



Building Critical Mass for Peace in Myanmar

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Executive Summary

Myanmar's latest peace conference, held on 24-29 May 2017, made welcome progress. Following a deal brokered by China on the eve of the meeting, more armed groups came to Naypyitaw than expected. On the final day, they agreed on 37 "principles" for a future peace accord, including a key provision that the state will be a federal democracy. Yet despite these steps forward, fundamental questions remain regarding where the peace process is heading and how many armed groups are ready to participate. Without new momentum and broader participation, a negotiated end to the conflict will remain elusive.

Until just days before the conference, the dynamics appeared much bleaker. The event had been delayed by three months as the government struggled to convince more armed groups to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). Only a few of the planned subnational preparatory dialogues had been held, and others – involving the Shan and Rakhine armed groups – had been blocked by the authorities, adding to frustration. In a further setback, in April the powerful United Wa State Party (UWSP) convened a summit of seven north-east-based armed groups. They issued a statement rejecting the current National Ceasefire Agreement text – an accord signed in 2015 by eight armed groups and the government that paved the way for political talks – and announcing a new alliance, the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC, "Wa alliance"). A deadlock appeared inevitable since the government and military continued to insist that only by signing the existing ceasefire agreement could armed groups join the peace process.

What would have been a high-profile failure of Aung San Suu Kyi's signature initiative was only avoided through Beijing's last-minute shuttle diplomacy. After obtaining concessions from the Myanmar government and military, a Chinese envoy convinced representatives of the seven north-eastern armed groups to attend the conference. As a result, fifteen of 21 armed groups were present for the opening – the eight that signed the ceasefire agreement and the seven in the new Wa alliance – a symbolically important win for the government. Beyond symbolism, this also set an important precedent by allowing three previously-excluded groups – the Kokang, Palaung and Arakan armies – to join negotiations. It also could open up new channels of communication with groups in the Wa alliance.

Yet progress should not be overstated. The Wa alliance groups attended the opening session and dinner but were not permitted to participate in substantive sessions and returned to Kunming two days before the end of the conference. They remain unwilling to sign the current ceasefire agreement and the government remains unwilling to revise it. It is unclear how much appetite there is on all sides for concessions needed to bring these groups into the peace process.

Discussions with the armed groups that signed the ceasefire agreement also were far from smooth. Key "principles" related to self-determination and the possibility for states to have their own constitutions within a future federal structure could not be agreed as groups opposed the quid pro quo requirement that they reject any possibility of secession. This failure to achieve what should have been an acceptable compromise – state constitutions are a longstanding demand of ethnic communities

and no group wishes to secede – highlighted deficiencies in the process and lack of trust. Furthermore, the principles that were agreed were pushed through the plenary without discussion.

With its last-minute intervention, China has assumed a high-profile role in the process. But the extent of its commitment remains unclear and its interests do not necessarily align with those of a robust peace process. If it stays focused only on delivering symbolic wins at critical moments, little may change. But if China is determined to see sustainable peace on its border, it can use its considerable leverage as well as sophisticated diplomacy and mediation to push all sides to compromise.

Yangon/Brussels, 29 June 2017

Building Critical Mass for Peace in Myanmar

I. Introduction

In 2011-2013, the previous government in Myanmar signed a series of bilateral ceasefires with fourteen armed groups.¹ There was much optimism on 31 March 2015, when the government and negotiating teams initialled the text of a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) that was intended to halt clashes and pave the way for a conflict-ending political agreement. However, the process stalled, and only eight armed groups signed the agreement at a 15 October 2015 ceremony.

The armed groups that signed the nationwide ceasefire include the powerful Karen National Union (KNU) and Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), based near the border with Thailand. Among non-signatories were armed groups based near the Chinese border, including the powerful Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) which has been engaged in regular intense clashes with government forces since their bilateral ceasefire broke down in 2011, and the United Wa State Party (UWSP), Myanmar's largest ethnic armed group with perhaps 30,000 well-trained and well-armed troops, whose 1989 bilateral ceasefire largely has held.

Finalisation of the nationwide ceasefire was the first step in a long, difficult process of political dialogue needed to reach a comprehensive peace agreement. Many of the most challenging issues – including what form federalism might take, details of revenue sharing and whether the future status of the armed groups would include their integration into the military – were deferred to the political dialogue phase. This was envisaged as a series of “Union Peace Conferences”.

The previous government did not have enough time left in its term to start a meaningful political dialogue, so it held a symbolic first Union Peace Conference from 12-16 January 2016, in the lame duck period between the elections and transfer of power. The goal was to launch the process, keeping to the ambitious political roadmap set out in the nationwide ceasefire agreement.² Armed groups that did not sign the agreement were invited to attend as observers, but nearly all declined. Since Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party previously had kept its distance from the peace process, it was significant that she gave an opening speech.

¹ See Appendix B and C and the acronyms in Appendix D. For a detailed analysis of the history of the armed conflict and the different armed groups, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°214, *Myanmar: A New Peace Initiative*, 30 November 2011. For recent Crisis Group reporting on Myanmar, see Asia Briefings N°s 149, *Myanmar's Peace Process: Getting to a Political Dialogue*, 19 October 2016; 147, *The Myanmar Elections: Results and Implications*, 9 December 2015; 146, *Myanmar's Peace Process: A Nationwide Ceasefire Remains Elusive*, 16 September 2015; 144, *Counting the Costs: Myanmar's Problematic Census*, 15 May 2014; 143, *Myanmar's Military: Back to the Barracks?*, 22 April 2014; also Asia Reports N°s 283, *Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State*, 15 December 2016; 282, *Myanmar's New Government: Finding Its Feet?*, 29 July 2016; 266, *Myanmar's Electoral Landscape*, 28 April 2015; and 261, *Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State*, 22 October 2014.

² This roadmap required the framework for political dialogue to be agreed within 60 days of the NCA signing and the political dialogue to commence within 90 days.

Once in office as Myanmar's de facto leader, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi made good on her own and the NLD's pledge to prioritise the peace process.³ In her first major speech, a Myanmar New Year's message to the nation on 18 April 2016, she said the government would try to bring remaining armed groups into the cease-fire agreement, stating that "through peace conferences, we'll continue to be able to build up a genuine, federal democratic union".⁴ She made major changes to the peace architecture, indicating that she would personally lead the process.

