

Analyzing the Importance and Impacts of Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in the Peacebuilding of Myanmar

Naw Cherry Oo, Sasiphattra Siriwato*, Jiraroj Mamadkul, Sompong Sanguanbun and
Pitchayaphant Charnbhumidol

Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies, Rangsit University, Pathum Thani, Thailand

*Corresponding author, E-mail: sasiphattra.s@rsu.ac.th

Abstract

Myanmar has suffered and experienced ethnic conflicts for more than 70 years since 1949 which was the year after independence in 1948. Many ethnic armed groups rose up and fought for autonomy, federal democracy, equality, and freedom from the Myanmar government. This research aims to analyze the impacts of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) on armed groups and its challenges to the peace in Myanmar and examine how NCA is important for the peacebuilding process in Myanmar. This research applied a qualitative method to compile the key information and collect the data. All the detail information was collected from eight different parties of ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and community-based organizations, who were represented by the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), the Karen National Union (KNU), the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN), the Assistance Association of Political Prisoners (AAPP), an activist and former 8888 student, the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), and Mote Oo Education, a senior peace education trainer. This study found that the core reasons of Myanmar's ethnic conflict are firmly rooted in historical, political, and social aspects. The Burmese government has failed to meet the aspirations of ethnic armed groups for self-determination, federalism, and acknowledgment of their rights and identities, resulting in a prolonged and deadly struggle.

Keywords: *Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), Ethnic Armed Group (EAG), Internal Conflict, Peacebuilding Process*

1. Introduction

Historically, two Panglong Conferences led to the independence of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) in January 1948. The first conference was held in March 1946, led by Shan *Sophas* (meaning princes) about the future of the Shan State. Other ethnic group leaders, such as the Kachin, the Chin, and the Karen leaders, also were asked to attend the first conference. Unfortunately, the lack of awareness of the Second World War in Myanmar was due to the focus on national politics which led to the second Panglong Conference in 1947. As noted, the three-day meeting brought together ethnic leaders from Chin, Kachin, and Shan territories and Burma Proper (under General Aung San) as well as representatives of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). At that second conference the Karen, the Rakhine, and the Mon were unhappy because they were not invited again to the first conference. This was the beginning of ethnic divisions and, later, conflicts within Myanmar (Transnational Institute, 2017).

General Aung San granted ethnic minorities equality, self-determination, and, in the case of the Karenni and Shan, also a right to secession after ten years of gaining independence from the British in an effort to negotiate with the ethnic leaders to sign the Panglong Agreement. Those promises of union and equality were adopted in the Panglong Agreement and applied to the 1947 Constitution (Sakhong & Willions, 2005). Unfortunately, General Aung San was assassinated on 19th July 1947. After his death, the Panglong Agreement was neglected and all the promises granted for ethnic minorities' rights were weakened or reneged. As a result, ethnic conflicts started after the first year of independence. Later on, the ethnic conflict simultaneously happened between non-state armed groups (NSAG) or ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and the national armed forces (Tatmadaw) (Sakhong & Williams, 2005).

The main problem in achieving peace is the internal fighting constantly happening between the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed groups, from 1949 until the present moment. Nyein (2019) has pointed out that

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over 50 ethnic groups have organized movements for autonomy, equality, and freedom. Many have taken up arms. The main ethnic armed groups are the Karen, Kachin, Pa-Oh, Shan, Mon, Karenni, Kayan, Akha, Kokang, Ta'ang (Palaung), Wa, Lahu, Arakan, Chin, and Naga. The basis of their fighting against Myanmar armed forces is because of the unfairness and inequality in their treatment by the majority-Bamar government.

Following the NCA signing, formal peace accord talks started in January 2016 when the first Union Peace Conference was held in Naypyidaw. Subsequently, a 21st Century Panglong Conference was announced by the new government led by the National League for Democracy, which merged with the NCA's Union Peace Conference for the second meeting in August of that year. Many political parties, ethnic armed groups, government representatives, and military officials were invited to attend for the purpose of national reconciliation. Approximately 1,400 delegates joined, led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar State Counselor (RFA, 2016).

Some ethnic armed groups which had not signed the NCA joined these meetings but did not attend the formal peace talks (KHA, 2017). For instance, ethnic armed groups like the United Wa State Party (UWSP) disagreed with the peace process and complained that the NCA did not provide clear definitions of democracy, equality, independence, and self-determination (KHA, 2017). Additionally, two other ethnic armed groups, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and Shan State Progressive Party/ Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA), presented their disagreement with the NCA by calling for China to be a peace mediator between the Myanmar government and ethnic armed groups. Furthermore, ethnic armed leaders asked the Myanmar government to create a new NCA or bilateral agreement which could be acceptable and adequate for all armed groups (KHA, 2017).

An addition, the Panglong Agreement was granted with promises was already broken and abandoned for ethnic minorities in terms of the political, social, and economic aspect. Therefore, Myanmar internal conflicts came to be based on different insurgencies to fight against the Tatmadaw for more than seven decades for their determination, equality, and federalism. President Thein Sein wanted to create a new stage for the peacebuilding process in Myanmar by transforming the national into a new form of quasi-civilian democracy in 2011 such as creating a place for political negotiations, aiming for the nationwide ceasefire by designing bilateral agreements with over 20 ethnic armed groups in order to end the conflict. However, it took Thein Sein two years to convince sufficient numbers of EAOs. Eventually, eight out of the fifteen invited ethnic groups agreed to sign the NCA in October 2015, including the Karen National Union (KNU), known for fighting the longest out of all the armed groups in Myanmar for their self-determination and autonomy for more than 70 years now (Slodkowski, 2015)

By looking at materials that have been published online or on web pages, this research topic will primarily analyze the effective factors of the NCA in the peacebuilding process in Myanmar. It is critical to comprehend the various points of view presented by scholars, articles, books, and online media. As a result, this article will highlight some perspectives from specialists who have worked with peace and conflict for many years, such as EAOs and political analysts, and will suggest some solutions for completing the peace process in Myanmar.

