ရောက်ပတ်



ခေတ်ယဉ်စွာ မြို့တော်တက်ရောက်ပတ်

မြည်ထောင်စု၏ မည်သည့်နေရာဒေသတွင် နေထိုင် သည်ဖြစ်စေ ခိုင်မြဲသည့်မြည်ထောင်စုစိတ်ဓာတ် ထားရှိမွှေးမြူ သွားကြရန် အလွန်အရေးကြီးသည်။

မြည်ထောင်စုစိတ်ဓာတ်သည်သာလျှင် တိုင်းရင်းသား အားလုံး ထာဝရစွာထိန်းသိမ်းစောင့်ရှောက်သွားရမည့် စစ်မှန် သော မျိုးချစ်စိတ်ဓာတ်ဖြစ်သည်။



ပြည်သူ့စစ်မဟာဗျူဟာ

၁။ ပြည်သူ့စစ်မဟာဗျူဟာသည် ပြည်သူလူထု၏ အမျိုးသားနိုင်ငံရေးယုံကြည်မှု အပေါ်အခြေခံ၍လူ၊ ပစ္စည်း၊ အချိန်နှင့်စိတ်ဓာတ်စသောပမာဏကြီး(၄)ရပ်နှင့် ဖွဲ့ခြံရေး (၅)ရပ်ဖြင့် စည်းရုံးဆောင်ရွက်၍ “တိုက်ရင်းစည်းရုံး၊ စည်းရုံးရင်းတိုက်” ဟူသော စစ်မဟာဗျူဟာကို ကျင့်သုံးပြီး တရားသောစစ်ဆင်နွှဲရန် စီမံပြင်ဆင်ထားသည့် စစ်မဟာဗျူဟာပင်ဖြစ်သည်။

၂။ မျက်မှောက်ခေတ်သည် အင်အားသေးငယ်သောနိုင်ငံများအပေါ် အင်အားကြီးမားသော နိုင်ငံများ၏ ဗိုလ်ကျစိုးမိုးလိုသော ကြိုးပမ်းမှုများ၌ စစ်ရေးနည်းသဘာမက တော့ဘဲ နိုင်ငံရေးနည်း၊သံတမန်ရေးနည်း၊ ဝါဒဖြန့်ချိရေးနည်းနှင့် စီးပွားရေးနည်းတို့ကို သတင်းအချက်အလက်နည်းပညာများဖြင့် ကျယ်ပြန့်စွာပေါင်းစပ်ဆောင်ရွက်လာသဖြင့် ဘက်စုံစစ်ပွဲအသွင် Multidimensional Warfare ပေါ်ပေါက်နေသည့်ခေတ် ဖြစ်သည်။ ထိုအခါ နိုင်ငံ၏ စစ်ဆင်မှုအင်အားစုအားလုံးသည် စီမံကျယ်ပြန့်သည့် မဟာဗျူဟာတစ်ရပ်ချမှတ်ဆောင်ရွက်ရန်လိုအပ်လာပါသည်။ “နိုင်ငံတစ်ခု၏ စစ်ဆင်မှု အင်အားစု”ဆိုသည်မှာသမားရိုးကျဖွဲ့စည်းထားသော လက်နက်ကိုင်တပ်ဖွဲ့များသာမက ပြည်သူလူထုတစ်ရပ်လုံးပါဝင်သည့်အဖွဲ့အစည်းများအားလုံး၏ အစားအလှယ်အစားကို ပံ့ပိုးမှုနှင့် ရန်သူကို ဆန့်ကျင်တိုက်ခိုက်မှုများကိုပါ ဆိုလိုရင်းဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ဆက်လက်၍ အမြဲတမ်းလက်နက်ကိုင်တပ်ဖွဲ့များ၏သမားရိုးကျစစ်ဆင်မှုများအပြင် ပြင်ပအခြေအနေ တင်ပြခဲ့သော နိုင်ငံ၏စစ်ဆင်မှုအင်အားစုများတွင် ပါဝင်သောပြည်သူ့စစ်ဆင်မှုအင်အားစုကို ပြောကားကျားစနစ်ဖြင့် ဆက်လက်ဆင်နွှဲရမည်ဖြစ်သည်။ နိုင်ငံတစ်ခု၏ စစ်ဆင်မှု လက်ဝယ်ကျဆုံးသွားပါက အမြဲတမ်းလက်နက်ကိုင်တပ်ဖွဲ့များသည်လူထုအဖွဲ့အစည်းအသီးသီးနှင့်ပြည်သူတစ်ရပ်လုံးပါဝင်သောပြည်သူ့စစ်ဆင်မှုအင်အားစုများကို စုစည်း၍ ရန်သူကိုလုံးဝကျဆုံးစေသည်အထိအစွမ်းကုန်ဟန်ပြန်တိုက်စစ်ဆင်သွားကြရ ပေမည်။ ဤသည်ကား ပြည်သူ့စစ်မဟာဗျူဟာ၏ အနှစ်ချုပ်ပင်ဖြစ်သည်။

ပြည်သူ့စစ်အဓိပ္ပါယ်

ပြည်သူ့စစ်ဆိုသည်မှာ မိမိနိုင်ငံ၏ လွတ်လပ်ရေးနှင့် အချုပ်အခြာအာဏာကို ကာကွယ်စောင့်ရှောက်ရန်၊ ပြည်သူလူထုတစ်ရပ်လုံး၏ အကျိုးစီးပွားကို ကာကွယ် စောင့်ရှောက်ရန်နှင့် ဖွဲ့စည်းတည်ဆောက်ထားသော မိမိတို့တပ်မတော်သည် ပြည်သူ လူထုနှင့် တစ်သားတည်းပူးပေါင်း၍ မိမိတို့နိုင်ငံအား ကျူးကျော်နယ်ချဲ့လာသော မည်သည့်ရန်သူမျိုးကိုမဆိုအရှုံးမပေးဘဲ နိုင်ငံတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးအတွက်ချမှတ်ထား သည့်ပြည်သူ့စစ်မဟာဗျူဟာဖြင့်အနိုင်ရသည်အထိ တရားသောစစ်မက်ရေးရာယှဉ်ပြိုင် ခြင်းကို ယေဘုယျခေါ်ဆိုခြင်းပင်ဖြစ်သည်။

Unofficial Translation of Display Titled People's Militia Strategy at the Defense Services Museum, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

People's Militia Strategy

- 1) The people militia strategy is a military strategy based upon the public's conscience on national politics and organized by means of four major priorities namely the people; material; time; and morale; and five [principles on?] development, designed to wage a just war utilizing the military strategy to "organize [the Burmese word စည်းရုံး also means persuade; campaign] while fighting, fight while organizing".
- 2) In the modern day, powerful nations in their bid to bully and influence smaller nations are not only using military tactics but also using the tactics of politics; diplomacy; propaganda and economy by means of information technology in the form of Multidimensional Warfare, prompting the need of a broader strategy on military operation forces in the country. The 'military operation force' of a country means waging combat against the enemy not only utilizing the armed forces organized by regular means but also with the support of organizations made up of all members of public. If the conventional military operations by regular armed forces fail, the members of public as part of the country's military operation forces are to continue in guerrilla tactics. If the whole country falls in the enemy's hand, the regular armed forces together with mass organizations must organize people's militia groups made up of all public members to wage counter-attack with utmost effort aiming for absolute defeat of the enemy. This is the summary of the People's Militia Strategy.