The conferences were rebranded 21st Century Panglong (Panglong-21) – a reference to the pre-independence Panglong Conference, convened in 1947 by her father, Aung San, the independence hero. The Panglong Agreement was not a peace deal – there was then no insurgency – but an agreement by some ethnic areas (Shan, Kachin and Chin) to join an independent Burma in return for promises of full autonomy in internal administration and an equal share in national wealth. Shan and Kayah states were given the right to secede after a ten-year trial period.⁵

The first Panglong-21 Conference was held in Naypyitaw from 31 August to 3 September. Suu Kyi's opening address was followed by plenary speeches from the lower and upper house speakers, the commander-in-chief, the Karen National Union chairman, NLD patron Tin Oo (an ex-commander-in-chief), the Kachin Independence Organisation vice chairman, and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.⁶ Representatives of nearly all armed groups attended.⁷ The attendance of most non-signatories was an important step forward. However, they were invited because the conference was merely a symbolic launch of the new government's peace process as opposed to a forum for substantive dialogue or negotiations.

³ The NLD's election manifesto had as its first item a promise to "hold political dialogue based on the Panglong spirit in order to address the roots of internal armed conflict" ("2015 Election Manifesto", NLD, official translation, p. 5).

⁴ "State Counsellor offers New Year message", *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 18 April 2016.

⁵ Other ethnic areas gave up this possibility in return for concessions, or were never offered it. For details on the 1947 Panglong Conference, see Crisis Group Report, *Myanmar: A New Peace Initiative*, op. cit., Section I.

⁶ KIO Vice Chairman N'Ban La's talk was a last-minute concession; there was initially no speaking slot for the non-signatory groups.

⁷ Four did not: the Arakan Army (AA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K). The first three were not invited; the NSCN-K, though invited, did not attend.

II. Preparations for the Second Panglong-21 Conference

A. Alliance Politics

Following the first Panglong-21 conference, the government's main focus became convincing non-signatories, in particular members of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) alliance, to sign the ceasefire agreement. Established in 2011 as an umbrella organisation of eleven armed groups, the UNFC had emerged as the main coalition of non-signatory groups.

A series of meetings between government and UNFC negotiators took place in the months following the first Panglong-21 conference. The discussions focused on the UNFC's nine conditions for signing the ceasefire agreement, which include the declaration by the military of a nationwide ceasefire within 24 hours of agreement on the nine points; commitment to the establishment of a federal union with full guarantees for equality and self-determination; international participation in ceasefire monitoring; and an independent and partly international commission to mediate disputes.⁸

The discussions did not make real headway. Following a meeting in Naypyitaw on 1 March, the government announced that its negotiators and the UNFC delegation had reached a somewhat vague and ad referendum "agreement in principle" on the nine points.⁹ However, the Kachin Independence Organisation – the UNFC chair – did not attend the meeting, and it subsequently became clear that an agreement satisfactory to the two sides' leaders had not been reached. On 30 March, the government issued a press release, coinciding with the administration's one-year anniversary, announcing that five UNFC members would sign the ceasefire agreement, but the announcement was premature and made without advance notice to the armed groups in question.¹⁰ The next day, the five groups said they had not decided whether to sign, embarrassing the government, which apparently was overeager to present good news on its anniversary.¹¹

Meanwhile, a major realignment was taking place that recast the political landscape of the armed opposition. On 22-24 February, the United Wa State Party (UWSP) convened a summit of seven non-signatory armed groups from the north-eastern region at its Pangsang (Pangkham) headquarters on the Chinese border.¹² The groups issued a joint statement demanding immediate retraction of the Shan state legisla-

⁸ "United Nationalities Federal Council Members' Proposal (Draft)", 16 August 2016.

⁹ "Peace Commission, DPN reach agreement on nine points", *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 4 March 2017, p. 1. The five groups mentioned were Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), New Mon State Party (NMSP), Arakan National Congress (ANC), Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) and Wa National Organisation (WNO).

¹⁰ Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor Press Release, 30 March 2017, published in *Global New Light of Myanmar* the following day.

¹¹ Crisis Group interview, UNFC representative, March 2017.

¹² Those attending were UWSP, National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), KIO, Shan State Progress Party (SSPP), MNDA, TNLA and AA. The KNPP and NMSP were also invited but did not attend.

ture's December 2016 decision to brand three of them "terrorist organisations";¹³ immediate cessation of offensives by government forces in ethnic areas; and inclusion of all armed groups in the peace process. The summit also established a new armed group alliance and "political negotiation committee" (subsequently renamed the FPNCC, and referred to here as the Wa alliance) and jointly adopted a UWSP-drafted peace process policy document.¹⁴ It called for a new ceasefire agreement as the basis for a peace process mediated by the UN and China and declared support for China's Belt and Road Initiative with security guarantees for Chinese projects in armed group areas.¹⁵

The UWSP convened a follow-up summit on 15-19 April, attended by leaders of the same seven armed groups. Their joint final statement announced the establishment of the FPNCC or Wa alliance as well as members of its negotiation team and endorsed a "constructive document" as the basis for future negotiations with the government.¹⁶ The seven also agreed that other groups that accepted this position paper could join the Wa alliance and that members would only negotiate with the government collectively.¹⁷

These meetings signalled a bold and unexpected move by the UWSP to take a key role in the peace process, from which it previously had remained largely aloof. The UWSP has had no major clashes with the government since agreeing to a ceasefire in 1989 (reaffirmed in 2011). It has a large and well-equipped force of perhaps 30,000 troops, and almost complete de facto autonomy in its twin territories on the Chinese and Thai borders. It appears to have been pushed to take this lead role because it feels increasingly threatened by military efforts to encircle its territory. Another concern may be the current government's failure to reaffirm its predecessor's stated willingness to recognise the UWSP's special status by allowing it to seek a separate deal outside the nationwide ceasefire framework. On the contrary, the government insisted that the UWSP sign the nationwide ceasefire agreement, and requested Beijing to pressure it to do so.¹⁸

The new Wa alliance eclipsed the UNFC, which had long been the main coalition of non-signatory groups. The UNFC accepted the nationwide ceasefire agreement in principle – it had been involved in the long negotiations for developing it, initialling the final text in 2015 – but took the position that its members would not sign without

¹³ The decision to brand KIO, MNDAA and TNLA as terrorists has no direct legal consequence. It followed rejection of a similar motion in the national legislature after attacks by these groups in November 2016 (see Section III.B).