Table 1 Emerging of Ethnic Armed Organizations (Catalyzing Reflection) (Oo, 2014).

AA		KNU/KNLA (PC)	Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army (Peace Council)
ABSDF	All Burma Students Democratic Front	KNUSO	Karen National Unity & Solidarity Organization
ALP	Arakan Liberation Party	KPF	Karen Peace Force
AMRDP	All Mon Region Democracy Party	KSDDP	Kayin State Democracy & Development Party
ANC	Arakan National Council	SNLD	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy
BGF	Border Guard Force	LDU	Lahu Democratic Union
BSPP	Burma Socialist Party Program	MNDA	Mon National Defense Army
CAN	Chin National Army	MNDAA	Myanmar National democratic Alliance Army
CNF	Chin National Front	MSA	Military Security Affair

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AA		KNU/KNLA (PC)	Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army (Peace Council)
DAB	Democratic Alliance of Burma	NDA	National Democratic Army
DKBA	KDBA 5/Klo Htoo Baw Battalion (Democratic Karen Benevolent Army)	NDAA	National Democratic Alliance Army
DPA	Democratic Party for Arakan	NDA-K	New Democratic Army (Kachin)
DPNS	Democratic Party for New Society	NDF	National Democratic Front
ENC	Ethnic Nationalities Council	NMSP	New Mon State Party
GOC	Government of Chinland	NNCNaga	National Council
HRP	Hangsawati Restoration Party	NSCN(K)	National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang)
IPSG	International Peace Support Group	NUPA	National United Party of Arakan
KDA	Kachin Defense Army	PMG/ PMF	People's Militia Group/ People's Militia force
KIA/ KIO	Kachin Independent Army/ Kachin Independent Organization	PNLO	Pa-oh National Liberation Organization
KKO	Klo Htoo Baw Karen Organization	PNO	Pa-O National Liberation
KNDP/A	Karenni National Development Party/ Army	SSPP/SSA	Shan State Progressive Party/ Shan State Army
KNDO	Karen National Defense Organization	KNPLF	Karenni State Nationalities People's Liberation Front
KNG	Kayan National Guard	SSPP/SSA	Shan State
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army	TNLA	T'an National Liberation Army
KNLP	Kayan New Land Party		
KNO	Kachin National Organization	PSLA	Palaung State Liberation Army
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party	PSLF	Palaung State Liberation Army
KNU	KNU Special Region Group Toungoo	RCSS/SSA	Restoration Council of the Shan State/ Shan State Army

1.1 Definition of terms

Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement: The NCA refers to the bilateral agreement between ethnic armed organizations and the government of Myanmar to be able to stop the aggressiveness of internal conflict and the actual fighting.

Peace Building Process (PBP): The peace-building process can be referred to as one of the mechanisms that can refix, modify, and salvage the broken pieces of the country due to the impact of the ethnic conflict or war within the nation.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Ethnic Conflict

In retrospect, ethnic and ethnic conflict took place in different forms in the early 20th century by demanding national self-determination, nationalism, and the new ideas of the nation had proliferated globally. These sorts of ideas apparently happened after the Industrial Revolution and European colonialism. As result, many anticolonial movements began and nationalist conflicts in Europe. Additionally, nationalism, modernization, and ethnic conflict emerged for the first time as the theory of modern development (Taras & Ganguly, 2010). The ethnic conflict primarily originated from the concept of "*ancient hatreds*" by allowing journalists and media that would cover up the ethnic conflict that happened in the country. Taras and Ganguly (2010) indicated that when the state or central authorities weaken, "*ancient hatreds*" caused the intergroup relations as hostile and violent as a weapon tool. At the end of the cold war the "*ancient hatreds*" extended and applied between superpower countries which allowed them to defeat the local ethnic conflict under the global bipolar alliance system.

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According to Smith (1999), the ethnic conflict in Burma is based in the country's complex social and political landscape. The conflict in Myanmar has several reasons such as the historical marginalization, political centralization, economic inequality, and foreign interference. However, the fight for federalism is one of the those reason the ongoing conflict happening in Myanmar. The country has a complicated history of ethnic and religious variety, economic inequality, and political instability, all of which have led to the country's ongoing tensions and conflicts. Yet, federalism is a significant topic since it governs how power and resources are distributed among various groups and areas within the country. Several ethnic minority groups in Myanmar have long desired more autonomy and authority over their own affairs, and federalism is considered as a means of achieving this. At the same time, other organizations are concerned that federalism may lead to fragmentation or perhaps dissolution of the country. As a result, while federalism is not the sole source of conflict in Myanmar, it is a significant problem that reflects deeper differences and tensions inside the country (Smith, 1999).

Many countries and ethnic groups consequently have been experiencing civil wars and ethnic revolutions or conflicts regarding political, economic, social, cultural, religious, and territorial issues in the late 1990s. Actually, conflicts are not caused by racial differences but by the intentions of different common interests or willingness in society. Therefore, ethnic conflict becomes one of the major threats to international peace and security (Reuter, 2021). Likewise, internal conflicts that occurred in the Balkans, Rwanda, Chechnya, Iraq, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Darfur, and Myanmar/Burma frighten the world even now in the 21st century. Other reasons for ethnic conflicts happening in a nation are because of human rights violations, genocide, crimes against humanity, state failure, environmental problems, and refugee flow. Reuter (2021) stated that conflict can be seen when two or more actors chase unparalleled goals. It may not be inevitably violent, but the use of tension, dispute, or unease is more common in a nonviolent context. Civil war and armed conflict organically illustrate a violent internal conflict that has a certain length. When internal conflict happens, most leading protagonists or advocacy groups and military operations are utilized in order to reach their political targets.

