The Role of Karen Policy Networks in Myanmar's National Peace Process

Stasha Malcolm

RCSD
Chiang Mai University

'Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration'
Publication Series

About the series

The Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration series is the product of teaching and research at the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD), Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University. It draws on primary postgraduate research undertaken for the dissertation in the Center's International Masters of Social Science (Development Studies) program. The focus of the program is to consider the processes and consequences of the increasing interconnections and regionalization between the five mainland Southeast Asian countries (Burma/Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam), and specifically to examine the relations, exchanges and encounters within the context of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).

The publication series is informed by the interface between the social sciences and development studies, specifically engaging with concepts which relate to physical and social mobility, boundary crossing, and the construction of ethnic identities. Within these concerns, the series also addresses issues of social, cultural and environmental sustainability, and the ways in which livelihoods are sustained and transformed in the mainland Southeast Asian sub-region. The series seeks to strike a balance between the experiences of both urban and rural life, and to examine the rich variety of responses and adaptations to processes of regionalization and globalization.

The Role of Karen Policy Networks in Myanmar's National Peace Process

Stasha Malcolm

Series Foreword

The monographs that comprise the Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration series have emerged from dissertations based on original primary field research and written as a part of the requirements for the Master of Social Science (Development Studies) program of the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD) in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University.

As Senior Editorial Adviser, I was engaged by the Center to conduct an overview of the dissertations—which date back to 2001 and now number well over 100 pieces of work—and select which of them would best illustrate the quality of the graduate student research. This was by no means an easy task, but it was decided to choose primarily those written in the past few years, given that empirical research in social science tends to date rapidly. Another consideration was that the monographs should give expression to the main theme of the series of Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration.

As the selection and editorial work proceeded it was decided to organize the publications into sub-series which focus on different parts of mainland Southeast Asia. The first several volumes focus on Myanmar, covering such subjects as livelihood strategies, changing ethnic identities, borders and boundary-crossing, and the commoditization of culture within the context of ethnic tourism. Following volumes will be devoted to Thailand, Lao PDR, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

The series also illustrates the concerns in the MA program to bring together social science and natural science in order to further the understanding of sustainable development issues in the region. Over some 20 years Chiang Mai University has developed considerable research expertise in such fields as resource management, environmental impact assessment, upland agricultural systems and indigenous knowledge, health, and ethnic and gender relations. Teaching and research in development issues also deploys social science concepts within the development field to address decision-making, policy and practice, and the responses and adaptations of local populations.

This current monograph series also focuses on the processes of social, cultural, economic, political and environmental change among populations and territories undergoing rapid transformations within the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

Victor T. King, Senior Editorial Adviser,
Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration Series

Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Abbreviations

ABSDF	All Burma Students Democatic Front
AFPFL	Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League
ALP	Arakan Liberation Party
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBO	Community-based Organisation
CNF	Chin National Front
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAB	Democratic Alliance of Burma
EAO	ethnic armed organizations
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
KESAN	Karen Environmental and Social Action Network
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
KNDO	Karen National Defense Organization (unofficial armed wing of the KNU, pre-dating the KNLA)
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army (armed wing of the KNU)
KNU	Karen National Union
KPC	KNU-KNLA Peace Council (splinter group)
KPSN	Karen Peace Support Network
KWO	Karen Women's Organisation
LDU	Lahu Democratic Union
NCA	National Ceasefire Agreement
MPC	Myanmar Peace Center
NCCT	Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team

NLD	National League for Democracy (political party led by Aung San Suu Kyi)
PNLO	Pa-O National Liberation Army
PPST	Peace Process Steering Team
RCSS	Shan State Army - South
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council (military government 1988-1997)
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council (military government 1997-2011)
UNFC	United Nationalities Federal Council
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party

Glossary of Terms

8888 Protests	(also known as the 8-8-88 Uprisings, the People Power Uprising, the People's Democracy Movement and the 1988 Uprising): a series of nationwide protests, marches and civil unrest in Burma that peaked in August 1988.
AFPFL (Anti-fascist People's Freedom League)	the main political alliance in Burma from 1945 to 1958. It began as an independence movement under British rule and was elected as the first post-independence government in 1948.
ceasefire capitalism	often refers to extractive industries that primarily benefit ethnic-minority elites, regional army commanders, and national and foreign investors. Grievances include land grabbing, forced displacement, and unequal distribution of profit. (Woods, 2011; Jones, 2014b; and TNI, 2011).
four cuts	designed to sever insurgents from key inputs from the local population: funding, food, intelligence, recruits.
imaginary	in sociology, a set of values, institutions, laws, and symbols common to a particular social group and the corresponding society through which people imagine their social whole.
knowledge creation	selecting knowledge, making it accessible, amplifying it in social contexts, and connecting it to existing knowledge in an organization (Nonaka & von Krogh, 2009).
kyat	Burmese currency. 1426 kyat = 1 USD.
Myanmar Peace Center (MPC)	an organization providing technical support to the peacemaking process, implementing and managing ceasefire agreements and facilitating dialogue. The center was established in Yangon with the support of the Peace Donor Support Group, comprising Norway, the European Union, Japan and United Nations agencies.

Panglong Meeting	held in February 1947 at Panglong in the Shan States in Burma between Shan, Kachin and Chin ethnic minority leaders and Aung San (father of Aung San Suu Kyi), head of the interim Burmese government. The leaders unanimously decided to join the Union of Burma to secure independence from Britain. Promises of future autonomy were later broken, and has led to continued ethnic conflict. The term 'Panglong' has come to represent meetings of negotiation between EAOs and the central government.
Pyidaungsu Hluttaw	the Burmese parliament.
social capital	the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by via a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119).
State-led development	refers to projects undertaken by the central government and the Tatmadaw. See Chapter 1 for further definition.
Tatmadaw	the Myanmar National Army.
United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC)	a coalition formed in 2011 by 11 opposition groups that campaigned for the rights of various ethnic minorities. Current members are: Arakan Army; Karenni Army; Lahu Democratic Union; New Mon State Party; Shan State Army – North.

Burma/Myanmar: A Note on Terminology

Prior to 1989, the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia was exclusively known internationally as "Burma," the name that British colonizers used after they consolidated the central plains and previously autonomous mountainous regions in the mid-1800s in reference to the country's largest ethnic group, the Burman. The international use of "Myanmar" to refer to the country dates only to 1989, when the country's unelected military rulers of the time announced the change of the nation's name to "Myanmar Naing-Ngan."

In addition, the official names of many ethnic groups, regions, cities, and villages were also changed, including that of the former capital from "Rangoon" to "Yangon."

The name changes were purportedly an effort on the part of the military regime to remake Burma into a more inclusive, multiethnic country, and to cast off vestiges of the colonial era. However, many critics pointed out that these changes failed to address the root causes of problematic Burman/ethnic minority relations, and historians have shown that both "Burma" and "Myanmar" were used prior to British administration. In addition, the use of "Myanmar" in English presents a grammatical challenge, as there is no conventional adjective form.

While international organizations such as the United Nations and Amnesty International have adopted the use of "Myanmar," journalistic, activist, and academic convention in much of the world continues to favor the use of "Burma," although usage patterns continue to evolve. For this series, the decision of whether to use pre- or post-1989 "official" names has been left entirely to the author of each work, and in most instances the names are used interchangeably with no intended political implications.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my greatest appreciation to my mom, my dad, and my sister for their continuous love, support, and understanding through the duration of the program and writing process. You guys are my everything. Thank you for teaching me to value hard work, be resilient in the face of a challenge, and to chase my ambition. I could not have accomplished this without you.

There are many people who encouraged me and influenced me to pursue this MA degree, and who played a role in the path that led me to this point. That being said, I want to take a moment to recognize:

My alma mater, California State University, Chico for providing me the opportunity to study abroad in Chiang Mai, setting the stage for years to come, and to the staff with whom I worked in the Office of International Education.

Professor Crosby and the CSU Chico Model United Nations program for strengthening my education, both personal and academic, to an extent more far-reaching than I could have imagined and equipping me with skills in research, public speaking, and diplomacy.

My teachers and mentors from the USAC Chiang Mai program, in particular Mrs. Chaidarun Tippawan for her valuable advice and assistance throughout my time in Chiang Mai and Mr. Nisit Panthamit for informing me about the MA program, supporting me through the application process, and involving me in various Center for ASEAN Studies (CAS) activities.

The YSEALI program through which I met and learned from some of the region's most inspiring young people; and Mrs. Jane Chongchit Houston for her role in advising my internships, both in the U.S. and in Chiang Mai; her contagious passion for youth empowerment; and her consistently optimistic guidance.

The staff and interns, both international and domestic, at the U.S. Consulate General, Chiang Mai during my internship in the summer of 2015 for teaching me skills that proved beneficial to my MA research, for trusting in me, and for continuously mentoring and supporting me after my internship ended.

Stasha Malcolm

Chapter 1

Introduction

Myanmar's peace process involves a series of ongoing negotiations between the government, military, and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). The National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA)[1] was signed in 2015, but three years later there is little progress to report. This has led some ethno-political actors to wonder whether the negotiations are genuine or just a front to persuade them – and the outside world - that progress is being made. There are historical tensions between the Tatmadaw[2], who have reserved a lot of power to themselves under the new (2008) constitution, and ethnic groups. Doubts about the ceasefire negotiations have deepened fragmentation within the Karen National Union (KNU), one of the signatory EAOs. Various Karen governance actors are involved in peace process negotiations, both directly and indirectly. Using

---

1   Signatories to NCA: All Burma Students Democratic Front; Arakan Liberation Army; Chin National Army; Democratic Karen Buddhist Army- Brigade 5; Karen National Defence Organisation; Karen National Liberation Army; Karenni Army; KNU/KNLA Peace Council; Lahu Democratic Union; Mon National Liberation Army; National Socialist Council of Nagaland; Pa-O National Liberation Army; Shan State Army North; Shan State Army South; United Wa State Army; Wa National Army.
    Non-signatories: Arakan Army; Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army; Kachin Independence Army; Kuki National Liberation Army: Zomi Revolutionary Army.
2   The Tatmadaw is the Myanmar National Army. The term Tatmadaw is used throughout this research.

the concepts of political imaginary[3] and advocacy, the proposed research aims to explore the following questions:

- How do Karen governance actors view the peace process and to what extent can change be leveraged at the negotiation level?

- What forms of rationality are mobilized within the Karen policy network to effectively advocate for particular policy views?

Background

Burma post 1948 independence – a brief history

The Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL)[4] led by Aung San won independence from Britain and went on to win the first general election in 1947. Aung San was assassinated in that year, and in 1948 U Nu became the first Prime Minister of independent Burma. The government had to struggle with various insurgencies plus the destabilizing presence of remnants of Chiang Kai Shek's Kuomintang army, left marooned in northern Burma after their defeat in the Chinese civil war, and not finally removed until 1960. In 1958 AFPFL split, instability increased, and U Nu handed over power to General Ne Win. The general election of 1960 handed the parliamentary majority to U Nu's party, but the stability didn't last. In 1962 Ne Win staged a coup and declared a 'socialist state' run by a 'Union Revolutionary Council' of senior military officers. This lasted until 1988 despite increasing poverty, inequality, corruption and international isolation. The fall of Ne Win's socialist state began in late 1987 when he demonetized 25, 35, and 75 kyat[5] banknotes without warning or compensation, rendering some 75% of the country's currency worthless and eliminating the savings of millions of Burmese. Ne Win then proceeded to introduce new banknotes for 45 and 90 kyat — multiples of nine, his favourite number. The

---

3   In sociology, an imaginary is a set of values, institutions, laws, and symbols common to a particular social group and the corresponding society through which people imagine their social whole.

4   The AFPFL was the main political alliance in Burma from 1945 until 1958. It began as an independence movement under British rule and was elected as the first post-independence government in 1948.

5   The kyat is the Burmese currency. 1426 kyat = 1 USD

resulting economic disturbances led to the pro-democratic 8888 Uprising[6], which was violently suppressed by the military, who then took power as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). In 1990, SLORC followed through with its policy to hold a general election, resulting in Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party winning 392 of 492 seats. However, the military refused to recognize the result, SLORC held on to power, and Aung San Suu Kyi stayed under house arrest.

In 1997 SLORC changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Peace and development goals were promoted as one and the same, implying that through development came peace, and allowing the Tatmadaw to exploit business ventures in the periphery wherever ceasefires were signed (17 had been signed 1989 – 1997). The primary "development" activities that took place were resource extraction, agribusiness, and infrastructure projects, which brought expansion of military control into the periphery, as well as economic profit to Tatmadaw and EAO leaders. Meanwhile, communities faced land confiscation, forced displacement, forced labor and increased militarization (Jolliffe, 2016, pp. 32-33; Dukalskis, 2015, p. 852).

After acceptance into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1997, the SPDC began implementation of the "Roadmap to Democracy[7]" in order to improve Myanmar's international reputation, reconvening the National Convention, which had been adjourned since 1996, and drafting a new constitution. Elections were scheduled for 2010. The SPDC set up their own political party - the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), led by Thein Sein, a military general, to contest the election (Morgenbesser, 2015. pp. 179-182). Through a manipulated (and boycotted) process, the USDP "won". President Thein Sein was faced with upcoming ASEAN initiatives, including the 2015 ASEAN Economic Community. Without

---

6   The 8888 Nationwide Popular Pro-Democracy Protests, also known as the 8-8-88 Uprisings, or the People Power Uprising, the People's Democracy Movement and the 1988 Uprising, were a series of nationwide protests, marches and civil unrest in Burma that peaked in August 1988.

7   On August 30, 2003, the SPDC unveiled a "roadmap" to democracy. The seven steps are (1) reconvening the National Convention (2) implementation of a process to allow the emergence of a "genuine and disciplined democratic system" (3) draft a new constitution (4) adopt a constitution through a national referendum (5) hold free and fair elections (6) convene elected bodies and (7) create government organs instituted by the legislative body. The National Convention was indeed reconvened in 2004 with additional sessions in 2005, 2006, and 2007 (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

policy reform, Myanmar would lose out on the benefits such a market would create, putting pressure on the newly 'elected' government (Callahan, 2012, p. 126). Thein Sein's rapprochement with Aung San Suu Kyi led to her release from house arrest and reinstatement as leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD). In the 2012 elections, the NLD competed for 44 out of 45 available parliamentary seats, winning 43 of them (Thawnghmung, 2016, p. 135). Following that success, in what was internationally recognized as the first free and fair election since 1990, the NLD won a landslide victory in the 2015 election. However, under the 2008 constitution[8], the military kept control of twenty-five percent of legislative seats and the Ministries of Defense, Home Affairs and Border Affairs (Thawnghumung, 2016, pp. 132, 133, 138). These provisions ensured that the military remained as a key stakeholder, to say the least, in political processes.

The Karen

The Karen are Burma's second largest ethnic minority, after the Shan. The Karen group comprises speakers of twelve dialects, though the majority speak either Sgaw or Pwo (South, 2011, p. 10). Demographic statistics remain unclear due to the inaccessibility of border regions and the people's constant need to move as a response to conflict. However, the Karen National Union (KNU) estimated in 1986 that the Karen population in Burma was around 7 million (ibid). Since then, thousands have sought refuge across the border in neighboring Thailand, which has its own Karen community of about 1 million. Nine refugee shelters along the Thai-Burma border house over 140,000 Karen and other Burmese refugees and IDPs. As of May 2018, the UNHCR estimates the number of registered and unregistered refugees as around 97,500 with 80% being Karen (The Border Consortium, 2018).

The Karen have been entangled in one of the longest ethnic conflicts in the world. Their insurgency movement began in 1881 with the formation of the Karen National Association. The KNU was established in 1947, and has since

---

8   The National Convention of 2004-2007 concluded with a draft constitution virtually identical to SLORC's 1993 constitution. Approved by way of controlled referendum in 2008, the 'new' constitution sought to achieve a "genuine, disciplined multi-party democratic system" (Jones, 2014a).

served as a *de facto* government within Karen state[9], particularly in areas inaccessible to the central government. This has engrained generations of ethnic Karen with skepticism toward governance and services provided by institutions other than the KNU. This skepticism has also led to factionalism in Karen politics.

The ethnic designation "Karen" comprises about twenty subgroups with various religious, cultural, and geographical backgrounds. Two main subgroups that claim the highest number of members are the Sgaw (mostly highland Christians and animists) and the Pwo (mostly lowland Buddhists), accounting for 80-85 percent of the population, though not all reside in Myanmar (Thawnghmung, 2008, p. 3; Jolliffe, 2016). The KNU draws most of its support from the Christian minority, which tends to have more interaction with the international community, explaining why so much research and literature generalizes the Karen, as a whole, as insurgents and rebels (ibid). It is often too readily accepted that the KNU represents all Karen people, though that is not necessarily the case. It is important to recognize the diversity within the Karen population rather than using the term "Karen" to signify an ideal-type (armed insurrectionist, ethnic rebel, and refugee). The 'other' Karen, as referred to by Thawnghmung, often live in more ethnically-mixed cities, where some have chosen to collaborate with successive governments and some have even attempted to create political change by 'working within the system' (Thawnghmung, 2008, p. 1).

The suppression of political dissent within Myanmar throughout decades of military rule, but especially following the 1988 crackdown, facilitated what Adam Simpson refers to as an 'activist diaspora' (2013, pp. 129, 136). Local communities are often restricted from voicing their opinions or exercising their rights, leading many to do so from outside the country. Governance actors who have been involved in KNU politics, whether directly or indirectly, maintain their social capital and authority even from Thailand. The proximity of border towns, such as Mae Hong Son, Mae Sariang, and Mae Sot, facilitate the continuation of in-country activism through both formal and informal channels of communication. Sokefeld describes such a transnational space as an 'imagined transnational community' (2006, p. 267). The imagined transnational Karen activist community was strengthened by the oppressive regime in Myanmar, facilitating access to an international audience and various capacity-

---

9   An ethnic state of Myanmar which is home to the majority of the country's Karen population. The capital city is Hpa-An. Renamed Kayin State by the Burmese military.

building resources (Simpson, 2013, pp. 137-138). Although Cleary (1997) asserts that most civil society organizations in the South, particularly in authoritarian regimes, are service providers rather than activists, through transnational activism Karen CSOs are able to work on issues and advocate for change outside the Myanmar government's sphere of influence. Simpson outlines two significant aspects of an activist diaspora as follows:

Activist diasporas actively establish linkages and provide specialist knowledge and otherwise unavailable expertise to broader campaign networks or coalitions in foreign or 'outsider' communities (2013, p. 145) The contribution of this expertise by the activist diaspora to broader campaigns and their engagement with activists outside their community plays an important role in bolstering their confidence and skills, such as increased proficiency in English, the *lingua franca* of transnational activism and media (ibid).

This research is not focused on the activist diaspora as such, but rather recognizes the activist diaspora community as a legitimate group of actors in the Karen policy sub-system, regardless of physical location.

Peace Talks and Ceasefires

Soon after Burma's independence, AFPFL initiated the first peace talks with the KNU (Thawnghmung, 2008, p. 9). However, the KNU demanded the right to continue to retain arms, which was rejected by president U Nu and General Ne Win. Within days fighting restarted and continued until 2012 (Tinker, 1967, pp. 46-47). One KNU veteran stated "We thought we would win the war in two or three years. We never thought we would be in the jungle 40 years later" (Smith, 1999, p. 141). In 1992 SLORC offered the KNU a bilateral ceasefire, but the KNU decided to adhere to the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) policy of a nationwide ceasefire with political settlement, and demanded political dialogue alongside the ceasefire (Thawnghmung, 2008, p. 29). SLORC refused, eventually signing ceasefires with the KIA and New Mon State Party in 1994 and 1995 despite the DAB agreement. The KNU tried to negotiate again in 1995, but this time SLORC demanded the renunciation of armed insurrection, which directly violated the founding principles of the KNU (ibid, p. 30). Unable to reach an agreement, the KNU increased their demands for political dialogue and the release of political prisoners, which may have been

the catalyst for the 1997 SLORC "Four Cuts" offensive[10] against the KNLA 4th and 6th Brigades.

The State Peace and Development Council along with Tatmadaw General Khin Nyunt entered into peace talks with the KNU, leading to the 2003 verbal ceasefire, or 'Gentlemen's Agreement' (ibid, p. 31). However, as this agreement was not official, former KNU president Bo Mya took it upon himself to negotiate an official ceasefire with Yangon. Controversy and concern marked Bo Mya's negotiation, causing many to wonder if he would 'sell out' the decades-old revolution (Thornton, 2006, p. 190). Despite popular belief, when asked whether the KNU founding principles were "on the bargaining table", Bo Mya answered "We will not surrender, we will always keep our arms, we want a free Karen State. The four principles of our revolution are still the same. We will decide our own political destiny." (ibid, p. 192). Further questions arose from concern about ceasefire-created disunity, to which Bo Mya replied, "We are united. The KNU and the KNLA are one." (ibid, p. 193). However, this effort eventually failed due to the removal of General Khin Nyunt,[11] and was a catalyst for further Tatmadaw Four Cuts operations against the KNLA 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Brigades (Thawnghmung, 2008, p. 32). This led Padoh Mahn Sha, KNU General Secretary at the time, to believe that the Tatmadaw was not taking the 'ceasefire' seriously, spurring fragmentation within the KNU. Following the Four Cuts campaign, tens of thousands of Karen civilians were relocated by the Tatmadaw and hundreds of thousands fled to refugee camps in Thailand and IDP camps along the Thai-Burma border (Jolliffe, 2016, p. 10).

Beginning in 2011, President Thein Sein started the democratic reform process by hosting ceasefire talks with various EAOs, eventually signing fourteen groups to either State or Union level agreements (Burma News International, 2016, p. 1). In order to facilitate negotiations, the KNU Peace Committee was established after a three-day emergency meeting of the KNU Central Executive Committee, Central Standing Committee, and seven KNLA Brigade representatives (Karen News, 2011). Led by David Thakabaw, Mutu Say Poe, and Zipporah Sein (three out of the seven committee members), the team met with parliamentary representatives, including Railway Minister U Aung Min

---

10   The four cuts was a doctrine designed to sever insurgents from their key inputs from the local population: funding, food, intelligence, and recruits.

11   9th Prime Minister of Myanmar from 25 August 2003 until 18 October 2004

(ibid). Following Mutu Say Poe's unsupported ceasefire signing in 2012, negotiations continued between the delegation and U Aung Min, although Zipporah Sein and David Thakabaw refused to take part, complaining that "their [Mutu Say Poe's] way was not proper according to the rules and regulations of our organization" (Brenner, 2017b, p. 11). This tension led to the dismissal of Mutu Say Poe, General Saw Johnny, and David Taw with a retraction only three weeks later for "the sake of unity" (ibid).

The Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) was then established in 2013 as the EAO-equivalent of the government's Union Peacemaking Working Committee (UPWC). It comprised seventeen EAOs, led by Padoh Kwe Htoo Win (KNU) and Deputy Commander in Chief Major General Gun Maw (KIA). The NCCT worked closely with the UPWC and the Myanmar Peace Center[12] (MPC) technical team to draft a "Single Text" NCA (Burma News International, 2016, p. 2). A working draft NCA was agreed upon in 2014. That same year, Mutu Say Poe withdrew the KNU from the United Nationalities Federal Council[13] (UNFC) and was severely criticized by the opposition faction, who voiced their concerns through the Karen Women's Organization (KWO) (Karen News, 2014). Following the official statement of the KNU's self-suspension was a second statement issued from Zipporah Sein's faction announcing her and David Thakabaw's intention to continue working with the UNFC (Radio Free Asia 2014). Attending UNFC meetings as representatives of the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO: the smaller, unofficial armed wing of the KNU), David Thakabaw went so far as to publicly denounce the KNU leadership and declared that the KNDO would continue to work with the "alliance of ethnic armed forces" in the UNFC (Brenner, 2017b, pp. 12-13). The KNU leadership, however, chose to continue NCA negotiations through the NCCT, approving a final draft in early 2015 (Burma News International, 2016, p. 52).

---

12 The Myanmar Peace Center (MPC) is an organization to provide technical support to the peacemaking process, including implementing and managing ceasefire agreements and facilitating dialogue on political issues. The center was established in Yangon with the support of the Peace Donor Support Group, comprising Norway, the European Union, Japan and United Nations agencies.

13 United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) is a coalition that was formed in 2011 by 11 opposition groups that campaigned for the rights of various ethnic minorities. Current members are : Arakan Army; Karenni Army; Lahu Democratic Union; New Mon State Party; Shan State Army - North

Following the 15 October 2015 signing of the official NCA, the UNFC evolved to represent the non-signatory EAOs, providing them with the opportunity to simultaneously discuss political strategies and concerns and engage in informal/formal talks with the MPC (Nyein, 2018). Other EAOs who were maintaining distance from the NCA joined together to form the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee. In February 2018, the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) signed the NCA, leading many to believe the UNFC would dissipate without achieving its political goals (Kumbun, 2018). However, the UNFC announced on February 25 that it would continue with its four remaining members while reinstating another two: the Kachin National Organization (KNO) and Chin National Front (CNF), and at the same time would be "collectively pursuing peace in Burma's current peace process through the NCA path" (Burma Link, 2018).

Statement of Problem

The peace process in Myanmar is complicated by the number of relevant actors - ethnic states, EAOs, NCA signatories and non-signatories, and individuals (Thawnghmung and Robinson, 2017, p. 244). Prior to the 2015 NCA, ceasefires were negotiated on a case-by-case basis, often bilaterally and allowing for more flexibility in local contexts, taking into account specific policy requests and offering various benefits (Morgenbesser, 2015, p. 180; Core, 2009, p. 98; Zaw Oo & Win Min, 2007). Additionally, ethnic states were governed in an almost autonomous manner, enabling local political and armed groups to make decisions within a 'closed' environment. Such decisions had local rather than nationwide consequences, and were therefore representative of local actors. In negotiating a national agreement, however, these secondary local actors have seen their influence diminish (Hellmueller, 2014, p. 8). The EAOs who have signed the NCA have been granted direct bargaining power with the government, but secondary ethno-political actors must assert governance over the relevant EAO in order to have any influence. In the case of the Karen, the relevant signatory EAOs are the KNU and KPC (KNU/KNLA-PC), though this research will focus specifically on the KNU. The problem that this research will address is how secondary ethno-political actors influence national level negotiations vis-à-vis the relevant EAO. This asserts the importance of such actors in Myanmar's national peace process while recognizing that their direct role has been limited since 2015.

Following the 16th Karen Congress, Zipporah Sein[14] stated, "We give our best wishes to the newly elected leaders. They have been given the responsibility to work for the people for the next four years", leading some to speculate that KNU factionalism had evaporated (Karen News, 2017; Saw Yan Naing, 2017). However, Zipporah Sein reasserted her influence by creating a CSO to provide an opposition voice to influence the KNU's NCA negotiating strategy. As recently as October 2017, current KNU Chairman Mutu Say Poe has pointed out weaknesses in the NCA, including the lack of inclusiveness (Saw Tun Lin, 2017). This is a subtle change from his prior policy that insisted on pushing ahead, though what caused this change has remained unexplored (Jolliffe, 2017). The number of local actors should demonstrate the limitations of a top-down approach; discussion of the peace process and NCA as negotiated at national level conferences, signatory meetings, and agreed-upon texts overlooks the detailed discussions and preparation that takes place in the local context. The coherence of national level processes should not be assumed.