¹⁴ "The general principles and specific proposition of revolutionary armed organisations of all nationalities upon the political negotiation", FPNCC, 19 April 2017 (in English, Burmese and Chinese). For analysis, see Section IV.D below.

¹⁵ Leaders of Ethnic Armed Organisations, Statement of 3rd Pangsang Summit, 24 February 2017 (unofficial translation). The first and second Pangsang summits of armed group leaders were held in May 2015 and March 2016.

¹⁶ This subsequently was revealed to be a revised text of the nationwide ceasefire agreement; see Section IV.D below.

¹⁷ Leaders of Ethnic Armed Organisations, Statement of 4th Pangsang Summit, 19 April 2017 (unofficial translation).

¹⁸ Crisis Group interviews, analysts and members of the previous government's peace team, Yangon, June 2017.

additional guarantees, as set out in the nine points. Now, however, two core members – the KIO, which chaired the UNFC, and the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) – had joined the Wa alliance, whose position is that the nationwide ceasefire agreement must be replaced or at least comprehensively revised. On 29 April, the KIO submitted a letter of resignation from the UNFC and another small member group subsequently did the same.¹⁹ Momentum was clearly with the Wa alliance, but the government, not wishing to lend legitimacy to this new, more hard-line grouping, declined to meet with it.

B. Armed Conflict

While these political developments were unfolding, the situation on the ground remained volatile. This has had a negative impact on the peace process, whose dynamics in turn provoked greater tensions and armed conflict.

The clearest example of the latter came on 28 September 2016, when the UWSP, the most powerful ethnic armed group, sent several hundred troops to seize three outposts from another armed group, the National Democratic Alliance Army or NDAA (Mongla group), one of their long-time allies. The UWSP subsequently returned one of the outposts, a road checkpoint, but refused to withdraw from the other two, both strategic hilltop bases. The move apparently was prompted by concerns that the Mongla group, which had attended the first Panglong-21 conference, was moving closer to the government and contemplating signing the ceasefire agreement. Territory controlled by the Mongla group, moreover, is strategically important for the UWSP to protect its flank and the corridor to its southern area on the Thai border.²⁰ Because government forces had also been active on the UWSP's other two flanks, the UWSP apparently feared that the Myanmar armed forces were trying to encircle its territory or ramp up military pressure.²¹

Other groups in northern Shan state were coming under increased military pressure from government forces. In response, on 20 November 2016 four armed groups launched joint attacks on military and economic targets, including rare attacks on urban areas. These groups called themselves the “Northern Alliance”, and among their targets was the town of Muse, a major trade gateway with China.²² Armed roadblocks and attacks on trucks virtually closed down the Lashio-Muse road, Myanmar's main overland trade route, for days. The alliance subsequently overran another strategic border town, Mongko, holding it for several days. Some 15,000 civilians had fled into China by early December, and several thousand others who attempted to cross the border were pushed back by Chinese authorities.²³ China attempted to mediate, bringing together Myanmar government peace negotiators and leaders of the Northern Alliance groups, as well as the UWSP, in Kunming over the weekend of 3-4 Decem-

¹⁹ That is, the WNO – a small Wa faction.

²⁰ Crisis Group interviews, analysts, Yangon, October 2016.

²¹ These other two flanks are areas where the MNDAA and SSPP operate.

²² They are the KIO, TNLA, MNDAA and AA.

²³ Crisis Group interview, local relief worker, December 2016. See also “U.N. says 15,000 flee into China as Myanmar's army battles ethnic rebels”, Reuters, 20 December 2016.

ber. The effort fell apart when the representatives, all of whom were at the same hotel, could not even agree on modalities for the meeting.²⁴

The November attacks prompted major offensives by the Myanmar military in northern Shan state. They also stepped up attacks on KIO positions in Kachin state. This included a sustained assault on the strategic KIO position on Gidon hill, which the Myanmar military overran on 17 December, allowing them to effectively cut the group's territory in two. The armed forces then seized battalion headquarters and several other KIO bases in early-January.²⁵

The emergence of the Northern Alliance and the 20 November attacks took the fight to the military in more urban areas and demonstrated the Northern Alliance's ability to inflict economic harm. They were also a political signal, a strategic embrace by the KIO of the three other Northern Alliance groups that the government had excluded from the peace process.²⁶ This is significant because the KIO and other groups that have not signed the nationwide ceasefire were willing to attend the August 2016 peace conference, prioritising engagement with the government over solidarity with the excluded groups. Prior to that, the KIO had insisted that the peace process must be inclusive of all groups. The emergence of the Northern Alliance was thus a sign that some in the KIO leadership wanted to distance themselves from the UNFC and move closer to the other groups in the north east – for a mixture of military reasons (all of these groups have overlapping territory and on-the-ground cooperation) and political ones (some UNFC members were inclined to sign the nationwide ceasefire).

Fighting also erupted in the Kokang region of Shan state, when the Northern Alliance (in this case, mainly the Kokang armed group, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army or MNDAA) attacked military and police posts around the main town of Laukkai on 6 March 2017, and then entered the town to target hotels and casinos run by the MNDAA's rival, government-aligned faction.²⁷ The attackers abducted some 300 casino staff and made off with tens of millions of dollars in cash, according to some reports. (The MNDAA says the amount was much smaller.) The female casino staff subsequently were released, but some 50 men appear to have been forcibly recruited into the MNDAA.²⁸

Most recently, on 3 June, government forces clashed with KIO troops, capturing a KIO outpost near Tanai town in Kachin state. On 5 June, a military helicopter dropped leaflets informing people living in the area, which has many gold and amber mines, that the military would conduct clearance operations and they should leave

²⁴ Crisis Group interviews, government negotiators and diplomats briefed on events, Yangon, December 2016.