1.2.2 Conflict Solutions Theory

Galtung (1996) also stated that communication is necessary for conflict intervention which will lead to peace. He introduced these conflict intervention ideas in order to stop further suffering, material, and non-material destruction; if possible, to arrive at a solution, meaning a formation that is reasonably acceptable and sustainable. There are three approaches to conflict intervention also called conflict triangles in order to maintain peace, which is known as the dissociative approach (peace-keeping), the resolution approach (peace-making), and the associative approach (peace-building). There are three dimensions to conflict which are like a triangle such as assumptions and attitudes, behavior, and contradictions or actions. These all have different roles to play: for instance, to stop the destructiveness, change attitudes and assumptions, make the new formation lasting, and finally to overcome the contradiction at the origin of the conflict formation (Galtung, 1996).

According to Zaw (2018), conflict resolution is described as four principles which are known as arbitration, litigation, negotiation, and mediation. The first two principles are most related to a court or legal proceedings while the other two are not; a third party may or may not be required to join the process. However, among those tasks or processes, negotiation and mediation are the popular principles that every peacemaker is using in the 21st century. Moreover, when it comes to a successful conflict resolution, the peace process needs to be constructed on truthful and honest relations between players. It is said that conflicts always break out due to the basic needs of parties not being met, which then turn into grievances and hatred: in summary, negative impacts create conflict (Zaw, 2018).

According to South (2022), the present administration in Myanmar, led by the National League for Democracy (NLD), has placed too much focus on negotiating with armed ethnic groups and not enough on inclusion, participation, and true power-sharing. Numerous ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and ethnic armed groups (EAGs) in Myanmar aspire to a "true federalism" system based on power sharing between a central (federal/union) government and various state and regional administrations. South (2022), argues for a more participatory approach to federalism that includes a diverse variety of stakeholders such as ethnic communities, political parties, and civil society organizations. This strategy would necessitate more open



political discourse, more equal resource sharing agreements, and greater autonomy for Myanmar's states and regions. As a result, federalism in Myanmar may be conceived and implemented in a way that represents the needs and ambitions of all groups while also leading to a more secure and peaceful future.

1.2.3 The Governing Body of the Peace Negotiation Process

The government implemented some steps to be able to monitor or guide the NCA process. Firstly, the government established the Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting (JICM) which is the highest mandated body to supervise and guide the implementation of the NCA. That JICM meeting was first held on 15-17th October 2015. The signing of the NCA ceremony resulted in the formation of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) and the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC). The UPDJC and JMC have to report to the JICM as it has the highest mandate to resolve the impasses in the peace negotiation process when the UPDJC and JMC are unproductive (Karen Peace Support Network, 2018).

The JMC which was formed on 18th October 2015, does not only have the responsibility for implementing the military provision of the NCA but also for counteracting the recurrence of armed clashes and resolving armed conflicts. The JMC has the authority to operate through the Union-, State- and Local-levels and is chaired by a high-ranking general from the Tatmadaw, and a high-ranking general from the EAOs as Vice-Chairperson. Along with the JMC, the UPDJC was also founded on 18th October 2015 that has a broad and significant mandate within the structure of the peace negotiation process. The main responsibility of the UPDJC is to hold and manage the implementation of the political dialogue process and unify the 21 CPC, renamed as the 21st Century Panglong by the NLD in August 2016 (Karen Peace Support Network, 2018).

1.2.4 The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement

The objective of the NCA has four key categories. Firstly, to build an inclusive political dialogue that is based on the process of the ceasefire framework and achieve sustainable peace. Secondly, under the supervision of the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee, all armed groups have to follow the Code of Conduct which has been provided explicitly for investigating alleged violations and undertaking problem-solving functions. Thirdly, the NCA made promises about the signatories of the agreement that could benefit their self-interest to both sides of the ethnic armed groups as well as the government. The last objective mentioned is the encouragement that all EAOs to be a part of NCA by respecting all their struggles with common ambition (UN Peacemaker, 2015).

In addition, all the signatories agreed and made the commitment to peace and national reconciliation on 12 February 2015 for the long-term goal to achieve lasting peace and national reconciliation desired by all citizens. The commitment consisted of three pillars which are known as the spirit of responsible action, transparency, and accountability (Myanmar Peace Monitoring, 2015).

There are seven chapters to the NCA comprised of 33 paragraphs. These chapters are:

- Basic Principles
- Aims and Objectives
- Ceasefire Related Matters
- Maintaining and Strengthening Ceasefire
- Guarantees for Political Dialogue
- Future Tasks
- Miscellaneous
- Miscellaneous

**Table 2** EAOs NCA Signatories and Non-signatories (Teacircleoxford, 2018)

Signatories:	Non-signatories:
1) Arakan Liberation Party	1) Arakan Army
2) All Burma Students Democratic Front	2) Kachin Independence Army
3) Chin National Front	3) Karenni National Progressive Party
4) Democratic Karen Benevolent Army	4) National Democratic Alliance Army
5) Karen National Union	5) National Socialist Council of Nagaland - Khaphlang
6) Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council	6) Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
7) Lahu Democratic Union	7) Shan State Progress Party/ Shan State Army North
8) New Mon State Party	8) Ta'ang National Liberation Army
9) Pao National Liberation Organisation	9) United Wa State Party
10) Restoration Council of Shan State/ Shan State Army South	

1.2.5 The Initiative of the Peace Process in Myanmar

Generally, the modern-day peace process in Myanmar was initiated through ceasefire agreements by the Tatmadaw in the run-up to 2011 when the country began to transform into a democratic system. The peace process in Myanmar, therefore, began with the new quasi-civilian government formally led by President Thein Sein (Oo, 2014). The original ceasefire or disarmament process started in 1988-89 but the consequences were not as successful as the Tatmadaw hoped. Over 30 EAOs including breakaway factions, joined government ceasefires up until 2011. The ceasefire agreements did not completely meet the target organized by the government at that time because some EAOs refused to sign treaties. The ceasefire agreement was indeed implemented under the military junta without providing clear codes of conduct or official endorsement between the government and non-state actors. As a result, some EAOs positively joined and agreed to the disarmament process but some denied it (Oo, 2014).