Endnotes

¹ There is a broad range of publicly available estimates for the number of militias in Myanmar. The estimates range from a few dozen to as many as five thousand militia groups. One problem with interpreting these estimates is that they do not clearly define what constitutes a militia. For the lower estimates, see Shan Herald Agency for News, *Show Business: Rangoon's "War on Drugs" in the Shan State* (Chiang Mai: Shan Herald Agency for News, 2003), 7. For higher estimates, see "Junta to Issue More Weapons for Militia Units," *Shan Herald Agency for News*, December 15, 2010; Min Zaw Oo, *Understanding Myanmar's Peace Process: Ceasefire Agreements* (Yangon: Swisspeace, 2014), 33; Aung Naing Oo, "Myanmar and the 'Ripe Moment,'" *Myanmar Times*, April 10, 2014.

² An exception is a recent meeting of the Committee for Shan State Unity (CSSU), a coalition of various Shan groups, that convened in March 2016. A representative from the Sein Kyawt, or Hsengkeow, militia (formerly SSPP/SSA 3rd Brigade) in Shan State attended the meeting. See "Shan Conference in Rangoon," *Shan Herald Agency for News*, March 7, 2016.

³ Exhibits at the Defense Services Museum in Nay Pyi Taw provide one source of information about militias and highlight their role in safeguarding the country from security threats. Field research, Defense Services Museum, Nay Pyi Taw.

⁴ There are several in-depth studies and sources of information about militias that are notable exceptions. These include the following: Burma News International (BNI), *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process*; KWAT, *Silent Offensive*; Paul Keenan, *People's Militia Forces: Time to Re-Assess the Strategy?* Briefing Paper No. 4, (Chiang Mai: Burma Center for Ethnic Studies, March 2012); Paul Keenan, *The Border Guard Force: The Need to Reassess the Policy*, Briefing Paper No. 15 (Chiang Mai: Burma Center for Ethnic Studies, July 2013); Palaung Women's Organization (PWO), *Poisoned Flowers: The Impacts of Spiraling Drug Addiction on Palaung Women in Burma* (Chiang Mai: 2006); Palaung Women's Organization (PWO), *Poisoned Hills: Opium Cultivation Surges under Government Control in Burma* (Mae Sot, Palaung Women's Organization, 2010); Palaung Women's Organization (PWO), *Still Poisoned, Opium Cultivation Soars in Palaung Areas under Burma's New Regime* (Mae Sot: Palaung Women's Organization, 2011); Andrew Selth, *Burma's Armed Forces: Power without Glory* (Norwalk, CT: EastBridge, 2002); Shan Herald Agency for News, *Show Business*; Shan Herald Agency for News, *Hands in Glove, The Burma Army and the Drug Trade in Shan State* (Chiang Mai: Shan Herald Agency for News, 2005); Transnational Institute, *Ethnic Politics in Burma: The Time for Solutions*, Burma Policy Briefing No. 5 (Amsterdam: February 2011); Transnational Institute, *Ethnic Politics and the 2015 Elections in Myanmar*, Myanmar Policy Briefing No. 16 (Amsterdam: September 2015); Shan Herald Agency for News, *Shan Drug Watch* (Chiang Mai: Shan Herald Agency for News, 2010, 2011, 2012).

⁵ Auxiliary forces include members of the Auxiliary Fire Brigade, the Myanmar Red Cross, the Myanmar War Veterans Association and *Swan Ashin* (the People's Vigorous Organization). Maung Aung Myoe, *Building the Tatmadaw: Myanmar's Armed Forces since 1948*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), 35; Selth, *Burma's Armed Forces*, 81.

⁶ In the 1960s, security officials from the *Tatmadaw* developed a military doctrine known as the doctrine of people's war, which became an integral part of the country's national defense plans. See Maung Aung Myoe, *Building the Tatmadaw*; Yoshihiro Nakanishi, *Strong Soldiers, Failed Revolution* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2013), 232-234; Defense Services Historical Museum and Archives, *Tatmadaw Thamain* [History of the Armed Forces], vol. 5: 1962-1974 (Yangon: News and Periodicals Enterprise, 1997-1998), 139-158.

⁷ For example, see Section 340, Government of the Republic of Myanmar, *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar* (Yangon: Printing & Publishing Enterprise, Ministry of Information, 2008).

⁸ Shan Herald Agency for News, *Show Business*, 71; Kachin Women's Association of Thailand, *Silent Offensive* (Chiang Mai: 2014), 12, 13; *Shan Herald Agency for News*, "Junta-backed militias ordered to expand," September 24, 2009.

⁹ Defense Services Historical Museum and Archives, *Tatmadaw Thamain*, 142; BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide* (Chiang Mai: Burma News International, 2013), 49-55.

¹⁰ *Kachin News Group*, "Burma Army Kills Kachin Farmer in Mansi Township," November 19, 2013; BNI,

Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process (2013), 105; BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide* (Chiang Mai: Burma News International, 2015), 140.

¹¹ Chao Tzang Yawngwhe, *The Shan of Burma: Memoirs of a Shan Exile* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010), 19, 22-24, 140, 192.

¹² In interviews with various members of civil society and armed groups in Myanmar, informants used different terms to describe militias. Militia members and their associates tended to use technical terms, such as *athwin pyaun pyithusit* (transformed militias) and *ta neh pyithusit*. Other informants, particularly members of ceasefire groups and non-militia members, used other, less technical terms. A few dismissed the relevance of the technical terms.

¹³ For discussion of conflict management, see Transnational Institute, *Military Confrontation or Political Dialogue: Consequences of the Kokang Crisis for Peace and Democracy in Myanmar*, Myanmar Policy Briefing No. 15 (Amsterdam: July 2015), 21. Martin Smith, *State of Strife: The Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict in Burma*, Policy Studies no. 36 (Washington, D.C.: East-West Center, 2007).

¹⁴ For a discussion of *tat*, see Mary P. Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), 36-40.

¹⁵ Frank Trager, *Burma: From Kingdom to Republic* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 7.

¹⁶ Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 36-40.

¹⁷ Interview, retired civil servant, Lashio, Shan State, November 2015.

¹⁸ Kin Oung, *Who Killed Aung San?* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1983).

¹⁹ Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 246.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 36-40.

²¹ Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Dhaka: University Press, 1999), 64; Bertil Lintner, *Burma in Revolt: Opium and Insurgency since 1948* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 1999).

²² Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 14, 102.

²³ Maung Aung Myoe, *Building the Tatmadaw*, 141.

²⁴ Bertil Lintner, "The CIA's First Secret War: Americans Helped Stage Raids into China from Burma," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 156, no. 37 (1993): 56; Richard Gibson, *The Secret Army: Chiang Kai-shek and the Drug Warlords of the Golden Triangle* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

²⁵ Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 114-115.

²⁶ Maung Aung Myoe, "The Counterinsurgency in Myanmar: The Government's Response to the Burma Communist Party" (PhD dissertation, Australian National University, 1999), 142.

²⁷ Keenan, *People's Militia Forces*, 5.