²⁵ See "Burma army seizes KIA mountain outpost", *The Irrawaddy*, 19 December 2016; "Myanmar military captures key ethnic army command base in Kachin state", *Radio Free Asia*, 19 January 2017.

²⁶ That is, the MNDAA, TNLA and AA.

²⁷ The MNDAA's 1989 ceasefire ended after an army attack in 2009, with one faction being pushed out of Laukkai (and its leaders fleeing to China) before subsequently regrouping, and the other agreeing to become a Border Guard Force unit under partial army control. That second faction now controls the Kokang area and runs the casinos.

²⁸ Laukkai's dozens of casinos with thousands of gaming tables are a major destination for Chinese gamblers, including high rollers. See "30 dead as intense fighting breaks out in Myanmar-China border town", *Agence France-Presse*, 6 March 2017; "China-linked rebels' casino cash grab stalls Myanmar border city", *South China Morning Post*, 4 June 2017.

by 15 June or be treated as “cooperating with KIO terrorists”. Tens of thousands of migrant workers live in and around these mines, most of whom have fled. Some 1,000 people are currently in temporary shelters in the town of Tanai.²⁹

²⁹ Crisis Group has seen one of these leaflets. See also “Displaced villagers and mine workers need food and clothes”, *Myanmar Times*, 19 June 2017; “Miners flee conflict in Kachin state”, *The Irrawaddy*, 20 June 2017.

III. A Delayed Peace Conference

A. Preparations for the Conference

Simultaneous with its efforts to convince more armed groups to sign the ceasefire agreement and participate in the second Panglong-21 conference, the government is engaged in a parallel political process provided for under the nationwide ceasefire agreement. This includes a series of subnational consultations to discuss proposals to be endorsed by the Panglong-21 conference and ultimately form part of a comprehensive peace agreement.³⁰

The process provides for three kinds of dialogue: ethnic-based (that is, involving a particular ethnic group), region-based (that is, covering a particular state or region) and thematic (covering a particular issue, at the national level). To date, seven such dialogues have been held: three ethnic-based (Karen, Chin, Pao); three region-based (Shan state, Bago region and Tanintharyi region); and one thematic dialogue, a Civil Society Forum in Naypyitaw.³¹ The Shan state dialogue was approved late, and invitations were sent out at the last minute, giving delegates less than 48 hours to prepare. Authorities refused to allow ethnic-based dialogues in Rakhine and Shan states. In Rakhine, they cited the risk of communal violence.³² In Shan, the parties could not agree on the location; the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) wanted to hold it in the state capital Taunggyi or the historic town of Panglong, while the military insisted on a more remote and hard-to-reach area controlled by the RCSS.³³

The proposals that came out of the seven dialogues were summarised – not always a very transparent process according to some participants³⁴ – then submitted to the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) through its five thematic working committees on politics, economy, security, social affairs, and land/environment. The joint committee, chaired by Suu Kyi and composed of representatives of government, legislature, military, political parties and armed groups, endorsed these in a 12 May meeting and submitted them to the conference. Many participants spoke of insufficient preparation, lack of subject-area knowledge within the working committees and lack of negotiation skills and procedural understanding of the peace process on the part of some working committee chairs.³⁵

³⁰ For details on this political process, the Framework for Political Dialogue, see Crisis Group Briefing, *Myanmar's Peace Process: Getting to a Political Dialogue*, op. cit.

³¹ Crisis Group interviews, individuals involved in the peace process, Yangon, January-June 2017. See also Sai Latt, "Burma's national dialogue: where now?", *The Irrawaddy*, 21 March 2017; "Peace negotiators hold press conference on National Level Political Dialogue for Shan state", *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 26 April 2017, p. 2.

³² The Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) armed group was to lead this dialogue but the previous government had implicated it in the communal violence of 2012. See "Thousand interrogated for Arakan strife role", *The Irrawaddy*, 1 November 2012; "Daw Aung San Suu Kyi rejects national-level political dialogue in Arakan state", *The Irrawaddy*, 27 April 2017.

³³ "Shan state regional dialogue to proceed, but ethnic dialogue stalled", *The Irrawaddy*, 21 April 2017.

³⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Yangon, May 2017.

³⁵ Crisis Group interviews, dialogue participants, working committee members and UPDJC members, Yangon, April-June 2017.

The result was a set of 41 “principles” that many participants said represented a lowest-common-denominator consensus, rather than capturing the real aspirations of minority ethnic communities.³⁶ For example, in the land and environment sector, no mention was made of the need to recognise customary rights, a key concern of minority communities and leaders. The political sector contained the most significant principles, which would ignite dramatic debate in the conference itself (see Section IV.C below).

B. *Participation of Armed Groups*

The top nationwide ceasefire implementation body, the Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting, met in Naypyitaw on 24 April 2017. It was attended by Suu Kyi, the deputy commander-in-chief and armed group leaders. The dates of the Panglong-21 conference were set for 24-28 May (subsequently extended to 29 May).³⁷ This was the first such meeting held under the current government. Groups that had not signed the nationwide ceasefire were invited to attend as observers, but most were unwilling to accept such a status, nor the fact that three groups were not invited.³⁸ On 28 April, the government offered to let UNFC member groups attend if they inked a “deed of commitment” to sign the nationwide ceasefire at a later date. None of them did so.³⁹ On 17 May, the Wa alliance issued a statement indicating its willingness to attend as a bloc of all seven members, not on an individual group basis – which appeared unlikely, since three of its members had not been invited.⁴⁰

Up until the day before the Panglong-21 conference, it thus appeared that only the nationwide ceasefire signatories would attend – eight of 21 armed groups. One of the eight, the RCSS, issued a statement that it would not sign any agreement at the conference since it had been blocked from holding the preparatory ethnic-based dialogue in its preferred location in Shan state.⁴¹ It thus appeared that the conference – Suu Kyi’s signature initiative – was heading for an embarrassing failure.