Therefore, EAOs formed a Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) to negotiate with the government in 2013, including a subsequent Peace Process Steering Team (PPST). Eight out of 21 EAOs involved in peace discussions then signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) on 15 October 2015. However, there were many complicated issues when all invited ethnic armed groups joined the negotiation process. President Thein Sein highly hoped that the NCA could work for the peace-building process for Myanmar by passing through the gate of the negotiations process. Unfortunately, continuing clashes between the Tatmadaw and a number of EAOs meant that the conflict cycle did not stop (Ganesan, 2015).

Mathieson (2021) believes that the main obstacles to the peace process in Myanmar are the following three reasons:

(1) The Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) lacks sincerity and disregards the NCA. Ignoring key aspects of the NCA, the Tatmadaw has talked about the instability of the EAO and the peace process, mainly in the Kachin, Karen and Shan states, as well as crimes against humanity in Rakhine. In addition, there is no financial commitment from international funding to support the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC) of approximately US\$10 million.

(2) The Liberal Democratic Party NLD government under Aung San Suu Kyi made the wrong choice by emphasizing the military and neglecting the nation. Mattison also said that Aung San Suu Kyi promised that the government would put national peace, tranquility and liberation first, but this has not been implemented as hoped. In addition, Aung San Suu Kyi's crimes against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state have attracted international attention, siding with the military. In addition, she adopted the status and memory of her father, General Aung San, to rename the peace process "21st Century Panglong".

(3) The final obstacle was the internal conflict between NCA "signatories" and non-signatories, some of whom were expelled by the Tatmadaw, which led to the EAO split on the NCA's third anniversary in 2018.



2. Objectives

- 1) To examine how the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) is importance for the peacebuilding process in Myanmar
- 2) To analyze the impacts of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) on armed groups and its challenges to the peace in Myanmar

3. Methods

This research applied a qualitative method that studies both primary and secondary sources in order to collect key information to be able to make the analysis of the reality of the NCA, national reconciliation, and peace process between the government and the non-states or EAOs. Semi-structured interview was also used in this research.

3.1 Data Collection

Both primary and secondary sources have been used in this study. There are eight people participated in the interview procedure for the primary sources. Information was gathered from institutions affiliated with non-governmental organizations and scholars with a high reputation as secondary sources. After gathering the data and material, the researcher studied what those writers had said and pointed out in order to clarify the intricacies of the NCA paper's contents, the challenges associated with attaining peace through NCA, and the difficulties of peace negotiations. To use this qualitative approach, the author conducted semi-structured interviews with several EAOs and their key players who are active in the NCA and peacekeeping processes. These interviews were then followed up with more extended, in-depth interview questions. Additionally, participant interviews were used to gather more information, express ideas, and discuss the difficulties associated with the illusive peace process in Myanmar.

3.2 Participants

The interviews are chosen based on a variety of factors, including who is working at the grassroots and national levels to transform the country in various ways. In order to collect additional information and data, the researcher separated the individuals into three groups. Participants in the interviews include chief spokespeople for ethnic armed groups, political activists, and senior peace trainers, as well as non-profit human rights advocates who have participated in the peace process and are advocating for political detainees. Senior political leaders and activists who have been working on the peace process in Myanmar since 1988 are eager to express their opinions on maintaining peace or engaging in political debate for the country's future toward the federal democracy.

The first group is represented by ethnic armed organizations such as the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), Karen National Union (KNU), and Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS)/Shan State Army South. These three ethnic armed groups play an important role in the NCA and peace negotiation process in Myanmar by sharing their political objectives. The KNU and the RCSS both signed the NCA with U Thein Sein's administration in 2015, however the KNPP only signed a bilateral agreement at the state level and assessed the circumstances of other signatory parties. These three ethnic armed groups were the major focus of the interview because they had the greatest experience in peace discussions and bilateral agreements from the initial phase of 1989 under the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), which was administered by the military administration.

The second group is represented by Mote Oo Education and the Karen Peace Networking Group, both of which concentrate on civic education areas. These two groups are focusing on federalism, politics, gender equality, and other aspects of development in Myanmar. The last group resides of individuals who represent political organizations and human rights advocacy groups. These individuals are political expert analysts and senior staff member who work for the AAPP and have compiled data on human rights abuses in Myanmar.

These Eight people were questioned, and they represented the ethnic groups or communities of the Karen, Shan, Naga, Karenni (Kayah), Bamar, or Burmese who had long worked in EAOs and community-based organizations. Two of the participants who represented KNU had been employed as full-time employees



for more than 10 years. The second was the Restoration Council of Shan State (RSCC), a member of the NCA's peacemaking committee from the outset. At the state level, the bilateral agreement had already been signed by a different KNPP representative. The remaining three participants work as full-time employees of community-based groups, including Mote Oo Education, the Karen Peace Support Network, and the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP). The final interviewee was a former political activist and analyst who participated only on an individual basis, not on behalf of any group.

The Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS)/Shan State Army South, the Karen National Union (KNU), and the Karen National Progressive Party (KNPP) are the three main ethnic armed organizations active in the NCA and peace talks in Myanmar. The researcher sought out their representatives while choosing interviewees for this study. Also, the researcher took into account a number of parameters for each group, including their involvement in bilateral accords and peace negotiations as well as elements like age and ethnicity. For instance, the KNU and RCSS have a wealth of expertise in peace talks and both parties signed the NCA with U Thein Sein's government in 2015. Nevertheless, for the KNPP, the research was only able to secure 1 person who had participated in a bilateral agreement at the state level and who could provide light on how the organization saw the situations of other signing parties. Finally, the researcher selected to focus on these three organizations because of their substantial significance in the peace process and their long-standing engagement in discussions extending back to the original phase in 1989 under the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

The interviewing process was performed between January 12 to March 15, 2022. In this study, the researcher will use participants A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H to protect their identity. The interview questions are based on research objective. There are seven males and one female participates to answer the interview questions. There is a comprehensive list of participants in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Participant's information

No	Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Organization/ Position
1	A	Male	38	Karennni	Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) / General secretary
2	B	Male	52	Karen	Karen National Union / Foreign Affairs
3	C	Male	52	Karen	Karen National Union / Joint secretary
4	D	Female	40	Karen	Karen Women's Organization / Director of Karen Peace Support Networking
5	E	Male	53	Bamar	Assistance Association of Political Prisoner (AAPP) Executive Committee member
6	F	Male	62	Bamar	Political Analyst/ Expert
7	G	Male	57	Shan	Restoration Council of Shan State/ Senior leader
8	H	Male	33	Naga	MoteOo organization / Senior Peace Education Trainer

4. Research findings

This section describes about the impact on conflict resolution and why the NCA is matters, challenges to implementation, and importance of inclusive dialogue including the need for continued monitoring and evaluation.

4.1. Impact on conflict resolution and why the NCA is matters

All participated reported that the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in Myanmar in 2015 was a significant step towards resolving decades of armed conflict in the country. The NCA was signed between the government of Myanmar and eight ethnic armed organizations, and it aimed to establish a permanent ceasefire, pave the way for political negotiations, and ultimately bring peace to the country. The impact of the NCA and the subsequent peace process has been far-reaching and has had a positive effect on the country in various ways:

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- **Reduced violence:** Since the signing of the NCA, the level of violence and fighting in the country has significantly reduced. This has led to a safer and more stable environment, especially in conflict-affected areas.

- **Improved humanitarian access:** The NCA has enabled greater humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas, allowing aid organizations to reach those in need more easily.

- **Economic benefits:** The reduced violence and improved security have led to increased economic activity, particularly in the agriculture, tourism, and extractive industries.

- **Political engagement:** The NCA has opened up avenues for political engagement between the government and ethnic armed organizations, which has created opportunities for the resolution of long-standing grievances and the pursuit of a more inclusive and equitable political settlement.

Participants B, C, G, and H (Personal Communication, 17 Feb, 2022) reported that the NCA is important because "the NCA is the first ever agreement that reached to an opening agreement for political dialogue since 1962." which means there were peace talks or negotiations for the first time in over half a century. All the participants stated that, generally, the aim of the NCA was to get all the armed groups to sign the bilateral agreement for disarmament reasons or stop fighting with one another through the negotiation process. However, all participants also agreed that the peace process in Myanmar is still ongoing, and significant challenges remain. The NCA has not yet been fully implemented, and fighting has resumed in some areas. Nevertheless, the signing of the NCA and the progress made in the peace process have brought hope to the people of Myanmar, and it is a step towards a more peaceful and prosperous future for the country.

The NCA is notable because it is the first effective agreement to initiate a political debate since 1962, according to participants B, C, G, and H. This suggests that no conversations or talks for peace have taken place for more than 50 years. The participants agreed that the NCA's main goal was to persuade all armed factions to ratify the bilateral accord out of concern for disarmament or to stop hostilities through the negotiating process. However, they also concurred that there are significant obstacles in Myanmar's ongoing peace effort. The NCA has not yet been completely implemented, and fighting has restarted in several places. Yet, the signing of the NCA and the progress achieved in the peace process have given the people of Myanmar optimism and mark a huge step towards a more peaceful and prosperous future.

4.1.2 Challenges to implementation

Despite its favorable impact, all participants acknowledged that the NCA has significant problems, including persistent fighting in particular areas, difficulty in creating trust between diverse communities, and limited progress toward political reconciliation. Participants, on the other hand, agreed that the NCA had failed the peace process. Simultaneously, a space for political conversation was created in which most armed factions may come to the table for negotiation in order to tackle the country's numerous political concerns. Participants B and H also asserted that the Panglong Agreement serves as the cornerstone of the Federal Union and is critical to ensuring self-determination, autonomy, and equality for all ethnic groups in Myanmar.

As a result, the Panglong Agreement is preferred by the majority of EAOs. As a result, EAOs have fought in the goal of establishing a federal democratic union, but the Tatmadaw has rejected and ignored this for decades. Participants A, B, C, E, F, and G identified that political desires and interests as critical stages in the negotiating process. Another issue was that negotiators lacked shared interests or a desire for political engagement. Participant D, E, and F reported that the NCA was actually created by the Tatmadaw because the ceasefire conditions were made explicit under the 2008 constitution and that the ceasefire framework just benefits the Tatmadaw. In fact, it was more like a policy play by the Tatmadaw, using the ceasefire agreement as a tactic to advance its own interests. And participant F added that the Tatmadaw did not follow the codes of conduct that were mentioned in the NCA. So instead of stopping disarmament, all EAOs resumed their armed struggle. After the signing of the NCA, many EAOs came to distrust it which means there is no trust building between different armed groups and the Tatmadaw. Participants B and G added that the 2008 constitution was another main problem because it was imposed by the Tatmadaw without consideration for EAO leaders and civilians.

