

WARID: Myanmar (KIO)
STARDATE: 1 February 1961
ENDDATE: 1 October 1992
Related cases: None
Last update: 12 September 2015
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Conflict overview

Myanmar is an ethnically diverse country.¹ The Kachin people, consisting of several sub-groups, are mainly Christians and the majority lives in Kachin State, situated in the very north of the country. This area is at the foothills of the Himalayas bordering China and India (HRW 2012: 22) and accounts for 13.5% of the country's territory (Yawnghwe 2008: 15). The rugged terrain is rich in natural resources (gems, stones and minerals) and important rivers cross the region, which was never fully under control of the central government (Yawnghwe 2008: 15; Effner 2013: 3). The Kachin also inhabit the northern part of Shan State, situated south of Kachin State (Lehman 1996).

The Kachin primarily live on agriculture and are culturally and linguistically quite distinct from the largely Buddhist Burman majority that lives in the lowlands in central Myanmar. After Burma (current Myanmar) gained independence from Britain in 1948, numerous conflicts broke out between armed ethnic groups and the central government, with objectives ranging from achieving secession to autonomy in a federal, democratic Burma (ICG 2013: 3, see Callahan 2003). Many of these conflicts persist to the present day, including the Kachin conflict.

This conflict traces back to 1 February 1961, when the newly formed Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) – seen as the political wing of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) – rebelled against the Burmese military government to achieve independence (EBO 2010: 2; Miller 2012: 120). The reasons for this were growing dissatisfaction among the KIO arising from the increasingly centralized government's neglect of the interests of ethnic groups along with its intent to establish Buddhism as the state religion (ICG 2013: 4; Kowalewski 2014: 49; Smith 2012: 22).

The armed struggle for independence changed to self-determination in 1989 when the KIO leadership became convinced that it should seek a political solution by negotiating with the

¹ Data for the 2014 census on ethnicity was not released by the last update of this case description.

military government (ICG 2013: 4; South 2003: 166). The conflict ended after 31 years of fighting on 1 October 1992 [WARDUR=380].² The end of fighting resulted in a ceasefire agreement signed by both warring parties on 24 February 1994 (ICG 2013: 4). According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), this agreement included regulation of further military issues [WARENDUC=2]. Case-specific literature confirms this conclusion but alludes to the ceasefire agreement as the end of the conflict [WARENDOS=2].³

The UCDP estimates the total number of fatalities to be around 3,000 [FATALUC=3000], including battle-related deaths and civilian victims of one-sided violence committed by government forces or the KIA. There is no reliable data from other resources on the total number of war victims [FATALOS=n.d.]. As there is no information on the pre-war-population of the disputed territory, we are forced to approximate this number. According to the census in 2014, the population in Kachin State amounted to 3.3% of Myanmar's total population.⁴ Applying this share to the country's total population in 1960 (21.4 million⁵), the number of residents in Kachin prior to the war can be estimated at about 700,000 [PREWARPO=700000]. Thus, 3,000 fatalities amount to 0.43% of the population [INTENSUC=0.43; INTENSOS=n.d.].

The military balance at the end of the war

As described, a ceasefire agreement terminated the armed conflict. As neither of the warring parties achieved all of its goals and the agreement granted both sides control over parts of the disputed territory, one cannot speak of a military victory by any side [VICTORY=0].⁶

Freston (2004: 96, cited in Farrelly 2013: 307) reports that the KIO was "at times controlling half the Kachin State". According to Cunningham et al. (2009: cell x68), the KIO was still in control of large parts of the disputed territory by the end of the war. Other sources (ICG 2013: 4; Smith 2012: 24) confirm this assessment [REBTERR=1].

The government was in control of the major towns (including the state capital Myitkyina) whereas the rebels controlled villages mainly in the north, along the border to China (South 2008: 155). The majority of people in Kachin State live in the larger towns. By the time the ceasefire agreement was signed, the KIO controlled about 40% of Kachin State [MORETERR=-1].⁷

2 http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=112®ionSelect=7-Eastern_Asia# (27 Feb 2015).

3 ICG 2013; Smith 2012.

4 Republic of the Union of Myanmar 2014: 3.

5 <http://api.worldbank.org/v2/en/country/mmr?downloadformat=excel> (30 Apr 2015).

6 ICG 2013: 4; Smith 2012: 25; South 2008: 156.

7 Grundy-War/Dean 2008: 88, cited in Farrelly 2013: 308.

Cunningham et al. (2009: cell w68) evaluate the rebels' fighting capacity as low [**REBFIGHT=-1**], meaning that the government of Myanmar had a relative advantage compared to the KIO; this is confirmed by case-specific literature (ICG 2013: 4).