Peace and Conflict Studies theory tends to conceptualize non-state armed groups as monolithic actors, assuming that insurgency movements are unified in strategy and action (Cunningham et al., 2012). In response to this assumption, researchers have recently aimed to highlight the importance of dynamics internal to non-state armed groups, acknowledging their heterogeneous nature and fragmentation into rival factions (Brenner, 2017b, p. 2). Brenner goes on to explain that such internal strife can undermine a group's capacity for collective action and lead to its demise. This research will not follow that framework but rather will illustrate how local actors' perceptions and influence must be considered in the analysis of national processes, in the NCA context.

The 2015 signing of the NCA changed Myanmar's peace process from local to national, changing which actors were directly relevant. In changing from bilateral ceasefires (local) to the NCA (national), signatory EAOs became the default units of analysis and secondary local actors were increasingly overlooked (Hellmueller, 2014, p.8). This research seeks to contribute to Peace and Conflict Studies through its analysis of ethno-political actors and heterogeneous insurgency movements, and to scholarship on Myanmar's Peace Process through its discussion of recent developments, illuminating the

---

14   Former KNU Vice-President. Coordinator and executive secretary of the Karen Women's Organization from 1998 to 2008.

importance of non-reported meetings, conferences and discussions, which contribute to the peace process at the grassroots level (Ganesan, 2017, p. 126).

Research Questions

1. In what ways do Karen governance actors make sense of the peace process and to what extent do they believe that change can be leveraged at the negotiation level?

2. What forms of rationality, including language, conduct, and discourse, are mobilized within the Karen policy network to effectively advocate for particular policy views?

Research Objectives

1. To analyze political leverage asserted by Karen governance actors intending to effect change in national level peace process negotiations through identification of rationality mechanisms.

2. To identify and evaluate methods of advocacy utilized by Karen governance actors through assessment of language, conduct, and discourse within the Karen policy sub-system.

Key Term Definitions

Policy networks

In the context of this research, policy networks refer to groups of actors that actively participate in policy-making and the peace process. Policy networks include, but are not limited to, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Policy opponents

'Policy opponents' is a generic term used in this research to refer to actors that disagree with the current facilitation of the peace process. As the KNU leadership had been participating, and to some extent compromising, with the Tatmadaw and central government since signing the NCA, policy opponents are typically those who opposed such interaction as it supported the military's direct role in politics.

Policy negotiators

'Policy negotiators' refers to the three main groups involved in the negotiations: the Tatmadaw, the NLD Central Government, and the signatory-EAOs. In the context of this research, for "EAOs" read "KNU". Regardless of the KNU's recent decision to temporarily withdraw from the peace talks, they remain a signatory to the NCA and subsequently have negotiating authority. Policy opponents are not included in this definition due to their positioning outside of the negotiation space.

Governance actors

Individuals who are attempting any type of political influence as governance actors. This definition narrows the scope to those engaged in the peace process, whether directly or indirectly.

Political and Developmental Imaginary

Imaginaries do not 'exist' per se, but provide an accessible way to describe the policy hopes and desires of Karen governance actors engaged in the peace process. The key ideas of each imaginary are detailed in Chapter 4.

Future Peace Imaginary

The Future Peace Imaginary is the actors' ideal socio-political future following completion of the peace process. It overarches all political engagement and consists of varying sub-imaginaries, two of which are the political and developmental. It can be said that Myanmar's national peace process is a negotiation of Future Peace Imaginaries.

State-led Development

Myanmar's governance structure is multiplex in that in various contexts 'state' can refer to the central government, or more locally the ethnic state and its relevant authorities. For clarification, this research uses 'state' in reference to the central government, currently led by the National League for Democracy (NLD). It follows that state-led development refers to projects initiated and conducted by the central government - and often carried out in practice by the Tatmadaw. For many communities in ethnic states, such state-led development has led to violence and displacement, as explained further in Chapters 3 and 4.

Research Methodology

Research Site & Informants

While the topic of this research is focused on Karen politics within the larger context of the Myanmar peace process, it is important to keep in mind the top-down restrictions that have been placed on ethnic political actors within Myanmar by the Tatmadaw and military governments. Many Karen political actors have sought refuge in Northern Thailand and conduct their business there. Various Karen CSOs have their headquarters in Thailand, particularly in Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, and Mae Sot. Often the KNU participate in peace process meetings hosted in Chiang Mai, including by the Peace Process Steering Team (PPST) led by Mutu Say Poe, current KNU Chairman. With this in mind, this study was based physically in Chiang Mai.

Karen governance actors, particularly those who work closely with CSOs and grassroots movements, participate in seminars, forums, and other forms of knowledge creation[15] and dissemination in Thailand, and more particularly in Chiang Mai. Local institutions, including Chiang Mai and Payap Universities, host many of these events interlinking their networks with the larger Karen policy sub-system. However, it is worth noting that at times political activity regarding Myanmar has been limited by the Thai government too. Recent examples are the cancellation of a public seminar in April 2018 for the planned release of a report by the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN) entitled *The Nightmare Returns: Karen Hopes for Peace and Stability Dashed by Burma Army Actions*; and a panel discussion to be hosted by the Foreign Correspondents Club in Bangkok in September 2018 entitled *Will Myanmar's Generals Ever Face Justice for International Crimes?*

During my fieldwork period three things were happening which required the attention of my target informants, so the fieldwork process took longer than expected. The first event was the planned but continually postponed third

---

15   Knowledge creation is the act of selecting knowledge, making it accessible, amplifying it in social contexts, and connecting it to the existing knowledge in an organization (Nonaka & von Krogh, 2009).

Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong[16] (UPC-21CP). The longer the conference was postponed, the more meetings, planning, and re-strategizing had to take place. Due to the addition of two more NCA signatories and the sensitive nature of the topics to be discussed, these preparation efforts had to be prioritized. Second was the decision of many International Aid Agencies to pull funding from border-based refugee shelters in order to support development, peacebuilding, and foreign direct investment inside Myanmar. Recent years have brought forth what is accepted by many internationally as democratic progress, although many do not see the real situation on the ground where it remains unsafe or unfeasible for refugees and IDPs to return to their home villages, leaving them still in need of assistance where they are. The third event was the onset of violent conflict in Mutraw (Hpapun District), Karen state. Clashes began in early March 2018 when the KNLA asserted that the Tatmadaw planned to construct a road without permission (Choudhury, 2018; Karen News, 2018). This followed a gradual military buildup in the form of more soldiers, more infrastructure, and more development projects (Choudhury, 2018). Although the situation de-escalated by mid-May, skepticism about the Tatmadaw's genuine engagement with the peace process increased, undoubtedly influencing the perceptions shared with me by my informants. A few of my informants were also directly involved in providing aid for those affected by the violent clashes (which had created hundreds of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and/or reporting on the situation. The challenges to my fieldwork schedule just go to show the direct role my informants play in the peace process.

Unit of Analysis

The primary goal of this research is to explore local politics in Karen state through analysis of governance actors' perceptions, and to link their perceptions to policy preferences, to see to what extent, if any, local politics impacts the national negotiation process. Analysis of collected data is on two levels: Karen

---

16   Held in February 1947, a historic meeting took place at Panglong in the Shan States in Burma between the Shan, Kachin and Chin ethnic minority leaders and Aung San (father of Aung San Suu Kyi), head of the interim Burmese government. The leaders unanimously decided to join the Union of Burma in order to secure independence from Britain. Promises of future autonomy for ethnic minorities were later broken, which has led to the continuation of ethnic civil wars. The term 'Panglong' has come to represent meetings of negotiation between EAOs and the central government, as is shown here.

governance actors within their own policy sub-system; and the Karen policy sub-system within the national context of ongoing peace process negotiation.

The informants chosen for this study therefore had to be involved in policy advocacy within the Karen policy sub-system, meaning that they had high ranking status within the sub-system. It does not necessarily follow, however, that they would have similar status within the larger national context.

Data Collection Methods

The primary data collection method was in-depth semi-structured interviews with pre-determined questions, in order to avoid unintentionally directing participants' responses (Collis & Hussey, 2003). Documentary research was utilized to strengthen the data gathered through first-hand interviews, as deficiencies in one method can be overcome by combining methods (Blaikie, 1991). (I have no ethnic or political alignment to either the KNU leadership or Karen policy opponents, but I should perhaps say that my compromising nature may produce a slight bias in favor of the current KNU leadership's rapprochement policy.)

Semi-Structured Interviews

The selection of informants for this research was greatly enhanced by a gatekeeper with whom I am personally familiar. His knowledge of Myanmar's peace process in addition to his connections with Karen CSOs and Karen governance actors was invaluable to this study. He is also respected by my first informants, which should have strengthened their trust in me as a researcher. Later informants, snowballed from the first set, were accessed through personal networks in Chiang Mai, and do not necessarily have the gatekeeper connection.

Fieldwork was conducted over a period of four months, February to May 2018. Informants being top-level actors within the Karen policy sub-system, their continued involvement in politics, meetings, activities, research, etc meant that finding the time to meet for an interview was challenging. In some cases when the arranged interview time came, the informant either didn't confirm or could not be contacted, prolonging the fieldwork even more.

The five main informants included four Karen governance actors from various Karen CSOs; and one political analyst close to the KNU. One is a woman and four out of five are ethnic Karen. All interviews were conducted in English

and in a one-on-one setting. One interview was conducted by phone while all four interviews with ethnic Karen informants were conducted in person. All interviews were recorded, with permission, for future transcription. All informants asked to remain anonymous. Collecting first-hand data from informants adds legitimacy to the discussion presented here, as the information has not been diluted through translation or political frameworks. Additionally, as it is first-hand data, I do not need to be wary of media biases such as are often present in political reporting. In an ever-changing context such as Myanmar's peace process, it is vital to gather first-hand knowledge in order to gain the most up-to-date and detailed information available.

In *Writing Culture,* Clifford (1986, p. 7) points out that "constructed truths are made possible by powerful 'lies' of exclusion and rhetoric". Further expanding upon the importance of acknowledging power relations in fieldwork, Price (1983, p. 14) noted that "knowledge is power, and that one must never reveal all of what one knows". In my decision to focus on individual actors I was aware that I would be dealing directly with power-imbalances that favored my informants. But I chose to face that challenge head-on in the hope of receiving information that could provide linkages within the multi-level interplay being explored. I have to accept that as most of my informants are top-level actors within their respective organizations, they maintain the authority to represent their organization in the way they see as most beneficial; and that they may not tell all they know, or reveal all their strategies. However, there is value in opening the topic through a direct method (Punch, 2014, pp. 192-193). And Rabinow (1977, p. 132) explains how in his discussions with informants, his questioning led to a realization or awareness that the informant did not previously acknowledge. I intentionally chose semi-structured interviews in order to allow the informants to reveal their knowledge base and individual perceptions to me organically prior to asking deeper questions.

As an outside researcher writing about sensitive local contexts within a transitional state, I had to be very careful of ethical considerations. Informants participated voluntarily and prior to conducting any discussion I made sure that my reasons for talking with them were clear and that their consent was given verbally or in writing (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 61).

Documentary Research

Through my informants I was able to gain access to research and draft publications prior to their official release. I made extensive use of the Burma News International guidebook entitled *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide*. Most reports were released by the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN), while statements were more widely released by various governance actors, organizations, and CSOs. This provided a wider understanding of the Karen political context, as documents are "socially situated products" (Scott, 1990, p. 34).

The origin of the documentation had to be considered carefully as regards its strategic function within the Karen policy sub-system. As Denscombe (1998, p. 170) observed, documents can owe more to the interpretations of their producers than to an objective picture of reality. Understanding the inherent political, cultural, and economic influences on the authors of documents and giving consideration to the process and social context of their construction, however, further informed the analysis of advocacy efforts as detailed in Chapter 5 (ibid).

Organization of the book

This book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter provides background information on the research topic, a statement of the problem being analyzed, and justification for its analysis. The section on research methodology, describes the research location, unit of analysis, and methods of data collection.

The second chapter presents a literature review, divided into two parts: a review of the concepts to be used in analyzing the data; and a review of related studies on Karen politics. In the review of relative concepts, policy, governance, power, lobbying, and advocacy are discussed in order to set a base understanding for the Karen political context. Two tactics of advocacy are identified, with discussion of actor perception which contributes to political and developmental imaginaries. The review of related studies identifies one main gap in current writing on Karen politics: the reluctance to afford policy opponents legitimacy or to acknowledge their role in shaping peace process policy.

Chapter three provides a historical overview of ceasefire negotiations in Myanmar, particularly between the Karen insurgency and the Tatmadaw. Through brief details of how ceasefires contributed to fragmentation within

the KNU, the reader is introduced to various Karen governance actors. Further context is given in section 3.2, which lists the NCA mechanisms in which these actors participate. Provisions of the NCA are briefly explained to provide deeper understanding of the peace process in which the actors are participating. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the Karen political context, including the relevant policy networks through which Karen governance actors advocate for their imaginaries within the Karen policy sub-system.

Chapter four is the first of the two findings chapters, examining the imaginaries of the policy opponents and policy negotiators by dividing the actor perceptions observed from the in-depth interviews into two categories: Political Imaginary and Developmental Imaginary. This chapter addresses the first research question: What are Karen governance actors' current perceptions of the peace process and to what extent do they believe that change can be leveraged at the negotiation level?

Chapter five is the second findings chapter, exploring the methods of advocacy utilized by various Karen governance actors. This chapter addresses the second research question: What forms of rationality are mobilized within the Karen policy network to effectively advocate for particular policy views? A discussion of both insider and indirect advocacy tactics is further strengthened by providing information from policy opponents.

Chapter six is the conclusion in which research findings are analyzed through the framework of the concepts and theories presented in Chapter 2. These findings are in response to the research questions and objectives as outlined in Chapter 1. This chapter also describes the limitations of the study and suggests possible topics for further research.

Chapter 2

Governance Actors in
Policy Network Advocacy

The intention of this research is to explore Karen local politics and relative actor interplay within the larger Myanmar peace process. Set against the backdrop of a country in democratic transition, local policy advocacy is often overlooked due to its lack of authority at national level. With academic focus shifting toward the peace process at the national level, priority is given to actors directly involved in that negotiation. This research seeks to explore local level policy networks, their participation in advocacy, and their potential influence in policy negotiation.

Policy and Governance: Setting the Stage

Howard Lasswell introduced the concept of policy studies and analysis in 1948 in his book *Power and Personality,* stating: "sciences are policy sciences when they clarify the process of policy making in society, or supply data needed for the making of rational judgments on policy questions" (1948, p. 120). This research is more an exploration of policy *process* as it focuses on the 'interactions among people in the development of public policy' (deLeon & Weible, 2010, p. 3).

Policy Network Analysis

A policy network is defined as "complex, dynamic interactions among a continuously evolving set of actors across fragmented institutions with overlapping jurisdictions" (Yi & Scholz, 2016, p. 251; Feiock & Scholz, 2010; Lubell, 2013). This definition makes it ideal for analyzing the political environment in Myanmar, which is undoubtedly complex and certainly involves countless interactions among ever-changing actors and institutions.

Policy network analysis focuses on the links and interdependence between sections of government and other elements of society, aiming to understand the policy-making process and public policy outcomes. This method of analysis also acknowledges the importance of relationships in the context of policymaking, but additional methods must be employed to break down the *ways* in which actors who engage in such relationships attempt to impact policy. Governance theory provides a way of seeing relationships within policy networks, and how an individual's agency can be considered as having impact on policy decisions.

Governance Theory

Focused on analyzing the *process* of governance, with its multiple actors (public and private), governance theory moves past the idea of formal institutions establishing control from the top (Bogason & Zolner, 2007; Toikka, 2011) and focuses on networks. Arho Toikka (Toikka, 2011, pp. 7, 24) explains that building policy networks needs lead-actors to get things started, triggering others to act (ibid, p. 22). In the context of this research, lead-actors are politically connected individuals who often participate in CSOs and ad hoc political groups.

Power and Advocacy

Jenkins defines advocacy as "any attempt to influence the decisions of any institutional elite on behalf of a collective interest" (1987, p. 297; Mosley, 2011, p. 436). Advocacy by non-state actors provides a voice, access to relevant institutions, and the capability to influence these institutions (James & Rose-Ackerman 1986: 9; Almog-Bar & Schmid 2014), transforming policy networks into governance actors (Chaskin & Greenberg, 2013; Ljubownikow & Crotty, 2015, p. 316). In 2011, Jennifer E. Mosley studied the involvement of human

service nonprofits in policy advocacy, looking at the tactics utilized by each organization. These advocacy tactics were defined as either indirect[17] or insider:

Indirect advocacy usually raises concerns about general public issues, using tactics such as knowledge-creation whereby information is disseminated but not necessarily in a non-objective manner. Sara Mills summarizes Foucault's theory of knowledge production:

> [Foucault] describes the ways in which knowledge does not simply emerge from scholarly study, but is produced and maintained in circulation in societies through the work of a number of different institutions and practices. Thus, he moves us away from seeing knowledge as objective and dispassionate towards a view which sees knowledge always working in the interests of particular groups. (Mills, 2003, p. 79)

In other words indirect advocacy tactics are employed to produce knowledge that supports a particular argument with the intention of mobilizing public support. Identifying the opposition as a vital part of the political system, Henrik Beech Seeberg analyzed the influence of opposition criticism on government policy development, urging the opposition to be taken more seriously in policy making: concentrating on the incumbency "implicitly makes holding power a prerequisite" for policy influence (2016, pp.186-7). By mobilizing indirect advocacy tactics that emphasize negative reflections on the incumbency, the opposition can ensure that the public is aware of certain issues and the current leaders' role in those issues (Thesen, 2013; Green-Pederson & Mortensen, 2010; Seeberg, 2016, p. 189).

Insider advocacy includes tactics such as participating in government committees and lobbying policy makers (2011, p. 437). Symbolic resources are also utilized, such as the "name and reputation" of an organization or individual – a resource otherwise described as social capital[18]. Described by Michal Almog-

---

17   Also referred to as 'outside' tactics; however, this research will use Mosley's term, 'indirect', as it more accurately describes the action taken, rather than causing confusion over the inside/outside dichotomy.

18   See Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992, p. 119) in which social capital is described as the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.

Bar as "softer and less-confrontational", insider tactics facilitate connections with the leadership and can legitimize the advocacy organization as expert in its field of knowledge, making the leadership dependent on its knowledge and expertise (2017, pp. 11, 13). As insider advocacy tactics are typically not visible to the public, the public must trust the advocacy group based on relevant actors' social capital (Hanegraaff et al., 2016, pp. 569, 571).

Most literature that discusses insider advocacy implicitly ascribes power to the relevant actors due simply to their proximity to the decision makers. The assumption that proximity implies influence has led to the view that insider tactics must be more effective than indirect advocacy. But this may not be so; the various forms of advocacy and the channels through which they operate often leave it unclear as to who exactly influenced whom (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Lowery, 2013; Hofman & Aalbers, 2017, pp. 6-7; Beyers et al., 2008). This is where policy network analysis can enhance researchers' understanding of actors' influence.

Where possible, policy networks attempt to balance both insider and indirect tactics in order to engage with multiple governance levels (Ljubownikow & Crotty, 2015, p. 5).

Policy Network: Methods of Analysis

As shown in Figure 2.1, policy networks offer an analysis of the relationships between macro-level political institutions and micro-level individual actors (Evans, 2001; Lubell et al., 2012, pp. 352).
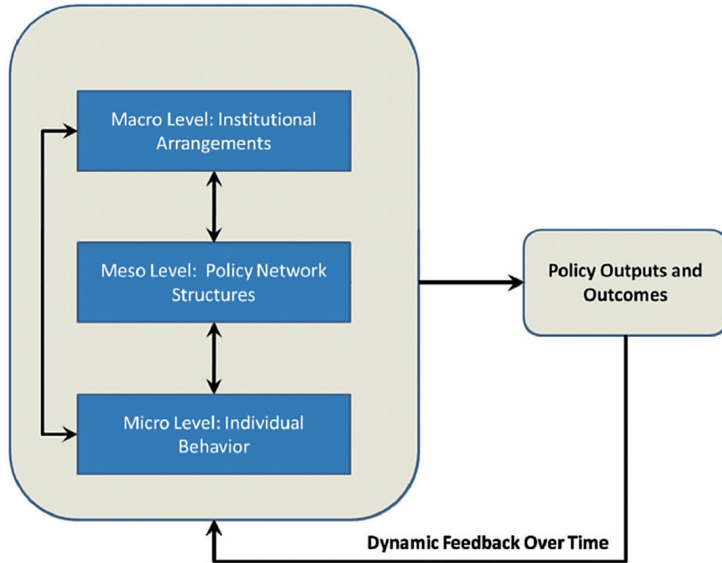
Figure 2.1: Social Elements of a Policy System (Lubell et al., 2012, p. 354)

Actor Perceptions

Actors filter perceptions through their belief systems, often ignoring information that challenges those beliefs while readily accepting information that reinforces them (Weible & Sabatier, 2006, p. 127). Actor perceptions are based on a three-tiered hierarchical belief system: 1) deep core beliefs, which are fundamental, not policy-specific, and very resistant to change; 2) policy core beliefs, which are empirical beliefs in a particular policy and very resistant to change; and 3) secondary beliefs, which are empirical beliefs and policy preferences that relate to an aspect of a particular policy, but not that policy as a whole. Of the three tiers, the third tier is most susceptible to change in response to new knowledge, information, or events (Weible & Sabatier, 2006, p. 128). Thus, an actor utilizes his own perception as a mechanism, similar to what is referred to as a 'policy platform', to promote a specific ideology through discourse. In the Karen policy sub-system context, this allows policy opponents to pursue a narrow and precise policy outcome at the national level.

Actor perception further motivates policy participants to collaborate and form advocacy coalitions (Weible & Sabatier, 2006, p. 127; Lahat, 2011; Linder & Peters, 1989; Stone, 2002). Actors participate in advocacy because of three interrelated motives: instrumentality, identity, and ideology (Klandermans, 2004). The ideology of a group, or within a policy network, arises from shared experiences in the group's history (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007, p. 903). This provides the rationality for challenging certain social arrangements and conditions through mobilization of advocacy tactics. An opposition group works to define a social issue in accordance with its own specific ideology, furthering discourse that reiterates those beliefs (Stone, 2002; Dente, 2014, p. 49).

Imaginaries

The relatively new open political society in Myanmar has facilitated a proliferation of imaginaries. The sheer number of stakeholders in the national peace process ensures a variety of policy-related ideals and developmental interests. Within the Karen political context, imaginaries vary between the current KNU leadership who maintain negotiating authority and the policy opponents who are often active in civil society but removed from the negotiation. As different groups develop different sets of shared perceptions, their non-convergence drives political conflict and contestation (Milkoreit, 2017, p. 7).

In her study of societal response to climate change, Manjana Milkoreit explains that social change relies on the 'ability of individuals and groups to envision possible, likely, and desirable futures' – in other words imaginaries (2017, p. 1). Managing transformational shifts, such as a national peace process, requires the creation of visions of both desirable and undesirable futures including appropriate responses to socio-political issues (McCray, 2012, p. 16; Levy & Spicer, 2013, p. 662). But note that actors who create unattainable imaginaries may thereby limit their participation in policy-making (Milkoreit, 2017, p. 3) (Karen policy opponents have often been criticized for their hardline stance on idealistic policies, which has impacted their participation in policy-making through exclusion from the negotiating space.)

Milkoreit also states that an imaginary is built through an individual's cognitive ability to create sets of mental representations of what is not yet present, and that the brain has a tendency to rely on memories of the past when trying to anticipate the future (ibid, p. 5). Buckner and Carroll assert that 'past

experiences are used adaptively to imagine perspectives and events beyond those that emerge from the immediate environment', which Milkoreit interprets as meaning that an actor's specific past would serve to 'both enable and constrain the kinds of futures that humans can envision at a particular time' (Buckner and Carroll, 2007, p. 49; Milkoreit, 2017, p. 5). Individual perception informs the discourse that an actor aligns with on certain ideas. In this research, two main ideas are analyzed - politics and development - both of which have particular meanings within the policy opponents' and the policy negotiators' contexts, as will be elaborated on in Chapter 4.

Governance actors who engage in future-thinking processes are often ascribed more authority or social capital, making their imaginaries more influential in guiding policy decisions (Milkoreit, 2017, p. 8). The act of generating and promoting an imaginary is an act in which governance actors are attempting to create a future that 'suits their interests and represents their values' (ibid, p. 9; Jasanoff & Kim, 2015). Social capital plays a role in both the creation of an imaginary and the advocacy of that imaginary. Karen policy opponents maintain high social capital and utilize policy networks to advocate for their imaginaries with the intention of influencing peace process negotiations.

Figure 2.2 illustrates the process of creating shared imaginaries as detailed here. This process takes place within the larger context of the Karen policy sub-system as presented later in Figure 2.3, particularly represented as a dashed line between policy opponents and policy networks.
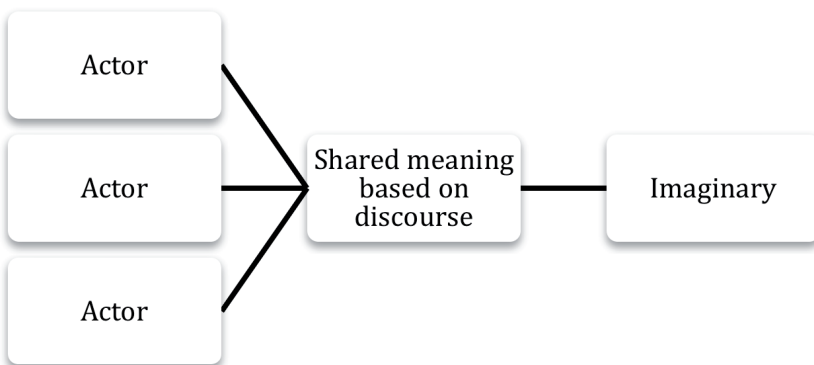

Figure 2.2 Creation of Shared Imaginaries

Advocacy through Karen Policy Networks: Theoretical Framework

Myanmar's current peace process is a paradigm study of policy networks in a complex governance arrangement. The mechanisms provided for in the NCA create a system of overlapping networks at the negotiation level, fulfilling roles in policy-making, monitoring, and forms of advocacy. This research goes one step further to explore the equivalent policy networks at local level, focusing primarily on the impact of governance actors on the national peace process vis-à-vis Karen policy networks. Analyzing the interplay of governance actors, negotiating actors, and the central government will identify the mechanisms of advocacy utilized and their subsequent impact. In Karen politics actors are often involved with various policy networks thereby increasing their advocacy tactics and potential impact.