²⁸ Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 129, 143.

²⁹ Ba Thann Win, "Administration of Shan States from the Panglong Conference to the Cessation of the Powers of the Saophas 1947-1959" (MA thesis, Rangoon Arts and Sciences University, n.d.), 170.

³⁰ Information from a display at the Defense Services Museum in Nay Pyi Taw entitled "Definition of Pyithusit," Field Research, Defense Services Museum, Nay Pyi Taw.

³¹ Field Research, Defense Services Museum, Nay Pyi Taw.

³² This militia program is an early instance of the government drawing on other models of militias. Lintner notes that the *Pyusawhti* "borrowed features from the defense of collective settlements in Israel." Bertil Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 154. Also see Pho Thar Aung, "From Pyusawhti to the Present," *Irrawaddy* 11, no. 1 (January 2003).

³³ Maung Aung Myoe, *Counterinsurgency in Myanmar*, 144.

³⁴ Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 143.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 186.

³⁶ The details concerning the operation of militias in this period are not well known. However, evidence from several sources provides the basis for putting together a brief sketch of the militias operating in Burma in this period. See General Khun Sa (1993), 5; Yawngwhe, *The Shan of Burma*.

³⁷ Maung Aung Myoe, *Counterinsurgency in Myanmar*, 149. Defense Services Historical Museum and Archives, *Tatmadaw Thamain*, 139-158.

³⁸ Maung Aung Myoe, *Counterinsurgency in Myanmar*, 146-7.

³⁹ Selth, *Burma's Armed Forces*, 78.

⁴⁰ Defense Services Historical Museum and Archives, *Tatmadaw Thamain*, 139-158.

- ⁴¹ Maung Aung Myoe, *Counterinsurgency in Myanmar*, 149.
- ⁴² Kevin Heppner and Jo Becker, *"My Gun was as Tall as Me": Child Soldiers in Burma* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2002), 155; interview, former militia member in Shan State, December, 2015, Chiang Mai, Thailand.
- ⁴³ In the 1960s, this type of militia was also referred to as "people's guerrillas" or *pyithu thaungya*, but commonly referred to as *Ka Kwe Ye* militias.
- ⁴⁴ As noted earlier, the term *Ka Kwe Ye* sometimes denotes militias in general.
- ⁴⁵ Interview with civil society leaders, Lashio, Shan State, November 2015.
- ⁴⁶ Yawngwhe, *The Shan of Burma*, 24.
- ⁴⁷ Maung Wint Thu, *Myanmar's Endeavours towards Elimination of Narcotic Drugs* (Yangon: Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC), 2003), 36.
- ⁴⁸ Yawngwhe, *The Shan of Burma*, 167.
- ⁴⁹ Gary Risser, Oum Kher, and Sein Htun, *Running the Gauntlet: The Impact of Internal Displacement in Southern Shan State* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2003), 18.
- ⁵⁰ Ko-Lin Chin, *The Golden Triangle: Inside Southeast Asia's Drug Trade*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2009), 24.
- ⁵¹ Alfred McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 247; Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 231, 237.
- ⁵² U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. 94th Congress. 1st Session. Subcommittee on Future Foreign Policy Research and Development of the Committee on International Relations. Proposal to Control Opium from the Golden Triangle and Terminate the Shan Opium Trade. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975. 13-40, 114-121.
- ⁵³ For accounts of militia operations in the 1950s and early 1960s, see Taungdwin Bo Thein, *Tah Moe Nye Region*; Maung Wint Thu, *Myanmar's Endeavors*, 35.
- ⁵⁴ Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 17, 221-222.
- ⁵⁵ Maung Aung Myoe, *Counterinsurgency in Myanmar*, 130.
- ⁵⁶ See Maung Aung Myoe, *Building the Tatmadaw*, 22; Nakanishi, *Strong Soldiers*, 232.
- ⁵⁷ Defense Services Historical Museum and Archives, *Tatmadaw Thamain*, 139-142; Nakanishi, *Strong Soldiers*, 232; Display, "Definition of Pyithusit," Defense Services Museum, Nay Pyi Taw. Defense Services Historical Museum and Archives, *Tatmadaw Thamain*, 139-158.
- ⁵⁸ Maung Aung Myoe, *Building the Tatmadaw*.
- ⁵⁹ Smith, *Burma*, 258-9; Defense Services Historical Museum and Archives, *Tatmadaw Thamain*, 139-158.
- ⁶⁰ Selth, *Burma's Armed Forces*, 82-83.
- ⁶¹ Maung Aung Myoe, 1999, 139; Display, "Definition of Pyithusit," Defense Services Museum, Nay Pyi Taw.
- ⁶² Mang Aung Myoe, *Building the Tatmadaw*, 131-5.
- ⁶³ *New Light of Myanmar*, "The *Tatmadaw* and the Entire People Have Become One and Indivisible," March 26, 2007.
- ⁶⁴ *Global New Light of Myanmar*, "Speech Delivered by Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services, Senior General Thayaysithu Min Aung Hlaing at the Parade of the 70th Armed Forces Day Held on 27th March, 2015," March 27, 2015.
- ⁶⁵ Maung Aung Myoe, "Myanmar Military's White Paper Highlights Growing Openness," *Nikkei Asian Review*, March 28, 2016.
- ⁶⁶ Display, "Definition of Pyithusit," Defense Services Museum, Nay Pyi Taw; Tin Muang Maung Than, "Burma's National Security and Defense Posture," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 11, no. 1 (June 1989): 40-60.
- ⁶⁷ Display, "Definition of Pyithusit," Defense Services Museum, Nay Pyi Taw. The new Directorate of People's Militias and Public Relations appears to have taken on duties of the Directorate of National Guard Forces.
- ⁶⁸ A Tatmadaw Researcher, *A Concise History of Myanmar and the Tatmadaw's Role 1948-1988* (Yangon: Ministry of Education, 1991 [volume 2]), 107. For footage of Lo Hsing Han's meeting with the Shan State Army leaders, see Adrian Cowell, *The Opium Series*, 1977.