As to the end of war, both sides would have been able to continue fighting in more than a sporadic manner. The number of troops of both warring parties did not decrease dramatically in the last weeks of fighting and case-specific literature does not imply a weakening in the frequency of their actions [**CONFIGHT=0**].⁸

Neither side killed or captured its opponent's political leader at the end of war [**LEADER=0**]. In 1985, the KIA assassinated the highest-ranking Kachin officer in the Burmese Army (Farrelly 2013: 307). KIO leader Brang Seng suffered a stroke a few months after the ceasefire in 1994 (ICG 2013: 4).

To conclude, there was a slight military imbalance to the benefit of the military government [**WARBAL= -0.17**].

The military balance in the post-war period

Only the side governing at the beginning of war participated substantially, if not exclusively, in the state's military and police forces [**STATEFOR 1993-2011= -1**]. The former rebels rejected to join the states' military (Smith 2012: 25f.).

Both sides retained their armed forces [**SEPFORCE 1993-2011=0**].⁹ The KIA continued to forcibly recruit (including child soldiers), and the government still used forced labor and confiscated land (ICG 2013: 5; Smith 2012: 25). Under the directive of the 2008 constitution, the military government announced that all "ethnic armed groups" had to transform into a Border Guard Force (BGF) under the direct control of the Myanmar military (EBO 2010: 1). The KIO did not meet this obligation, as no political solution about the ongoing conflict was in sight and this would have meant a reduction of their autonomy (EBO 2010: 1; ICG 2013: 6; Smith 2012: 26).¹⁰ This refusal became a breaking point for the ceasefire.

The government consistently had more combatants at its disposal than the KIO. In some years, however, the ratio between both sides' forces changed significantly. In 1996 and in the period between 2003 and 2007, it shifted to the advantage of the government [**TROOPS 1993-1995=0, TROOPS 1996= -1; TROOPS 1997-2001=0; TROOPS 2002-2007= -1, TROOPS 2008-2011=n.d.**]. The number of rebel troops did not change during the period under investigation.

8 ICG 2013: 4.

9 Smith 2012: 25.

10 For a detailed report about the Kachin dilemma on becoming a Border Guard Force, see EBO 2010.

The number of governmental troops, in contrast, almost constantly increased in the post-war period (see Table 2 in the annex with data provided by the IISS 1992-2012). There is no data on armaments [**ARMS 1993-2011=n.d.**].

In regards to territory, both sides were in control of important territory [**TERRCON 1993-2011=0**]. The areas controlled by the KIO with a civilian presence were mostly located in Kachin State (ICG 2003: 11; ICG 2013: 19; Nilsen 2013: 120). It is rich in natural resources such as gems, stones, timber and minerals with important rivers crossing the region that lead to the central lowlands further south (ICG 2013: 5; Smith 2012: 22).

The ceasefire agreement granted both parties authority over their respective territories (ICG 2013: 4; Smith 2012: 24). Additionally, there were other ceasefire agreements and peace-agreements with various armed groups formerly at war with the government; these assured that the Myanmar Government had more authority and consequently more territory due to the (partly) successful implementation of the ‘Seven-step Roadmap to Democracy’ with the goal of introducing a constitution and disarming all armed ethnic forces [**TERRWIN 1993-1994=0, TERRWIN 1995-2011= -1**].¹¹

Overall, the Myanmar Government controlled a larger territory than the KIO. The KIO-controlled area was difficult to access, which made supplies of any goods for aid delivery difficult. As such, the Myanmar Government was less vulnerable in its territory [**VULNERAB 1993-2011= -1**].

There were no armed peacekeeping forces present in Myanmar [**PEACKEEP 1993-2011=n.r.**].¹²

No permanent member of the United Nations Security Council announced it would be an ally of one side in the case of a new war [**P5ALLY 1993-2011=n.r.**].¹³

Altogether, the post-war military balance was in favor of the Myanmar Government and only varied according to the number of troops the government had at its disposal and territorial wins by the government through agreements with other rebel groups [**POSTBAL 1993-1994= -0.33, POSTBAL 1995= -0.5, POSTBAL 1996= -0.67, POSTBAL 1997-2001= -0.5, POSTBAL 2002-2007= -0.67, POSTBAL 2008-2011= -0.6**].