My research will be analyzed utilizing a theoretical framework as presented below:
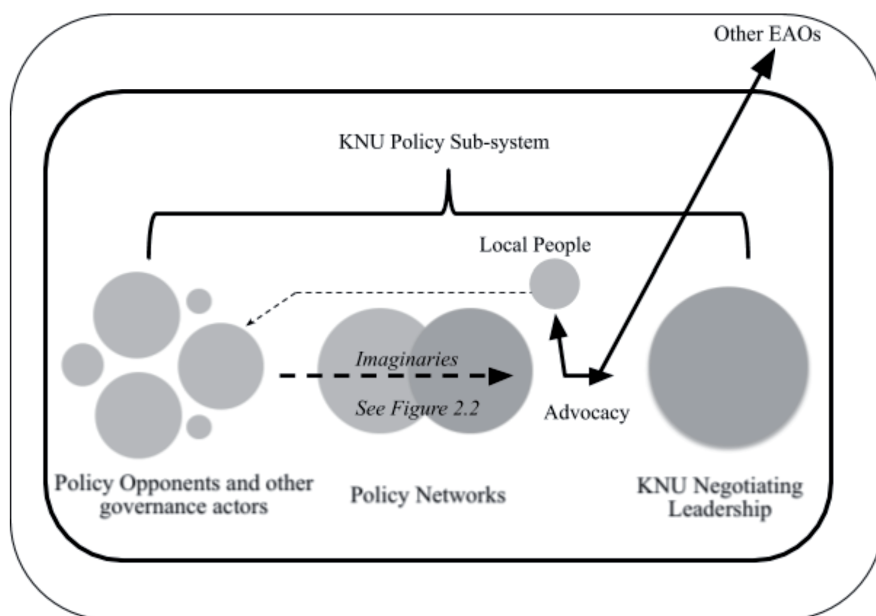
Figure 2.3 Karen Policy Sub-system Theoretical Framework

Within the larger context of the Myanmar Peace Process, various policy sub-systems exist simultaneously. This is readily apparent through the 'national

dialogues' as further detailed in Chapter 3, but can be simplified by stating that each EAO (signatory or non-signatory) operates within its own policy sub-system. Individual actors utilize policy networks to advocate for their imaginaries, to influence policy at the decision-making level within their sub-system.

Although indicated by a single arrow, advocacy will refer to both insider and indirect tactics as defined by Jennifer Mosley (2011). Karen actors seeking to influence policy decisions must do so through policy networks, as indicated by the dashed arrow. Policy networks provide a means for actors to form into groups based on shared beliefs and perceptions in order to promote an imaginary. Though some of such policy networks overlap, not all do. The advocacy tactics mobilized by Karen policy networks are not aimed exclusively at the KNU leadership, but also at the public, and village-level leaders.

Overview of Karen Insurgency Related Studies

Scholarship on Myanmar's peace process and the related NCA negotiations by EAOs is quickly outdated. As this research is focused specifically on recent events, priority is given to work published after the 2012 ceasefire with the KNU, and more especially to that published after the signing of the NCA in 2015.

In his report for The Asia Foundation, Kim Jolliffe (2016) discusses how KNU governance dynamics have been transformed by ceasefires and political developments. He details the various actors within the Karen insurgency movement, including both armed and political organizations. Although the KNU is not the only political actor from Karen State in the national peace process, they have maintained significant autonomy in local governance, remaining a 'deeply embedded governance actor' (Jolliffe, 2016, pp. 1, 2). The analysis stops short of detailing current political factionalism within the KNU and treats the KNLA as a relatively coherent movement, as it has not (yet) officially splintered into two separate groups. The report focuses instead on factions that split from the main organization to create their own group, such as the DKBA or KPC. This does a disservice to the need for updated and detailed information regarding the heterogeneous aspects of ethnic insurgencies, even those that present a unified front. Jolliffe concludes the report with a section focusing on implications for reform, peace building, and development. It is in this section that governance is finally discussed, though with a focus on allowing governance within Karen state from a top-down perspective, overlooking the potential policy influence of

individual actors and revealing the ever-present gap in Peace and Conflict Studies literature - the influence of individual ethno-political actors in policy-making.

The heterogeneity of the Karen insurgency is expertly detailed in Brenner's 2017 article, criticizing Peace and Conflict Studies for conceptualizing non-state armed groups as monolithic actors. Focusing on the interplay between rival factions within different levels of analysis, the article succeeds in explaining the various factors that have contributed to fragmentation of the KNU. Unlike South's 2007 article, which relates political disunity to a lack of singular ethnic identity, religious affiliation, and disconnect between political elites and grassroots civilians, Brenner provides context through discussion of geopolitical relations, power imbalances, and political-economic resource access. The recognition of individual actors contributes to a deeper understanding of the current political factions and their respective ideological perceptions (Brenner, 2017b, p. 10). While providing one of the most recent analyses of the Karen insurgency and its relative factions, the article does not address specific policy desires outside the pro/anti-NCA dichotomy.

Following Brenner's discussion of the disunity present in Karen politics, he discusses further how rebel leaders depend upon identity and recognition in their struggle for legitimate authority (2017a). Utilizing the Karen and Kachin as case studies to explore internal dynamics of non-state armed groups, Brenner identifies rank-and-file insurgency fighters as part of the grassroots community, and demonstrates that the KNU leaders' increasing business ventures and amicable relations with the Tatmadaw put them at odds with their insurgent grassroots, furthering factional infighting and increasing support for the faction that stands firmly inline with revolutionary principles (ibid, p. 423).

The incumbents' ceasefire capitalist[19] behavior has made it increasingly difficult for the 'grassroots' to identify with the KNU, rupturing the relationship between the leadership and Karen CSOs. The author describes a consultative meeting from 2013 in which a senior KNU leader implied that social and environmental concerns were 'none of their [KNU] concern', clearly demonstrating that the leadership did not take these concerns into account

---

19   Ceasefire capitalism often refers to extractive industries that primarily benefit ethnic-minority elites, regional army commanders, and national and foreign investors. Grievances include land grabbing, forced displacement, and unequal distribution of profit. See Kevin Woods, 2011, Lee Jones, 2014b, and TNI, 2011.

(ibid: 424). Without further research that claim should not be generalized too quickly, but Brenner's point is appreciated in the larger context of policy network analysis, which often assumes proximity as implicit with policy influence.

Discussing the influence of civil society on policy-making specifically within the Myanmar context, SiuSue Mark's 2012 article is particularly valuable in its analysis of the utilization of individual networks as informal channels (SiuSue, 2012, pp. 2, 5). In the context of this research, opposition actors have blurred the line between private actors and advocacy coalition participants, engaging with the KNU as both. Seeking to 'create alternative spaces for the debate and discussion of policy issues', opposition actors have provided potential space for influence over policy-making through continued insider advocacy tactics. Civil society organizations employ various mechanisms to leverage their influence within the local and/or national context, including media networking and coalitions with strong upward linkages (ibid, pp. 4, 5). However, the article is quick to assume that upward linkages can facilitate such policy influence without acknowledging the mechanisms in place that block such direct access. SiuSue's article is a much-needed attempt at providing focus in a broad-based field. However, as it strives to claim that structural flexibility in Myanmar's civil society framework provides its strength, the article falls short by not providing specific examples of where policy influence has been successful.

A large number of related studies focus on the KNU as a coherent organization and while many acknowledge the *presence* of factionalism, there is an obvious reluctance to provide legitimacy to its political influence (Jolliffe, 2016; Brouwer & van Wijk, 2013; South & Joll, 2016; Thawnghmung, 2017). Scholars researching Myanmar are applauded in their goal to provide a full context and understanding of a complex issue. However, I argue that some specificity and focus would provide a more nuanced understanding of the various issues embedded in the larger peace process (such as Brenner, 2017a and 2017b).

Policy networks provide a way to expand policy-making assumptions and give agency to actors who are not recognized in the normal policy cycle. All actors maintain their own belief systems, which generate their perceptions on policy and advocacy. Policy opponents, in particular, often ally with one another in advocacy coalitions, which then employ various tactics to promote their chosen discourse and imaginaries. Additionally, some policy opponents employ advocacy tactics through more than one policy network. In the complex governance system that is the Myanmar peace process, Karen politics constitute

a policy sub-system in which multiple actors are asserting leverage through policy networks in order to effect change. Detailing the imaginaries promoted through policy networks, this research also seeks to demonstrate where policy platforms align, interact, and diverge.

Through a discussion of policy, governance, power, lobbying, and advocacy, I have attempted to set the stage for my research by introducing my view of the Karen political context. This includes most importantly turning attention to individual actors and their non-static roles in policy-making. I then detail the two main channels of advocacy as set forth by Mosley (2011), leading to an overview of varying methods of analysis for policy networks. Two main concepts have been identified: that policy is advocated through two main tactics, and that actors advocate for policy through policy networks. In Myanmar, however, policy is not an objective term. I present a discussion of actor perceptions and imaginaries to demonstrate the inherent experience-based biases in promotion of policy ideals. My theoretical framework, then, combines the three main concepts presented to demonstrate how governance actors (with a focus on policy opponents) create a shared imaginary for which they advocate through policy networks in an attempt to effect change at the level of the national peace process negotiation.

This literature review has served to identify two main gaps in academia: 1) the limited application of policy network analysis in post-conflict societies; and 2) the hesitation to provide policy opponents legitimacy or acknowledge their role in shaping peace process policy, particularly in the context of Karen factionalism. While this research cannot claim to *fill* such gaps, it does aim to demonstrate that exploring such lines of inquiry is viable and in fact valuable to studies of the Myanmar peace process.

Chapter 3

The KNU: History, Governance Actors, and National Peace Process Imaginaries

After Myanmar's independence from Great Britain, attempts at nation building grew tense as ethnic groups began challenging what they perceived as threats to their autonomy (Tin Maung Maung Than, 2013). Taking up armed struggle against the government, civil wars erupted that have yet to be resolved. The last sixty-plus years have seen ceasefires signed and broken, and peace negotiations occurring with no real sign of peace. The oldest of Myanmar's ethnic insurgent movements goes back to 1881, with the formation of the Karen National Association, followed by the establishment of the Karen National Union (KNU) in 1947. Under the first president Saw Ba U Gyi Four Principles were declared:

> For us, surrender is out of the question.
> Recognition of the Karen State must be completed.
> We shall retain our arms.
> We shall determine our destiny.
> (Brouwer & van Wijk 2013, p. 837; Jolliffe, 2016, p. 5)

The KNU has operated as a *de facto* government within large areas of Karen State[20] where the Tatmadaw does not exert control, referred to as

---

20   Following the 1988 uprising, SLORC made various name changes including Burma to Myanmar, Rangoon to Yangon, and Karen to Kayin. This research will maintain use of the original name "Karen", as it is consistent with other academic works.

"liberated zones" (South, 2011, p. 8; Davis, 2016, p. 8). The current political structure of the KNU is based on delegate elections, at a Congress held every four years, of a Central Standing Committee comprising a Chairman, Vice Chairman, General Secretary, and Joint Secretaries 1 and 2; and a Central Executive Committee (CEC). The KNU Chairman takes the lead in the Central Executive Committee, while the General Secretary is more active in managing and coordinating the work of the fourteen departments. (Jolliffe, 2016, pp. 16-19).
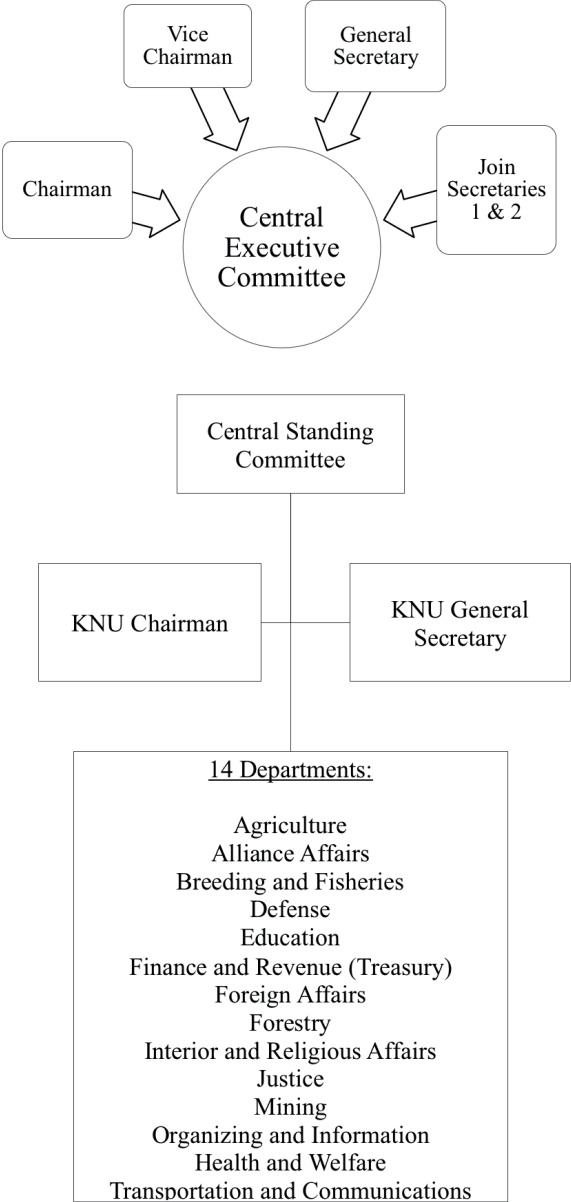
Figure 3.1: Diagram of Governance Structure: Central KNU Committees

The KNU-controlled area is divided into seven districts, each corresponding to a brigade of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA; the armed wing of the KNU) (see Figure 3.2):

First Brigade (Thaton),

Second Brigade (Toungoo),

Third Brigade (Nyaunglebin),

Fourth Brigade (Mergui-Tavoy [Dawei] in Tenasserim Region),

Fifth Brigade (Hpapun [MuTraw]),

Sixth Brigade (Duplaya), and

Seventh Brigade (Hpa'an)

In this *de facto* federation of seven districts, each district retains some autonomy in local governance and financial management while remaining connected through institutional processes requiring consensus on KNU policy changes (Jolliffe, 2016, p. 14).

In addition to political and armed divisions, the KNU administration includes departments for health, education, law, forestry and other aspects of civilian life (South, 2011, pp. 10, 14). Social services are often provided through community-based organizations (CBOs) or civil society organizations (CSOs). These organizations were traditionally based at the local level, emerging from religious groups' social welfare activities, fulfilling the state's service-provider role in areas of conflict (ADB, 2015). Some CSOs have officially mandated roles in the KNU structure, including the Karen Women's Organization, Karen Youth Organization, and the Karen Office for Relief and Development (KORD) (Jolliffe, 2016, p. 26). Karen civil society thrives both inside and outside Myanmar resulting in much transnational activity where a CSO based in Thailand, such as the Karen Environmental and Social Action Network, nevertheless works in KNU territory (Simpson, 2013, p. 144; Jolliffe, 2016, p. 27). Members, directors, and founders of these CSOs may also hold positions in the KNU at various levels (Jolliffe, 2016, p. 27).

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first will discuss fragmentation in the Karen insurgency movement, and more specifically within the KNU, providing a historical context to current political differences. The policy perceptions of various governance actors will also be discussed to give

context to their support for particular imaginaries, as will be described further in Chapter 4. The second section provides a brief but in-depth look at the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) signed by a total of ten EAOs as of 2018, and goes on to describe some NCA mechanisms and the actors involved. The next section analyzes where Karen governance actors have authority and where they hold most representation in the NCA. Following exploration of the Policy Negotiators who are directly involved in peace process negotiations, the fourth section will look at the Policy Opponents, explaining some of their main concerns in the peace process: infrastructure development and particpatory policy-making. This section also touches on the Karen political context including variegated structure and unity building measures. The last section lists the Karen policy networks from which informants were chosen, as being the most relevant to this research.
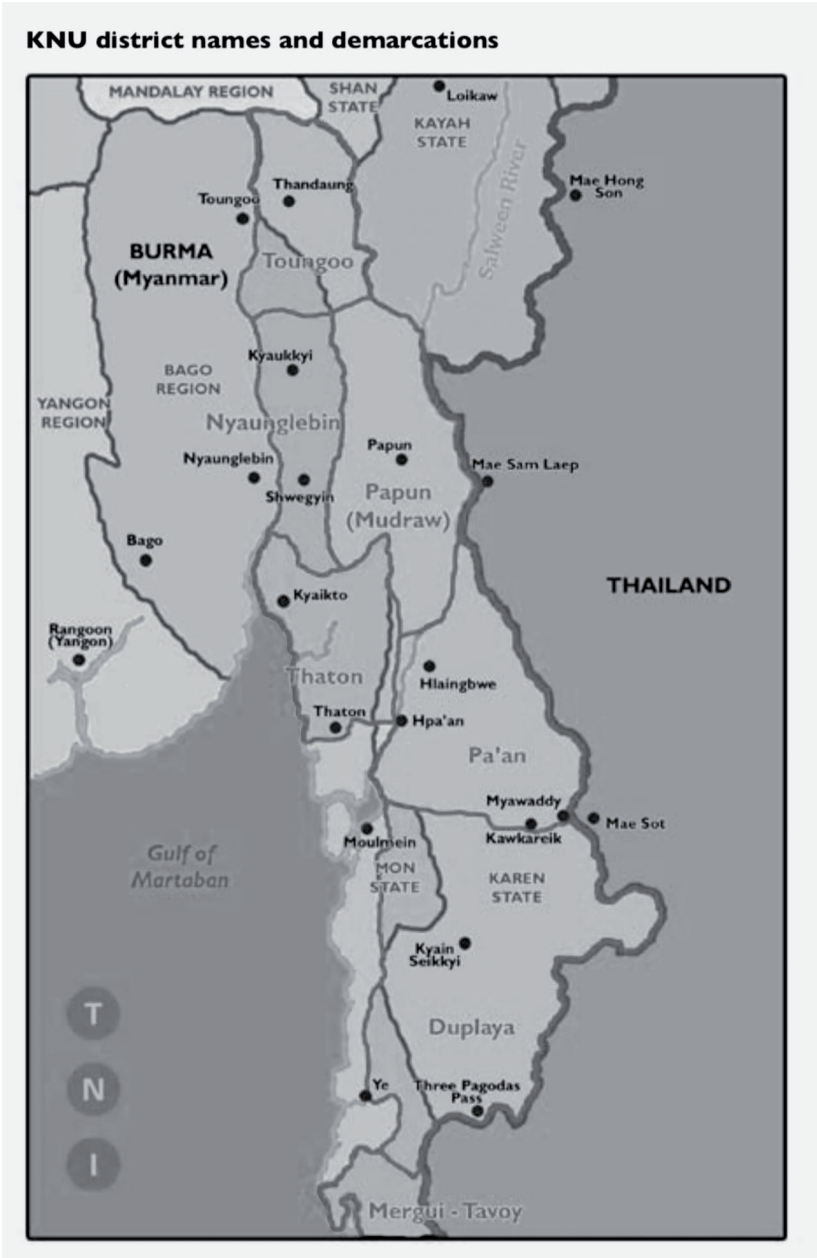
Figure 3.2: Maps illustrating Karen State & KNLA Brigades (South, 2011, pp. 9, 11)
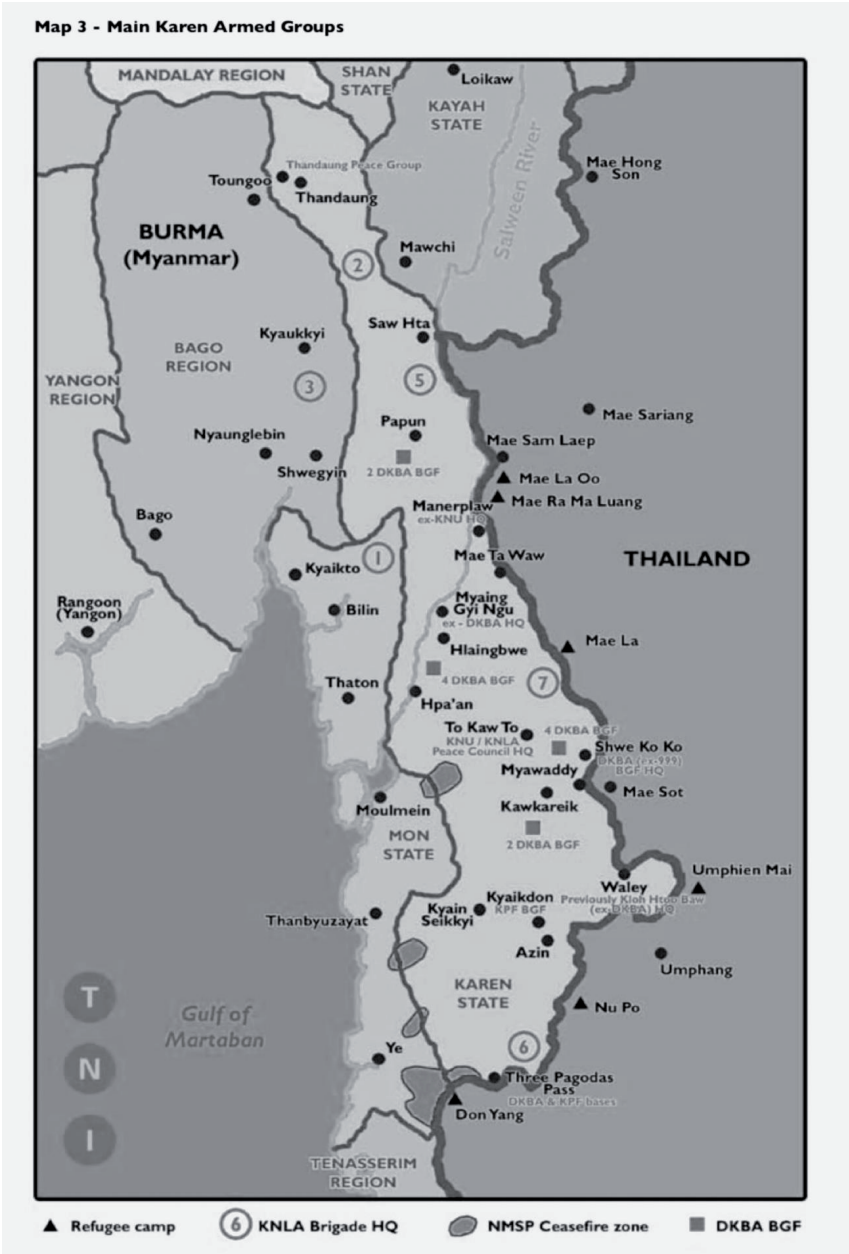
Figure 3.2: Maps illustrating Karen State & KNLA Brigades (South, 2011, pp. 9, 11)

Unity-Disunity

Although the KNU is a key stakeholder in Myanmar politics, it is not representative of a pan-Karen identity nor of a united Karen political goal (South, 2007; Brouwer & van Wijk, 2013; Thawnghmung, 2008). The Karen insurgency has always been a heterogeneous movement, involving people from varying political, religious, geographic, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds, and with additional power imbalances between KNLA brigades (Brenner, 2017, p. 3; Thawnghmung, 2008, p. 9). Policy divisions have plagued the Karen political arena since as early as 1945 when the Karen Youth Organization was founded as a youth wing of the Karen Central Organization[21] (KCO). Their advocacy for accommodation with the central government and willingness to compromise on the definition of the Karen state is in stark contrast to KNU policy (Smith, 1999, p. 87). The political divide between cooperation and resistance exists to this day (Thawnghmung, 2008, pp. 8-9; Jolliffe, 2016, p. 4).

In 1994, as a consequence of religious differences[22], Sgt.-Major Kyaw Than of the KNLA defected and founded the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), pulling about 3,000 soldiers out of the KNLA (South, 2007, 2011). In 1995 the DKBA allied with the Tatmadaw and launched an offensive against the KNU headquarters in Manerplaw (Hpa'an, Brigade 7) (Jolliffe, 2016, p. 10; Davis, 2016, p. 9). This marked the end of the relatively united KNU political movement and a significant decline in its authority, spurring a number of smaller defections:

1. 1996: Thu Mu Hei's Peace Force (formerly the KNU's sixteenth battalion);

2. 1997: Perry Moe of Thandaung, formed from the KNU's second brigade; and

3. 1998: Padoh Aung San's Karen Peace Force.

Additionally, in 1997, Mahn Robert Zan founded the Karen Solidarity Organization (KSO) to explore alternatives to armed resistance, and in 1998 Doctor Marta broke away from the KNU to form the Working Group for Karen Unification (Thawnghmung, 2008, pp. 35-36).

---

21 One of the four Karen organizations that merged to create the KNU in 1947.
22 Religious differences also influenced disparity in access to resources; see South, 2007, p. 61.

The 2007 creation of a KNU-KNLA Peace Council (KPC) splinter group was the result of an individual ceasefire negotiation between the Brigade 7 commander, Gen. Htein Maung, and the SPDC (Brenner, 2017, p. 5). Following the agreement Gen. Htein Maung was dismissed from the KNU Central Executive Committee while other KPC followers were unable to secure KNU positions at the 13th Congress, losing their political bargaining power. The KPC then advocated for dialogue with the SPDC to bring about political change, as the burden of conflict for the local population had become unbearable (Core, 2009, pp. 98, 99). The KNU-KNLA Peace Council is now a signatory to the NCA. In 2009 the Myanmar government attempted consolidation of all Tatmadaw forces, ordering ceasefire groups, including the KPC and DKBA, to transition into Border Guard Forces (BGF) which would essentially place EAOs under Tatmadaw control and weaken EAO military power without addressing their political goals (Davis, 2016, pp. 11, 22). While some ceasefire groups complied, the DKBA faced coflicting desires ultimately leading to the splinter group 'Klo Htoo Baw', also referred to as DKBA-5, which refused to comply and eventually realigned itself with the KNU (ibid).

When Tatmadaw offensives hit the central and southern brigades particularly hard, the traditional KNU power base was weakened, leading to the emergence of Brigade 5 (Hpapun) as its successor (Brenner, 2017, p. 8). Receiving substantial support from Brigade 5, Zipporah Sein's[23] ability to remain steadfast in her opposition to the KNU leadership stemmed from strong military backing and the availability of socio-economic resources[24] within the northern brigades. On the other hand, current KNU Chairman and former Brigade 6 commander, Mutu Say Poe[25], along with KNU leaders from Brigades 4 and 7, lead the "pro-ceasefire" faction. As support for this faction is generally concentrated in the

---

23 Zipporah Sein is the daughter of former KNU President Tamla Baw and is considered a 'hardliner' of the "political solutions" faction. She was elected as KNU General Secretary in the 14th KNU Congress, under the leadership of her father as KNU Chairman. The 15th KNU Congress saw her elected as Vice Chairman, however she was not reelected to the KNU Central Executive Committee in the 16th KNU Congress.

24 As Brigade 5 was able to maintain control over their territory in comparison to the Southern and Central brigades, they have continued to rule as a quasi-government that delivers social services and security in return for taxes (Brenner, 2017, p. 92). This revenue serves as a source of security for Karen governance actors within northern Karen state.

25 Prior to his election as chairman of the KNU in 2012 (and subsequent reelection in 2017), Mutu Say Poe served as commander-in-chief of the KNLA as well as commander of KNLA Brigade 6.

southern brigades, decreased military and economic capacity have led to an increased interest in compromise and business opportunities, primarily through state-led development projects (Brenner, 2017, pp. 8-10; Jolliffe, 2016, pp. 61, 62).