Such an outcome was avoided through last-minute shuttle diplomacy by Beijing. At a meeting between Suu Kyi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on 16 May following the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, the president pledged China’s support for the peace process.⁴² On 22 May, China’s special envoy for Asia affairs (who de facto deals only with Myanmar) met in Naypyitaw with Suu Kyi. The following morning, Suu Kyi met with the commander-in-chief in an unpublicised meeting.⁴³ The Chinese envoy then met with the commander-in-chief that afternoon.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ “It is progress to disagree without hate”, *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 25 May 2017, pp. 1, 7.

³⁸ That is, the MNDAA, TNLA and AA.

³⁹ “Govt asks UNFC to sign ‘deed of commitment’ to attend union peace conference”, *The Irrawaddy*, 2 May 2017.

⁴⁰ “FPNCC Statement on the Second Session of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong”, Letter no. 1/2017, 17 May 2017 (in Burmese).

⁴¹ “RCSS to refrain from signing any agreements at 21st-Century Panglong conference”, *Karen News*, 25 May 2017.

⁴² “Xi says China willing to assist Myanmar in peace progress”, Xinhua, 16 May 2017.

⁴³ Crisis Group interview, senior peace process official briefed on the meeting, Yangon, June 2017.

The upshot of these meetings was that representatives of six Wa alliance armed groups which the Chinese had gathered in Kunming, China, boarded a Chinese government aircraft and flew to Naypyitaw on the afternoon of 23 May, ahead of the opening of the Panglong-21 conference the following morning. The seventh, the Mongla group made its own arrangements and arrived in Naypyitaw the same day.⁴⁴ In addition to security guarantees, China had obtained three key concessions from Suu Kyi and the commander-in-chief:

- ❑ That the representatives of the seven groups would be “specially invited guests” rather than observers. This was mostly a face-saving device, but it allowed the groups to submit papers (but not give oral presentations) to the conference. The Wa alliance provided three policy documents, analysed in Section IV.D below.
- ❑ That the three previously-excluded groups also would be invited. This was a major concession, particularly by the military, which previously had insisted on disarmament (or at least a credible commitment to do so) as a precondition for these groups participating in the peace process. These groups had attended neither of the previous peace conferences.⁴⁵ Up until the afternoon of 22 May, the commander-in-chief had opposed their participation, but China pressed him to reconsider. He confirmed his change in position in a meeting with Suu Kyi the following day.⁴⁶ This issue had become the deal-breaker for the participation of the rest of the Wa alliance, and it seems the commander-in-chief did not wish to be held responsible for a highly visible failure.
- ❑ That Suu Kyi would meet with the seven members of the Wa alliance, though not as a bloc to avoid conferring legitimacy on the new grouping. Thus on 26 May, Suu Kyi had a lunch with the KIO representative (Vice Chairman N’Ban La) together with his wife and a KIO colonel; followed by two separate meetings with other alliance members.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, the UNFC on 23 May held an emergency meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand, to decide whether to attend the conference with the “specially invited guest” status offered by the government. KIO vice chairman, N’Ban La, who had also long served as UNFC chairman, attended the meeting, although his group already had resigned from the coalition. UNFC members agreed not to attend Panglong-21, after which N’Ban La left the meeting early without saying that his reason for doing so was to travel to Naypyitaw for the conference. When they learned this, remaining members of the UNFC felt sidelined or even betrayed.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Ibid. For more details of the negotiations, see interview with UWSP head of external affairs, “The Wa’s Zhao Guo An: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi wants to achieve peace in her lifetime”, *The Irrawaddy*, 29 May 2017.

⁴⁵ For details, see Crisis Group Report, *Myanmar’s Peace Process: Getting to a Political Dialogue*, op. cit., Section III.B. See also “Myanmar invites three previously shunned ethnic armed groups to peace talks”, *Radio Free Asia*, 23 May 2017.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group interview, senior peace process official, op. cit.

⁴⁷ Ibid. These were a meeting with the UWSP, NDAA and SSPP; and then a meeting with the MNDAA, TNLA and AA.

⁴⁸ Crisis Group interviews, three individuals with direct knowledge of the events, Yangon, May-June 2017. The SSPP, also a member of both FPNCC and UNFC, also attended Panglong-21.

C. *The Conference Itself*

The second session of the Panglong-21 conference opened on 24 May, with fifteen armed groups in attendance (the eight ceasefire agreement signatories as participants and the seven Wa alliance members as “specially invited guests”).⁴⁹ Opening speeches were given by State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, the commander-in-chief and the KNU chairman, among others.

Speaking of a key aspiration of Myanmar’s minority communities, Suu Kyi stated that “peace and stability will enable our nation to realise its potential as a strong, prosperous democratic federal Union” and noted that “almost everyone accepts that the resolution to our country’s long-running armed conflicts is a federal system that is acceptable to all” – a political consensus that would have been unthinkable prior to the transition from military to civilian rule six years ago. She made clear that negotiations with non-signatory armed groups would continue, with the aim of bringing them within the agreement.⁵⁰

Commander-in-Chief General Min Aung Hlaing’s message on the ceasefire was blunter: “the standpoint of Tatmadaw [military] on peace process is to stand firmly on the NCA path, which is the peace strategy of our country”. He warned that refusing to join the ceasefire meant spurning a “Union based on peace, democracy and federalism ... [and] tantamount to grabbing power and splitting from the Union through armed struggle”.⁵¹ These comments were a pointed rejection of the Wa alliance’s demand for the replacement or revision of the ceasefire agreement. However, his use of the word federalism was significant – although the military had accepted this in principle, the general had not used the word at the previous conference, instead emphasising “peace and unity”.⁵²

The KNU chairman, General Mutu Say Poe, speaking on behalf of ethnic armed groups, also had pointed messages, noting that it was “essential that we leave no one behind in this peace process”, exhorting participants to include “all the relevant stakeholders”, particularly non-signatories to the ceasefire agreement.⁵³ He criticised “result-oriented negotiations with rigid time frames”, referring to the biannual schedule for peace conferences, which can limit the flexibility needed to overcome obstacles.⁵⁴ He noted the importance of dialogue as opposed to pressure. General Mutu was particularly critical of the way subnational political dialogues were man-

⁴⁹ This conference is being referred to as the “second session” to distinguish from the first session that was held in August-September 2016.