Regarding the combined score of the military balance at the end of war and in the post-war period, the government prevailed [**BALANCE 1993-1994= -0.25, BALANCE 1995= -0.33**,

11 Lorch/Pasch 2007: 2 and http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=4653&page=1 (24 Feb 2015) and <http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/armed-ethnic-groups> (24 Feb 2015).

12 <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/past.shtml> (27 Feb 2015).

13 See Yun (2014) for a detailed examination of the roles China and the USA, especially in recent years.

BALANCE 1996= -0.42, BALANCE 1997-2001= -0.33, BALANCE 2002-2007= -0.42, BALANCE 2008-2011= -0.38].

Economy

The World Bank does not provide any data for the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in Myanmar in USD but only in the local currency (Burmese Kyat). Therefore, we use the data of the United Nations Statistics Division that indicate the GDP per capita in USD. According to this data, GDP per capita increased until 2011. Myanmar was still a poor country despite this increase.

Table 1: GDP per capita in current USD¹⁴

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Population</i> | <i>GDP per capita</i> |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1993 | 44,052,710 | 147 |
| 1994 | 44,686,091 | 159 |
| 1995 | 45,329,862 | 171 |
| 1996 | 45,991,828 | 183 |
| 1997 | 46,664,455 | 194 |
| 1998 | 47,321,204 | 125 |
| 1999 | 47,925,630 | 137 |
| 2000 | 48,453,000 | 150 |
| 2001 | 48,894,203 | 156 |
| 2002 | 49,261,313 | 210 |
| 2003 | 49,577,152 | 200 |
| 2004 | 49,875,169 | 206 |
| 2005 | 50,181,020 | 238 |
| 2006 | 50,500,070 | 274 |
| 2007 | 50,828,959 | 359 |
| 2008 | 51,174,018 | 505 |
| 2009 | 51,540,490 | 639 |
| 2010 | 51,931,231 | 799 |
| 2011 | 52,350,763 | 1107 |

The scale of compromise after the war

Fighting predominantly took place in Kachin State; the demands for secession and later autonomy mainly involved that area. The ceasefire agreement in 1994 froze the situation at that time (ICG 2013: 4) so that both sides were in control and effectively governed a part of the territory within the disputed area throughout the post-war period. As a part of this arrangement, the KIO was allowed “to manage a semi-autonomous region called Special Region 2” (Farrelly 2013: 308). There were no effective changes after the implementation of the 2008 constitution¹⁵

14 Data on the population at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?page=3> (3 Feb 2015), data on GDP per capita at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/snaama/dnltransfer.asp?fID=9> (15 Apr 2015).

15 Myanmar’s constitution 2008: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a1/Constitution_of_Myanmar_of_2008.pdf (24 Feb 2015).

[GOVERN 1993-2011=0].¹⁶ Politically, there was little or no integration between the former warring parties; the KIA remained the local police force in Kachin State (Smith 2012: 24).

In accordance with the ceasefire agreement, the ‘dual sovereignty’ (Charles Tilly) in Kachin State continued. There was no provision for mandatory consensual decision-making [VETO 1993-2011=n.r.; VETOSAT 1993-2011=n.r.].

After the war, free and fair elections did not take place, which was clearly to the advantage of the Myanmar Government [ELECT 1993-2011= -1].¹⁷ Moreover, the ‘Kachin State Progressive Party’ (KSSP), founded by the KIO, was barred from running in the national elections in 2010 (Farrelly 2012: 54). The Kachin seats were mainly secured by the government-backed party, the ‘Union Solidarity and Development Party’ (USDP).

During wartime, the KIO demanded independence and later changed that goal to self-determination within Myanmar.¹⁸ For ascertaining the scale of compromise, we consider the maximum demands of a warring party. As the KIO did not achieve secession and only a limited de facto autonomy was granted, the Myanmar Government prevailed on this issue [EXBORDER 1993-2011= -1]. Internal borders were not an issue in the conflict, as the territorial borders for secession and later autonomy were not questioned [INBORDER 1993-2011=n.r.]. As mentioned, the ceasefire agreement in 1994 de facto recognized KIO’s control over a part of Kachin State and allowed it to manage a semi-autonomous region [COMPETEN 1993=n.r., COMPETEN 1994-2011=0].¹⁹

During the war, questions regarding the economic order were subordinated to the conflict over territory [ECONOMY 1993-2011=n.r.]. Demands for other issues, including the promotion of special programs, did not play a role [SPECPRO 1993-2011=n.r.; ISSUE 1993-2011=n.r.; ISSUE2 1993-2011=n.r.].