In 2012, KNU Chairman Gen. Tamla Baw sent Mutu Say Poe, as the head of the ceasefire delegation and KNLA Chief of Staff, to Yangon in order to discuss the points of tension in the ceasefire negotiations with Thein Sein's government. Instead, Mutu Say Poe overstepped the delegation's authority and signed a ceasefire agreement, which KNU leadership, including Zipporah Sein, accepted for the sake of KNU unity (Brenner, 2017, p. 11). Under Mutu Say Poe's leadership, newly voted in during the 15th Congress (2012), the "united" KNU movement fragmented even further. In 2014 Mutu Say Poe attempted to withdraw from the United Nationalities Federal Council as his faction believed membership in the alliance was constraining NCA negotiations with Thein Sein's government, but he was pressured to remain a member by the opposition faction. Later that year the opposition faction signed an agreement with the DKBA and KPC to create a new umbrella organization for Karen armed groups, which was met with concern by the incumbent leadership. Although unity was reestablished in a 2014 emergency meeting, the 2015 signing of the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) reignited that same factionalism (Brenner, 2017, p. 12). After the NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi took over the NCA negotiations and national peace process in 2016, two "Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong" (UPC-21CP) events were held, the first in August 2016 and the second in May 2017. The second conference concluded with agreement on 37 basic principles of the Union Accord. However, according to the NCA roadmap (see Figure 3.3), national (political) dialogue had to be completed prior to holding UPC events and discussing, let alone approving, the Union Accord (Burma News International, 2017, p. 33). This created an additional point of disagreement for the KNU factions, as many signatories and non-signatories had not been allowed to conduct the required dialogue (Mon News Agency, 2017; interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

Figure 3.3: NCA Roadmap (Burma News International, 2016, p. 48)

These examples of fragmentation within the KNU illustrate the dividing line between "peace through development" and "political solutions" (Smith, 2007, pp. 49-50; Core, 2009, p. 102). As "…many KNU leaders had come to view the term *ceasefire* as synonymous with *surrender*, and the term *development* as a code word for personal profit", the idea that development could be part of peace-building was distrusted by many on the "political solutions" side (Jolliffe, 2016, p. 41). Today, this fragmentation still aligns with the decades-old divide essentially between 'compromising'(current KNU leadership under Mutu Say Poe) and 'uncompromising' (opposition led by Zipporah Sein). In the context of the NCA, the 'compromise' is to follow the order of the process as the government and Tatmadaw are leading it, while the opposition demands that the process be followed in the order originally set out, focusing on the necessity of political dialogue (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

The National Ceasefire Agreement

Myanmar's 'peace process' is primarily facilitated through the NCA. It attempts to include all stakeholders in a democratic and representative decision-making process, though some call into question the democratic nature of the process due to the Tatmadaw's continual presence (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). The peace process is pursued by numerous committees with varying levels of authority linked in complex ways, as detailed in Figure 3.4.

While the peace process is not at all straightforward, it is important to recognize the NCA mechanisms that play an influential role. This research will focus on the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC), the Union Peace Dialogue Committee (UPDJC), the Peace Process Steering Team (PPST), and the EAO Coordination Team (EAO-CT), which are just four of the myriad of teams, working groups, organizations, etc. that continuously band and disband for various reasons depending on their role in the process.

The Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) was established in October 2015 to prevent the recurrence of armed clashes by enforcing the military code of conduct[26]. The JMC works at Union (JMC-U), State (JMC-S), and Local (JMC-L) levels. The JMC-U has 26 members: ten from the government, parliament, and military; ten from the signatory EAOs; and six civilian representatives, three chosen by the military and three chosen by the signatory EAOs. (Burma News International, 2017, pp. 36-41). JMC-S responsibilities include resolving disputes without using force, coordinating between NGOs and EAOs regarding humanitarian assistance programs for IDPs and conflict victims, and giving guidance to JMC-L committees. JMC-L committees are the main mechanism through which persons can complain about code of conduct violations, which are then categorized as minor, serious, or critical. A critical violation requires JMC-U verification prior to action.

---

26   Military code of conduct agreed in 2015 between the government and the EAOs "to uphold and implement precisely the terms of the NCA."

Government	EAO	
Chairman: Lt. General Ya Pyae	Vice Chair 1: Maj. General Saw Isaac Poe	KNU
U Khin Maung Soe	Maj. General Saw Nay Soe Mya	KPC
Lt. General Ye Aung	Secretary 1: Dr. Sui Khar	CNF
Maj. General Tun Tun Naung	Maj. Saw Kyaw Than Htay	DKBA
Maj. General Aung Kyaw Zaw	Lt. Colonel Khun Aung Man	PNLO
Maj. General Min Naung	Comrade Salai Yaw Aung	ABSDF
U Myint Soe	Lt. Colonel Khaing Myo Chit	ALP
Maj. General Aung Soe	Colonel Saung Han	RCSS
Secretary 2: Col. Wunna Aung	Padoh Saw Tar Doh Moo	KNU
Dr. Min Zaw Oo	Sai Leng	RCSS

Table 3.1: Members of JMC-U as of April 2016

Out of the group of EAO representatives, four come from Karen EAOs, with two directly from the KNU. This demonstrates the KNU's authority as a primary actor in NCA mechanisms, taking a leading role in the peace process.

The JMC-Terms of Reference dictate that JMC-U independent civilian representatives must be "trusted and respected by the many" and accepted by both the government and EAO members.

Civilian Representatives
Vice Chair 2: U Pyae Sone
Reverend Matthew Aye (Karen Peace Support Network)
U Ko Ko Kyi
Sai Myo Than
Maung Maung Than
Thura U Tin Hla

Table 3.2: Members as of April 2016

The Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) was established in October 2015 as the political wing of the NCA. Its responsibilities include:

1. to draft and approve the Framework for Political Dialogue, and launch the political dialogue;

2. to organize the Union Peace Conference (UPC);

3. to draft, and submit to the UPC, rules and regulations to be followed by UPC participants, structure of meetings, and procedures for carrying out tasks;

4. to collect and analyze the proposals from the working committees that will be submitted to the UPC;

5. to form necessary committees and subcommittees and specify their duties and responsibilities;

6. to break dialogue deadlocks;

7. to submit the Union Accord to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw[27] for ratification.

The UPDJC also includes Thematic Working Groups and a Secretariat.

The UPDJC comprises three groups of sixteen members each: sixteen members from the government, parliament and military; sixteen members from the signatory EAOs; and sixteen members from the political parties. The UPDJC is the highest body established by the NCA to direct the peace process dialogue. As can be seen in the chart below, Karen delegates have four of the EAO member seats.

---

27   The Burmese parliament

Government, Parliament and Tatmadaw	EAO	
Chair: State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi	Vice Chair Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong	CNF
Vice Chair 1: U Kyaw Tint Swe	Saw Kyaw Nyunt	KPC
Vice Chair 2: U Thu Wai	Saw Smith Don	DKBA
U Thant Zin Muang	Khun Myat Tun	PNLO
U Thein Shwe	Saw Myrat Razar Linn	ALP
Dr. Win Myat Ayre	U Bawng Hkur	RCSS
Naing Thet Lwin	Padoh Man Nyein Maung	KNU
U Tun Tun Oo	Salai Thla Hei	CNF
Lt. General Tin Maung Win	Saw Sein Win	DKBA
U Khun Muang Thaung	Khun Tun Tin	PNLO
Daw Sheila Nang Twaung	Mi Su Pwint	ABSDF
Maj. General Myint New	U Khaing Linn Khaing	ALP
Maj. General Soe Naing Oo	U Myo Win	ABSDF
Brigade General Sein Tun Hla	U Sai La	RCSS
U Khin Zaw Oo		
U Hla Maung Shwe		

Table 3.3: Government, Parliament and Tatmadaw and EAO Members of Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC)

Political Party Representatives	
U Thu Wai	DP (Myanmar)
U Tun Tun Hein	NLD
U Nai Ngan Linn	NLD
U Myint Soe	USDP
Dr. Maung Maung Htay	USDP
Dr. Aye Maung	Arakan National Party
Dr. Min New Soe	Mro National Development Party
Saw Tun Aung Myint	Kayin People's Party
U Thein Tun	National Unity Party
Dr. Manam Tu Ja	Kachin State Democratic Party
Tar Hla Pe	Ta'ang National Party
U Khun Tun Shwe	PNLP
U Zam Za Mung	Zomi Congress for Democracy
U Shwe Min	Lisu National Development Party
U Kyaw Zeya Oo	Mon National Party
Sai Kyaw Nyunt	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy

Table 3.4: Political Party Representatives on UPDJC as of June 2016, some updated to 2018

The Framework for Political Dialogue provides a dialogue process plan, agendas for discussion, and structure of the political dialogue. It was originally adopted after the NCA was signed in order to facilitate the first UPC, only to be reviewed and revised following the NLD's official entrance into the peace process. However, this meant that UPC-21PC session 1 was conducted without an approved framework, and UPC-21PC session 2 utilized the previous framework (Thiha, 2017). As of February 2018[28], a Framework for Political Dialogue has yet to be adopted, giving the government more power to control the process while undermining the very significance of the NCA as a regulating procedure (ibid). Chapter Four of the (draft) Framework outlines "National Political Dialogue" as follows:

---

28   As of August 2018 the Peace Process Steering Team (PPST) was still reviewing the Framework for Political Dialogue.

1. Under the direction of the Working Committees, and in accordance with the roadmap laid out by the UPDJC, State and Region Governments, EAOs, or civil society organizations, either individually or jointly, may hold national political dialogue.

2. Representatives of the Government, Parliament, Tatmadaw, EAOs, registered political parties, ethnic nationalities, civil society organizations, and relevant stakeholders may participate in national political dialogue.

3. Issues under the six (6) major topics to be discussed during the national political dialogue relating to ethnic nationalities, specific regions, or citizens at large may be discussed at the State and Region level, or at the nationwide level.

4. The relevant Working Committees shall submit recommendations and proposals from these meetings to the Union Peace Conference for discussion and decision-making.   (Aung Naing Oo, 2016, p. 165)

As seen here, the term "national dialogue" is somewhat misleading as "national" does not refer to the country, or the sub-national level such as an ethnic state. More accurately, "national" refers to Myanmar's "national races"; meaning political dialogues should be ethnically based (Latt, 2017). However, thematic dialogues are also included in this umbrella term focusing on five issues: politics, economics, security, society, and land and the environment. These are then filtered through the UPDJC's coordinating thematic working committees (ibid). Between February and March 2017, there were six national dialogues: three were based on ethnicity (Karen, Chin, and Pa-O); two were regionally focused (Pegu & Tenasserim); and one – the Civil Society Forum - was thematic (ibid). Figure 3.4 illustrates the Framework for Political Dialogue.
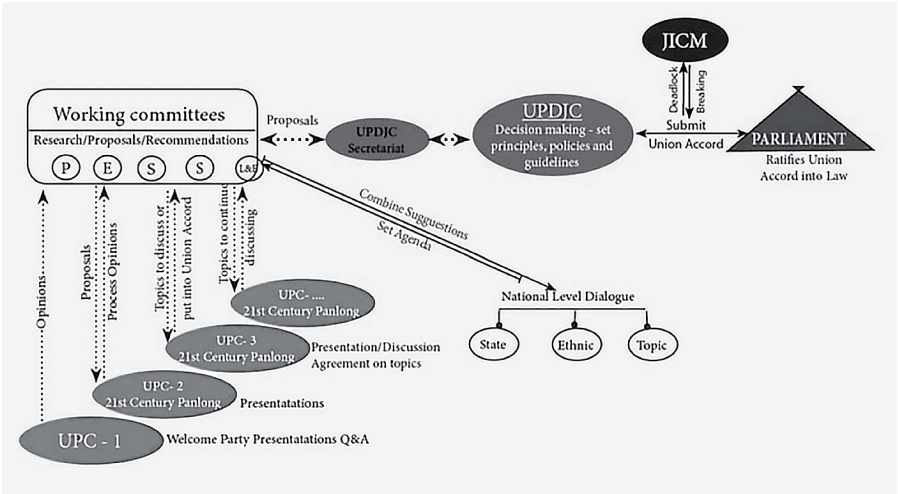
Figure 3.4: Political Dialogue (Burma News International, 2017, p. 50)

Ahead of the second UPC-21PC in 2017, a Karen (ethnicity-based) national political dialogue was conducted with an outcome of ratifying previously drafted policy papers to present at the Conference. Agreed upon by the KNU, DKBA, KNU-KNLA PC, political parties, religious leaders, regional delegates, CSO representatives, and special guests (291 total participants), these standardized policy papers "reflect the voices of the Karen people" and though "not totally complete and comprehensive", they were to be strengthened in future political talks at various levels (Karen News, 2017a).

Both the JMC and UPDJ report to the NCA Joint Implementation Coordination Meetings (JICM), which are held regularly and composed of signatory EAO and government representatives. In 2016, arrangements were made to schedule JICM meetings every three months. The first meeting was held immediately after the 2015 signing of the NCA, and the most recent meeting was January 2018.

Government	EAO	
U Thein Swe	Comrade Than Khe	ABSDF
U Tun Tun Oo	Khaing Soe Naing Aung	ALP
Dr. Tin Myo Win	Dr. Lian H. Sakhong	CNF
U Kyaw Tint Swe	Maj. General Saw Moshay	DKBA
Lt. General Ye Aung	Padoh Saw Kwe Htoo Win	KNU
Lt. General Yar Pyae	Naw Kapaw Htoo	KPC
U Thein Zaw	Khun Myint Tun	PNLO
U Khin Zaw Oo	Maj. General Bawng Khur	RCSS

Table 3.5: Members of JICM as of April 2016:

The Peace Process Steering Team (PPST) is considered to be a 'policy-making body' comprised of representatives from the signatory EAOs. The PPST, established in March 2016, is led by KNU Chairman Mutu Say Poe. Meetings are held regularly in Chiang Mai. As this NCA mechanism does not include members of the government, parliament, or military, it holds the most potential in terms of dialogue and policy-network influence via advocacy (to be described further in Chapter 5). According to Myanmar Peace Monitor, its purpose is to provide leadership (guidance and supervision) when meeting with non-signatory groups and the new government; to provide direction when making urgent decisions; and to direct projects for the JMC and UPDJC (Burma News International, 2017, p. 62). The PPST meetings allow for the signatory EAOs to consult with one another and their advisors, without government or military representatives present, in order to 'reassess NCA implementation' (ibid).

Under Mutu Say Poe's guidance, the PPST engages with the NLD government, particularly State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi, in meetings, summits, and other forms of interaction. In a recent example, the government proposed a peace summit in October 2018 to address issues that are causing the current deadlock. However, with such a short timeframe, the KNU released a statement requesting the summit to be delayed in order to provide the EAOs with more time to prepare. The PPST agreed that it was best to engage the

government as a unified bloc, largely due to the significance of the event as the first opportunity for EAOs to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi and Tatmadaw Chief General Min Aung Hlaing simultaneously (Nyein Nyein, 2018b).

Position	Name	EAO Affiliation
Leader	Mutu Say Poe	KNU Chairman
Deputy Leader	Lt. General Yawd Serk	RCSS Chairman
Coordinator 1	Hkun Okker	PNLO Central Committee
Coordinator 2	Pu Zing Cung	CNF Chairman
Member	U Khine Soe Naing Aung	ALP Deputy Chairman 2
Member	Yebaw (Comrade) Than Khe	ABSDF Chairman
Member	Dr. Naw Ka Paw Htoo	KPC
Member		DKBA

Table 3.6: Members of PPST as of 2016:

The EAO-Coordination Team was established in October 2015 and led by KNU Vice Chairman Padoh Kwe Htoo Win to form a strategy for continuing political dialogue and to create mechanisms for coordination with non-signatory EAOs. Essentially, this can be considered a reformation of the NCCT.

Leader: Padoh Kwe Htoo Win	KNU
Sai La	RCSS
Saw Mra Raza Lin	ALP
Pu Thla Hei	CNF
Yebaw (Comrade) Sonny	ABSDF
Saw Kyaw Nyunt	KPC
Hkun Thomas	PNLO
	DKBA

Table 3.7: Members of EAO-CT as of 2016:

The purpose of including such detailed description of the NCA mechanisms is to illustrate to the reader various areas of actor overlap, to make

clear which areas of the NCA have more/less influence from particular EAO actors, and to record the latest peace process developments.

KNU Interaction with NCA

Based on the detailed description of the current NCA mechanisms, an overview of how the KNU specifically interacts with the NCA is outlined below:

Name	NCA Position	KNU Position
Mutu Say Poe	PPST Leader	Chairman
Maj. General Saw Isaac Poe	JMC-U Vice Chair	KNU Central Executive Committee Member
Padoh Saw Tar Doh Moo	JMC-U Member	KNU General Secretary
Reverend Matthew Aye	JMC-U Civilian Member	Karen Peace Support Network (Coalition of CSOs)
Padoh Saw Kwe Htoo Win	JICM Representative; EAO-CT Leader	KNU Vice Chairman
Padoh Man Nyein Maung	UPDJC Member	KNU Central Executive Committee Member
Susanna Hla Hla Soe	Parliament Member (NLD)	Former director of Karen Women's Empowerment Group (KWEG)

Table 3.8: KNU/NCA interactions

As various members of the KNU and Karen policy networks are directly involved in NCA mechanisms, one can see why Karen governance actors trust that their advocacy can impact the negotiation process. However, this depends on the relevant KNU actors being able to carry policy points to the level of negotiation. Such dynamics are explored further in the following chapters.

The KNU Congress is the highest-level decision-making body of the KNU and convenes every four years, while district and township congresses convene every two years. The congresses elect committees and decide their primary objectives, making them essential for building consensus (Jolliffe, 2016, p. 6). Each level of congress receives delegates from the level below in order to be representative: the KNU Congress elects delegates from each of the seven districts; the district congresses from their constituent townships (of which there are 26); and the township congresses from the villages and village tract communities (ibid). The Standing and Executive Committees oversee most governance and political responsibilities. As this research focuses on the peace process, more attention will be given to the KNU Central Standing Committee, though that is not to downplay the political impact of lower-level congress actors.

The 14th KNU Congress was held in 2008, which saw the election of:

- Chairman: General Tamla Baw
- Vice-Chariman: David Tharckabaw[29]
- General Secretary: Zipporah Sein

The focus of this 'hardliner'-led delegation was to solve political issues through political means, setting the stage for the policy opponents' chosen discourse. Nearing the time of the upcoming 15th Congress, General Tamla Baw voluntarily stepped down in face of criticism regarding the potential impact of his age on peace talks and negotiations with the government.

The 15th KNU Congress was held in 2012, which saw the election of:

- Chairman: Mutu Say Poe
- Vice-Chairman: Zipporah Sein
- General Secretary: Padoh Saw Kwe Htoo Win[30]

---

29   Other iterations of Saw David's surname include: Takabaw, Takapaw, Takarpaw, Thackrabaw, and Tharkapaw. In the following (15th) KNU Congress, David Tharckabaw was elected as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

30   Padoh Saw Kwe Htoo Win is currently (April 2018) leading the informal PPST team on the political sector, with Padoh Saw Roger Khin (Head of the KNU Defense Department) leading the informal PPST team on the security sector.

The focus of this delegation proved to be ceasefire negotiation with the transitional central government. As Chairman, Mutu Say Poe's pragmatic approach to negotiating peace with the government replaced the more hardline stance of former Chairman General Tamla Baw. Zipporah Sein is General Tamla Baw's daughter, and her approach to negotiation has echoed that of her father and caused tension within the KNU. It is believed that her continued opposition to engagement with the NCA and Tatmadaw led to her not being re-elected at the 2017 KNU Congress.

The 16th KNU Congress was held in 2017 with much anticipation. The results were:

- Chairman: Mutu Say Poe

- Vice-Chairman: Padoh Saw Kwe Htoo Win

- General Secretary: Saw Tar Doh Moo[31]

This delegation is currently prioritizing NCA negotiations while confronting criticism from various Karen actors, particularly the ever-present voice of the opposition, Zipporah Sein. This political dynamic will now guide the discussion of Karen policy opponents, Karen policy networks, and advocacy.

Concerns from the Policy Opponents

Following initial peace talks and a preliminary ceasefire in 2012, the center-periphery conflict perpetuated by decades of Tatmadaw-EAO clashes began to subside, and the center started infiltrating the periphery. Effectively, the Tatmadaw's counter-insurgency strategy is disguised as development[32]

---

31   In 2016, controversy surrounded Saw Tar Doh Moo (Tahdoh Moo) as the chair of Thoolei Co. Ltd. which had signed an agreement with the central government's Ministry of Electricity to begin construction of a hydropower dam. Policy opponents questioned the KNU's signing of the NCA around this time as a 'quid pro quo' deal with the Tatmadaw and central government, as Saw Tar Doh Moo was also serving as the chair of the KNU's economic committee.

32   The policy line between "peace through development" and "political solutions" created two categories of Karen governance actors. This research will refer to these two groups as policy negotiators and policy opponents, respectively (Smith, 2007, pp. 49-50; Core, 2009, p. 102).

(Su-Ann Oh, 2013, p. 12). As one long-time Karen environmental activist stated:

> Building new roads, infrastructure, land concessions, all these things are coming into the conflict-affected areas without really talking and resolving the fundamental issues or the root causes of the conflict (interview with KNU Concerned Group Member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

Roads are viewed as providing a strategic advantage for the Tatmadaw if political dialogues fail and conflict returns. So much so, in fact, that in Hpapun (Mutraw), KNLA authorities denied them permission to build or upgrade roads in their territory claiming the intent to do so as a violation of the NCA. Instead the Transportation Department built rudimentary transportation options unsuitable for heavy vehicles (Joliffe, 2016, p. 56). With continued state expansion, the Tatmadaw has strengthened facilities and infrastructure significantly, moving weaponry to new facilities within EAO areas, refortifying bamboo outposts with concrete, resupplying and rotating troops more regularly, and undertaking reconnaissance missions in areas it could not previously access (Jolliffe, 2016, p. 49). The threat this poses to the KNLA has damaged its confidence in the ceasefire, placing confidence instead in the JMC to keep the Tatmadaw within the limitations of the code of conduct (ibid; KHRG, 2015). The centralization of political-economic power through ceasefire capitalism has led to development projects through joint business ventures and the re-routing of economic flows to benefit the government (Woods, 2011; Jones, 2014a, p. 793). As Jones describes, ceasefires established a *quid pro quo* system: "in exchange for suspending armed struggle, former rebels would receive government development assistance, retain control over some territory and checkpoints, and continue cross-border trading", essentially converting many EAO leaders into government 'subcontractors' (Jones, 2014a, p. 793; Taylor, 2009). This enables the central government to enforce its sovereignty, reiterating the 2008 Constitution, and proliferating the divide-and-conquer strategy (Su-Ann Oh, 2013, pp. 1, 12).

Infrastructure is not the only form of state expansion threatening EAO stability. The transition of international assistance from locally based NGOs and CSOs to the central government weakens the KNU's leverage. If the international community turns their support to the 'now democratic' government, and the government then provides services for local people within

EAO territory, it is as if they are effectively ruled by the central government (Jolliffe, 2016, p. 60). One KNU Central Executive Committee member further explained: "The government is going into the villages and making many offers, but because the people don't understand the importance of the political process, they simply think the government is improving things for them and don't understand the bigger problems" (ibid). Although state expansion seems to have been facilitated by the signing of the NCA, there are "Interim Arrangements" provided by Chapter 6 of the NCA intended to permit EAOs to maintain authority regarding their service delivery and governance functions (South, 2017b, p. 3). However, failure to establish such arrangements or define the interim timelines undermines the EAOs' future capacity to autonomously run their own service systems such as health, education, and environmental conservation (South, 2017a; Thiha, 2017). As mentioned above, it is vital for the KNU to maintain legitimacy throughout the continuation of the peace process in order to achieve the end goal of federalism (Ethnic Peace Resources Project, 2016). If Interim Arrangements fail to provide the KNU with authority at the local level, it is unlikely that the central government will recognize any EAO authority, even within its own ethnic territory. This begs the question of whether or not the 2008 Constitution can be amended to reflect a true federal government, or if it will remain as is, allowing EAOs only representative authority under a strong centralized government ("non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity, and perpetuation of sovereignty") (Jones, 2014a, p. 789).

Governance within Karen state is leveraged through a local policy sub-system primarily composed of the KNU and Karen CBOs/CSOs. This research considers Karen CBOs/CSOs as policy networks which are utilized by Karen governance actors to promote their shared perceptions in the form of imaginaries. Historically, the KNU relied on CBOs/CSOs for service provision, and their role as participants in political negotiations was generally unrecognized. However, this research aims to illuminate their role as governance actors, impacting the national peace process.

While consultation between the KNU and Karen CSOs does happen, it has also been noted that these consultations are sometimes conducted in a less-than-enthusiastic manner (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Following consultation, many of the concerns raised are left out of account, with the KNU leadership moving forward

as originally planned. For example, in December 2016 there were calls for greater transparency in the planning of development projects in the Tanintharyi Region. A coalition of CSOs stated that no consultation had taken place with the local Karen communities, nor with the CSOs, yet the Memorandum of Understanding Ceremony was attended by members of the KNU leadership (Su Phyo Win, 2016). In addition to consultation, the statement called for priority to be placed on achieving sustainable peace and commencing political dialogue before investing in large-scale infrastructure projects. Although the KNU had agreed that development projects should not begin until a political settlement had been reached for a federal system of government, KNU leadership also advocated for engagement in the expanding economic and development sectors in order to become a key stakeholder in Myanmar's new economy (Jolliffe, 2016, p. 12). In February 2017, consultation meetings were arranged, confirming that the proposed project had been accepted. A local villager interviewed by the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) stated, "Regarding the proposed dam project, KNU leaders have not taken any action for us. We have been able to submit the issue to the KNU leaders but we are not sure whether they will take action or not" (KHRG, 2017, p. 4).

Karen Political Context: Variegated Structure and Unity Building

Although criticized by many policy opponents, consultations regarding the peace process have actually gained their strength from Karen State's inherent variegated governance structure, in which "various government agencies and individuals operate on different scales, applying various rules and regulations, while also interacting with non-government entities and individuals" (Baird & Cansong, 2017, p. 222). Although variegated governance augments diversity, particularly in political leanings, it also provides the platform for local-level influence within the policy-network. In 2012 Reverend Saw Matthew Aye organized a meeting of Karen CSO representatives with members of the KNU leadership to discuss the peace process and ensure their continued involvement (Saw Yan Naing, 2012). Following a discussion regarding the need to build greater unity among Karen organizations, the Karen Affairs Seminar was established in 2013, in addition to the Karen Unity and Peace Committee (KUPC) (Davis, 2016, p. 14). The KUPC is comprised of 60 members from government sectors, religious leadership, armed groups, political parties, and

CSOs. Founded with three main objectives[33], the KUPC is able to provide a sustainable way for various Karen groups to collaborate on a range of issues. Since establishment, the KUPC has led over 40 consultations which provide a means for Karen community members to have their opinions included in the peace process negotiation through direct engagement with KNU and state officials (ibid, p. 15; South, 2015). In 2015, the KUPC also hosted the National Karen Pre-Conference in order to solidify a unified vision of Karen politics, social security, education, and preservation of culture ahead of the Karen National Conference to be held later that year. Consultative meetings were again held in both January 2017 and 2018 ahead of the respective UPC-21PC conferences in order to provide updates on the peace process and current political dialogues (Wera Moe Nay, 2017).