⁵⁰ “State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s speech at the opening ceremony of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong 2nd Session”, *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 25 May 2017, p. 3.

⁵¹ “The greetings extended by Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing”, *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 25 May 2017, pp. 6-7.

⁵² Crisis Group Report, *Myanmar’s Peace Process: Getting to a Political Dialogue*, op. cit., Section IV.B.

⁵³ “Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong (2nd Meeting), Remarks by General Mutu Say Poe, Chairman, Karen National Union, on behalf of the Ethnic Armed Organisations”, Naypyitaw, 24 May 2017. (This is the English text distributed by KNU at the conference; the unofficial translation by the *Global New Light of Myanmar*, printed on p. 7 of its 25 May edition, blunts several of the key criticisms.)

⁵⁴ For analysis of the risks of the rigid timeframe, see Crisis Group Report, *Myanmar’s Peace Process: Getting to a Political Dialogue*, op. cit.

aged, noting that dialogues should be held in all ethnic areas, and that doing these in a rushed or symbolic way undermined national reconciliation.

General Mutu's speech foreshadowed unexpectedly contentious negotiations over the following days. These centred on the 41 political, economic, social, and land/environment "principles" agreed in the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) on 12 May (no principle was agreed in the fifth sector, security).

The political principles were the most significant and contentious. These included guarantees of self-determination, such as giving each state the authority to write its own constitution in a future federal arrangement (as long as these state charters did not contradict the federal constitution), and that no part or state of the union could ever secede. Accepting these principles – which already had been endorsed in the UPDJC – should have been straightforward. Self-determination and state constitutions within a federal system have long been key demands of ethnic communities, and no group advocates secession.

But talks nearly broke down due to lack of trust, weak preparation and poor facilitation of conference discussions. Some armed group and political party delegates did not accept the non-secession clause because they considered it demeaning; others also argued that it already was covered by their acceptance of the military's *sine qua non* "three causes", enshrined in the constitution, one of which is "non-disintegration of the union". This concern was compounded by the government's decision to rebrand the peace process as "21st Century Panglong". Invoking the 1947 Panglong conference made it difficult for some delegates to accept an explicit rejection of secession, which was a right granted to Shan state in the original Panglong agreement (and subsequently also to Kayah state in the 1947 constitution). A major Shan armed group (RCSS) and political party (the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy) were particularly concerned. Moreover, because there was no Shan ethnic-based subnational dialogue before the conference, these two actors felt they had no mandate to sign any agreements.⁵⁵

The situation came to a head during a UPDJC meeting held on 28 May, the penultimate day of the conference. The military's position, fully backed by the government, was that the principles of self-determination, state constitutions and non-secession were a "package deal" – all must be accepted, or none could be. This had not been the position in the 12 May UPDJC, which had treated them separately. The armed groups felt that they had been ambushed. But although participants failed to agree on the non-secession clause, and therefore the "package deal", they managed to reach accord on 37 other principles.⁵⁶

Finally, that evening, a representative of the armed groups told the meeting that their steering team had decided they could not sign anything. The military reportedly were incensed, with their lead representative stating that if the armed group delegates were not prepared to agree to anything, there was no point in continuing political dialogues or peace negotiations. Several participants felt that the process was about

⁵⁵ Crisis Group interviews, participants in the discussions, Yangon, June 2017. See also "Accord or discord at Panglong?", *Frontier Myanmar*, 6 June 2017; and "SNLD leaders: govt insistence on 'non-secession' deprives Shan of dignity", *The Irrawaddy*, 1 June 2017.

⁵⁶ 41 principles were agreed in the 12 May UPDJC, and a further four were subsequently added. The "package deal" of eight principles was rejected, leaving 37 agreed.

to collapse.⁵⁷ During a short recess, the armed group representatives consulted again and offered a compromise that may have saved the peace process: one of them would sign the agreement on behalf of all, rather than all groups signing individually.

The following day, 29 May, the session was chaired by an armed group representative.⁵⁸ The 37 principles were presented to the plenary by UPDJC members, and seconded by one representative from each stakeholder group (government, legislature, military, armed groups and political parties). The chair informed the meeting that the UPDJC already had agreed to these principles and called for applause for their efforts. He then declared the principles adopted by acclamation, without giving delegates an opportunity to disagree. The formal adoption was then signed by a representative of each stakeholder group.

While this achieved the goal of pushing the principles through, allowing the government to show a successful outcome, it angered some armed group and political party delegates, who felt the conference had simply rubber stamped the principles, contradicting procedures pursuant to which agreements required specific voting thresholds.⁵⁹ This reinforced the view of many armed group representatives, expressed by the KNU chairman in his opening address, that the peace process had become increasingly unilateral and based on pressure, rather than the joint process of dialogue that they had signed up for.

D. *The Wa Alliance Proposals*

The seven Wa alliance armed groups that attended the opening session were not permitted to participate in subsequent substantive sessions. Instead, they held a series of parallel discussions with government peace negotiators and Suu Kyi and the government refused to meet the delegation as a bloc. The groups left Naypyitaw on 27 May, two days before the close of the conference, after handing the government the following three position papers:

- *Provincial and Federal Peace Agreement and National Parliament-Level Ceasefire Agreement by and between Republic Government of the Union of Myanmar and All Ethnic Revolutionary Armed Forces* (undated). This is the Wa alliance's proposed alternative to the nationwide ceasefire agreement, which had already been provided to the Myanmar military on 20 March 2017.⁶⁰ While it has some similarities to the existing nationwide ceasefire in terms of structure and language, it goes well beyond it in scope and detail, particularly on military matters such as demarcation of territory and force separation. The government and military have publicly rejected any revision to, or replacement of, the current agreement.

⁵⁷ Crisis Group interviews, participants in the discussions, Yangon, June 2017.

⁵⁸ That is, PNLO patron Khun Okkar.

⁵⁹ Ibid. See also Sai Wansai, "Commentary on 'Accord or discord at Panglong?'," *Shan Herald Agency for News*, 7 June 2017. These procedures are set out in the Framework for Political Dialogue under the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.