According to Farrelly (2013: 310), the ceasefire enabled a jade industry to emerge in Kachin State and “wealth from the mines helped to lubricate the interactions of the two sides”. We have no evidence that jade mining became a new topic in the conflict between the government and the KIO in the post-war period [NEWCON 1993-2011=n.r.; NEWCON2 1993-2011=n.r.].

The only compromise implemented in the post-war period was sharing territorial control in Kachin State. This included the semi-autonomous region run by the KIO. In our view, this

16 ICG 2013: 4f; Kramer 2009: 17.

17 See the ratings for the political rights in Myanmar by Freedom House at: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Country%20Ratings%20and%20Status%2C%201973-2014%20%28FINAL%29.xls> (25 Feb 2015).

18 <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdata/gpcountry.php?id=112®ionSelect=7-Eastern Asia#> (27 Feb 2015).

19 South 2008: 154f.

compromise did not favor either side [**BENEFIT 1993-2011=n.r.; BENEFIT2 1993-2011=n.r.**].

To conclude, the Myanmar Government primarily held an advantage in the post-war period was [**COMPROM 1993= -0.67, COMPROM 1994-2011= -0.5**]. The rebels demand for secession was not met by the government during wartime or thereafter.

Stability of peace

The ceasefire agreement of 1994 collapsed on 27 June 2011 (Duell 2013: 69)²⁰ when a major military offensive by the Myanmar Government in Kachin State ended 17 years of ceasefire between the two former warring parties [**SAMEWAR=1; DATESAME=27 June 2011; PEACMON1=224**].²¹ Months of rising tensions had preceded the escalation. As described, the announcement that all armed groups under ceasefire agreements would have to transform themselves into a Border Guard Force under control of the Burmese army as stipulated in the 2008 Constitution was rejected by the KIO. The barring of the political party from the 2010 elections also contributed to the growing dissatisfaction on the KIO side. Finally, the entry of government forces into KIO-controlled territory with the goal of providing security for the Taping dam project can be seen as the immediate trigger for renewed fighting.

Regarding the broad definition of a renewed civil war, there was also a new war in the country [**ANYWAR=1**]. This definition takes every other civil war in the same country into account. During and after the ceasefire between the government and the KIO, several violent conflicts took place in Myanmar. The first new armed conflict that passed the threshold of 1,000 fatalities was the war between the Myanmar Government and the Mong Tai Army (MTA). It started on 22 May 1993, lasted until 31 December 1995 and caused about 1,300 deaths [**DATEANY=22 May 1993; PEACMON2=8**].²²

20 While the UCDP Armed Conflict Dataset v4.2014 (cell P403) confirms this date, Farrelly (2013: 305) reports that the relapse into war occurred on 9 June 2011.

21 Petrie/South 2013: 5. The new conflict exceeded the threshold of 1,000 deaths, applied to the total time of the armed conflict defined by UCDP, in 2013, <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=112®ionSelect=7-Eastern Asia#> (26 Feb 2015).

22 <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=112®ionSelect=7-Eastern Asia#> (26 Feb 2015).

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Annex

Table 2: Troops in post-war Myanmar (IISS 1992-2011)

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Government</i> | <i>Rebels</i> | <i>Ratio</i> | |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|---|
| 1992 | 265000 | 8000 | 33.13 | 1 |
| 1993 | 265000 | 8000 | 33.13 | 1 |
| 1994 | 265000 | 8000 | 33.13 | 1 |
| 1995 | 300000 | 8000 | 37.5 | 1 |
| 1996 | 400000 | 8000 | 50 | 1 |
| 1997 | 325000 | 8000 | 40.63 | 1 |
| 1998 | 325000 | 8000 | 40.63 | 1 |
| 1999 | 325000 | 8000 | 40.63 | 1 |
| 2000 | 325000 | 8000 | 40.63 | 1 |
| 2001 | 325000 | 8000 | 40.63 | 1 |
| 2002 | 350000 | 8000 | 43.75 | 1 |
| 2003 | 350000 | 8000 | 43.75 | 1 |
| 2004 | 350000 | 8000 | 43.75 | 1 |
| 2005 | 350000 | 8000 | 43.75 | 1 |
| 2006 | 350000 | 8000 | 43.75 | 1 |
| 2007 | 375000 | 8000 | 46.88 | 1 |
| 2008 | 375000 | n.d. | | |
| 2009 | 375000 | n.d. | | |
| 2010 | 375000 | n.d. | | |
| 2011 | 375000 | n.d. | | |