Karen armed groups have also participated in unity building measures, joining together in 2014 to commemorate Karen Revolution Day and Karen New Year (Davis, 2016, p. 17). General Saw Johnny[34], KNLA Brigade 7 Commander and Chief of Staff, stated:

> Our Karen people need to unite. If we are not united, we won't be able to develop and we won't be able to meet the needs of our Karen people. Therefore we have to forgive each other's mistakes in the past…We will work together in the future and our Karen armed groups will hold our hands together. (ibid).

Noting that Karen unity must be inclusive, and challenging the traditional top-down method of decision-making, some Karen soldiers declared that it was desirable for there to be greater engagement in the peace process and increased exchange between the Karen leadership and people. One KNLA Commander noticed that his lack of discussion or consultation with others was not acceptable to his followers and that "at times even leaders must listen

---

33   KUPC Founding Objectives:
     1)Promoting inter-organizational collaboration to preserve and promote Karen culture, language and literature; 2) Facilitating collaboration to identify actions to strengthen the existing ceasefire agreement and the creation of a constitution securing the rights of the Karen people; 3) Developing a better and more unified nation for Karen, including appropriate administrative rule and legislative law. (Davis, 2016, pp. 14-15).
34   Elected as General Commanding Officer of the KNLA, a position within the Central Executive Committee of the KNU, at the 2012 KNU Congress.

to followers" (ibid, p. 24). A Karen community member stated that the government and EAOs should both realize that they are "only engaging in the peace process for the people, and not for the power and wealth of one party" (Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2014, pp. 38-39).

Unity building is crucial to minimize feelings of discrimination between groups and communities and to strengthen the peace process (Davis, 2016, p. 23; Transnational Institute, 2015). The KNU Central Executive Committee started the unity building effort in 1998 with the formation of the Karen National Unity Seminar, complimented further by the 2012 creation of the Karen Peace Support Team (or Network) as a unified body of over twenty Karen CBOs and CSOs (Davis, 2016, p. 13; Burma News International, 2016). Continuation of service provision through Karen CSOs legitimizes local Karen authority, but many CSOs align with policy opponents in their criticism of the KNU's negotiation strategy. Just as Karen governance actors play a major role in the NCA peace process through participation in various mechanisms, the Karen policy opposition plays a role through CSOs, organized groups, and networks.

Karen governance actors that identify with the imaginary/shared perception of the policy opponents are often secondary ethno-political actors: people who used to have a direct role in Karen politics (whether in the KNU Executive Committee or otherwise) but who have now been demoted. Maintaining a strong determination to influence the national peace process, such governance actors add an interesting dimension to how insurgency movements are conceptualized, particularly within the overarching national peace process.

Relevant Karen Policy networks

This research intends to provide a new perspective to the current understanding of Karen activism and its impact on Myanmar's peace process. The advocacy roles of civil society organizations have been overlooked, particularly following the signing of the NCA when analysis – in both media and academia – took a turn toward the national level processes. In addition signatory (and non-signatory) EAOs are implicitly treated as non-contested by their constituents, while in reality the relatively open political space in Karen state has allowed democratic differences to arise and impact policy-making. The advocacy of policy opponents in the Karen policy sub-system must not be

ignored. This section looks at the policy opponent networks from which interviewees have been chosen for this research.

Karen Environment and Social Action Network (KESAN)

According to their website, KESAN is a community-based, non-governmental, non-profit organization that works to develop sustainable livelihoods in Karen state through survey, capacity building, dialogue, and empowerment in local communities. Their listed objectives include: 1) to assist in securing access to lands, water, forests, and the agricultural biodiversity that is the basis of Karen people's lives; 2) to support improved livelihood capabilities and resilience for displaced and local communities; 3) to strengthen and inform civil society networks that advocate for good environmental governance; and 4) to advocate for local, state, and national policies and practices that safeguard the environment and the rights of local people while protecting against unsustainable and harmful development. In line with objective 3, KESAN supports and participates in networks to advocate for human rights and the environment while also informing the public about development projects. Advocacy is also one of KESAN's seven areas of focus[35], and has garnered the organization over 21,200 followers on Facebook. Two of my informants are associated with KESAN.

Karen Women's Organization (KWO)

Formed in 1949, the KWO now has over 49,000 members. Defined as a community-based organization working in Karen state and on the Thai-Burma border, the KWO has expanded its efforts from development, relief, and social welfare to include women's rights and their participation in political processes. The KWO has over 9,700 followers on Facebook and consistently gains international attention for its work. The KWO often releases statements in response to situations in Karen state, disseminates reports and statements released by other Karen CSOs, and participates in various regional forums and seminars. One of my informants is associated with the KWO.

---

35   The seven program areas of focus: 1) Community based livelihoods initiative and IDP livelihoods restoration program; 2) Land and forest management program; 3) Water governance; 4) Environmental education program; 5) Wildlife and biodiversity conservation; 6) Networking, media, and advocacy; and 7) Salween Peace Park initiative.

Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN)

The Karen Peace Support Network is the largest coalition of Karen CSOs, established in 2012 after the bilateral ceasefire (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). The KPSN is focused "on making recommendations and strengthening the voices of the people" (ibid). According to the Myanmar Peace Monitor, the KPSN was created out of the interest of individuals and CSOs to participate in the peace process but who were impeded by financial and human resource constraints. KPSN's role in peace negotiations has included: organizing media both inside and outside Myanmar; acting as observers; facilitating meetings; and strengthening community participation (Burma News International Online). Leaders of the KPSN are typically also leaders of their respective CSOs, with some members also serving as members of parliament. As described by an analyst familiar with the Karen political context, "The KPSN includes most of the main actors from the Karen CSO community so I think the KNU would take them pretty seriously" (interview with political analyst, 25 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). The KPSN is known for releasing reports based on in-country social research, including the most recent *The Nightmare Returns: Karen Hopes for Peace and Stability Dashed by Burma Army's Actions.* Three of my informants are associated with KPSN.

KNU Concerned Group

The KNU Concerned Group first came to notice with their statement in early June 2017, criticizing the outcomes of May 2017's UPC-21PC and calling for a "comprehensive evaluation of the peace process and all its mechanisms" (Mon News Agency, 2017). Most members of this group had failed to retain their seats at the KNU Congress elections in March 2017, and the KCG is the vehicle that maintains their voice as policy opponents. According to a member of the KCG, the aim of this group is to 'maintain the integrity of the KNU' and 'not deviate from the original mission/vision' (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). The group 'watches how the peace process is going from both sides, the government and the EAOs, to identify the problems that they are facing and monitor how the negotiation process is going' (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). The group consists of specific members, 'particularly the former leaders of the KNU, past executive and standing committee members, and those

who have the same concerns about the process' (ibid). The KCG is currently a very loosely structured group meeting in an ad-hoc manner. Two of my informants are associated with the KNU Concerned Group.

Summary

Karen politics have been subject to fragmentation, particularly in the context of ceasefires with the Tatmadaw. While previous ceasefires were bilateral, the 2015 emergence of the NCA has spurred further fragmentation in response to ethnic inclusivity and state-led development projects. The involvement of Karen governance actors in the peace process, either directly or through the KNU, provided a platform for creating contrasting imaginaries based upon shared actor perception. Karen governance actors, then, advocate for their imaginaries through various Karen policy networks. The following chapter will explore these varying imaginaries, focusing on the political and developmental imaginaries as described by Karen policy opponents.

Political and Developmental Imaginaries in the Karen Policy Sub-system

Following the discussion of imaginaries in Chapter 2 and the Karen political context in Chapter 3, the structure of this discussion will now follow three imaginaries: Political, Developmental and Future Peace. The Political and Developmental Imaginaries are subcategories of an overarching Future Peace Imaginary. Not all governance actors in the Karen political context share the same perception of Myanmar's socio-political future post-peace process. Karen policy opponents share a Future Peace Imaginary that is considered by some as idealistic and unattainable, whereas the Future Peace Imaginary of Karen governance actors who have negotiating authority with the central government and Tatmadaw is considered by many as more practical and compromising. The Political and Developmental sub-imaginaries are discussed here as independent from one another in terms of their focus, yet interdependent in terms of their relation to the Future Peace Imaginary. The purpose of this chapter is to present a more detailed understanding of Karen governance actors' differing policy alignments, to provide further insight into their participation in policy networks and engagement in the peace process.

Imaginaries are based on actor perception and promoted through advocacy tactics. Karen policy opponents act through policy networks that

align with their perception in order to influence the Future Peace Imaginary being negotiated at the national level.

The Political Imaginary

Policy Opponents: Focusing on Process and Dialogue

The primary participants in this shared perception are border-based civil society actors who generally oppose the peace process policy of the recently voted-in KNU leadership. For the purpose of this research, I will refer to these actors as "policy opponents". Policy opponents are removed from the policy negotiation space - they may have filled top-level positions in the past, but currently occupy more minor roles.

The basic defining idea of the policy opponents' Political Imaginary is that the EAOs, Central Government, and Tatmadaw should be following the NCA's peace process step by step. The keyword identifying this feature of the Political Imaginary is "process". This process, as detailed in Chapter 3 and presented here again in Figure 4.1, is part of the NCA Roadmap and has seven steps. According to Karen policy opponents, each step in the process should be completed prior to moving on to the next one. However, as of 2018, at least three Union Peace Conferences[36] will have been completed before all political (national) dialogues have been conducted. This has led many Karen policy opponents to criticize the KNU's seemingly complicit participation in a scattered peace process. Members of the KNU Concerned Group explained that the negotiating parties are more concerned with rushing through the NCA rather than paying attention to detailed steps and allocating enough time to ensure these steps are completed thoroughly. Following the roadmap, or process, properly, ensures that EAOs' voices are heard and their concerns acknowledged through political dialogue. For many policy opponents, the NCA has failed due to this lack of process.

---

36   The first UPC occurred during Thein Sein's government. The following UPC conferences were termed 21st Century Panglong conferences (UPC-21PC) by Aung San Suu Kyi and the fourth, scheduled for early 2018, has continuously been postponed due to political deadlock.

For me, I feel like the NCA failed because nobody followed the NCA. The government did not follow the NCA, the military did not follow, and the signatories did not follow the NCA. They didn't follow the steps that they should take; they just come up with their own steps. We think that the roadmap, the political roadmap of the NCA means that you have to finish one step before you go to the next one (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

Figure 4.1: NCA Roadmap (Burma News International, 2016, p. 48)

"Process" serves as a primary point of contention between the Political Imaginary of the policy opponents and that of the policy negotiators. It has become a criticism of the negotiating actors, including the KNU leadership,

for their disregard of the roadmap as set forth, demonstrating further a disregard for the values and ideals that the peace process represents. To policy opponents, the decision to disregard an agreed-upon process has generated skepticism about adherence to future agreements.

Where Karen policy opponents believe the process should be completed step-by-step, the KNU leadership appears to be following a different process determined by the central government and/or Tatmadaw. It is important to note the importance of the national (political) dialogue (figure 4.1, step 3), which provides policy opponents with an opportunity to advocate for their Political Imaginary through relevant policy networks. However, the opportunity is not easily taken:

> It is very complicated when they have the national dialogue. They discuss it in their different groups, but when they come to the conference or before they come to the conference they have the secretariat team of the UPDJC to look at the papers coming from the CSOs, the 8 signatory groups, something like that. With five or even ten issues, then they have to look at all that and come up with (only) one paper. So I think it's very difficult (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

This criticism has been further discussed by members of the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN), describing how there are five steps of political dialogue through which policy points are filtered. Essentially, policy papers are produced at the initial national dialogue, which includes input from the people. As this policy paper is submitted at each level, it is cut and reduced by the thematic working groups, the UPDJC secretariat, the UPC, and finally the Parliament. These cuts and edits to the policy papers are decided on by just a few people with no checks and balances to ensure maintenance of policy points that were present at the first step. This process effectively excludes local voices and mid-level governance actors' policy points from reaching negotiation level.

The policy opponents' Political Imaginary can then be described as follows: if the peace process as defined by the NCA is not followed step-by-step, then the NCA has been violated and should therefore be reviewed or restarted. This policy ideal is conceptualized as a Political Imaginary because it rests on a belief shared

by policy opponents, but not necessarily by policy negotiators: namely that the negative consequence of not following the NCA roadmap is future disregard for agreed-upon policy. A second member of the KNU Concerned Group elaborated on the different imaginaries by explaining that the policy negotiators do not realize the connection between process and dialogue.

> The NCA is dead, and the only person who gives life to it is the army (Tatmadaw) because they are using it for their advantage. It has been broken by the government since the beginning, since early 2016, because you should finish the political dialogue, the national dialogue and complete it before you move on. But, if you move forward to the first UPC without doing anything, how do you call this dialogue? You have nothing to bring to the [UPC] (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

This is reflected in Zipporah Sein's analysis of the UPC-21PC second meeting:

> On looking back on the peace process, it must be remembered that the armed ethnic resistance organizations, which have signed the NCA, Bama Tatamadaw as well as the current government have said that they shall obey and perform in accordance with the NCA, after all the ethnic armed resistance organizations participate in the signing at the NCA level. However, they themselves are not obeying and performing according to the terms of the NCA. For example, in the Chapter (5), Article (20), the political roadmap that must be undertaken, step by step, is shown as follows:
>
> Signing of the NCA;
>
> Drafting the Framework for Political Dialogue and adopting it;
>
> Holding of National Level (ethnic nationality level) Political Dialogues;

> Convening the Union Peace Conference (called "the 21st Century Panglong" by the current government).

> Not any one of the four levels has been carried out effectively and to completion by them (A Brief Analysis by Former KNU Vice-President Zipporah Sein, provided to the author by e-mail, 2017).

Building on the analysis of the impact these differing Political Imaginaries have on the Karen political context, members of border-based Karen CSOs stated that they are excluded from the negotiation space and thereby limited in their engagement with the peace process. The border-based Karen CSOs represent a majority of what this research refers to as the 'policy opponents'. By disregarding a Political Imaginary that is shared by such a large portion of Karen governance actors, the KNU leadership and policy negotiators risk making policy decisions that are not supported by those they intend to represent. This has led to increased criticism from policy opponents, in addition to intensified advocacy efforts, as will be elaborated on in Chapter 5.

> All the mechanisms don't work… the way the government and the EAOs designed, as the architects of this peace process, they made it more like the 'first-track' top-level, but there is no 'track-two' or 'track-three' and no way for those tracks to lead to the first-track. So there is a very big gap between the government, 'first-track', and the reason is also because we are very critical of the process because we don't think their approach or the process is going in the right direction. So we were critical about that from the beginning, which is why they only form groups that support their ideas. And that is why things don't work. (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

As explained by the informant above, the gap between policy opponents and the negotiating space is an ever-present challenge in Myanmar's peace process. The NCA created mechanisms that appear to provide negotiation access to actors not in EAO leadership positions; however, these mechanisms' rosters include only the names of EAO leaders. This has severely limited the

direct access of policy opponents to negotiation, pushing them into a 'sub-track' status: the peace process negotiations are essentially being conducted in a closed space. This has created hardline opposition to the NCA and its current peace process. While the hardline opposition is often criticized by outsiders as being based on personal opinions rather than what is best for the nation as a whole, it can be seen through this analysis how exclusion from the process and a lack of legitimacy with the negotiating parties has led to frustration. While democratic values and inclusivity are proclaimed, this does not seem to describe the reality, causing policy opponents to feel further removed from a process which is supposed to include them. This has led to further self-removal from the peace process, negatively impacting its progress as described by a member of the KPSN:

> The thing is that the KPSN has a very strong political position that the peace process is flawed and we don't believe in the peace process now. So if we are going to have a peace process, we want it to be correct. So that we can contribute, we can spend our time, our energy, and our knowledge on it. But because the peace process is flawed and has a lot of problems, we try to step back. We don't really provide a close spot to the peace process. They do request people from other areas… there are a lot of educated Karen people who understand the issues, but they do not believe in the peace process so they don't comment; they aren't heavily involved in supporting the peace process because the peace process has problems. I think a lot of people want to come back and support the peace process, but because of these problems they will not come back (interview with KPSN representative #2, 29 May 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

Historically, Karen factionalism has created two main streams of discourse that vary in their focus – either on negotiation with the Tatmadaw and central government or on minimizing negative impacts on the local people. The role of Karen policy networks, then, is promotion of the Political Imaginary within the discursive structure of the Karen political context, which is primarily identified by a contentious relationship between KNU leadership and Karen policy opponents. Simply identifying flaws and issues in the peace process mechanisms

is not enough, as these points need to be raised at the policy negotiation level. However, as the platform for negotiation is provided by the Tatmadaw and the government, the KNU leadership is constrained by power relations.

The Political Imaginary, as described here by Karen policy opponents themselves, is identified by the necessity of respecting and following the process as set forth in the roadmap and the urgency of national (political) dialogue which is a step in that process. The informants' preoccupation with the 'process' is primarily a call for completion of national dialogues. Had the UPC conferences been postponed until national dialogues were completed, policy opponents would be less concerned about the process itself as they would have had an opportunity to promote their Political Imaginary at the level of negotiation. Karen policy opponents appear to subscribe to a Political Imaginary that projects a more democratic political society in terms of dialogue, participation, and consensus building.

Policy Negotiators

While criticized for following the peace process roadmap 'out of order', the KNU leadership recognizes the benefit of remaining a signatory to the NCA, even though this subjects them to the decisions of the Central Government and Tatmadaw. Although they are a negotiating party, it is vital to recognize the inherent power disparity within the top-level participants. As the KNU leadership is the weaker party in the negotiation space, it can be said that they are making the best of a difficult situation. A political analyst close to the KNU leadership stated that a better form of engagement in the peace process for policy opponents would be to support the NCA rather than criticizing it (interview with political analyst, 25 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). The EAOs are in need of increased support and community alignment to counter the Tatmadaw's military advantage and NLD government's international support.

The Political Imaginary that the negotiating parties share, then, is that of a completed peace process, regardless of the order of steps taken to achieve it. However, it appears that the Future Peace Imaginary is not consistent between the EAOs, central government, and Tatmadaw, leading to differing 'roadmaps' to achieve such Future Peace Imaginaries. It is worth acknowledging therefore that shared actor perception at the policy negotiating level is not as strong as that of the policy opponents' shared actor perception. One member of the KNU Concerned Group explained that even though the KNU leadership's policy

position is more in line with the policy opponents' Political Imaginary than before, this does not facilitate change unless they confront the Tatmadaw (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Many policy opponents believe, though, that the KNU leadership has been politically paralyzed by their fear that the Tatmadaw will pressure them to change their position or withdraw from the NCA and subsequent peace process. The KNU leadership recognizes the value of remaining within the negotiation space and therefore does not want to intentionally threaten the opportunity they have to impact the Future Peace Imaginary.

As mentioned above, national dialogue is a key point in understanding the Political Imaginaries. The national dialogues should be taking place freely within signatory-EAO territories, providing an opportunity for ethnic groups to create comprehensive policy platforms prior to the UPC, as detailed previously. In December 2016 – January 2017, the KNU conducted pre-consultations leading up to a national political dialogue in Hpa'an which concluded with a policy paper addressing four of the five areas of debate under the NCA (interview with political analyst, 25 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). However, very few of these policy points made it onto the UPC agenda due to the process of editing and cutting policy papers by various NCA bodies. Since then, the central government has severely limited the circumstances in which this dialogue is allowed to take place.

Restrictions on national dialogues and EAO consultations increased leading up to the fourth UPC-21stPC, held in mid-2018. As this UPC was set to focus on security matters, it could be assumed that the Tatmadaw was strategically limiting dialogue, as it does not believe in the value of opinions of those outside the negotiating space. Just as policy opponents have been removed from the negotiating space, there is also an effort at exclusion from the dialogue space in order to limit policy influence from those who subscribe to a conflicting Political Imaginary. Policy opponents explained that EAOs had to get permission from the Tatmadaw or the NRPC (National Reconciliation for Peace Center, headed by Aung San Suu Kyi) before conducting any forms of dialogue or consultations (interview with KPSN representative #2, 29 May 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Without this permission, EAO actors have fallen victim to intimidation and harassment by the Tatmadaw. Furthermore, the Tatmadaw has limited the places where national dialogues can be held within

ethnic states (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand), and on dialogue topics:

> Even sometime before when the KNU wanted to hold a meeting in Rangoon, they are prohibited. And of course this is also based on the current issues. If you talk about issues like land, or something that is very sensitive for the government, then they don't want you to do that. So the last consultation meeting was actually supposed to be a consultation for the upcoming UPC because there is a lot of feedback that civil society wants to give to the KNU, especially from the KPSN, that we need to revise the peace process. There are a lot of things going on behind the scenes when we talk about the NCA or UPC. So it looks like it has hit a deadlock now (interview with KPSN representative #1, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

A key finding from discussion of the policy negotiators' Political Imaginary is that it may be better to describe the KNU leadership as a party to both political imaginaries, aligning actor perception with both the opponents and negotiators. Yet, aligned perception does not necessarily mean shared meaning. The KNU has access to the negotiating space, and has to maintain its role there if it is not to lose all opportunity to negotiate with the government and Tatmadaw. Unfortunately, this power struggle has led to the peace process's current deadlock.

The 2008 Constitution: An Additional Point of Contention

The 2008 Constitution is an additional point of contention between the Political Imaginaries. Although political dialogue is provided for in the NCA, this same political dialogue is blocked by the 2008 Constitution, which is still in place. This leads to conflicting understandings as to what has truly been provided by the NCA as the Tatmadaw continues to use the 2008 Constitution to serve its goal of exclusion, further sacrificing the peace process (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). As the NLD government is restricted from directly changing the constitution, EAOs depend on dialogue through the NCA in order to eventually change it to allow for federalism and true democracy. Therefore, policy opponents believe

that since in practice the NCA strengthens the 2008 Constitution, engaging with the current peace process supports the Tatmadaw's role in politics (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

Furthermore, the outcome of the peace process is set to be the Peace Accord, which is subject to approval by Parliament. This process is bound by the 2008 Constitution, which allocates 25% of Parliamentary seats to the Tatmadaw. Policy opponents do not have much confidence that the Tatmadaw would vote to approve the Peace Accord, and without 25% of the vote the approval process is essentially blocked. As one member of the KPSN elaborated, "Without the military being willing to change the constitution, the whole peace process is just finished." (Interview with KPSN representative #2, 29 May 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

These factors (dialogue limitation and the boundaries set by the 2008 Constitution) have negatively impacted the progress of the peace process by restricting participation and consensus building. Without the possibility for Political Imaginaries to be shared, the peace process will not progress. Policy opponents strongly support an open space for dialogue outside the UPC in which signatories and non-signatories can discuss policies and create unified platforms to present at the UPC for discussion at the next level (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). However, in the current context a consensus cannot be reached prior to the UPC due to restriction of national dialogues, resulting in EAOs attending the UPC with varying ideas of which policies to advocate. This leaves space for the Tatmadaw and NLD government to control the discussion at the UPC, as well as the decisions made by the UPDJC (ibid).

More recently the KNU leadership has grasped this misalignment within the shared Political Imaginary and may be more likely to align with the Political Imaginary being advocated by Karen policy networks. In relation to the recent clashes in Mutraw district, the KNU issued a statement that publicly rebuked the Tatmadaw for conducting military activities within Karen state (Kaspar, 2018). KNU General Secretary, Padoh Saw Tadoh Moo said that the Tatmadaw refused to attend the JMC meeting regarding the road-building and that construction "should not be continued while the KNU and the government are at the stage of building trust" (Nyein, 2018). General Baw Kyaw Heh echoed this sentiment in

expressing that the aim of the NCA is to 'build trust between the KNLA and the Tatmadaw by avoiding clashes and confining their troops to their bases, but now it appears that these were empty words and that the Tatmadaw has simply been pursuing its own military agenda' (Weng, 2018). This example demonstrates the widening gap in shared perception between the Tatmadaw and KNU leadership. An analyst close to the KNU explained further:

> The KNU, particularly in the last year, has been pretty clear about their lack of agreement with the peace process. This means that the KNU leadership is more closely aligned with those activist groups now, and I think the kind of concerns they have are probably similar (interview with political analyst, 25 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

While the example of the Mutraw clashes serves to demonstrate the widening gap between political imaginaries, it also introduces another primary issue in the Karen policy sub-system: development.

The Developmental Imaginary

Policy Opponents: State-led Development Does Not Facilitate Peace

The peace process, facilitated by the NCA, has allowed for Tatmadaw expansion into EAO-controlled areas via development projects. As detailed in Chapter 3, road building and development within ethnic states has often been a strategy of the government to extend its centralized power. As opposed to decentralization and true federalism, the Central Government and Tatmadaw have acted in a manner that implies the intention of control under the guise of a peace process. Additionally, state-led development[37] augments the EAOs' fear of forced Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration, or DDR, leaving EAOs defenceless and vulnerable to a Tatmadaw that has not compromised any of its own military dominance. The basic defining feature of the policy opponents' Developmental Imaginary, then, is that state-led development projects do not facilitate peace. Even before the recent onset of violent conflict

---

37   This research uses the term 'state-led development' to refer to such projects undertaken by the central government and the Tatmadaw. See Chapter 1 section 1.5 for further definition.

in Mutraw (Hpapun), many Karen policy opponents criticized the KNU leadership's complicit response to state-led development.

As many policy opponents are members of CSOs that work on the ground, they have experienced first-hand the increase in land-related issues since the 2012 onset of various ceasefires. As ceasefires open access for outsiders to enter conflict areas, policy opponents have observed a repeating pattern of building new roads, infrastructure, and land concessions without dialogue or resolution of fundamental issues (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand; interview with KPSN representative #2, 29 May 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Without addressing natural resources and land rights through the provisions of the peace process, development of ethnic territories is led by the central government without any accountability or safeguards for the people affected.

Policy opponents remain skeptical of state-led development projects in Karen state, as history has shown that these projects often lead to violent conflict. In an ongoing peace process, progress can only be hindered by ceasefire violations. This military strategy has been repeatedly utilized under various conditions; the difference now is the use of the NCA as a front. Additionally, as the NCA did not enforce strict demarcation of territory, various actors are claiming overlapping territories, including the KNU and the Tatmadaw (interview with KPSN representative #1, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). While this is likely a strategic move by both the Tatmadaw and the EAOs, land has become a point of tension.