- ⁶⁹ U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. 94th Congress. 1st Session. Subcommittee on Future Foreign Policy Research and Development of the Committee on International Relations. Proposal to Control Opium from the Golden Triangle and Terminate the Shan Opium Trade. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975, 105-114.
- ⁷⁰ Yawngwhe, *The Shan of Burma*, 127. For analysis of counter narcotics efforts, see Ronald Renard, *The Burmese Connection: Illegal Drugs and the Making of the Golden Triangle* (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1996).
- ⁷¹ Yawngwhe, *The Shan of Burma*, 26, 177.
- ⁷² Government of the Union of Burma, *Constitution of the Union of Burma*, (Yangon: Printing & Publishing Enterprise, Ministry of Information, 1974).
- ⁷³ See Taungdwin Bo Thein, *Tah Moe Nye Region*, 24-25.
- ⁷⁴ Selth, *Burma's Armed Forces*, 78; Frederica M. Bunge, *Burma, a Country Study* (United States Government Printing Office, 1984), 259-269.
- ⁷⁵ Bunge (1984: 231), refers to a militia force formed by Lo Hsing Han in 1980, as the Shan State Volunteer Forces.
- ⁷⁶ Selth, *Burma's Armed Forces*, 82. Interview, retired civil servant, Lashio, November 2015. One account indicates that by 1988, the number of anti-insurgent groups formed by the *Tatmadaw* had reached 2,600. Tin Maung Maung Than, "Burma's National Security and Defense Posture," 49.
- ⁷⁷ See Yan Nyein Aye, *Endeavors of the Myanmar Armed Forces*; Zaw Oo and Win Min, eds, *Assessing Burma's Ceasefire Accords* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007).
- ⁷⁸ Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 210-11.
- ⁷⁹ Interviews with members of armed groups, Myitkyina, Kachin State, November 2015. It remains unclear how many militias were disbanded.
- ⁸⁰ Karen Human Rights Group, "Ongoing Forced Recruitment into the People's Militia in Kyeikto Township, Thaton District," January 30, 2014.
- ⁸¹ The Directorate of Defense Services Intelligence was a powerful intelligence organization of the *Tatmadaw*, which was disbanded in 2004.
- ⁸² Selth, *Burma's Armed Forces*, 82-83.
- ⁸³ Selth, *Burma's Armed Forces*, 311.
- ⁸⁴ Display, "Definition of Pyithusit," Defense Services Museum, Nay Pyi Taw; Maung Aung Myoe, *Building the Tatmadaw*, 75. The term Territorial Forces is sometimes translated as Frontier Forces. The reorganization involved the establishment of the Directorate of Public Relations and Psychological Warfare.
- ⁸⁵ This approach dates back to the late 1960s, when the local *Tatmadaw* commanders began offering units of the Shan State Army (SSA) – an early ethnic Shan-led armed organization operating in Shan State – the status of militia units in return for their acceptance of government authority. Yawngwhe, *The Shan of Burma*, 22, 24.
- ⁸⁶ Bertil Lintner, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).
- ⁸⁷ *New Light of Myanmar*, "Government Already Acceded to Peace Proposals of KIO to Most Possible Degree," August 11, 2013, 6-7; Yan Nyein Aye, *Endeavors of the Myanmar Armed Forces Government*.
- ⁸⁸ Shan Herald Agency for News, "One Ceasefire Commander Has Had Enough of It," September 20, 2005; Shan Herald Agency for News, "Ex-ceasefire Group Urges Former Allies to Renew Efforts for Three-Way Talks," September 21, 2005.
- ⁸⁹ Shan Herald Agency for News, "One Ceasefire Commander Has Had Enough of It," September 20, 2005; Shan Herald Agency for News, "Ex-ceasefire Group Urges Former Allies to Renew Efforts for Three-Way Talks," September 21, 2005.
- ⁹⁰ Karen Human Rights Group, "Toungoo Field Report: December 2013 to December 2014," February 25, 2016.
- ⁹¹ For an overview of ceasefires, see Tom Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace*. For analysis of KIO, see Paul Keenan, "The Kachins' Dilemma – Become a Border Guard Force or Return to Warfare," EuroBurma Office Analysis Paper No. 2, 2010.
- ⁹² It is important to note that these major armed groups and minor armed groups, also referred to as

national armed groups, are classifications used by the government. Some of the Major Armed Groups are also known as splinter groups, such as the KDA, which broke away from the KIA. See *New Light of Myanmar*, "Press Conference (1/2011) on Government's Efforts to Transform National Race Armed Groups in Accordance with State Constitution Held," August 13, 2011.

⁹³ This practice dates back to the late 1960s, when the *Tatmadaw* offered militia status to units of the Shan State Army. After a ceremony involving the surrender of their weapons, they were reconstituted and armed as militia. Yawngwhe, *The Shan of Burma*, 24.

⁹⁴ Selth, *Burma's Armed Forces*, 311.

⁹⁵ Shan Herald Agency for News, *Show Business*, 40.

⁹⁶ WO, *Poisoned Flowers*, 20-25.

⁹⁷ Keenan, 2012, 120-131; *Shan Herald Agency for News*, "Anti-SSA Militia's War Chest Fatten in the Kachin States business activities to support themselves. e communities in which they operate. In addition, the section ed," May 17, 2007.

⁹⁸ Matthieu Baudey and Carole Oudot, "Villagers Afraid to Break Silence over Militia Murder Allegations," *Myanmar Times*, June 3, 2015.

⁹⁹ BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process* (2013), 36, Appendix 3.

¹⁰⁰ Ashley South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma: States of Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2008), 156-8; Kennan, *By Force of Arms*, 148-9.

¹⁰¹ Karen Human Rights Group, "Inside the DKBA," March 31, 1996.

¹⁰² Karen Human Rights Group, "SLORC Orders to Villages: Set 97-A," March 16, 1997.

¹⁰³ Shan Herald Agency for News, *Show Business*.

¹⁰⁴ Interview, member of militia organization, Myitkyina, November 2015.

¹⁰⁵ Karen Human Rights Group, "SLORC in Kya-in & Kawkaik Townships," February 10, 1996.

¹⁰⁶ *The Mon Forum*, "Militia Troops on the Rise: A New Strategy to Rip Off the Local Inhabitants in Southern Burma." Issue No. 11/2006, November 30, 2006, 4-12; *Phophtaw News Association*, "Locals Forced into Militia for Battle in Southern Burma," February 18, 2010; *Phophtaw News Association*, "Burmese Army Recruits Militia in Mon-Controlled Area," February 19, 2010.

¹⁰⁷ See *General Khun Sa*, 4-5; Alfred W. McCoy, "Requiem for a Drug Lord: State and Commodity in the Career of Khun Sa," In *States and Illegal Practices* (Oxford: Conference Publication, 1999), 129-167.

¹⁰⁸ *General Khun Sa*, 5.

¹⁰⁹ Yawngwhe, *The Shan of Burma*, 18, 276-277.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Maung Wint Thu, *Myanmar's Endeavours*, 36.

¹¹² Yawngwhe, *The Shan of Burma*, 27, 176-177. Later the organization adopted the name of Shan United Army.

¹¹³ *General Khun Sa*, 7.

¹¹⁴ Kim Gooi, "Just a Freedom Fighter," *Far Eastern Economic Review* [CD-ROM], February 20, 1986, 28.

¹¹⁵ Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 411-13; Maung Pho Shoke, *Why Did U Khun Sa's MTA Exchange Arms for Peace?* (Yangon: U Aung Zaw, 1999).

¹¹⁶ Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 411-13.

¹¹⁷ See Tom Kramer, *Neither War Nor Peace*, 13. Shan Herald Agency for News, *Show Business*, 49-51. Cheewin Saththa, "Shan Business Firm Set Up," *Bangkok Post*, June 25, 1999.

¹¹⁸ Shan Herald Agency for News, *Show Business*, 49-51; Patrick Meehan, "Fortifying or Fragmenting the State? The Political Economy of the Opium/Heroin Trade in Shan State, Myanmar, 1988-2013," *Critical Asian Studies* 47, no. 2 (2015): 273.

¹¹⁹ Shan Herald Agency for News, "'Druglord' Denies He's Druglord," August 29, 2013.

¹²⁰ The circumstances under which Naw Kham became a militia leader are not clear.

¹²¹ Andrew R. C. Marshall, "In Mekong, Chinese Murders and Bloody Diplomacy," *Reuters*, Special Report (2012); Jeff Howe, "Murder on the Mekong," *The Atavist* 30, October 2013.