Participants A, B, G and H asserted that the 2008 Constitution is guaranteed that 25 percent of the seats in both houses of the parliament will be reserved for Tatmadaw appointees so that they have the power to make changes and control the constitution. If the elected government or parties wanted to amend the policy



or reform the new constitution, then there should be 75 percent must approvals to make the change in both houses. The recent invocation of the Panglong Agreement is also problematic. It has prolonged negotiations and the peace process because the NLD-led government initiated a new 21st Century Panglong Conference in 2016. But, while it recalled the original treaty in 1947, it appears more of a ploy to try and get more EAOs to sign bilateral ceasefires.

Participants A, B, C, G, and H reported that when the NLD came to power, they all thought that the NLD which is led by DASSK would be able to reform the 2008 constitution and transform from military dictatorship to federal democracy. But, in reality, they could not deal with the Tatmadaw and stop the fighting. Participants A, C, D, and H stated that the 2008 constitution is the problem because it did not contain any key principles of a federal democratic union, such as the equality of ethnic group rights and self-determination. Even the previous two constitutions did not protect and guarantee ethnic rights nor the 1947 Panglong Agreement which was theoretical in nature. Participant D said that all the constitutions would still be a problem, not only the 2008 constitution. In particular, the present constitution will remain a problem if the guaranteed 25 per cent of seats in parliament for the military is not abolished. Lastly, participants G and H said that the military should not be involved in the political system because it will delay peacebuilding in the country.

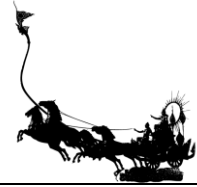
Participants A, B, and H reported that the NCA has been dead for a long time already because it was created by the Tatmadaw and thus could never succeed in building national peace in Myanmar. Even the international communities have witnessed the brutal killing of civilians in front of cameras, and the Tatmadaw committed more crimes against humanity during the military coup on 1st February, 2021. Many Bamar-majority people finally understand how badly the Tatmadaw has treated ethnic minorities who have been struggling for their rights for more than 70 years.

Participant G said that the Bamar-majority population are suffering in the same situation and that fighting will grow due to the aspirations of the Spring Revolution in Myanmar. Some of the EAOs and new People's Defense Forces will join together. Participants B and G also added that this fighting will not finish within one or two years because the challenges are endless. Now, the people do not see any light for peace from the military State Administration Council (SAC). Instead, they do not even consider the rival National Unity Government of Myanmar (NUG), which supports the NLD, as a legitimate government. At the same time, the NUG regards the SAC as terrorists and the Tatmadaw as the enemy. Thus, there is no light and no negotiation process for the future and for peace. Therefore, the EAOs decided not to have confidence in the NCA again. Therefore, these problems are still prolonging the peace process in Myanmar.

4.1.3 Inclusive Dialogue and Monitoring and Evaluation

All participants highlighted the need of the open political dialogue and consultation with all key stakeholders, including ethnic armed groups, civil society organizations, and minority populations, in ensuring the success of the NCA and addressing the core cause of violence in the nation. Participants G and H also reported that the NCA be continually monitored and evaluated in order to find areas for development and ensure that it stays relevant and responsive to the changing demands of the Myanmar people. Participants A, B, C, F, and G further stated that the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) did not prioritize the participation of all EAOs, resulting in certain groups signing the NCA but others not. Participant A and D stated that even though all EAOs want to achieve the sustainable peace but it will never happen due to lack of transparency between both side of the armed groups. All EAOs understand that they cannot trust the Tatmadaw anymore nor the NCA since the conflict is ongoing in ethnic areas. All participants believed that transparency between various armed groups and the Tatmadaw would give insights into the complexity of the NCA and the challenges of achieving long-term peace in Myanmar, and might guide future efforts to promote peace and stability in the nation.

In order to attain the NCA, the NCCT, JMC, and PPST shall monitor and evaluate the peace-building process in Myanmar. Participant B stated that the National Unity and Consolidation Committee (NUCC) may endeavor to bring together diverse ethnic groups and encourage conversation and understanding amongst them. The NCCT (Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team) can continue to mediate peace discussions between the government and ethnic armed groups and monitor the execution of ceasefire agreements. Furthermore, the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) can supervise the implementation of peace agreements and handle any



disagreements that may emerge. Finally, the Peace Process Steering Team (PPST) may organize and manage the peace process by collaborating closely with the government, ethnic armed groups, and other stakeholders. By facilitating discourse, monitoring the implementation of peace accords, and resolving problems, these groups may play a significant role in promoting peace and stability in Myanmar.

5. Discussion

In this section, the researcher will analyze the significance of the NCA stage in Myanmar's peacebuilding process as well as why the NCA is not working in Myanmar's peacebuilding efforts.

5.1 The important of the NCA to the peacebuilding process in Myanmar

There are two major reasons that why the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) is important to the peacebuilding process in Myanmar. The first reason is that the NCA was intended to reduce violence and the second reason is that the NCA will help to end armed conflict in the country. All participants also reported that the NCA in Myanmar was intended to reduce violence and end decades of armed conflict in the country. The NCA has led to a significant reduction in violence in some parts of Myanmar. Following the signing of the NCA in 2015, the government and the signatory ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) committed to a ceasefire, which has largely held in areas where the signatory EAOs have a presence. This has led to a decrease in clashes and civilian casualties in these areas.

For the first reason that is aiming to reduce violence in Myanmar, the NCA has played an important role in lowering bloodshed and bringing Myanmar's decades-long armed conflict to an end. After the signing of the NCA in 2015, the government and signatory ethnic armed groups (EAOs) have agreed to a ceasefire, resulting in a considerable decrease in violence in several areas of the nation. The NCA has offered a forum for political conversation and permitted the development of joint monitoring committees to supervise the implementation of the ceasefire, increasing confidence in the peace process. The accord has also improved access to conflict-affected areas, enabling for the delivery of much-needed humanitarian supplies. Ultimately, the NCA is a critical component of Myanmar's ongoing peace process, providing a route to democratic transformation and a more peaceful and prosperous future for its residents. Its accomplishment will provide the groundwork for confidence and collaboration between the government and ethnic armed groups, ultimately leading to the achievement of Myanmar's federal democratic system.