The roadmap as set forth by the NCA includes the establishment of Interim Arrangements. Such arrangements would provide for administration of ethnic territories by the relevant EAOs, but without such arrangements the current mixed administration has led to conflict, confusion, and violent clashes. Policy opponents believe that the peace process and NCA have become tools for the government to expand their territory into the forested, ethnic-controlled areas while imposing undemocratic, centralized and repressive laws (ibid). Without Interim Arrangements, only the central government can issue land titles which would result in the KNU's loss of administrative authority over its territory (interview with KPSN representative #2, 29 May 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

Had the Interim Arrangements been agreed upon and implemented, there would be less displacement and more refugee returns. However, the lack

of these regulations has prolonged the insecurity of Karen state, even through years of ceasefire. In late 2017, border-based policy opponents began to see an increase in Tatmadaw deployment and advances into ethnic areas (interview with KPSN representative #2, 29 May 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). The Tatmadaw's maintenance of a physical presence in many Karen villages has created a strong disincentive for refugees to return due to fear of violence and repeated displacement (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

The policy opponents' Developmental Imaginary is based on the premise that development is intrinsically linked to violence and militarization, derived from many policy opponents' past experience. "For us, we say there is no such thing as 'development for peace'… It's clear – there are more conflicts that come with development." (ibid).

Development and forced Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)

The issues caused by development go even deeper than an expansion of central government. Many policy opponent informants also touched on the sensitive topic of DDR, stating their belief that the Tatmadaw is focused on making ethnic armies 'dissolve' (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). An underlying aspect of the Developmental Imaginary, then, is the uneasy suspicion of the Tatmadaw desiring to disable the KNLA.

With extensive Tatmadaw bases and eased access in Karen state, it can be projected that a power struggle could only lead to a violent breakdown of the ceasefire or a disablement of EAOs' armed wings and further creation of one integrated Burmese army. Some Karen policy opponents who remain close to the KNLA have explained that the Tatmadaw consistently talks about how the NCA is the means to end armed conflicts and abolish ethnic armed groups (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). But rather than discussing political solutions and reaching agreements through dialogue first, the Tatmadaw is using DDR as a means to an end, desiring to weaken EAOs into political submission (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

In the context of the policy opponents' Developmental Imaginary, the shared actor perception is primarily that state-led development projects do not facilitate peace but rather are associated with violence and militarization. The aspect of militarization is further described by policy opponents who demonstrate a fear of forced DDR, leading to ethnic territories dominated by Tatmadaw military forces and unsustainable development by the central government. Policy opponents also fear that this will lead to a loss of EAO control of ethnic lands as these are not steps toward establishing a federal system in which control/authority is decentralized. Linking with the Political Imaginary, this demonstrates further the Tatmadaw's and central government's disregard for inclusive negotiation. Instead, peace process negotiation appears to be a front for the Tatmadaw to continuously assert control, in many instances even more so than before the NCA.

While tense negotiations take place between the Tatmadaw and EAOs, the issue of DDR has been utilized to stall discussions even further. This is directly relevant to the 2018 continual postponement of the fourth UPC-21PC which was to be centered on a discussion of security issues. Refusing to allow EAOs to consult with their constituents on the topic of security, limits the potential responses and pigeonholes the EAOs into compliance. However, the KNU has not settled into compliance, particularly with the most recent mobilization of the Tatmadaw in Mutraw. One informant acknowledged the KNU's recent role in state-led development, explaining that the KNU and KNLA had refused the Tatmadaw's request for permission to reconstruct an old road in Karen state (interview with KPSN representative #1, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Understanding that local people have a historically negative perception of state-led development, representatives of the KPSN stated that development is not necessarily the issue as long as there is proper negotiation prior to beginning construction. However, without prior agreements, Tatmadaw presence in Karen state leads to a sense of insecurity and fear of displacement for many people (ibid).

Policy opponents tend to concentrate their efforts on the ground-level consequences of state-led development projects, focusing on the people directly affected. This Developmental Imaginary supports review of the NCA in terms of strengthening its implementation and accountability mechanisms, limiting the military power of the Tatmadaw within EAO-controlled areas. The

Developmental Imaginary of the policy opponents does in fact overlap with that of the KNU leadership, as will be detailed further in the following section.

Policy Negotiators

The key ideas of the policy negotiators' Developmental Imaginary are less obvious. Specifically, the KNU's Developmental Imaginary is based on the creation of a truly federal system in which EAOs maintain territorial control of development projects, access to resources, and retention of arms; while the Developmental Imaginary of the Tatmadaw is to expand territorial control and push for disarmament. A representative of KESAN describes this separation of imaginaries as follows:

> The policy that the KNU has, it's good for the people, but the state or the government doesn't have that – they have very bad laws that give authority to the government agencies to grab land, to hand it over to new businesses… in other words the power is very centralized in Naypyidaw at the central level. They don't share any power. So it's also related to the KNU demands of the Karen revolution, to have a more federalist setting, more democratic. So the policy that we are advocating for is a new federal system that recognizes indigenous people and their rights to natural resources, to their land (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

Divergent Actor Perceptions

Policy opponents utilize terms such as decentralized, democratic, and federalist to describe the overlapping ideals of the policy opponents' Developmental Imaginary and the KNU leadership's Developmental Imaginary. But while policy opponents act through policy networks such as KESAN or the KPSN to voice their concerns to the people on the ground directly affected by the onset of development projects, the KNU leadership focuses on the military (KNLA) and governmental (KNU) impact of Tatmadaw expansion. This is where shared actor perception between the two Imaginaries diverges.

Without a clear policy platform, though, policy opponents often distort the KNU leadership's stance on federalist principles. One member of the KNU

Concerned Group alluded to a belief that the KNU is equating policy negotiation with potential disarmament by stating that the current KNU leadership has deviated from the original KNU's mission and political vision (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). However, this belief is unfounded, as those close to the policy negotiators explain that simply discussing federalism is not equivalent to agreeing to DDR.

> Regarding the Four Principles of Saw Ba U Gyi, they haven't surrendered, they have retained their arms, the NCA process is about Karen self-determination so they're on track for that… in terms of those Four Principles I wouldn't say that the KNU leadership is involved in anything that particularly challenges any of those principles. The KNU has been pretty clear that disarmament is not on the cards. That may clearly be what the Tatmadaw wants, but there isn't evidence of the KNU having agreed to this, rather they've been pretty clear not to accept disarmament (interview with political analyst, 25 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

Some Karen policy opponents expressed a willingness to see a more positive side of the KNU leadership's negotiation, demonstrating an understanding that DDR is not part of the KNU's Developmental Imaginary, but rather that of the Tatmadaw. For example, one informant told a story of a networking event at which a representative of the KNU said that if the Tatmadaw continued to push for DDR, then they would leave the meeting and not engage in the discussion anymore. The Tatmadaw then agreed to discuss DDR and security at the next meeting, which was to be the third UPC-21PC (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

With continual pushback from the Tatmadaw as regards progressing the peace process, it appears that the shared perception of desired progress in the Political Imaginary, as presented above, has reached a limit, due to the differing Developmental Imaginaries of the policy negotiators. The Tatmadaw's focus on DDR as opposed to Security Sector Reform makes it increasingly difficult for EAOs to initiate dialogue on Security Sector Reform at the negotiation level, culminating in deadlock (interview with KPSN representative #1, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

The recent violent conflict in Mutraw district has strengthened the shared perception between policy opponents and policy negotiators. A report on this situation, released under threats from the Tatmadaw, quoted one local Karen informant saying:

> Even though the ceasefire talks are ongoing, the Burma Army keep sending up more troops and military rations in our area instead of withdrawing. This could be the sign of preparations for the next operation. So, we villagers have to be ready to run in different ways instead of thinking about uniting and building a village (Karen man, Mutraw District, June 2012, KORD interview – accessed from KPSN Report 2018).

The recent violent clashes can be utilized as empirical evidence for differing Developmental Imaginaries. The KNU has increasingly promoted discourse opposing the development activities of the Tatmadaw on the grounds of their perceived militarization of Karen territory. Regardless of both the KNU and Tatmadaw being policy negotiators, their shared perception does not manifest a shared imaginary. Additionally, while the KNU's perception is aligned with that of the policy opponents, it cannot be considered a shared perception as the discourse utilized in advocacy tactics differs in focus. The KNU's Developmental Imaginary is more concerned with military and governmental consequences for the peace process; while the policy opponents' prioritizes the impact such clashes have on local people and internally displaced persons. However, this conclusion is somewhat tentative as the scope of this research did not allow for direct contact with the KNU leadership.

Through this chapter's discussion of the Political and Developmental Imaginaries, it can be determined where there are overlaps and crossovers, not only between actor perceptions but also between Imaginaries. Issues are not isolated, nor are the actors involved in negotiation or advocacy. The recent onset of violent conflict has stalled the process further by threatening security within Karen state, not only for the local people but also for the stability of the KNLA. It is vital to understand the various actors' shared meanings as manifested in Imaginaries before analyzing their role in the peace process, as their role is determined by their Imaginary. Policy opponents remain removed from the negotiation space as their Imaginaries are not as closely aligned with those of the Tatmadaw and Central Government, making negotiation and

compromise more difficult. Therefore, policy opponents continue to seek ways in which to promote their Imaginaries at the negotiation level, acting through Karen policy networks in an attempt to increase shared perception with the KNU Leadership. As the KNU leadership begins to subscribe to aspects of the policy opponents' Imaginaries, those aspects are then brought forth to the negotiation level. In an attempt at national/societal transformation, these Imaginaries are promoted in an effort to create one shared Future Peace Imaginary, to be manifest in a newly established post-ceasefire, post-peace process Myanmar.

To summarize, the policy opponents' and policy negotiators' Future Peace Imaginary is comprised of the following elements of discourse, subcategorized into a Political Imaginary and a Developmental Imaginary:

Policy Opponents:

Political Imaginary	Developmental Imaginary
Peace process completed according to roadmap set forth in NCA (following the process; completion of national dialogue)	EAO-controlled development, as opposed to state-led development projects which do not facilitate peace but rather are associated with violence and militarization (focus on ground-level impacts)
Governance actors removed from negotiation space are included in creation of negotiation strategies (dialogue, participation, and consensus building)	KNLA maintains military dominance within Karen State (no forced DDR)

Table 4.1: Future Peace Imaginaries; Policy Opponents

KNU Leadership:

Political Imaginary	Developmental Imaginary
Completing the peace process negotiation, regardless of which roadmap is followed (though this is changing to an increased desire to follow the NCA's roadmap)	EAO controlling development and access to resources, and retaining arms (focus on top-level/local government consequences)
Respect for national dialogue (participation and consensus building)	

Table 4.2: Future Peace Imaginaries; KNU Leadership

Central Government and Tatmadaw:

Political Imaginary	Developmental Imaginary
Completing the peace process negotiation, regardless of which roadmap is followed.	Expand territorial control, particularly through state-led development
Policy domination and exclusion of opposition actors (maintaining control set up in 2008 Constitution)	Push for DDR

Table 4.3: Future Peace Imaginaries; Central Government and Tatmadaw

Expanding upon the Political and Developmental Imaginaries detailed here, Chapter 5 will discuss how policy opponents advocate for the discourse which represents their imaginary within the context of Karen politics and the larger context of the peace process.

Chapter 5

Insider and Indirect Advocacy Tactics of Karen Policy Networks

This chapter focuses on advocacy tactics, divided into two main categories - insider and indirect - as outlined by Mosley (2011). As the Political and Developmental Imaginaries of policy opponents and policy negotiators were explained in Chapter 4, this Chapter will then clarify how policy opponents act to influence the peace process, or the Future Peace Imaginary, through policy networks. This research asserts that in promoting the Political Imaginary, indirect tactics seem to be more effective, while insider tactics are more effective in promoting the Developmental Imaginary.

Insider Advocacy

Insider advocacy, as defined by Mosely (2011), includes participation in government committees, lobbying policymakers, and engagement of actors on the basis of social capital. Informants in the following discussion describe some such tactics and their utilization by Karen policy networks in promoting the Political and Developmental Imaginaries detailed in Chapter 4. It should again be pointed out that insider advocacy tactics are typically not visible to the public, and therefore the legitimacy attributed to them must be inherent in the actor prior to his/her involvement. Many Karen policy opponents have held political positions within the KNU and have therefore established legitimate public following. The relationship between community members and policy

opponents enhances the strength of shared perception and, thereby, trust in the imaginaries promoted by Karen policy networks. However, this legitimacy does not lead to change within the policy negotiators' imaginaries. In fact, it may isolate the policy opponents from the policy negotiators even further.

Interconnected Relationships

Members of the KNU Concerned Group and Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN) illustrate the interconnectivity of Karen political actors, both those referred to as policy opponents and those referred to as policy negotiators. Actors change positions within the Karen political context quite fluidly, but relationships, both formal and informal, remain. Utilization of such relationships is an example of insider advocacy. Within the Karen policy sub-system these relationships can include the KNU leadership or members of the KNLA, whom Karen policy opponents advise and inform regarding local and national issues (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Some policy opponents even refer to these relationships as "close," demonstrating the informal aspect of insider advocacy: "Sometimes we give information to our close friends for them to be aware of a situation and how they can provide their perspective, help them not to forget their points, information like that" (ibid). Even policy opponents who do not maintain 'close friendships' benefit from informal discussions with those who have access to the negotiation space, establishing contacts that can approach policy negotiators directly (interview with KPSN representative #1, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

Policy opponents who, when in higher political positions, established themselves as mediators within the Karen policy sub-system can call on their relationships with the local community to support the promotion of imaginaries (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). The maintenance of shared perceptions between policy opponents and community members has facilitated the support of the greater Karen community. Sometimes such support is even strengthened after political events perceived as unfair or manipulated against the policy opponent. Such political events have even spurred the creation of new policy networks. For example, the results of the recent 2017 KNU Congress led to the establishment of the KNU Concerned Group, founded by former leaders of the KNU, both executive committee members and standing committee members (see Chapter 3).

The relationships that remain, even after political reshuffling, create networks that cross over between opponents and negotiators. The person-to-person dissemination of information provides an opportunity to promote a particular discourse or imaginary. However, not all such relationships provide the benefit of insider connection or insider advocacy. One example is that of a former KPSN member who was elected to parliament and who has been effectively blocked from promoting any Karen imaginaries at the negotiating level. The issues she is able to raise within the NLD are minor and communication between her and the Karen policy networks has been limited by the regulations of Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Another example is of a Karen environmentalist who worked on coal and power plant issues with KESAN and the Myanmar Green Network but was elected to parliament and has faced the same limitations (Karen policy opponents have also expressed disappointment with his recent downplay of the impact of coal mining on local communities and his pro-NLD leanings).

Here it can be inferred that insider advocacy tactics do not have high success in terms of perpetuating the discourse of the policy opponents' imaginaries. Although relationships and connections remain, they do not necessarily facilitate adoption of the policy opponents' perceptions by policy negotiators. The assumption that insider relationships and increased knowledge lead to policy change, as asserted by earlier policy cycle theories, is not always true (Lasswell, 1948, 1956).

Advocacy Outside the Karen Policy Sub-system

Karen policy-network insider advocacy efforts are not confined to the KNU leadership, Tatmadaw, and NLD government; policy opponents also draw on insider relationships with other EAOs (signatory and non-signatory) in targeted promotion of their Political Imaginary outside the Karen policy sub-system. With the addition of other EAOs to the policy opponents' Political Imaginary, insider advocacy is then implicit in the interactions of those EAO actors with the KNU leadership. As actors within other EAOs are influenced by Karen policy opponents to support their discourse and align their actor perceptions, these outside actors also engage in insider advocacy with policy negotiators, inherently on behalf of the policy opponents. The contacts that remain between other EAOs and Karen policy opponents facilitate a deeper

understanding of the peace process at the level of negotiation, from which Karen policy opponents are removed (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

Some policy opponents argue that their Political Imaginary is not confined to the Karen political context, but should be all-inclusive as it is part of the Future Peace Imaginary, encompassing the entire post-peace process Myanmar society. A KNU Concerned Group member explained that it is vital to remember that the peace process is addressing issues faced by all ethnic groups and their local communities, so it is important that all ethnic groups and their armed organizations are involved in the negotiation. The strength of ethnic groups as a whole has been weakened by the division between signatory- and non-signatory EAOs, which further impairs unity, understanding and trust among the ethnic groups. However, working together, whether formally or informally via insider advocacy, creates a stronger representation for EAOs and subsequently stronger negotiation with the Tatmadaw and NLD government. The role of other EAOs is complimentary to that of the Karen policy networks and governance actors. The success of Karen policy networks' insider advocacy is, to some extent, dependent on these EAOs outside the Karen policy sub-system.

In order to achieve the Future Peace Imaginary entertained by policy opponents, its meaning must be shared by others working toward the same goal. This increases the likelihood that policy negotiators will begin to adopt aspects of the policy opponents' shared perception and, eventually, their Future Peace Imaginary. Following the 2015 signing of the NCA, many analysts focused on Karen policy opponents' ideology of inclusivity. However, the focus on inclusivity as the primary opposition point between the KNU leadership and policy opponents is not entirely accurate. While policy opponents emphasize the need for inclusivity, they already include other EAOs within their Political Imaginary. Therefore, the primary point of opposition is more accurately the perceived importance of following the NCA's peace process roadmap step by step.

Information and Knowledge Gaps

In addition to the points of contention between the Political Imaginaries of policy opponents and policy negotiators, namely the importance of open and inclusive dialogue, there is also an information gap between the policy opponents and the KNU leadership. One problem is that the KNU leadership

is party to the policy negotiators, making it difficult for outsiders, such as policy opponents, to convince the KNU of alternative perspectives. While the KNU leadership does maintain a presence within Karen state, their knowledge of the situation on the ground is said to be superficial, motivating Karen policy networks to try to fill in the gaps by reporting and mediating (interview with KPSN representative #1, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Deeper understanding of the issues is vital to the success of the peace process - otherwise the root causes are not addressed and problems recur. Karen policy networks see their advocacy efforts as a rational way to address this issue through insider knowledge dissemination.

Mediation is not only between the KNU leadership and the local community, but also between the KNU leadership and other KNU actors such as members of the standing committee, as the 'KNU representatives at those levels don't have a lot of knowledge regarding specific issues' (ibid). Karen policy opponents are confident in their understanding of ground-level situations, as well as the accuracy of their information, explaining that with the 'real and right information' better decisions can be made at the negotiation level (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). It came as a surprise that some KNU committee members do not have access to media and other sources of information including papers and the news, which is another justification for Karen policy opponents to disseminate information via insider relationships in order to ensure that committee members understand the problems and can respond effectively (ibid).

Information dissemination as advocacy is undoubtedly a form of knowledge production as policy opponents exercise control over the way in which information is presented and engaged with. This subjectivity of information allows for its utilization in favor of the interests of Karen policy networks (Mills, 2003, p. 79). In the Karen policy sub-system, policy opponents produce knowledge that maintains a precise discourse with the intention of mobilizing support for their imaginaries. This emphasizes the importance of knowledge and its non-static role in policymaking, vis-à-vis governance actors.

Karen Policy-Network Consultations

Limitations

Insider advocacy is not only based on actor-actor relationships but also includes direct communication between the policy negotiators and the policy opponents' policy networks. In the Karen political context, this takes place through CSO consultations, seminars (i.e. Karen Unity Seminar), and conferences (i.e. Karen National Conference). However, various policy opponents have stated that they do not feel as though the KNU leadership values these interactions, due to their lack of response to issues raised at such meetings (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). It can be argued that the KNU leadership does not give much legitimacy to such consultations given the involvement of governance actors that do not have relevant social capital and the participation of border-based policy networks of a 'partisan and factionalized' nature and 'association with the opposition' (interview with political analyst, 25 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). As these consultations are far-removed from the negotiation level, many governance actors and policy opponents question their advocacy value. Additionally, as peace process negotiations take place at various levels including the ethnic states, the union, the working groups, and relevant secretary teams, Karen policy opponents' voices are capped at the level of in-state consultations (interview with KPSN representative #1, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

The KPSN has been actively involved in consultations organized by the KNU to help them prepare for upcoming UPC-21PCs, however the policies the KPSN advocates have rarely made their way to the negotiating level at the actual conference (ibid). Due to weak institutions and a lack of human resources, the KNU is unable to guarantee representation of the peoples' voices. While the policy papers created at such consultations may include suggestions from the policy networks, these suggestions rarely reach the actual negotiation level, leading to outcomes 'completely different from what the Karen people agreed on during the consultations' (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand; interview with KPSN representative #2, 29 May 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). This incites further distrust of the consultation process among Karen policy opponents.

While consultations are intended to provide policy networks with an opportunity to engage in the peace process by offering policy suggestions and providing information regarding ground-level situations, they tend to be dominated by presentations of what the KNU 'thinks, sees, and wants to explain' (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). As policy opponents feel their inputs are not taken seriously, some have stopped attending such consultations altogether (ibid). Due to the predictable nature of the consultations, policy opponents assert that the primary participants have fallen into groupthink, and that no progress is being made on the issues that the consultations should be seeking to resolve (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Nevertheless these consultations are important as their continuation is vital to the maintenance of open dialogue in the peace process. The issues that remain are further illuminated below, in addition to an exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of insider advocacy.

Although there are various ways in which consultations take place (formal and informal meetings, conferences, seminars, etc.), there is effort from the Tatmadaw to limit the political influence of policy opponents. While the NLD government appears more flexible and cooperative, it is actually the soft power compliment to the Tatmadaw's hard power suppression of policy-network interaction (interview with KPSN representative #1, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Among the signatory EAOs, it can be said that the KNU is the most important in keeping the negotiations alive. Additionally, the KNU maintains more substantial relationships with Karen policy networks compared to other relevant EAOs (interview with political analyst, 25 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). The efforts at limitation seem to show that the policy opponents' advocacy of their Political and Developmental Imaginaries is having some effect.

Without deeper understanding of the peace process, policy opponents can be quick to blame KNU leadership, citing the differences in shared actor perception as the motivation for not advocating for the policy opponents' imaginaries. However, further analysis of the peace process as currently handled makes clear all the limitations that have been put in place to stop outside policy networks from altering the Tatmadaw's and NLD Government's Future Peace Imaginary.

Expansion of Shared Perception

Insider advocacy does seem to be effective in increasing shared perception between the Karen policy networks and KNU leadership regarding the Developmental Imaginary. Actor-to-actor relationships with the negotiating parties do not encourage the expansion of shared perception as much as direct communication via consultations with policy networks. In fact, many policies regarding development projects are created in partnership between the KNU leadership and Karen policy networks in an attempt to 'respect and recognize the local Karen people's rights' and to 'link the local people's voices to the KNU leaders' (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Karen policy networks engage with the KNU administrative department (forestry, agriculture, health, education, etc.) that is most relevant to their organization's focus in order to develop policies, with input from experts and local communities (ibid).

As Karen policy networks work closest with 'on-the-ground' situations, they serve as gatekeepers of vital policy-related knowledge and are able to utilize that role to strengthen shared perceptions between the policy opponents' and policy negotiators' Developmental Imaginaries. Karen policy networks have initiated the formation of committees with the KNU in order to address issues more directly and bring united policy suggestions to the negotiation level (ibid). In some instances, Karen policy networks have even attempted engaging the central government directly, but with no success. Discussion of policy wasn't considered an option by the KNU, leading Karen policy networks to create committees as short-term solutions to urgent issues (interview with KPSN representative #1, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Through continued interaction with committees, perceived by the KNU as different from policy networks, effective local policy implementation has been achieved in recent cases.

It is important to acknowledge the KNU's recognition of policy networks as experts in their particular fields. Although insider advocacy via consultations does not demonstrate policy influence per se, it does provide the opportunity for policy networks to disseminate their knowledge and demonstrate their expertise. Policy networks also attempt to engage the KNU in various issue-related dialogues in order to increase awareness. Once an issue has reached national or international level, the KNU will reciprocate by engaging in dialogue with the policy opponents through cooperative policy networks, here referred

to as 'committees'. While policy opponents engage in insider advocacy making use of their social capital to promote their imaginaries, there is also active participation in indirect advocacy as will be discussed in the next section.

Indirect Advocacy

Access to Karen Policy-Network Imaginaries

Karen policy networks utilize indirect methods of advocacy primarily as a means to provide the public, both local and international, with access to their Political and Developmental Imaginaries. Policy opponents are aware that the more advocacy effort is made, the more attention can be garnered toward their imaginaries, furthering their goals at impacting peace process negotiations and the Future Peace Imaginary.

When particular issues start to gain traction, policy opponents begin to talk to the media in order to share their perspectives and expertise (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). This public form of advocacy is considered indirect because it is not aimed at the KNU leadership or policy negotiators. Rather, its purpose is to create a lot of 'noise' surrounding particular issues in order to catch the attention of policy negotiators without engaging them directly. The idea of 'making noise' was reiterated by other informants, demonstrating the effort being made to utilize indirect advocacy methods. As the KNU leadership is more likely to engage with issues that have reached the attention of the policy negotiators or international community, the more 'noise' raised around an issue, the faster it is likely to garner the attention needed to reach that level. Upon reaching this point, the KNU leadership will require the expertise and knowledge of policy networks in order to formulate a negotiation strategy. This negotiation strategy will be based on two Imaginaries, that of the policy opponents and that of the KNU Leadership, so only certain aspects of discourse, based on shared meaning, can be promoted, rather than the Imaginary as a whole.

One popular method of indirect advocacy within the Karen political context is releasing papers (by individuals) and statements (by policy networks) on particular events. Politically charged statements are typically released by policy networks such as KPSN, KESAN, KWO, and KNU Concerned Group. For example, the quote below is taken from an individual's analysis paper:

According to the Road Map, the Conference must be held only after the national level political dialogues were held. In fact, some of the 8 ethnic armed resistance organizations, which had signed the NCA, had not held national level political dialogues. The fact was that Tatmadaw, on its own volition, did not give permission to 2 of the 8 organizations to hold national level political dialogue. However, the peace process was pushed ahead and proceeded with the 6 organizations, which had held national level political dialogues. Accordingly, as Tatmadaw, the government, the parliament and the 8 ethnic armed organizations had deviated from the NCA, the NCA has been wrecked. For that reason, for further undertaking of peace building, the question arises whether the NCA will be reviewed or whether a new course will be crafted. We must consider about it. For peace building, if the undertaking is to be done according to the NCA, the NCA must be reviewed and the necessary terms and conditions must be incorporated. Similarly, the Framework for Political Dialogue and the Terms of Reference must be reviewed and amended, and the peace building must be further undertaken. It should not be done in haste as before. If it is done as before, the present peace process will surely be wrecked (A Brief Analysis by Former KNU Vice-President Naw Zipporah Sein, provided to the author by e-mail, 2017).

This quote is presented to show policy opponents' use of language and discourse in indirect advocacy efforts. The discourse being perpetuated is that of the Political Imaginary regarding the importance of the NCA roadmap's step-by-step process while the language used is very direct and critical. Such aspects of policy-network indirect advocacy are standardized throughout various advocacy statements, papers, and reports. Some policy opponents, particularly those close to the KPSN, explained that advocacy messages were stronger when released by the policy network as opposed to individual policy opponents who may have acquired a reputation for being critical (interview with KPSN representative #1, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

Publicly released statements are examples of indirect advocacy tactics, which are intended to raise concerns among the general public about a particular issue by perpetuating the policy opponents' discourse. In the case of the Karen Political and Developmental Imaginaries, it can be claimed that policy networks maintain issue ownership, as their imaginaries encompass a more widely held, publicly shared perception. Some research (see Chapter 2) attributes policy change made by the incumbent leadership to the mobilization of indirect advocacy tactics when the opposing party has issue ownership. Therefore, it can be argued that the presence of such discourse within the Karen policy sub-system has some association with policy change. At the very least, the continuation of policy opponent discourse and advocacy provides strength through the presentation of alternative policy perspectives to counter deadlocks and encourage progress:

> Of course we want to have a stronger voice in the political process because I think the KNU now realizes that they need pressure groups like the KPSN or others that are really critical of the peace process because of course you know that now they are faced with a deadlock, so unless there is more pressure and a push from different sources, different angles, then I don't know how they can move forward. Because actually the pressure group is good for them, and I think they understand that (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

This perceived policy impact provides policy networks with motivation to continue their advocacy efforts, both insider and indirect.