¹²² On August 30, 2003, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt announced the military government's plans for political reform, referred to as Myanmar's "roadmap to discipline flourishing democracy."

¹²³ Wai Moe, "Myanmar: Border Guard Force Plan Leads to End of Ceasefire," *Irrawaddy*, August 31, 2009.

¹²⁴ Exhibit, “Summary of Border Guard Force History” [Burmese language], Defense Services Museum, Nay Pyi Taw; BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar’s Peace Process* (2013); Interview, former militia member, Chiang Mai, Thailand, December 29, 2015.

¹²⁵ BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar’s Peace Process* (2013).

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ *Irrawaddy*, “ပခိုင်းအမျိုးသားတပ်မတော် ပြည်သူ့စစ် ကွပ်ကဲရေးမှူးနှင့် ...” [Interview with Pa-O National Army leader], June 15, 2013.

¹²⁸ Major General Loimaw, Commander of the 3rd Brigade, formed his units into the Hsengkeow, or Sein Kyawt, a militia group in Shan State, in April 2010. *Shan Herald Agency for News*, “Shan State Army ‘North’ Leader Pressured to Persuade Remaining Brigade,” August 5, 2010. Regarding the 7th brigade, Major General Gaifa, Commander of the Brigade in the area near Kali, in Kunhing Township, also became a pro-government militia. *Shan Herald Agency for News*, “Ceasefire Shan Army’s HQ Unit Transformed as Home Guard Force,” April 27, 2010.

¹²⁹ *New Light of Myanmar*, “Government Already Acceded to Peace Proposals of KIO to Most Possible Degree,” August 13, 2011.

¹³⁰ National Democratic Front, *NDF Report on Ceasefire Groups Resisting SPDC’s Pressure and Instability*, March 7, 2010.

¹³¹ See Keenan, *The Kachins’ Dilemma*.

¹³² *Narinjara News*, “Locals Ordered to Serve in Militias,” September 2, 2009.

¹³³ Chin Human Rights Organization, “Dozens Flee as Junta Steps Up Conscription Drive,” January 30, 2010; *Chinland Guardian*, “Civilians Forced to Take Militia Training in Chin State,” April 7, 2011; *Khonumthung News*, “Funds Collected for People’s Militia Training in Chin State,” April 11, 2011.

¹³⁴ *Shan Herald Agency for News*, “Militia Men from Battlefields Deserting,” May 19, 2011. *Shan Herald Agency for News*, “People in Shan State Forced to Join Local Militias,” September 2, 2008. *Shan Herald Agency for News*, “Junta-Backed Militias Ordered to Expand,” September 24, 2009.

¹³⁵ Karen Human Rights Groups, “Incident Report: Forced Recruitment In Thaton District #2, May 2012,” May 31, 2013.

¹³⁶ *The Mon Forum*, “Burmese Government Pressure on Communities for Support in 2010 Election,” Issue No. 11/2009, November 2009; *Kaowao*, “Forced Militias Ordered to Battle in Southern Burma,” February 18, 2010.

¹³⁷ See Keenan, *People’s Militia Forces*; Mon Relief and Development Committee, *Monthly Report*, August 2010.

¹³⁸ Union Government Announcement No. 1/2011, August 18, 2011 in *New Light of Myanmar*, “Union Government Offers Olive Branch to National Race Armed Groups,” August 19, 2011.

¹³⁹ See Keenan, *The Kachins’ Dilemma*.

¹⁴⁰ Ye Mon, “Kokang Groups Reject Direct Peace Talks,” *Myanmar Times*, September 11, 2015.

¹⁴¹ Aung Naing Oo, “Myanmar’s Ethnic Armed Groups Serve Complex ‘Alphabet Soup,’” *Nikkei Asian Review*, October 8, 2015. *Shan Herald Agency for News*, “Why Are Some Groups Excluded from Burma’s ‘Inclusive’ Nationwide Ceasefire?” September 23, 2015.

¹⁴² *Constitution of the Union of Burma*, 1974.

¹⁴³ *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar*, 2008.

¹⁴⁴ *New Light of Myanmar*, “Information Minister Replies to Question of U Saw Thein Aung of Hlaingbwe Constituency about Aspiration of Kayin Nationals,” March 22, 2011.

¹⁴⁵ Zinn Lin, “Burma’s New Parliament Will Activate Arguable Conscription Law,” *Asian Tribune*, March 17, 2013.

¹⁴⁶ Selth, *Burma’s Armed Forces*, 76.

¹⁴⁷ See Keenan, *People’s Militia Forces*.

¹⁴⁸ BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar’s Peace Process* (2013), 49.

¹⁴⁹ *New Light of Myanmar*, “Border Guard Forces of Southeast Command Formed,” August 19, 2010.

¹⁵⁰ See BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar’s Peace Process: A Reference Guide* (Chiang Mai: Burma News International, 2014), 61; interview, representatives of armed groups, Myitkyina, November 2015. Recent conflict involves BGF units against a remaining splinter faction of the DKBA (Kloh Htoo Blaw). In 2010, the transformation of the DKBA into twelve BGF units (nos. 1011-1022) took place in Kayin State.

However, the late General Saw Lah Pwe, also known as Na Ka Mwe (“man with the mustache”), who was the commander of the DKBA’s Kloh Htoo Baw Battalion, did not comply with the government’s order. On Election Day in November 2010, he led a surprise attack on the Myanmar border town of Myawaddy, located in Kayin State, which signaled his break with other DKBA commanders. In April 2012, Gen Saw Lah Pwe adopted a new name for his organization, which involved a slight tweaking of the name of his former organization. His group became the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, also known as the DKBA–Kloh Htoo Baw. On October 15, 2015, the DKBA–Kloh Htoo Baw became a signatory of the NCA. See Lawi Weng, “DKBA Splinter Group, Government Army and Allied BGF Clash in Karen State,” *Irrawaddy*, February 1, 2016.

¹⁵¹ BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar’s Peace Process* (2013), 50.

¹⁵² Kramer, *Neither War, Nor Peace*, 35.

¹⁵³ BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar’s Peace Process* (2013), 51.

¹⁵⁴ Plans for BGF units are that they be of roughly battalion strength, with 326 troops. Of these, three officers and 27 soldiers are to be drawn from the *Tatmadaw*. *New Light of Myanmar*, August 13, 2011. See Annex I and II for information on BGFs structure and composition.

¹⁵⁵ *New Light of Myanmar*, “Government Already Acceded to Peace Proposals of KIO to Most Possible Degree,” August 11, 2013; BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar’s Peace Process* (2013), 49-52.

¹⁵⁶ Sithu Aung Myint, “Tatmadaw Strengthens Grip on Militias,” *Myanmar Times*, May 19, 2014.

¹⁵⁷ *New Light of Myanmar*, “Government Has Never Discriminated against Any National Races Whether They Reside in Hills or Plains but Treated Them Equally,” December 5, 2009.

¹⁵⁸ See BGF recruitment pamphlet in Annex II.

¹⁵⁹ *New Light of Myanmar*, “Government Already Acceded to Peace Proposals of KIO to Most Possible Degree,” August 18, 2011, 6.