The second reason is that the NCA will help to end armed conflict in Myanmar. The NCA is an important component of Myanmar's peace process, offering a framework for political discourse, democratic change, and the development of a more peaceful and prosperous future for all residents. It is a key step toward establishing trust and collaboration between the government and ethnic armed groups, creating the groundwork for Myanmar's transition to a federal democratic system. According to Khu (2019), the NCA is essential for establishing stable and long-term peace in Myanmar and serves as a critical cornerstone of the country's ongoing peace process.

After the signing of the ceasefire accord, problems persist, and the Burmese peacebuilding process is at a crisis. Armed confrontations in some places have increased even further, and several ethnic armed organizations, most notably the Northern Alliance, have been excluded from formal peace talks and have refused to sign the NCA (Pauli, 2020). While the NCA has made headway in lowering violence and building a framework for political discussion, more work remains to be done to maintain Myanmar's long-term stability.

To lessen bloodshed and put an end to the armed conflict in Myanmar, the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was put into effect. Although the NCA has reduced violence in some areas of Myanmar, other portions of the nation have seen a rise in violence as a result of ethnic armed groups that refused to sign the deal and continue to have conflicts with the government. Nevertheless, certain ethnic armed groups that were left out of the formal peace negotiations choose not to sign the NCA, despite the fact that it is meant to be an inclusive peacebuilding project. Despite considerable progress in certain areas, there are still many problems, like the government taking over private property, which violates human rights (International Crisis Group, 2017). The Tatmadaw's breach of the cease-fire with the KIO, as well as other human rights violations,



have harmed the NCA's efficacy. While the NCA has achieved considerable progress, long-term peace and stability in Burma continue to confront substantial challenges.

5.2 The impacts of the NCA on armed groups to the peace in Myanmar

The National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) has major impacted on the armed groups in Myanmar in terms of maintaining peace in the nation. The signing of the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in 2015 represented an important milestone in Myanmar's attempts to achieve permanent peace and end its protracted armed conflict. The NCA was signed by the Burmese government and several armed ethnic groups with the purpose of minimizing violent conduct among signatory organizations and seeking a peaceful conclusion to the conflict. While the NCA has had a good influence on signatory organizations, with fewer episodes of violence, the ongoing conflict with non-signatory groups remains a difficulty. Yet, the NCA is an important step forward in Myanmar's inclusive rehabilitation, reflecting the government's commitment to settling the conflict and establishing peace in the country (Oo, 2014).

However, some observers have critiqued the NCA, claiming that it was drafted in accordance with the 2008 Constitution, which has severe weaknesses and fails to effectively address the core values of a federal democratic union, such as equal rights for all ethnic groups and the right to self-determination. As a result, the Tatmadaw, which formed the NCA, and all parties concerned regard the deal as ineffectual and insufficient in achieving long-term peace in the country. Notwithstanding its flaws, the NCA is an important beginning point for Myanmar's peace process, and efforts must be made to resolve its weaknesses and foster a more comprehensive and inclusive peace process.

Despite efforts by the newly elected government to press for constitutional reform, their efforts were hampered by the fact that the NCA was negotiated under the 2008 constitution, which allows the Tatmadaw veto authority. As a result, the peace steering committee and leaders of ethnic armed groups (EAOs) were unable to act against the Tatmadaw, making it impossible to secure a permanent peace for a federal Union of Myanmar. After several informal negotiations and peace talks, no clear way to peace has been discovered, forcing certain EAOs to engage in violent combat with the military in order to maintain their autonomy, equality, and the safety of their citizens (International Crisis Group, 2016).

Several ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) did not agree with the 2008 Constitution and thus refused to sign the NCA because it lacked basic features of a federal democratic union, such as equal rights for ethnic groups and the right to self-determination. Previous constitutions, particularly the 1947 Panglong Agreement, did not guarantee ethnic rights effectively. As a result, problems with all constitutions, not only the 2008 one, persist. If the military's mandatory 25% of parliament seats is not repealed, the present constitution will remain problematic. Regrettably, the Tatmadaw has a veto on constitutional amendments and controls one-quarter of the members in both chambers of parliament, making constitutional reform in Burma difficult (Fisher, 2015).

While discussing conflict resolution, Galtung (1996) emphasizes the role of communication as a crucial instrument for conflict intervention that leads to peace. He suggests three conflict intervention techniques, often known as conflict triangles, to sustain peace: the dissociation approach (peacekeeping), the resolution approach (peacemaking), and the associative approach (peacebuilding). These techniques address the three dimensions of conflict: assumptions and attitudes, behavior, and contradictions or acts. Each strategy has a distinct role in preventing harmful behavior, altering attitudes and assumptions, sustaining new forms, and eliminating inconsistencies that lead to conflict creation.

Zaw (2018) distinguishes four dispute resolution principles: arbitration, litigation, negotiation, and mediation. Negotiation and mediation are the most common and successful techniques in the twenty-first century. To accomplish successful conflict resolution, the peace process must be based on true and honest relationships between the parties concerned. Disputes frequently emerge when one or more sides' fundamental needs are not addressed, leading to grievances and animosity that have negative consequences and fuel the conflict.

According to South (2022), the present Myanmar administration has placed much too much focus on dealing with armed ethnic groups and far too little emphasis on inclusion, participation, and meaningful power sharing. Numerous ethnic armed organizations and groups in Myanmar seek a form of "genuine federalism" based on power sharing between a central government and multiple state and regional governments. South (2022)



pushes for a more participatory approach to federalism that incorporates ethnic communities, political parties, and civil society organizations. This strategy necessitates more open political debate, equal resource-sharing agreements, and increased autonomy for Myanmar's states and regions. Federalism in Myanmar may be applied to lead to a more secure and peaceful future by taking into account the interests and aspirations of all people.