Advocacy Coalitions

Another form of indirect advocacy is working within coalitions. Karen policy opponents, representing various policy networks, formed the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN) in order to strengthen their individual advocacy efforts. The focus was originally to provide a united view of the peace process from the policy networks, but is now more involved with making policy demands and strengthening voices of the local community. Maintaining a strong connection with the KNU in terms of policy implementation and peace process monitoring,

the KPSN remains engaged in an effort to support the KNU in the peace process (interview with KPSN representative #1, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

As discussed in Chapter 2, advocacy coalitions create policy change through three main mechanisms: 1) external shocks, 2) a hurting stalemate, and 3) accumulation of scientific/technical evidence (Weible & Sabatier, 2007, p. 130). In the Karen context, policy change is effected through all three of these mechanisms. External shocks come in the form of pressure from the international community when conflict arises that leads to situations such as a refugee crisis or violent clashes between the KNU and Tatmadaw. The hurting stalemate can be likened to the current political deadlock between negotiating parties, which has forced the KNU leadership to consider changes of meaning in their Imaginary in order to achieve the objectives of the peace process. The accumulation of evidence is apparent through the indirect advocacy efforts of policy networks to disseminate knowledge through reports and statements such as the KPSN's most recent report, *The Nightmare Returns* (2018).

Expansion of Shared Perception

Karen policy networks' imaginaries maintain a focus on local people, as detailed in Chapter 4. Acknowledging that focus, the value placed on indirect advocacy can then be understood. It is not sufficient to concentrate all advocacy efforts on the KNU leadership and negotiating parties, as policy should be inclusive of the local people. Indirect advocacy provides policy opponents with the opportunity to legitimize their imaginaries through expansion of shared perceptions with local communities in order for the imaginaries to be supported by the people they are intended to benefit.

Working to increase social awareness, Karen policy networks facilitate local-level understanding of the peace process and other various situations with the intention of creating participation-based solutions that are also context-sensitive (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). It is then the responsibility of local communities to take on ownership of solutions and to defend their right to those solutions. Working together with local communities strengthens trust in Karen policy networks, strengthening the legitimacy of their perceptions at ground level. This is vital to expanding shared perception and is achieved primarily through

information dissemination (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #1, 16 Feb 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

Through information dissemination and knowledge sharing, policy opponents provide local people with an opportunity to participate in policy networks to further their shared perception via advocacy for the Political and Developmental Imaginary. This is an opportunity that many have not been afforded before. The policy opponents, then, utilize their social capital and role within policy networks in an attempt to raise the voices of the local people to the negotiating level.

Community Engagement

Policy opponents engage in indirect advocacy through various methods, not only direct conversations with their constituents but also through community engagement endeavors. This includes development of communication infrastructure such as FM radio for the local community to listen to general and local news, and information about the political situation (interview with KNU Concerned Group member #2, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Because communication is an issue in remote areas and policy networks are taking the lead in bridging the gap, they are hoping to initiate ownership of shared perception in these communities. Community engagement is also self-regulated; while many Karen policy networks maintain a social media presence through which they share information, release reports, and promote advocacy messages, sensitive issues are not discussed there but rather through internal, trusted groups.

Policy opponents have also taken on a *de facto* monitoring role within the Karen policy sub-system. By monitoring the peace process on the ground, policy opponents are in a unique position to advocate for better practices to be facilitated through the NCA. This demonstrates that policy opponents do not oppose policy just for the sake of doing so, but rather maintain their opposition in order to advocate for the best possible Future Peace Imaginary. Through close follow-up with peace process negotiations, Karen policy opponents are monitoring whether they really represent what the people need and want (interview with KPSN representative #1, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand). This narrows the gap between the negotiation space and the ground level, with policy networks playing a mediating role.

International Support and Balance of Information

Indirect advocacy is vital in the representation of Karen politics to the international community, whether political, humanitarian, or research-focused. International support for Karen policy opponents' imaginaries has been integral to the success of their indirect advocacy. As mentioned earlier, if an issue has received attention from the international community, the KNU leadership is more likely to engage with policy networks in order to negotiate a solution. Another crucial aspect of policy-network indirect advocacy with the international community is to ensure that the information being disseminated about the peace process is balanced. Policy opponents emphasise that situations cannot be analyzed from only one perspective. For example, although the KNU has signed the NCA and is participating in the UPC-21PC, that does not legitimize all aspects of the peace process without further consideration of ground level situations, conflicts, and perspectives. As not many people outside Karen state know about ongoing local issues or new conflicts, policy networks turn to indirect advocacy tactics to ensure that these issues are known about within the larger context of the peace process.

The international community is further cautioned not to support negotiators simply on the basis of their participation in the peace process, but rather to ensure they first have a full understanding of the issues and solutions being negotiated. As this research intends to illuminate, the Future Peace Imaginaries of the Karen policy opponents and the KNU leadership are not in complete alignment. Therefore, blindly supporting the Imaginaries of the KNU leadership (or even that of the policy negotiators as a whole) could have potentially negative consequences for the people the international community intends to support.

The early 2018 Tatmadaw attacks on KNLA Brigade 5 in Mutraw district brought to light many of the observations made by this research. Particularly, the assertion that the KNU Leadership will seek engagement with Karen policy networks when a situation has gained attention outside of the Karen policy sub-system. To that effect, the KPSN released a report highlighting the impact of the attacks on local people in order to gain the attention of the central government and international community (ibid). The KPSN's engagement with this conflict has strengthened the effectiveness of their advocacy through knowledge production, making the KPSN a primary actor in policy negotiation,

though still removed from negotiation itself. The report, entitled *The Nightmare Returns*, includes the following:

> KPSN's findings show that the Burma Army has repeatedly breached the terms of the 2012 and 2015 ceasefire agreements in Mutraw District. The Burma Army is again taking advantage of the ceasefire to accomplish what it was unable to do during earlier periods of widespread armed conflict: expand and upgrade its military infrastructure and capability to seize and control indigenous Karen people's lands. The Burma Army's actions undermine local people's efforts to build genuine lasting peace, protect their natural and cultural heritage, and facilitate the return of refugees and IDPs to their ancestral lands (The Nightmare Returns report by KPSN, 2018).

Through reporting on the Mutraw situation, the KPSN utilized indirect advocacy tactics to engage with the KNU in order to effect change in the negotiation of imaginaries at the national level. Due to the policy network's issue-ownership of conflicts that impact local people, the KNU leadership is compelled to compromise and adopt certain aspects of the policy opponents' imaginary, promoting those aspects of shared perception at the negotiating level. The impact of the report on policymaking is yet to be determined, however, as it was blocked from public release in April 2018 because of its threat to the legitimacy of the Tatmadaw in the peace process.

Summary

This chapter focused on the advocacy efforts of Karen policy opponents, divided into two main categories as outlined by Mosely (2011): insider and indirect. By highlighting the ways in which policy opponents attempt to engage the KNU Leadership, the dependency of the KNU Leadership on the policy opponents for their knowledge and expertise became more apparent, particularly regarding conflicts and situations that began to attract external attention. As one informant explained:

> I think the KNU realize that they cannot neglect the CSOs and CBOs. Which is good actually, and sort of trying to re-engage with the public, otherwise they might get lost… or as

we say, if you compare to a snake, only the head will move forward and the tail will be left behind. So yeah, it is a good thing that they keep in touch with the public and they are more open now compared to when they first signed the ceasefire (Author's interview, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand).

While insider advocacy seems to be best at promoting the policy opponents' Political Imaginary, indirect advocacy has greatly expanded shared perception between the policy opponents' and policy negotiators' Developmental Imaginaries. Through utilization of knowledge production, reports, and statements, the policy opponents provide outsiders with an opportunity to partake in their imaginaries. Larger participation in an imaginary strengthens its legitimacy at the policy negotiators' level. However, participation must be acquired through advocacy as outlined in this chapter. An Imaginary cannot influence change without action, therefore advocacy tactics are a vital part in understanding the Karen policy sub-system.

While Chapter 4 explored the creation of Political and Developmental Imaginaries through shared perceptions within the Karen policy sub-system, Chapter 5 took these research findings one step further to demonstrate how such imaginaries are advocated for by Karen policy networks. Beginning with an explanation of insider advocacy based on interconnected relationships, relationships with EAOs outside the Karen policy sub-system, information and knowledge gaps, consultation limitations, and expansion of shared perception via consultations, the Chapter then went on to examine indirect advocacy based on outsider access to Karen policy-network imaginaries, advocacy coalitions, expansion of shared perception, community engagement, and international support on the basis of balanced information. The advocacy role of Karen policy networks in Myanmar's peace process, then, is determined by their use of relationships, language, conduct, and discourse in promotion of shared perceptions, conceptualized as imaginaries.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Karen policy sub-system has been impacted by ongoing political negotiations at the national level, even prior to the 2015 NCA. However, this impact cannot be analyzed as only one-sided. The consequences of the NCA on Karen politics and governance actors have further facilitated their advocacy attempts to impact the national peace process in favor of their political and developmental imaginaries. While academia gives a lot of attention to the peace process as a national event, it often overlooks the agency of individual actors outside the negotiation space.

Karen governance actors do not represent a united Karen political goal (South, 2007; Brouwer & van Wijk, 2013; Thawnghmung, 2008). In fact, fragmentation has been at the core of Karen politics since the 1945 foundation of the Karen Youth Organization; this policy divide has consistently been defined as a dichotomy: those willing to compromise with the Tatmadaw and those maintaining a more hardline stance.

This research sought to analyze the political leverage of Karen governance actors (particularly those maintaining a more hardline stance against the Tatmadaw, referred to throughout as policy opponents) to effect change in national level peace process negotiations. Two lines of inquiry were explored:

- In what ways do Karen governance actors make sense of the peace process and to what extent do they believe that change can be leveraged at the negotiation level? and

- What forms of rationality, including language, conduct, and discourse, are mobilized within the Karen policy network to effectively advocate for particular policy views?

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five informants (four primary actors in Karen policy networks, and one political analyst) whose first-hand accounts gave various perspectives on the peace process in addition to describing actor involvement in advocacy efforts. Through in-depth discussions, my understanding of the peace process and its relevant mechanisms was enhanced, which I hope I have successfully conveyed through this work. Readers should remember, however, that what is presented here is just a snapshot in time of an ongoing process, and that situations and topics may have changed after the research was completed.

This final chapter presents a summary of the research project's major findings followed by a discussion of said findings based upon relevant theories and concepts. Policy implications are then presented in an attempt to translate an academic venture into a more broadly accessible report. Finally, the concluding section acknowledges the limitations of the study and considers what might be gained from further research.

Major Findings

The three major findings of this study are related to: shared actor perception across various levels of local politics, the creation of various imaginaries within the Karen political context to make sense of the peace process, and the current use of advocacy in an attempt to impact the national peace process.

Participation in Policy-networks Based on Shared Actor Perception

This study demonstrates that governance actors in the Karen political sub-system depend on past experience to create assumptions about the future. Through decades of conflict, Karen governance actors have experienced transitional governments, ceasefires, political tensions, and ongoing violence spurred by state-led development projects. Such past experiences inform actors' future-thinking processes when discussing ceasefires and peace in Myanmar. The acknowledgement that past experience, in addition to socio-economic and

geopolitical factors, influences the way actors behave within a policy network context describes the concept of actor perception. As actor perception is also influenced by religion, language, and culture, it is clear that the Karen policy sub-system contains a countless variety of actor perceptions.

In order for actor perception to be effective in a decision-making context, it cannot remain isolated. Shared experiences create shared actor perception. Shared actor perception is a typically overlooked aspect of societal interaction yet it determines how people relate to one another. In contexts where experience can vary greatly, people look to shared perceptions for support to achieve particular goals. In this way, shared actor perception greatly impacts the Karen political sub-system through variegated levels of political experience by informing governance actors' methods of engagement with the national peace process.

The Karen policy sub-system can be broadly divided into three main actor groups: local community members, CSO/CBO actors and activists, and political leadership. Such groups are fluid and many Karen governance actors will maintain simultaneous roles across various levels. Each level is subject to differing political experiences: those affected by policy, those advocating for policy, and those negotiating policy, respectively. It could be assumed, then, that these three groups entertain three main shared perceptions. However, such a generalized statement would overlook the complexity of the Karen policy sub-system, and the numerous shared actor perceptions present at varying crossroads in these actor groups. Crossroads between these levels actually strengthen shared actor perception, as Karen governance actors are able to understand the experience and perceptions of those from other groups. However, these crossroads have not led to merged imaginaries as will be discussed in the next section.

Policy networks facilitate the interactions between the main actor groups, providing individual governance actors access to institutions that may be more directly involved in policy negotiation. Without the combined social capital of such policy networks, many individual governance actors would not have a chance to further their shared perceptions. However, just as interwoven policy networks do not facilitate merged actor perception, it has become clear through this research that they are also unable to guarantee the promotion of policy through varying stages of the policy sub-system.

Creation of Political, Developmental, and Future Peace Imaginaries within the Karen Policy Sub-system

Furthering the discussion of shared actor perception is the combining of such perceptions into a singular idea based on a particular topic and its surrounding discourse. These ideas are referred to as imaginaries and serve as collective ideological goals (Cornwell & Atia, 2012, p. 270). Imaginaries provide an accessible way to understand the complexities of the Karen policy sub-system.

Within the context of this research, three categories of imaginaries were identified: Political, Developmental, and Future Peace. Chapter 4 elaborated on policy opponents' own perceptions of their Political and Developmental Imaginaries, providing in-depth descriptions of the discourse represented in each imaginary and how these imaginaries relate to the Karen political context. In the Political Imaginary, such key ideas include discussion of the 'process' (including dialogue), the need for review of the NCA roadmap, and the potential disregard of future agreed-upon policies. Key ideas of the Developmental Imaginary include criticism of state-led development projects on the basis of inciting violent conflict and community displacement, expansion of central government authority through the development of infrastructure, and the threat of DDR as Karen policy opponents fear that without the armed forces, in this case the KNLA, their political leverage will become very weak.

The Future Peace Imaginary is not detailed to such an extent, as it would require guided future-thinking processes with each informant. However, as the Political and Developmental Imaginaries contribute to the Future Peace Imaginary, certain ideas of the imaginary can be ascertained through the data collected. The policy opponents' Future Peace Imaginary is a conceptualization of the following discourse:

- The peace process is completed in accordance with the roadmap set forth in the NCA, including completion of the national dialogue.

- Governance actors that have been removed from the negotiation space are included in creation of negotiation strategies through participatory consensus building practices.

- Termination of state-led development projects which do not facilitate peace but rather are associated with violence and militarization.

- Maintenance of KNLA as dominant military force within Karen State without forced DDR compliance.

Advocacy Tactics and the Current Use of Advocacy to Impact the National Peace Process

As described by Cornwell and Atia (2012, p. 270), imaginaries serve as a collective ideological goal, and require action in order to create change. Within the Karen political context, activists engage in advocacy tactics in order to impact policy at various levels: grassroots, local policy sub-system, national government, and the international community.

These tactics are categorized as either insider or indirect. Informants described some insider interactions as more subtle and cautious, while other actors are more overt in their opposition. Indirect advocacy relies more heavily on the use of language and knowledge production. Policy networks, particularly the KPSN, are well known in the Karen political context for reporting on local situations and engaging the international community. These tactics have proved effective in promoting imaginaries to those outside the Karen policy sub-system.

Theoretical Discussion of Findings

Policy Networks as a Communication Link for Shared Perceptions

Policy-network analysis has proved an ideal concept to utilize in the context of Myanmar's peace process, where policy-making spans various levels of the ethnic political sub-systems, as it illuminates the interactions between varying actors in the light of their individual perceptions. Furthermore, as Karen governance actors' relationships have facilitated their participation in policy networks, enabling them to take part in policy-making (Jordan et al., 2005; Toikka, 2011), they are afforded more legitimacy through their combined social capital (interview with KPSN member, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai).

The Karen governance actors interviewed for this research seek participation in policy networks that align with their perceptions of the peace process. For example, the two members of the KNU Concerned Group were also members of the KWO and KESAN. Network interactions are not limited to single policy networks; instead various policy networks are utilized to further specific

policy goals and define problems, a form of knowledge creation manifest in political statements, reports, and advocacy efforts (Mills, 2003, p. 72; Weible & Sabatier, 2007, p. 127). In support of a Future Peace Imaginary that focuses on ground-level impact, such knowledge creation is often centered around reporting on situations that occur within the community as a result of the NCA and its subsequent peace process. Policy opponents tend to report on situations that reflect poorly on those in negotiating parties including the government, the Tatmadaw, and sometimes even the KNU leadership itself. This advocacy is an effort to foster shared actor perception and garner public support for the Political and Developmental Imaginaries promoted through Karen policy networks. As various Karen policy networks often have a policy focus or target demographic (for example environmental issues or Karen women), the KPSN serves as a more general policy-network through which a stronger shared perception is created.

It can now be seen that if this research had utilized traditional policy analysis in which the Central Government represents the macrolevel political institution and Karen governance actors as the microlevel, a range of influential and active mesolevel policy networks would have been overlooked, while the causal relationship between individuals and institutions would have been exaggerated, particularly in a transitional state such as Myanmar (Evans, 2001; Lubell et al., 2012). As there is no direct or normative link from individual governance actors in the local policy sub-systems to the macrolevel political institution, policy networks serve to fill this gap. Karen governance actors seek to utilize such a space to promote their perceptions in an attempt to create understanding with the KNU leadership. The more shared actor perception that is merged between the policy opponents and policy negotiators, these perceptions will be further represented to the macrolevel political institution outside of the Karen policy sub-system.

Making Sense of the Peace Process Through Imaginaries

Shared actor perception is vital to the understanding of an individual governance actor's policy preferences. However, when governance actors intend to act on such perceptions or preferences, they seek to do so through a network with others sharing similar perceptions. When this action is done in order to serve a collective ideological goal, the combined shared meaning, based on discourse alignment and perception, can then be considered an imaginary (Cornwell & Atia, 2012, p. 270). As pointed out through the presentation of data,

the Karen policy sub-system contains various imaginaries, some overlapping due to shared actor perception, and others isolated due to factional tension as perpetuated by opposing discourse. Through policy opponents' attempts to envision a Future Peace Imaginary that aligns with the shared meaning generated from particular chosen discourse, Political and Developmental Imaginaries were generated that facilitate observation and understanding of their shared perception (Milkoreit, 2017, pp. 1, 9; Jasanoff & Kim, 2015).

Outsider perceptions of Karen imaginaries have categorized the policy opponents' Future Peace Imaginary as idealistic and unattainable, while claiming the Future Peace Imaginary of the KNU Leadership is more practical and compromising. However, analyzing imaginaries in contrast to one another does not serve the interest of the Karen policy sub-system. Rather, it is more valuable to detail each imaginary in order to determine where there is overlap in ascribed meaning and to promote shared elements of discourse as potential policy.

The Karen policy opponents' Political Imaginary, primarily defined by a desire to follow the peace process as set forth by the NCA roadmap, represents a strong future-claim for accountability, suiting their interests and further representing what they put forth as their group values (Milkoreit, 2017, p. 9; Jasanoff & Kim, 2015). On the other hand, the Developmental Imaginary provides Karen policy opponents an opportunity for knowledge creation and dissemination as it is this imaginary where shared actor perception is the strongest between local community members and the CSO/CBO actors and activists (Mills, 2003, pp. 72, 79; interview with KPSN member, 26 April 2018, Chiang Mai). The Karen policy opponent imaginaries are most accessible as the advancement of their discourse depends up on the level of attention it has gained within both domestic and international communities. Therefore, policy opponent actors are more likely to share with researchers, media, and others who can spread the key ideas of their imaginaries to reach broader audiences.

Advocacy Tactics and the Current Use of Advocacy to Impact the National Peace Process

As ethno-political governance actors have not yet had the opportunity at future-claim making, those in the Karen policy sub-system are doing so through advocacy of their imaginaries. Advocacy serves as the 'expressive function' of policy networks, demonstrating how Karen governance actors are

active players in policymaking (James & Rose-Ackerman, 1986, p. 9; Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2014; Mosley, 2011, p. 450). More specifically, Karen policy opponents engage in two forms of advocacy: indirect and insider. Indirect advocacy aims to produce knowledge that maintains a particular discourse with the intention of mobilizing public support for a particular policy. Insider advocacy relies on social relationships within networks and their ascribed social capital. Not all tactics are aimed directly at the KNU leadership, though, as many are also directed to the public, the village leaders, and the international community.

Karen governance actors who engage in opposition advocacy do so through a few main channels. These include: community/CSO consultations, political statements, academic analysis papers, research and report writing, and engaging in dialogue with both signatory and non-signatory EAOs. Through discussion of the informants' formal and informal relationships within the Karen policy sub-system, it was revealed that political fragmentation and differing imaginaries did not necessarily restrict personal contact (interview with KNU Concerned Group member, 16 February 2018, Chiang Mai). Rather, such factors primarily hindered the impact of policy network advocacy. On the individual level of insider advocacy, relationships varied depending on the informant, and also varied in their potential for policy impact depending on their position within the Karen policy sub-system, and more broadly their position within the peace process context, whether signatory or non-signatory (interview with KNU Concerned Group member, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai; interview with KNU Concerned Group member, 16 February 2018, Chiang Mai).

The advocacy value of consultations came into question particularly regarding their ability to facilitate promotion of imaginaries. When advocacy efforts are blocked, as in the recent cases of KNU consultations being blocked by the Tatmadaw, inherent power disparities are placed at the forefront of Karen politics. Such exclusionary actions isolate the policy opponents' imaginaries, further diminishing their policy value within the Future Peace Imaginary. The Tatmadaw's efforts at limitation, though, do shed light on the legitimacy of such advocacy space to potentially impact policy negotiation. As the Tatmadaw and Central Government become more cautious of outside imaginaries altering their own Future Peace Imaginary, more exclusionary practices are being implemented under the guise of the NCA. While policy networks remain

removed from the negotiation space, their advocacy efforts must continue to be varied and active.

Although consultations do not necessarily facilitate policy impact, they are also vital to the dissemination of knowledge and demonstration of expertise. Such example of indirect advocacy is an attempt to provide the public, both local and international, access to their imaginaries. However, the imaginary is not static and unchanging but is rather influenced by local peoples' experiences as well. Many informants discussed their role of providing a voice to the local communities in order for their concerns to be heard at the level of negotiation vis-à-vis Karen policy networks (interview with KNU Concerned Group member, 2 March 2018, Chiang Mai). This local voice, then, becomes part of the policy opponents' imaginaries, furthering the extent to which shared perception is increased amongst imaginaries in the Karen policy sub-system.

The key findings can be summarized as follows: Governance actors, particularly policy opponents, make sense of the peace process through the creation of imaginaries that reflect shared actor perception. As policy opponents do not maintain high confidence in the KNU to directly promote their policy ideals at the negotiation level, they choose to act through policy networks employing both insider and indirect advocacy tactics. The Political and Developmental Imaginaries of policy opponents support positive, inclusive impacts for both local communities and EAOs outside of the Karen policy sub-system and are therefore advocated for in an attempt to leverage change at the level of national peace process negotiations.

Policy Implications

As discernible in this study, the national peace process facilitated by the NCA is beginning to unravel. The recent Tatmadaw attacks in Mutraw District are significant evidence for this assertion. As this act a blatant violation of the NCA, it is vital that the NCA be reviewed and reevaluated in terms of its accountability measures and monitoring institutions.

In relation to the Karen political context more specifically, the overall policy implication is that shared actor perceptions are historically grounded and bound by experience, making for strong imaginaries that are often difficult to influence (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007, p. 903). Although policy networks are

vital to the Karen policy sub-system for their facilitation of advocacy, they do not necessarily catalyze sharing and combining of imaginaries. In this way, policy opponents' imaginaries remain isolated from the policy negotiators'. Though each group is aware of the other imaginaries, there has not yet been sufficient merging of imaginaries to create a single, agreed-upon policy platform. While such differing imaginaries remain in the Karen policy sub-system, there will continue to be political tension and policy disagreement (Milkoreit, 2017, p. 7).

Limitations of the Study

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the presented research in order to ensure that the findings are not assumed to be complete and that further research is highly recommended on this particular topic. First is my decision to focus primarily on top-level actors within policy networks, which limited the possible number of informants. Additionally, gaining access to such actors was more difficult than I had originally anticipated. Contacting and scheduling interviews with informants took weeks at a time due to their busy schedules and constant travel around the Thai-Burma border and within Karen State. In turn, this affected the overall analysis, as participant numbers were restricted.

A second limitation was the sudden onset of armed conflict in Mutraw district, Karen State, between the KNLA and Tatmadaw in early 2018. Although my fieldwork was not physically based in this area, the conflict led to many consequences that impacted the research. Many top-level actors of policy networks had to reallocate their time to focus their efforts on advocating for the cessation of violent conflict, to meet with local leaders in order to accurately report the situation, and to help provide aid for those that had been affected.

Recommendations for Further Research

In response to such limitations, the primary recommendation for further research of this topic would be to expand both the scope and timeframe. Expanding the scope would provide the opportunity for a larger range of informants to share their perceptions, and furthermore the way they understand and conceptualize the peace process, creating a more discernable map of governance actors within the Karen policy sub-system. Additionally, a larger

scope would ideally include informants from the policy negotiators, further balancing the research findings. Lengthening the timeframe is recommended as policy change, especially in Myanmar's current context, takes time. Allowing more time for observation of policy impact would strengthen the research further in facilitating more accurate assertions.

Anticipating the outcome of my fieldwork, I did not expect to hear as much pessimism from the KNU toward the other policy negotiators as I did. Though some of this can be attributed to hope or wishful thinking, the consistency of comments mentioning the KNU's disapproval of the current peace process lends some legitimacy to such assertions. As mentioned above, expanding the scope of the research to include policy negotiators as informants would strengthen the study in terms of providing the KNU a space outside of the narrow definitions utilized here of 'policy opponents' and 'policy negotiators'. Although this research focused on the need to acknowledge the role of policy opponents in the negotiation process, there is also a need for acknowledging the increasing gap between imaginaries *within* the policy negotiators themselves.

Bibliography

14th UPDJC Meeting Held at NRPC. (2018, February 28). *Myanmar Digital News*. Retrieved from http://myanmardigital.news/en/content/9190

Almog-Bar, M. (2017). Insider Status and Outsider Tactics: Advocacy Tactics of Human Service Nonprofits in the Age of New Public Governance. *Nonprofit Policy Forum*.