¹⁶⁰ BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar’s Peace Process*, (Chiang Mai: Burma News International, 2014), 57; Molo Women Mining Watch Network, *Mining in Conflict Zone: A New Form of Military Offensive* (2013).

¹⁶¹ For example, a recent news report issued in March 2016 indicates that fighting broke out between a BGF allied with Zakung Ting Ying and KIA units involved in opium eradication near Kampeiti. *Kachin News Group*, “KIA Clashes with Pro-government Militia in Poppy Growing Area of Kachin State,” March 28, 2016.

¹⁶² BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar’s Peace Process* (2013), 51.

¹⁶³ *Tatmadaw* non-integrated militias have a broad range of titles. In many cases, the titles are not clearly defined. For instances, some militias are known as “transformed people’s militias” or *athwin pyaun pyithusit*, which is a term used by several militias for ceasefire groups that have become government militias. Another expression used for militias is *tah nye*, which refers to their status as residential militia.

¹⁶⁴ BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar’s Peace Process* (2013), 51; *Kachin News Group*, “KDA Transformed to Militia Groups by Burma Junta,” January 21, 2010.

¹⁶⁵ *Kachin News Group*, “KDA Transforms to Burma Junta-Controlled Militia Group,” February 1, 2010.

¹⁶⁶ For instance, Bo Mon (aka U Sai Mon) of the Manpang militia reportedly had a force of between nine and 14 companies (900 to 1,400 men). See *Shan Herald Agency for News*, “Junta Backed Militias Ordered to Expand,” September 24, 2009. Also see BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar’s Peace Process* (2013), 53-55; Keenan, *By Force of Arms*.

¹⁶⁷ For instance, Ja Htaw, an ethnic Lahu militia leader in Tangyan Township, reportedly has about 250 members in his militia, but only 150 are armed. See *Mizzima*, “Prepare for Battle, with Better Weapons, Junta Tells Militias,” December 16, 2010.

¹⁶⁸ BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar’s Peace Process* (2013), 51; *Kachin News Group*, “KDA Transformed to Militia Groups by Burma Junta,” January 21, 2010.

¹⁶⁹ Accounts indicate that a few militias were originally village-based, volunteer defense forces raised by local leaders that cooperated with the *Tatmadaw* in containing varied external and internal armed threats. For instance, the militias in the villages of Tarmoenye, Shaw Haw, and Lon Tan, in Kutkai Township of northern Shan State, can trace their roots back to earlier village defense forces that assisted the *Tatmadaw* in fighting the KMT remnants and the multicolored insurgents in the early

1950s. By 1973, these groups reportedly surrendered their weapons to the *Tatmadaw*. The *Tatmadaw* commanders later reconstituted them as pro-government militia units to fight against the CPB. At present, they operate as militias in Kutkai Township. See Taungdwin Bo Thein, *Tah Moe Nye Region*.

¹⁷⁰ For instance, the current Nampong/Loi Taw Khan militia in Shan State reportedly contains elements of an ethnic-Lahu militia headed by Wilson Moe, which traces its roots back to a militia formed in the 1970s. See Lahu National Development Organization, *Aftershocks along Burma's Mekong: Reef-Blasting and Military-Style Development in Eastern Shan State* (Chiang Mai, August 2003), 15, 18. The Kutkai Special People's Militia is an incarnation of the Kutkai Rangers. As mentioned earlier, this group was created to combat the threats presented by CPB forces in eastern Shan State. Selth, *Burma's Armed Forces*, 82; interviews, Lashio, Shan State, November 2015. The Pang Hsay militia in Namkhan Township was set up by Kyaw Myint to assist the *Tatmadaw* in dealing with the CPB in the late 1980s. PWO, *Poisoned Flowers*, 26.

¹⁷¹ BNI, Myanmar Peace Monitor, *Border Guard Force Scheme*. <http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/background/border-guard-force>.

¹⁷² BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process* (2013), 51-52. Interviews with businesspeople and members of civil society organizations in Shan, Kachin, and Kayah State, October and November 2015.

¹⁷³ Global Witness, *Guns, Cronies and Crops*, 37, 53.

¹⁷⁴ *Eleven News*, "NLD Complains about Kachin Campaign Ban," September 28, 2015.

¹⁷⁵ See BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process* (2015), 29-30; PWO, *Poisoned Flowers*; PWO, *Poisoned Hills*; PWO, *Still Poisoned*; Shan Herald Agency for News, *Drug Watch* (2009, 2010, 2011); Shan Herald Agency For News, *Show Business*; Shan Herald Agency For News, *Hand in Glove: The Burma Army and the Drug Trade in Shan State* (Chiangmai: Shan Herald Agency for News, 2005); KWAT, *Silent Offensive*; Transnational Institute, *Neither War, Nor Peace*.

¹⁷⁶ Defense Services Historical Museum and Archives, *Tatmadaw Thamain*, 139-158; interviews, Shan State, Kachin State, October and November 2015.

¹⁷⁷ Interviews, members of community based organizations, Yangon, Taunggyi, and Lashio, Shan State, October and November 2015.

¹⁷⁸ Interview, member of community based organization from Mon State, Yangon, December 2015.

¹⁷⁹ Karen Human Rights Group, "State Agencies, Armed Groups and the Proliferation of Oppression in Thaton District," September 24, 2007.

¹⁸⁰ Interviews, Yangon, Shan State, and Kachin State, December 2015, January 2016.

¹⁸¹ For instance, a report in Thaton district of Mon State notes, "Depending on the size of the village, the soldiers have been ordering village heads to arrange between five and 10 individuals to serve in the Pyi Thu Sit for a period of five years." Karen Human Rights Group, "State Agencies, Armed Groups and the Proliferation of Oppression in Thaton District," September 24, 2007; also interview, member of civil society organization, Taunggyi, Shan State, October 2015.

¹⁸² Interview, official from ethnic armed organization, Chiang Mai, Thailand, December 2015.

¹⁸³ *Khonumthung News*, "Funds Collected for People's Militia Training in Chin State," April 11, 2011.

¹⁸⁴ Defense Services Historical Museum and Archives, *Tatmadaw Thamain*, 142-144.

¹⁸⁵ The *Tatmadaw's* employment of local militias has experienced several interruptions and reconfigurations. In 1973 and after 1988, the *Tatmadaw* disbanded local militias in several areas, but they later reconstituted some of them. Defense Services Historical Museum and Archives, *Tatmadaw Thamain*, 139-158.

¹⁸⁶ Interviews, Loikaw, Kayah State, Yangon, and Taunggyi, Shan State.

¹⁸⁷ Heppner and Becker, "'My Gun Was as Tall as Me,'" 106-109; Selth, *Burma's Armed Forces*, 81.

¹⁸⁸ Tun Tun, "People Militia Training Conducted for Native Residents in Maungdaw," *Narinjara News*, October 6, 2012.

¹⁸⁹ Karen Information Center, "Villagers Forced to Take Militia Training," *Karen News*, October 23, 2010; Karen Information Center, "KNU Claims Burma Army Forcible Recruiting Karen Villagers for Militia," *Karen News*, November 21, 2012.