In conclusion, the NCA's goal of preserving peace in Myanmar has been compromised by the Tatmadaw's violations of the ceasefire agreement with the KIO and the growing military presence in EAO zones. Ethnic ceasefire groups are now doubting the success of the agreement because to the increase in human rights violations, forced labor, property theft, and extortion that has resulted. Southeastern Myanmar has made significant progress, but there are still many issues that need to be resolved, including the persistent breaches of human rights, sexual assaults, and property damage. In order to overcome these challenges and guarantee the preservation of everyone's rights and safety in Myanmar, tremendous work will be needed.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

The National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), which was signed in 2015 by the Tatmadaw, the Burmese government, and ethnic armed groups (EAOs), was seen as a crucial step toward establishing long-term peace in Myanmar. While the agreement has helped to lessen internal disputes between the Tatmadaw and EAOs, there are still many difficulties and problems that need to be resolved. In this part, the researcher comes to the conclusion that although the NCA has been crucial to Myanmar's peacebuilding efforts, it has also had a variety of negative consequences on armed groups and encountered difficulties. The following paragraphs will outline the key results and go through how they may affect future efforts to achieve peace in Myanmar.

6.1.1 The significant role of the NCA in the peacebuilding process and its failure

The National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) has been a significant step towards achieving sustainable peace in Myanmar since its signing in 2015. While it has helped to stop internal conflict between the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), many issues still need to be resolved, such as lingering disputes and mistrust between parties. Despite its potential to be a key player in the peacebuilding process, the NCA has been unable to prevent bloodshed between armed forces. However, there have been some positive developments, such as improvements in road infrastructure, support for disarmament, and the formalization of the ceasefire.

On the other hand, some researchers have noted negative aspects of the NCA's implementation, such as the government granting free permits for natural resource exploitation without adequate environmental restrictions. Additionally, many rural communities and villages still lack access to basic necessities like education, healthcare, and clean water. Despite these shortcomings, the research emphasizes the need for persistent efforts to address the primary causes of conflict and foster harmony between the government and ethnic groups in order to achieve lasting peace in Myanmar.

6.1.2 The Impact of the National Ceasefire Agreement on Armed Groups and the Challenges to Myanmar's Peace Process

The researcher's analysis of the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) emphasizes its influence on armed groups as well as the difficulties that Myanmar's peace process faces. Despite the signing of the NCA, persistent warfare in the Kachin and Shan states has prevented long-term peace from being achieved. The researcher underlines the need of including impacted communities and civil society organizations in the peace process in order to develop a clear political conversation between the Tatmadaw, EAOs, and government. Political instability, widespread poverty, and a lack of education and healthcare, on the other hand, offer substantial difficulties to Myanmar's peace process. The new Burmese National Unity Government (NUG) is addressing these concerns by scrapping the 2008 constitution and the NCA.

Additionally, the Tatmadaw's important participation in the peace process has hampered the NCA's efficacy, since it has key positions in parliament, allowing them the authority to impose martial law, dissolve parliament, and declare a state of emergency. As a result, the minority of EAOs have had limited engagement in the peace process, impeding the building of enduring peace. To advance the peace process, the researcher



advises that EAOs band together around similar political goals and seek international help for peace discussions that include all civilians and EAOs.

6.2. Recommendations

The people of Myanmar, especially ethnic minorities, have been struggling and fighting for their self-determination and federal democracy. Thus, they signed different ceasefire agreements and took part in various peace negotiations over many decades. Unfortunately, all the bilateral ceasefire agreements were never been completed due to non-compliance and restrictions by the government and Tatmadaw. Even though many implanting bodies were formed, such as the Joint Monitoring Committee, the Joint Monitoring Committee, and the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee to look after the NCA peace process, they did not monitor government activities nor the Tatmadaw. The Peace Process Steering Team also failed to follow the NCA process and conditions.

To be able to solve these kinds of problems, firstly the government should provide more authorization to the NCCT, JMC, NUCC and PPST in order to maintain peace talks and peacebuilding processes in the future. Secondly, the government should strive for mutual understanding and build trust within the Tatmadaw in order to hold productive peace negotiations. It is important that, if Myanmar state leaders wish to implement a democratic system, the government stops the Tatmadaw from interfering and being involved in parliament, Thirdly, ethnic solidarity is essential for all the EAOs as well as the Bamar-majority population because, when all peoples join together with the same goals, then there can be sustainable peace in Myanmar.

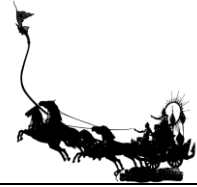
To promote peace and stability in Myanmar, the State Administration Council (SAC) should engage in meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders, protect human rights, enable free speech and press, address economic inequalities, and adopt political changes to guarantee inclusion and representation.

The National Unity Government (NUG) should undertake substantive consultations with the State Administration Council (SAC) and other stakeholders in order to address the core causes of the conflict and foster unity and inclusion among all ethnic groups and political parties. The NUG must uphold human rights, ensure the safety and well-being of all citizens, combat economic inequalities, and strive toward a peaceful transition to a more democratic and representative administration. Building alliances with various groups, encouraging debate and negotiation, and gaining international support and recognition while avoiding violence or coercion may all be part of this strategy.

Finally, the government should prepare other possible solutions to replace the NCA which has been found to be insufficient for ceasefire negotiations and for a sustainable peacebuilding process in the country. In this case, the government can call on the international community to help as mediators between the conflict groups in the country. In the long run, the government, EAOs, and ethnic minority civilians can eventually build and enjoy lasting peace with the help of the international community.

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