Almog-Bar, M. & Schmid, H. (2014). Advocacy Activities of Nonprofit Human Service Organizations: A Critical Review. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly 43* (1), 11-35.

Asian Development Bank (ADB). (2015). *Civil Society Briefs: Myanmar*. Retrieved from https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/154554/csb-myanmar.pdf

Aung Naing Oo. (2016). *Pathways to Peace: An Insider's Account of the Myanmar Peace Process.* Yangon: Mizzima Media Group.

Baird, I. G. & Cansong, L. (2017). Variegated Borderlands Governance in Dehong Dai-Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture Along the China-Myanmar Border. *Geoform 85,* 214-224.

Baumgartner, F. R. & Jones, B.D. (1991). Agenda Dynamics and Policy Sub-systems. *Journal of Politics 53*, 1044-1074.

Baumgartner, F. R. & Jones, B. D. (2009). *Agendas and Instability in American Politics.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Baumgartner, F. R. & Leech, B. L. (1998). *Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science.* Chichester, UK: Princeton University Press.

Beyers, J., Eising, R., & Maloney, W. (2008). Researching Interest Group Politics and Europe and Elsewhere: Much We Study, Little We Know? *West European Politics 31* (6), 1103-1128.

Blaikie, N. (1991). A Critique of the Use of Triangulation in Social Research. *Quality and Quantity 25* (2), 115-136.

Börzel, T. A. (1997). What's So Special About Policy Networks? – An Exploration of the Concept and Its Usefulness in Studying European Governance. *European Integration online Papers (EIoP)* 1 (16).

Bogason, P. & Zolner, M. (eds.). (2007). *Methods in Democratic Network Governance.* Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology.* University of Chicago Press.

Bourne, L. & Walker, D. (2005). The Paradox of Project Control. *Team Performance Management Journal 11* (5/6), 157-178.

Brenner, D. (2017a). Authority in Rebel Groups: Identity, Recognition, and the Struggle Over Legitimacy. *Contemporary Politics 23* (4), 408-426.

Brenner, D. (2017b). Inside the Karen Insurgency: Explaining Conflict and Conciliation in Myanmar's Changing Borderlands. *Asian Security* DOI: 10.1080/14799855.2017.1293657

Brewer, G. (1974). *The Policy Sciences Emerge: To Nurture and Structure a Discipline.* The Rand Corporation Papers.

Brouwer, J. & van Wijk, J. (2013). Helping hands: external support for the KNU insurgency in Burma. *Small Wars and Insurgencies 24* (5), 835-856.

Bryson, J. M., (2004). What to do when stakeholders matter. *Public Management Review 6* (1), 21-53.

Buchanan, J., Kramer, T. & Woods, K. (2013). *Developing Disparity: Regional Investment in Burma's Borderlands.* Burma Center Netherlands: Transnational Institute.

Buckner, R. L. & Carroll, D. C. (2007). Self Projection and the Brain. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences 11*, 49-57.

Burma Link. (2018). UNFC Council Meeting Press Release. Retrieved from https://www.burmalink.org/unfc-council-meeting-press-release/

Burma News International (BNI). (2016). *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide 2015*. Chiang Mai: Burma News International.

Burma News International (BNI). (2017). *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide 2016*. Chiang Mai: Burma News International.

Burt, R. S. (1992). *Structural Holes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Burt, R. S. (2005). *Brokerage and Closure: An Introduction to Social Capital*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Callahan, M. (2012). The Generals Loosen Their Grip. *Journal of Democracy 23* (4), 120-131.

Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. (2014). *Listening to Communities: Karen (Kayin) State.* Phnom Penh: The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies.

Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose Reality Counts: Putting the First Last.* London: Intermediate Technology Publications.

Chaskin, R. J. & Greenberg, D. M. (2013). Between Public and Private Action: Neighborhood Organizations and Local Governance. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly.* Retrieved from http://nvs.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/11/11/0899764013510407

Chhotray, V. & Stoker, G. (2009). *Governance Theory and Practice: A Cross-Disciplinary Approach.* Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Choudhury, A. (2018, June 7). Myanmar's Violent Road to 'Peace'. *Tea Circle.* Retrieved from https://teacircleoxford.com/2018/06/07/myanmars-violent-road-to-peace/

Cleary, S. (1997). *The Role of NGOs Under Authoritarian Political Systems.* London: Macmillan.

Clifford, J. & Marcus G. E. (eds.). (1986). *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography.* Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

Collis, J. & Hussey, R. (2003). *Business Research: a practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students.* Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Core, P. (2009). Burma/ Myanmar: Challenges of a Ceasefire Accord in Karen State. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs 28* (3), 95-105.

Cornwell, G. & Atia, M. (2012). Imaginative Geographies of Amazigh Activism in Morocco. *Social and Cultural Geography 13* (3), 255-274.

Cressman, D. (2009). A Brief Overview of Actor-Network Theory: Punctualization, Heterogengous Engineering, and Translation. Retrieved from http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Cressman-ABriefOverviewofANT.pdf

Cunningham, K. G., Bakke, K. M. & Seymour, L. J. M. (2012). Shirts Today, Skins Tomorrow: Dual Contests and the Effects of Fragmentation in Self-

Determination Disputes. *Journal of Conflict Resolution.* DOI: 10.1177/0022002711429697.

Dawson, A. (2013). Edward Said's Imaginative Geographies and the Struggle for Climate Justice. *College Literature: A Journal of Critical Literary Studies 40* (4), 33-51.

Davis, Q. (2016). *Karen Unity Building Initiatives: Towards Sustainable Peace in Myanmar.* The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS).

Den Hond, F. & de Bakker, F. G. A. (2007). Ideologocially Motivated Activism: How Activist Groups Influence Corporate Social Change Activities. *Academy of Management Review 32* (3), 901-924.

Dickinson, H. (2016). From New Public Management to New Public Governance: The Implications for a 'New Public Service. In J. Butcher & D. Gilchist *The Three Sector Solution: Delivering Public Policy in Collaboration with Not-For-Profits and Businesses* (pp. 41-60). Canberra: ANU Press.

deLeon, P. (1999). The Stages Approach to the Policy Process: What Has it Done? Where is it Going? *Theories of the Policy Process 1*, 19-32.

deLeon, P. & Weible, C. M. (2010). Policy Process Research for Democracy: A Commentary on Lasswell's Vision. *International Journal of Policy Studies 1* (2).

Denscombe, M. (1998). *The Good Research Guide for Small-Scale Social Research Projects.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Dente, B. (2014). Who Decides? Actors and Their Resources. In B. Dente (ed.) *Understanding Policy Decisions* (pp. 29-66). New York: Springer.

Dukalskis, A. (2015). Why Do Some Insurgent Groups Agree to Cease-Fires While Others Do Not? A Within-Case Analysis of Burma/Myanmar, 1948-2011. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 38* (10), 841-863.

Eden, C. & Ackermann, F. (1998). *Making Strategy: The Journey of Strategic Management.* London: Sage Publications.

Ethnic Peace Resources Project (EPRP). (2016, January 20). *Peace Conference, Political Dialogue and Immediate Concerns.* Retrieved from http://www.eprpinformation. org/files/eprp-highlights/peace-conference-political-dialogue-and-immediate-concerns--EPRP-Opinion--20Jan2016-eng.pdf

Evans, M. (2001). Understanding Dialectics in Policy Network Analysis. *Political Studies 49*, 542-550.

Feiock, R. C. & Scholz, J. T. (2010). *Self-Organizing Federalism: Collaborative Mechanisms to Mitigate Institutional Collective Action*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fine, G. A. & Sandstrom, K. (1993). Ideology in Action: A Pragmatic Approach to a Contested Concept. *Sociological Theory 11* (1), 21-38.

Freeman, B. (2013, June 21). *Revisiting the Policy Cyle*. Written for ATEM Developing Policy in Tertiary Institutions seminar, Northern Metropolitan Institute of TAFE, Melbourne, Australia.

Friend, R. (2009). Fishing for Influence: Fisheries Science and Evidence in Water Resources Development in the Mekong Basin. *Water Alternatives 2*(2), 167-182.

Ganesan, N. (2017). Democratization and Its Implications for the Resolution of Ethnic Conflict in Myanmar. *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding 5* (1), 111-129.

Granovetter, M. (1985). The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology 81*, 727-729.

Green-Pedersen, C. & Mortensen, P. (2010). Who Sets the Agenda and Who Responds to It in the Danish Parliament? *European Journal of Political Research 49* (2), 257-281.

Hanegraaff, M., Beyers, J., & De Bruycker, I. (2016). Balancing Inside and Outside Lobbying: The Political Strategies of Lobbyists at Global Diplomatic Conferences. *European Journal of Political Research 55*, 568-588.

Heclo, H. (1972). Review Article: Policy Analysis. *British Journal of Political Science 2*, 83-108.

Hellmueller, S. & Santschi, M. (eds.). (2014). *Is Local Beautiful? Peacebuilding Between International Interventions and Locally Led Initiatives*. New York: Springer.

Hesse-Biber, Nagy, S. & Leavy, P. (2011). *The Practice of Qualitative Research*. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Hobart, M. (1993). *An Anthropological Critique of Development: The Growth of Ignorance*. London: Routledge.

Hofman, A. & Aalbers, M. B. (2017). Spaces of Lobbying. *Geography Compass 11*, 1-17

Hoppe, R. & A. Peterse. (1993). *Handling Frozen Fire*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Human Rights Watch. (2008, April 11). *Chronology of Burma's Constitutional Process*. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/burma0508chronology.pdf

James, E. & Rose-Ackerman, S. (1986). *The Nonprofit Enterprise in Market Economics*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers.

Jaquet, C. (2014) Enabling Environment of Civil Society in Myanmar (Burma). *CIVICUS*. Retrieved from https://www.civicus.org/images/Enabling_Environment_Civil_Society_Myanmar_CIVICUS_IRASEC.pdf

Jasanoff, S. & Kim, S. H. (2015). *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press.

Jenkins, W. I., (1978). *Policy Analysis: A Political and Organizational Perspective*. London: M. Roberston (Publisher).

Jenkins, J.C., (1987). Nonprofit Organizations and Policy Advocacy. In W. W. Powell (Ed.) *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook* (pp. 296-315). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Jolliffe, K. (2016). *Ceasefires, Governance and Development: The Karen National Union in Times of Change*. San Francisco: The Asia Foundation.

Jolliffe, K. (2017, April 26). A New Chapter for the Karen Movement. *Frontier Myanmar*. Retrieved from https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/a-new-chapter-for-the-karen-movement

Jones, L. (2014a). Explaining Myanmar's Regime Transition: The Periphery is Central. *Democratization 21* (5), 780-802.

Jones, L. (2014b). The Political Economy of Myanmar's Transition. *Journal of Contemporary Asia 44* (1), 144-170.

Jordan, A., Wurzel, R. K. W., & Zito., A. (2005). The Rise of 'New' Policy Instruments in Comparative Perspective: Has Governance Eclipsed Government? *Political Studies 53* (3), 477-496.

Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG). (2015, June 5). *Dooplaya Photo Set: Tatmadaw Conduct Heavy Weapons Target Practice in Win Yay Township, January 2015*.

Retrieved from http://khrg.org/2015/06/15-2-ps1/dooplaya-photo-set-tatmadaw-conduct-heavy-weapons-target-practice-win-yay-township

Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG). (2017). Proposed Hydropower Dam Project in Tanintharyi Region, Mergui-Tavoy District 2017. *News Bulletin 17-2* (1).

Karen News. (2011, November 12). KNU 'Peace Committee' Ready to Talk Peace. Retrieved from http://karennews.org/2011/11/knu-'peace-committee'-ready-to-talk-peace

Karen News. (2014, September 15). KNU's Decision to Suspend Itself from the UNFC Proves Divisive. Retrieved from http://karennews.org/2014/09/knus-decision-to-suspend-itself-from-unfc-proves-divisive/

Karen News. (2017a, February 3). Karen Representatives Finalized Draft Policy Papers for February's Union Peace Conference. Retrieved from http://karennews.org/2017/02/karen-representatives-finalized-draft-policy-papers-for-februarys-union-peace-conference

Karen News. (2017b, April 11) Have Your Say: PadohNawZipporah Urges for Genuine Peace and Ethnic Unity. Retrieved from http://karennews.org/2017/04/have-your-say-padoh-naw-zipporah-sein-former-vice-chairperson-knu.html

Karen News. (2018, March 7). Burma Army Moves on Karen State – Builds Roads, Occupies Village Land, Displaces Thousands of Villagers and Fights KNLA. Retrieved from http://karennews.org/2018/03/burma-army-moves-on-karen-state-builds-roads-occupies-village-land-displaces-thousands-of-villagers-and-fights-knla

Kaspar, A. (2018). Calls Grow for Withdrawal of Burma Army Troops in Karen State's Hpapun. *Democratic Voice of Burma.* Retrieved from https://www.burmalink.org/calls-grow-withdrawal-burma-army-troops-karen-states-hpapun/

Keim, K. D. (2003). Das Fenster zum Raum. Traktat über die Erforschung sozialräumlicher Transformation, Opladen. (In-text translation by Michael Haus, "Policy Networks in Subnational Governance", paper for the ECPR joint sessions, 13-18 April 2004, Uppsala).

Kenis, P. & Schneider, V. (1991). Policy Networks and Policy Analysis: Scrutinizing a New Analytical Toolbox. In B. Marin & R. Mayntz (eds.) *Policy Networks: Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Considerations* (pp. 25-59). Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.

Klandermans, B. (2004). The Demand and Supply of Participation: Social-Psychological Correlates of Participation in Social Movements. In D.A. Snow, S.A. Soule, and H. Kriesi (eds.) *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (pp. 360-379). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Kumbun, J. (2018, February 14). The UNFC: Reasons Behind Signing and Not Signing the NCA. *The Irrawaddy*. Retrieved from https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/unfc-reasons-behind-signing-not-signing-nca.html

Lahat, L. (2011). How Can Leaders' Perception Guide policy Analysis in an Era of Governance? *Policy Sciences 44* (2), 135-155.

Lasswell, H. D. (1948). *Power and Personality.* New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press.

Lasswell, H. D. (1956). *The Decision Process.* College Park: The University of Maryland Press.

Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory.* New York: Oxford University Press Inc.

Latt, S. (2017, March 21). Burma's National Dialogue: Where Now? *The Irrawaddy*. Retrieved from https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/burmas-national-dialogue-now.html

Laumann, E. O. & Knoke, D. (1987). *The Organizational State: Social Choice in National Policy Domains*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconson Press.

Law, J. (1992). Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy and Heterogeneity. *Systems Practice 5*, 379-393.

Levy, D. L. & Spicer, A. (2013). Contested Imaginaries and the Cultural Political Economy of Climate Change. *Organization 20*, 659-678.

Linder, S. & Peters, G. (1989). Instruments of Government: Perceptions and Contexts. *Journal of Public Policy 9* (1), 35-58.

Ljubownikow, S. & Crotty, J. (2015). Nonprofit Influence on Public Policy: Exploring Nonprofit Advocacy in Russia. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly 45* (2), 314-332.

Lowery, D. (2013). Lobbying Influence: Meaning, Measurement, and Missing. *Interest Groups and Advocacy 2* (1), 1-26.

Lubell, M. (2013) Governing Institutional Complexity: The Ecology of Games Framework. *Policy Studies Journal 41*, 537-559.

Lubell, M., Scholz, J., Berardo, R., & Robins, G. (2012). Testing Policy Theory with Statistical Models of Networks. *Policy Studies Journal 40* (3), 351-374.

Majone, G. (1989). *Evidence, Argument and Persuasion in the Policy Process.* Yale: Yale University Press.

Marglin, F. A. & Marglin, S. A. (eds.) (1990). *Dominating Knowledge.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Marsden, P. (1982). Brokerage Behavior in Restricted Exchange Networks. In P.V. Marsden and N. Lin (eds.) *Social Structure and Network Analysis* (pp. 201-218). Beverly Hills: Sage

Matthews, D. (2008) Metadecision Making: Rehabilitating Interdisciplinarity in the Decision Sciences. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science 25*, 157-179.

Mayers, J. & Vermeulen, S. (2005). Stakeholder Influence Mapping. *Power Tools.* London: International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

McAdam, D, Tarrow, S., & Tilly, C. (2001). *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCray, W. P. (2012). *The Visioneers: How a Group of Elite Scientists Pursued Space Colonies, Nanotechnologies, and a Limitless Future*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mendelow, A. (1991). Stakeholder Mapping. *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Information Systems*. Cambridge, MA.

Milkoreit, M. (2017). Imaginary Politics: Climate Change and Making the Future. *Elementa Science of the Anthropocene 5* (62), 1-18.

Mills, S. (2003). *Michel Foucault.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Mon News Agency. (2017, June 8). KNU Affiliate calls for thorough review of the Peace Process. *Burma News International*. Retrieved from http://www.bnionline.net/news/mon-state/item/3132-knu-affiliate-calls-for-thorough-review-of-the-peace-process.html

Morgenbesser, L. (2015). In Search of Stability: Electoral Legitimation under Authoritarianism in Myanmar. *European Journal of East Asian Studies 14* (2), 163-188.

Mosley, J. E. (2011). Institutionalization, Privatization, and Political Opportunity: What Tactical Choices Reveal About the Policy Advocacy of Human Service Nonprofits. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly 40*(3), 435-457.

Nonaka, I., & von Krogh, G. (2009). Tacit knowledge and knowledge conversion: Controversy and advancement in organizational knowledge creation theory. *Organization Science 20*(3), 635–652. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1080.0412

NyeinNyein. (2018a, February 13) Analysis: A Win for Peace Commission as Mon, Lahu Groups Sign NCA. *The Irrawaddy*. Retrieved from https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/analysis-win-peace-commission-mon-lahu-groups-sign-nca.html

NyeinNyein. (2018b, October 11). Armed Groups Agree to Join Peace Summit. *The Irrawaddy*. Retrieved from https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/armed-groups-agree-join-peace-summit.html

Osborne, S. P. (2006) The New Public Governance? *Public Management Review 8* (3), 377-387.

Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Petrocik, J. (1996). Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study. *American Journal of Political Science 40* (3), 825-850.

Price, R. (1983). *First-Time: The Historical Vision of an Afro-American People*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Punch, K. F. (2014). *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches.* Third Edition. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Rabinow, P. (1977). *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco.* Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

Radio Free Asia. (2014). Karen National Union's Participation in Umbrella Rebel Movement in Doubt. Retrieved from https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/knu-09022014180925.html

Raynaud, M. (2017, January 30). Towards a 'Normalization' of the Political Sociology of the Elites in Myanmar. *Tea Circle*. Retrieved from https://teacircleoxford.com/2017/01/30/towards-a-normalization-of-the-political-sociology-of-the-elites-in-myanmar-part-one

Rhodes, R. A. W. (1996). The New Governance: Governing without Government. *Political Studies Association 44*, 652-667.

Saw Tun Lin. (2017, October 16) KNU chair highlights weaknesses in the NCA during anniversary celebrations. *Burma News International.* Retrieved from https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/karen-state/item/3540-knu-chair-highlights-weaknesses-in-the-nca-during-anniversary-celebrations.html

Saw Yan Naing. (2012, November 21). KNU Leaders Meet Karen Civil Society to Discuss Peace Talks. *The Irrawaddy.* Retrieved from https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/knu-leaders-meet-karen-civil-society-to-discuss-peace-talks.html

Saw Yan Naing. (2017, April 20). How the KNU's 'Hardliners' Tried and Failed to Win the Election. *The Irrawaddy.* Retrieved from https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/commentary/how-the-knus-hardliners-tried-and-failed-to-win-the-election.html

Scott, J. (1990) *A Matter of Record: Documentary Sources in Social Research*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Seeberg, H. B. (2016). Opposition Policy Influence through Agenda-Setting: The Environment in Denmark, 1993-2009. *Scandinavian Political Studies 39* (2), 185-206.

Simpson, A. (2013). Challenging Hydropower Development in Myanmar (Burma): Cross-Border Activism Under a Regime in Transition. *The Pacific Review 26* (2), 129-152.

SiuSue, M. (2012, July 29). How Civil Society Can Engage with Policy Making in Myanmar's Transitional Context. *Columbia University Journal of International Affairs.* Retrieved from https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/authors/mark-siusue/.

Smith, M. (1999). *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*. London: Zed Books.

Smith, M. (2007). *State of Strife: The Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict in Burma*. Washington, D.C.: East-West Center.

Sokefeld, M. (2006). Mobilizing in Transnational Space: A Social Movement Approach to the Formation of Diaspora. *Global Networks 6*(3), 265-284.

South, A. (2007). Karen Nationalist Communities: The 'Problem' of Diversity. *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs 29* (1), 55-76.

South, A. (2011). *Burma's Longest War: Anatomy of the Karen Conflict*. Netherlands: Transnational Institute Burma Center.

South, A. (2015, April 8). Participation, Mobilization: The Karen Peace Dividend. *The Myanmar Times*.

South, A. & Joll, C.M. (2016). From Rebels to Rulers: The Challenges of Transition for Non-state Armed Groups in Mindanao and Myanmar. *Critical Asian Studies 48* (2), 168-192.

South, A. (2017a, May 22). Divergent Strategies Behind Myanmar's Peace Process. *Nikkei Asian Review.* Retrieved from https://asia.nikkei.com/Viewpoints/ Ashley-South/Divergent-strategies-behind-Myanmar-s-peace-process

South, A. (2018). "Hybrid Governance" and the Politics of Legitimacy in the Myanmar Peace Process. *Journal of Contemporary Asia. 48*,1, 50-66

Sova, C.A., Helfgott, A., Chaudhury, A. S., Matthews, D., Thornton, T. F., & Vermeulen, S. J. (2015). Multi-level Stakeholder Influence Mapping: Visualizing Power Relations Across Actor Levels in Nepal's Agricultural Climate Change Adaptation Regime. *Systemic Practice and Action Research 28* (4), 383-409.

Stone, D. (2002). *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making.* Revised Edition. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company.

Su-Ann Oh. (2013). Competing Forms of Sovereignty in the Karen State of Myanmar. *ISEAS Working Paper No. 1*. Retrieved from https://bookshop.iseas.edu.sg/ account/downloads/get/16399

Su Phyo Win. (2016, December 16). CSOs Call for Greater Transparency in Tanintharyi Developments. *The Myanmar Times.* Retrieved from https://www.mmtimes. com/national-news/24247-csos-call-for-greater-transparency-in-tanintharyi-developments.html

Taylor, R. (2009). *The State in Myanmar.* London: Hurst.

Thawnghmung, A. (2008). The Karen Revolution in Burma: Diverse Voices, Uncertain Ends. *Policy Studies 45* (Southeast Asia). East-West Center.

Thawnghmung, A. (2016). The Myanmar Elections 2015: Why the National League for Democracy Won a Landslide Victory. *Critical Asian Studies 48* (1), 132-142.

Thawnghmung, A. (2017). Signs of life in Myanmar's nationwide ceasefire agreement? Finding a Way Forward. *Critical Asian Studies 49* (3), 379-395.

Thawnghmung, A. & Robinson, G. (2017). Myanmar's New Era: A Break From the Past, or Too Much of the Same? In D. Singh and M. Cook (eds.) *Southeast Asian Affairs* (pp. 237-257). Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Themner, A. (2015). Former Military Networks and the Micro-Politics of Violence and Statebuilding in Liberia. *Journal of Comparative Politics 47* (3), 334-353.

Themner, A. & Utas, M. (2016). Governance through Brokerage: Informal Governance in Post-Civil War Societies. *Civil Wars 18* (3), 255-280.

Thesen, G. (2013). When Good News is Scarce and Bad News is Good: Government Responsibilities and Opposition Possibilities in Political Agenda-Setting. *European Journal of Political Research 52* (3), 364-389.

The Border Consortium. (2018). Refugee Camp Populations: May 2018. Retrieved from https://www.theborderconsortium.org/media/108454/2018-05-may-map-tbc-unhcr.pdf

Thiha, A. (2017, October 2017). On the Second Anniversary of the NCA, is Myanmar Keeping Peace on Track? *Frontier Myanmar*. Retrieved from https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/on-the-second-anniversary-of-the-nca-is-myanmar-keeping-peace-on-track

Thornton, P. (2006). *Restless Souls.* Bangkok: Asia Books.

Tinker, H. (1967). *The Union of Burma: A Study of the First Years of Independence.* London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Tin Maung Maung Than. (2013). Ethnic Insurgencies and Peacemaking in Myanmar. *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter 66*, 37.

Toikka, A. (2011). *Governance Theory as a Framework for Empirical Research: A Case Study on Local Environmental Policy-Making in Helsinki, Finland.* (doctoral dissertation). University of Helsinki.

Transnational Institute (TNI). (2011). *Financing Disposession: China's Opium Substitution Program in Northern Burma.* Amsterdam: TNI.

Transnational Institute (TNI). (2015). Political Reform and Ethnic Peace in Burma/Myanmar: The Need for Clairty and Achievement. *Myanmar Policy Briefing No. 14.*

Weible, C. M. & Sabatier, P. A. (2006). A Guide to the Advocacy Coalition Framework. In F. Fischer, G.J. Miller, and M.S. Sidney (eds.) *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis* (pp.123-136). Florida: CRC Press.

Wera Moe Nay. (2017, February 2). Karen Groups Ready for Peace Conference. *Eleven News.* Retrieved from http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/7687

Woods, K. (2011). Ceasefire Capitalism: Military-Private Partnerships, Resource Concessions and Military-State Building in Burma-China Borderlands. *The Journal of Peasant Studies 38* (4), 747-770.

Yi, H. T. & Scholz, J. T. (2016). Policy Networks in Complex Governance Sub-systems: Observing and Comparing Hyperlink, Media, and Partnership Networks. *The Policy Studies Journal 44* (3), 248-279.

Zald, M. (2000). Ideologically Structured Action: An Enlarged Agenda for Social Movement Research. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly 5* (1), 1-16.

Zaw Oo and Win Min. (2007). *Assessing Burma's Ceasefire Accords.* Washington, D.C., East-West Center; Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Index

The Role of Karen Policy Networks in Myanmar's National Peace Process

Stasha Malcolm

The KNU has become accepted as a de facto government within Karen State. Political tension has led to factionalism within the KNU, creating a sub-system in which various governance actors attempt to raise their policy concerns at the national level. Current literature analyzes Karen politics as they happen within top-level negotiations on the NCA, overlooking the impact of policy opponents that do not have direct access at that level.

This study illustrates the involvement of individual Karen actors, vis-à-vis the KNU, in Myanmar's peace process. It explores to what level Karen governance actors believe they can leverage change at the negotiation level, and what forms of rationality — including language, conduct, and discourse — they mobilize within Karen policy networks to advocate for their policy views. Various imaginaries, both political and developmental, are created by Karen governance actors through shared perceptions to understand and engage in the peace process. Acting through various policy networks, Karen policy opponents attempt to impact national level negotiations in favor of their imaginaries.

Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration **18** | **Myanmar in Transition**

RCSD | The Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development | Chiang Mai University