¹⁹⁰ *Mon News Agency*, "Villagers Suffer Extortion by Militias Despite New Govt," July 7, 2013; Karen Human Rights Group, "Ongoing Forced Recruitment into the People's Militia in Kyeikto Township, Thaton District," January 30, 2014.

- ¹⁹¹ Shan Human Rights Foundation, "Ongoing Attacks by Burma Army against Civilians during Operations to Control Strategic Border Area near Namkham (April 10-June 2, 2014)," February 7, 2015.
- ¹⁹² *Chinland Guardian*, "Civilians Forced to Take Militia Training in Chin State," April 7, 2011.
- ¹⁹³ *Kachinland News*, "Battles Continue Unabated in Hpakant and Northern Shan State," July 1, 2015; Khin Su Wai, "'Red Shan' in Kachin State Hold Second Militia Training," *Myanmar Times*, February 18, 2013; interview, militia members, Myitkyina, Kachin State, November 2015.
- ¹⁹⁴ *Mon News Agency*, "Villagers Suffer Extortion by Militias Despite New Govt," July 7, 2013; Keenan, *People's Militia Forces*.
- ¹⁹⁵ The news media have sometimes characterized ethnic armed organizations as militias. Media reports sometimes refer to ethnic armed groups, even large ones, such as the UWSA and others, as militias.
- ¹⁹⁶ For an account of the complex history of ethnic armed groups in Myanmar, see Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*; Smith, *Burma*.
- ¹⁹⁷ For data on reserve forces for selected groups, see Keenan, *By Force of Arms*; BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process* (2013).
- ¹⁹⁸ Heppner and Becker, "My Gun Was as Tall as Me," 135-6.
- ¹⁹⁹ Interview, researcher, February 13, 2015.
- ²⁰⁰ Defense Department, *Official Karen Nation Union Webpage*.
- ²⁰¹ Karen Human Rights Group, "Papun Interview: Saw T---, December 2011," July 16, 2012.
- ²⁰² Heppner and Becker, "My Gun Was as Tall as Me," 131.
- ²⁰³ Andrew Selth, "Burma's Tatmadaw: A Force to be Reckoned With," *The Interpreter*, October 22, 2015.
- ²⁰⁴ Among the difficulties, the details about militias are deemed politically sensitive by the *Tatmadaw* because of ongoing political negotiations. A report released by the International Labor Office in 2015 highlights the sensitivity regarding militias: "In the most recent SWG meeting, the ILO was informed that it was impossible for the Ministry of Defense to facilitate awareness raising with militia groups due to the complicated command structure between the militia and the *Tatmadaw*, and the current sensitivities around the peace process." International Labor Office, *Review of the Situation in Myanmar on Issues Relating to ILO Activities, Including Forced Labour, Freedom of Association, and the Impact of Foreign Investment on Decent Working Conditions*, March 4, 2015.
- ²⁰⁵ *Shan Herald Agency for News*, "Junta to Issue More Weapons for Militia Units," December 15, 2010.
- ²⁰⁶ *Shan Herald Agency for News*, *Shan Drug Watch* (2010), 15.
- ²⁰⁷ Min Zaw Oo, *Understanding Myanmar's Peace Process*, 33.
- ²⁰⁸ *Shan Herald Agency for News*, "Junta to Issue More Weapons for Militia Units," December 15, 2010.
- ²⁰⁹ Keenan, *People's Militia Forces*, 3; *Shan Herald Agency for News*, "Junta to Issue More Weapons for Militia Units," December 15, 2010; Shan Human Rights Foundation, "Ongoing Attacks by Burma Army against Civilians During Operations to Control Strategic Border Area near Namkham (April 10-June 2, 2014)," June 5, 2014; Maung Aung Myoe, "Myanmar Military's White Paper Highlights Growing Openness," *Nikkei Asian Review*, March 28, 2016.
- ²¹⁰ The complexity and diversity of the militias make it difficult to characterize them and their practices. It is important to consider that these are trends and that these practices may involve only a few groups.
- ²¹¹ See McCoy, *Politics of Heroin*; U.S. Congress, *Proposal to Control Opium from the Golden Triangle and Terminate the Shan Opium Trade*, 40.
- ²¹² Interview, businessman, Loikaw, Kayah State, October 2015.
- ²¹³ Interviews, civil society organization member, villagers, Taunggyi and Hopang, September 2015. For instance, a media report indicates that money from local businesses was solicited to support the Kachin State-based BGFs. *Kachin News Group*, "Burmese Junta Collects Funds for New Border Guard Force," November 19, 2009.
- ²¹⁴ Environmental Investigation Agency, *Organized Chaos* (September 2015), 6, 16.
- ²¹⁵ *Kachin News Group*, "Burma's Pro-government Kachin Militia Leader Grabs Land for Gold Mining," July 10, 2013; Molo Women Mining Watch Network, *Mining in Conflict Zone*.
- ²¹⁶ Global Witness, *Guns, Cronies and Crops*, 5, 37.
- ²¹⁷ BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process* (2014), 53; Saw Yan Naing, "'Peace Permit' Bonanza

Puts Ethnic Groups on Defensive,” *Irrawaddy*, December 20, 2013.

²¹⁸ The lack of data about other militias makes a determination of their sources of revenue difficult.

²¹⁹ LNDU, *Aftershocks*, 18.

²²⁰ News and reports indicate the involvement of militias in smuggling opiates and methamphetamines. See KWAT, *Silent Offensive*; Shan Herald Agency for News, *Shan Drug Watch* (2010, 2011, 2012, 2014); Shan Herald Agency for News, *Show Business*; Shan Herald Agency for News, *Hand in Glove*; Palaung Women’s Organization, *Poisoned Flowers*; Palaung Women’s Organization, *Poisoned Hills*; Patrick Win, “Myanmar’s State-Backed Militias are Flooding Asia with Meth,” *Global Post*, November 12, 2015; Karen Human Rights Group, “Drug Production, Use and the Social Impacts in Southeast Myanmar since the January 2012 Ceasefire,” June 15, 2014.

²²¹ Patrick Win, “Myanmar’s State-Backed Militias are Flooding Asia with Meth.”

²²² Pangmu Shayi, “Vigilantism and Pat Jasan,” *Kachinland News*, February 27, 2016; News and Information Department PSLF/TNLA, “Battle between TNLA Troops Engaged in Destroying Opium Fields and Myanmar Tatmadaw,” May 28, 2015; *Kachin News Group*, “KIA Clashes with Pro Government Militia in Poppy Growing Area of Kachin State,” March 28, 2016; *Kachinland News*, “Pat Jasan Members Eradicated Over 3000 Acres of Opium Poppies,” February 4, 2016.

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²²⁴ *Karen News*, “Karen Villagers – We Lost Everything In Asia Highway Conflict...,” September 27, 2015; *Radio Free Asia*, “Karen Rebels Plan Attack of Myanmar Military For Highway Opening Ceremony,” July 16, 2015; Karen Human Rights Group, “Fighting between Tatmadaw and DKBA Soldiers along the Asian Highway Displaces Villagers in Dooplaya District, July 2015,” September 3, 2015.