⁶⁰ The English version was provided on this date, with a Burmese translation subsequently provided on 1 April.

- ❑ *The General Principles and Specific Proposition of Revolutionary Armed Organizations of All Nationalities upon the Political Negotiation* (FPNCC, 19 April 2017). This document is essentially the same as one issued by the United Wa State Party (UWSP) on 13 August 2016 and submitted to the first Panglong-21 conference at the end of that month. It proposes a high degree of political autonomy for ethnic states, going beyond federalism to envisage a set of semi-independent “nations” that cede very little of their sovereign power to the union. The terms “federal” or “federalism” do not appear.
- ❑ *Process of Wa State’s Consultation and Negotiation with the Government of Myanmar on Modification of Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement* (Central Committee of United Wa State Party, 30 April 2017). This paper was given to local media at the conference on 24 May. It sets out in detail a series of secret negotiations between the UWSP and the government and military in March and April 2017, about which almost nothing was previously known. The final section makes clear the UWSP had decided to reveal the details of the supposedly confidential dialogue because they felt treated in bad faith; the section is titled: “The government of Myanmar’s open humiliation of efforts of Wa State to break the current deadlock of the peace process”.

The third document states that UWSP and its ally, the Mongla group, had come under repeated “soft and hard” pressure from both the Myanmar government and China to sign the nationwide ceasefire. According to the document, the UWSP informed government peace negotiators in early March 2017 that it was ready to discuss changes to the ceasefire agreement, but the government requested that subsequent talks be held directly with the military. This assertion appears broadly correct, suggesting government peace negotiators had removed themselves from discussions with the largest armed group in the country, and one now leading a major alliance.⁶¹

According to the paper, the military agreed to modifications but requested that these be minimal, since the nationwide ceasefire already had been signed with eight armed groups, and that the title (“Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement”) remain unchanged. The UWSP did not accept either point and drafted a modified agreement “that would take care of interests of all parties involved” and that “retained the original content of NCA to maximum extent” (as noted above, in fact a great deal has been changed or added). The paper then cites several public statements by government officials and military that it took to be a “humiliating” public rejection of its draft text.⁶²

⁶¹ The government account differs only in emphasis – that since the UWSP had longstanding contacts with the military, it was natural for discussions to proceed through those channels. Crisis Group interviews, two government peace negotiators, Yangon, June 2017.

⁶² Specifically, a 21 April statement from Zaw Htay, a director general under Suu Kyi, rejecting the Pangsang Summit statement and insisting that the nationwide ceasefire text must be signed without modification, as well as a 24 April statement by Deputy Commander-in-Chief Soe Win that “not one word of the NCA can be changed”. (Both cited in the paper.)

IV. The Path Ahead

The May 2017 peace conference avoided embarrassing failure. But the path to the next conference, which is envisaged to take place before the end of 2017, is extremely difficult. Three key issues loom:

- ❑ Bringing more armed groups into the process. This will be very hard and will require negotiations on two fronts, with the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) alliance and with the north-eastern groups in the newer Wa alliance. Government peace negotiators will need to invest considerable effort to understand what might induce these groups to sign the ceasefire agreement. Even if some details of the UWSP's account of recent negotiations may be contested, they cast previous talks in a negative light. So far, the government and the military have been unwilling to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Wa alliance, much less negotiate with them as a bloc. That could change, but the process of reaching any sort of agreement appears long and fraught.
- ❑ Preparing the content for the next conference. Many subnational dialogues have yet to be held, and these will have to be scheduled in coming months. Two have been blocked. To reach agreement on the key political principles of self-determination and state constitutions, negotiators must find a way to deal with the non-secession issue. They also must decide on an additional set of principles to be discussed at the next conference. Discontent with the way the 37 principles were approved is likely to resurface, complicating these discussions. It is also risky to move too quickly when most armed groups are not included in the process, undermining any agreement's legitimacy. Decisions might need to be reopened if they join in the future.
- ❑ Improving Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement implementation. At times, the eight signatory groups have felt overlooked, with the focus mainly on how to convince non-signatories to sign. This has two disadvantages: it weakens relations with these armed groups and communities, which can negatively impact the one area of the country (the south east) where peace largely has been achieved. It also undermines the perceived benefits of the nationwide ceasefire, reducing incentives for other groups to sign. There are currently two processes underway that could help address this. The Joint Monitoring Committee, which is responsible for implementation of the military provisions of the ceasefire agreement (including civilian protection), is expanding its work to the village level. Also, ceasefire provisions dealing with interim arrangements – that is, governance arrangements for areas under partial or total authority of armed groups prior to a comprehensive peace settlement – are moving ahead, after being stalled for some time. The commander-in-chief highlighted this area (about which the military previously appeared ambivalent) as important.

Overall, the peace process under the present government still appears more unilateral and less consultative than under its predecessor, which troubles many stakeholders, particularly armed groups. The convergence of views, and often common positions, of the Suu Kyi government and the military has raised particular concern. Lack of preparation on substantive matters also was clearly a problem. For example,

the thematic working committees only met for a total of nine hours during the conference, far too short a time to address the numerous issues that arose.⁶³

There are also concerns about the legitimacy of conference decisions. The process is defining the shape of a future federal state, which will affect the country as a whole. Yet delegates who are not fully representative are making important decisions. The government and the military, certain armed groups, and political parties that won seats in the last election hold privileged positions. Even if other armed groups are brought into the process, areas without armed conflict are generally underrepresented. Also underrepresented are civil society actors, who only received their invitations the day before the conference. Women and youth are particularly marginalised; government peace negotiators have engaged them far less than in the past. Only 20 per cent of the delegates at the conference were women, despite an agreed minimum target of 30 per cent participation, though this is a small improvement over the 15 per cent representation at the last conference.⁶⁴

At the same time, delegates were positive about other aspects. They appreciated that Suu Kyi was more engaged than before and more open to hearing their views. For example, she sat for seven hours at the 28 May UPDJC meeting, listening carefully without trying to control the discussion; at the dinner on 24 May evening, she made a point of speaking with delegates and guests at each table.⁶⁵

Ultimately, the peace process depends to a significant degree on China. If China focuses its efforts only on delivering symbolic wins at critical moments, little is likely to change. If it really wants to promote sustainable peace on its border, it would have to use its considerable leverage and some sophisticated diplomacy to push all sides to make real compromises. So far, there are no indications that China is inclined to play such a difficult and potentially fraught role. Of course, while necessary, Chinese intervention also holds risks for Myanmar of which its various constituencies should be aware: as a powerful neighbour, it naturally has political, strategic and economic interests that may not align with the best interests of the peace process.