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²²⁶ BNI, *Deciphering Myanmar’s Peace Process* (2014), 29; Kevin Woods, *Commercial Agriculture Expansion in Myanmar: Links to Deforestation, Conversion Timber, and Land Conflicts*, Forest Trends Report Series (March 2015); Karen Human Rights Group, “Hpa-an Incident Report: Land Confiscation in Paingkyon,” August 17, 2015; *Shan Herald Agency for News*, “Farmers Protest Land Confiscation by Paoh Militias,” January 13, 2015; Global Witness, *Guns, Cronies and Crops*, 2, 7.

²²⁷ Kyaw Phyto Tha, “Lower House MP Seeks Halt to High-Rise Construction in Rangoon,” *Irrawaddy*, January 8, 2016; Kyaw Phyto Tha, “Inya High-Rise Owned by Militia Chief ‘Unlikely’ to Resume: YCDC,” *Irrawaddy*, January 22, 2016.

²²⁸ Interviews, members of a community based organization, Taunggyi, Shan State, October 2015.

²²⁹ Interviews, Shan State, November 2015.

²³⁰ Heppner and Becker, “*My Gun Was as Tall as Me*,” 106.

²³¹ Bill O’Toole, “‘Red Shan’ Caught between Violence in Kachin State Conflict,” *Myanmar Times*, November 16, 2012.

²³² Khin Su Wai, “Red Shan in Kachin State Hold Second Militia Training,” *Myanmar Times*, February 18, 2013.

²³³ Karen Human Rights Group, “Incident Report: Forced Recruitment in Thaton District #2, May 2012,” May 31, 2013; *Mon Forum*, “Burmese Government Pressure on Communities for Support in 2010 Election,” Issue No. 11/2009 (November 2009); Karen Human Rights Group, “Exploitation and Recruitment under the DKBA in Pa’an District,” June 29, 2009.

²³⁴ Karen Human Rights Group, “Ongoing Forced Recruitment into the People’s Militia in Kyeikto Township, Thaton District,” January 30, 2014; Karen Human Rights Group, “Thaton District, September 2012 to December 2013,” December 9, 2014.

²³⁵ Alison Vicary, “The Actual System of Taxation in Burma’s Ethnic Minority States” (conference paper, June 2011), 1, 10.

²³⁶ Ricky Yue, *Warlords’s Learning Curve: A Case Study of the Pa-O Self Administrated Zone* (City

University of Hong Kong, 2015), 1; Shan Human Rights Foundation, *Checkpoint Banditry: Rampant Extortion at Checkpoints*, January 2013.

²³⁷ *Mon News Agency*, "Villagers Suffer Extortion by Militias Despite New Govt," July 7, 2013; *Mon News Agency*, "Villagers Strain under Taxes after Profit Loss from Bad Harvest," February 16, 2010; *Mon News Agency*, "Army Collects Money to Create People's Militias," October 14, 2010; *Khonumthung News*, "Funds Collected for People's Militia Training in Chin State," April 11, 2011.

²³⁸ Interview, member of civil society organization, Shan State, October 2015.

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²⁴⁰ Interviews, Shan State, October 2015.

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²⁴⁵ Transnational Institute, *Ethnic Politics and the 2015 Elections*, 9; Shan Herald Agency for News, "Druglords in Parliament," *Shan Drug Watch*, 2011, 19-24; Seamus Martov, "Ruling Party MPs Return Guns, Alleged Drug Ties to 2015 Race," *Irrawaddy*, October 8, 2015.

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²⁴⁷ Ei Ei Toe Lwin and Wa Lone, "Kachin State Warlord Ordered to Let Opponents Campaign," *Myanmar Times*, September 30, 2015. As this report goes to press, the case is still pending. Thin Lei Win and Htet Khaung Linn, "After Successful Polls, Myanmar Election Commission Deals with Disputes," *Myanmar Now*, February 29, 2016.

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²⁴⁹ Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), General Headquarters, Kawthoolei, *KNLA Position with Regard to Ceasefire* (October 14, 2015).

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²⁵³ Saw Yan Naing, "47 Govt Troops Killed, Tens of Thousands Flee Heavy Fighting in Shan State," *Irrawaddy*, February 13, 2015.

²⁵⁴ Anthony Davis, "Democracy or Not, War with Ethnic Groups Continues," *Bangkok Post*, November 17, 2015; Anthony Davis, "Myanmar's New War in the North," *Nikkei Asian Review*, February 26, 2016; *Shan Herald Agency for News*, "Burma Army, Together with Manpang Bo Mon's Militia," April 5, 2011.

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²⁵⁶ *Kachin News Group*, "Burma's Kachin Conflict Turning into a War between Militias," August 27, 2013; *Kachin News Group*, "Pro Myanmar Government Militias Fighting KIO Growing Opium Says Rights Group," October 8, 2014.

²⁵⁷ An exception is a recent meeting of the Committee for Shan State Union (CSSU), a coalition of various Shan groups, that convened in March 2016. A representative from the Sein Kyawt, or Hsengkeow, militia (formerly SSPP/SSA 3rd Brigade) in Shan State attended the meeting. *Shan Herald Agency for News*, “Shan Conference in Rangoon,” March 7, 2016.

²⁵⁸ Chris Alden, et al., *Militias and the challenges of Post-Conflict Peace: Silencing the Guns* (London: Zed, 2011).

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Aung Naing Oo, “Elusive Peace: Time is Ripe for Ceasefire,” *Myanmar Times*, April 5, 2014.

²⁶¹ Matthew Arnold, “The South Sudan Defence Force: Patriots, Collaborators or Spoilers?” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 45, no. 4 (2007): 489-516; George Katete Onyango, “The Place of Spoilers in Peace Processes in Sudan,” *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 6, no. 8 (2012): 167-180.

²⁶² At the Union Peace Conference held in mid-January 2015, the first round of political dialogue took place. Representatives from the eight armed organizations that signed the NCA attended. With one exception, the representatives of ethnic armed organizations that had bilateral ceasefire agreements but did not accede to the NCA did not attend. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K) was the only one of these groups to attend, but it was recorded as a “special guest.” The remaining groups, along with other civil society organizations, have boycotted the meeting on the grounds that the *Tatmadaw* continues to engage in armed conflict in some areas and the NCA is not inclusive. See *Nagaland Post*, “UPC Approves 4-Point Proposal,” January 18, 2016; United Nationalities Federal Council, *UNFC on NCA and Internal Peace* (January 5, 2016).

²⁶³ According to a media report, the director of the People’s Militias and Border Forces Directorate, Major General Maung Maung Ohn, reportedly noted, “There are only three organizations that are allowed to hold weapons, the *Tatmadaw* (the army), police, and militia units.” From *Shan Herald Agency for News*, “Junta to Issue More Weapons for Militia Units,” December 15, 2010. Also see Government of the Republic of Myanmar, *Constitution* (2008); *New Light of Myanmar*, “Information Minister Replies to Question of U Saw Thein Aung of Hlaingbwe Constituency about Aspiration of Kayin Nationals,” March 22, 2011.

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²⁶⁵ *Radio Free Asia*, “Proposal by Myanmar’s Rebel Groups to Discuss Federal Army Rejected,” September 23, 2014.

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²⁶⁹ *Shan Herald Agency for News*, “BGF Men Fleeing Due to Junta’s Broken Promise,” August 11, 2010.



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