⁶³ Crisis Group interviews, conference delegates, Yangon, May-June 2017.

⁶⁴ "Gender alliance reports 20 percent women's participation in peace conference", *The Irrawaddy*, 30 May 2017.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

V. Conclusion

Despite steps forward during the latest round of peace talks, the path ahead remains extremely difficult. Only a minority of armed groups are participating in the process and bringing the others on board will be difficult. The May conference reached agreement on some important provisions, but deadlocked on an essential compromise: self-determination in return for non-secession. Conference agreements were pushed through the plenary without debate or a vote, leaving some ethnic participants unhappy.

Myanmar narrowly avoided a high-profile collapse of the peace talks. But future progress will require the government and the military to redouble their efforts at engagement, negotiation and compromise. Armed groups outside the current process must make all efforts join it to reach their aspirations for self-determination. China's role will be important, but it would be far better for domestic stakeholders seek to find workable and durable solutions than for outside actors to intervene to obtain short-term wins.

Yangon/Brussels, 29 June 2017

Appendix A: Map of Myanmar



International Crisis Group/KO/Dec 2015. Based on UN map no. 4168 Rev. 3 (June 2012).

Appendix B: List of Main Ethnic Armed Groups and their Ceasefire Status

	Armed Group	Bilateral ceasefire	NCA-signatory?
1	United Wa State Party (UWSP)	06-Sep-11	No
2	National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA, "Mongla group")	07-Sep-11	No
3	Democratic Kayin Benevolent Army (DKBA)	03-Nov-11	Yes
4	Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army-South (RCSS/SSA-South)	02-Dec-11	Yes
5	Chin National Front (CNF)	06-Jan-12	Yes
6	Karen National Union (KNU)	12-Jan-12	Yes
7	Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army-North (SSPP/SSA-North)	28-Jan-12	No
8	New Mon State Party (NMSP)	01-Feb-12	No
9	Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council	07-Feb-12	Yes
10	Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)	07-Mar-12	No
11	Arakan Liberation Party (ALP)	05-Apr-12	Yes
12	National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Khaplang	09-Apr-12	No
13	Pao National Liberation Organisation (PNLO)	25-Aug-12	Yes
14	All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF)	05-Aug-13	Yes
15	Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO)	No*	No
16	Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA)	No	No
17	Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA, "Kokang group")	No†	No
18	Arakan Army (AA)	No	No
19	Arakan National Council (ANC)‡	No	No
20	Lahu Democratic Union (LDU)‡	No	No
21	Wa National Organisation (WNO)‡	No	No

* An agreement was signed on 30 May 2012, containing inter alia a commitment to "efforts to achieve de-escalation and cessation of hostilities", but clashes have continued.

† The MNDAA's 1989 ceasefire ended after an attack by the Myanmar army in 2009, with one faction being routed (and its leaders fleeing to China) and the other agreeing to become a Border Guard Force unit under the partial control of the Myanmar army. The routed faction subsequently reactivated, with support from other groups.

‡ Small groups with no real military forces. Previously they were told they could join the political dialogue but were not eligible to sign the NCA. However, in early-2017 they were invited to sign the NCA; they have not done so.

Appendix C: Armed Group Alliances

There are three main armed group political alliances: (1) the NCA signatories, represented by a Peace Process Steering Team; (2) the United Nationalities Federal Council which had long been the main group of non-signatories, but which has recently been eclipsed by a new UWSP-led grouping, (3) the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee. (The NSCN-K is not a member of any alliance.) There is also a military coalition, the Northern Alliance, consisting of KIO, TNLA, MNDAA and AA.

NCA Signatories (Peace Process Steering Team)

1	All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF)
2	Arakan Liberation Party (ALP)
3	Chin National Front (CNF)
4	Democratic Kayin Benevolent Army (DKBA)
5	Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council
6	Karen National Union (KNU)
7	Pao National Liberation Organisation (PNLO)
8	Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS/SSA-South)

United Nationalities Federal Council (Delegation for Political Negotiation)

1	Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)
2	New Mon State Party (NMSP)
3	Arakan National Council (ANC)
4	Lahu Democratic Union (LDU)
5	Shan State Progress Party (SSPP/SSA-North) Also member of FPNCC
6	<i>Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO)</i> Resigned; member of FPNCC
7	<i>Wa National Organisation (WNO)</i> Resigned; to merge with UWSP?

Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee

1	United Wa State Party (UWSP)
2	National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA, "Mongla group")
3	Shan State Progress Party (SSPP/SSA-North)
4	Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO)
5	Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA)
6	Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA, "Kokang group")
7	Arakan Army (AA)

Appendix D: List of Acronyms

AA	Arakan Army
ABSDF	All Burma Students Democratic Front
ALP	Arakan Liberation Party
CNF	Chin National Front
DKBA	Democratic Kayin Benevolent Army
DPN	Delegation for Political Negotiation (UNFC negotiating team)
FPNCC	Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee
KIO	Kachin Independence Organisation
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
KNU	Karen National Union
MNDAA	Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (Kokang)
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NDAA	National Democratic Alliance Army ("Mongla group")
NMSP	New Mon State Party
NSCN-K	National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang
PNLO	Pao National Liberation Organisation
PPST	Peace Process Steering Team (NCA signatories' negotiating team)
RCSS	Restoration Council of Shan State
SSA-North	Shan State Army-North
SSA-South	Shan State Army-South
SSPP	Shan State Progress Party
TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
UNFC	United Nationalities Federal Council
UPDJC	Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee
UWSP	United Wa State Party

Appendix E: About the International Crisis Group

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Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries or regions at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international, regional and national decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a monthly early warning bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in up to 70 situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

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June 2017

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