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Kai Chen

Comparative Study of Child Soldiering on Myanmar-China Border

Evolutions, Challenges and Countermeasures

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Kai Chen
The Center for Non-Traditional Security
and Peaceful Development Studies
College of Public Administration
Zhejiang University
Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province
People's Republic of China
e-mail: chen kai@zju.edu.cn

ISSN 2192-8533 ISSN 2192-8541 (electronic)
ISBN 978-981-4560-01-6 ISBN 978-981-4560-02-3 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-981-4560-02-3
Springer Singapore Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014930900

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Printed on acid-free paper

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who took the time to review the book proposal and draft, and give me insightful comments and suggestions. I am grateful to the Springer editors for their professionalism, timely supports, superb editorial and production services, dedication and kind wishes.

I would extend my sincere thanks to Prof. Xiaofeng Yu, the director of the Centre for Non-traditional Security and Peaceful Development, Zhejiang University, China. Prof. Yu is thanked for being a dedicated co-mentor and friend.

I also extend my gratitude to the following scholars for enlightening discussions and sharing experiences: Dr. Peter Warren Singer, senior fellow and director of the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence at the Brookings Institution; Dr. Michael Wessells, professor of Clinical Population and Family Health at Columbia University in the Program on Forced Migration and Health, and professor of Psychology at Randolph-Macon College; Prof. Richard Ned Lebow in Department of War Studies, King's College London; Prof. Theresa Betancourt in Harvard School of Public Health at Harvard University; Prof. Sonja Grover in Faculty of Education at Lakehead University; Prof. Jennifer Hyndman in Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies at York University; Prof. Richard Maclure in Faculty of Education at University of Ottawa; Dr. Philipp Kuwert in Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy at University of Greifswald; Prof. Frank Neuner at Faculty of Psychology and Sports Science, Bielefeld University; Prof. Sofie Vindevogel at the Department of Orthopedagogics at Ghent University.

I want to acknowledge the invaluable support of Prof. Yongnian Zheng, the director of East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore. During my visit at East Asian Institute, Prof. Zheng is my supervisor and gracious host. In addition, I wish to express my special appreciation of Ms. Wee Li Lian and Mr. Swee Thiam Tan at East Asian Institute.

At Zhejiang University, I owe thanks to Director Xuezhen Zhao, Ms. Ruoqun Luo and Chenhua Ma at Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, for their supports on the call of duty. Zhejiang University Library is also welcoming and for this I thank Ms. Ting Zhang and Ms. Jingjing Wu.

This book is granted financial support from China Postdoctoral Science Foundation (Project No. 2013M531479).

Kai Chen

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Abbreviations

ATS	Amphetamine-type stimulants
BGF	Border Guard Force
CCDAC	Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DKBA	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
HREIB	Human Rights Education Institute of Burma
ILO	International Labour Organization
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
KIO	Kachin Independence Organization
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
KNU	Karen National Union
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
Optional Protocol	Optional protocols to the convention on the rights of the child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
PMSC	Private Military and/or Security Company
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SSA North	Shan State Army—North
SSA South	Shan State Army—South
<i>Tatmadaw</i>	Myanmar Armed Forces
<i>Tatmadaw Kyi</i>	Myanmar Army
TNC	Transnational Company
TPPP	Transnational Public–Private Partnership
UN	United Nations

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UWSA	United Wa State Army
WFP	World Food Programme
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

Chapter 1

Introduction

Abstract This chapter reviews the outline of this book and addresses the necessity and main purposes of this research.

Keywords Introduction · Research purpose · Child soldiering · Myanmar–China border · Necessity

Child soldiering is a deep sorrow of human society, even to those who care little about international security or human rights. Among the various consequences of violence, child soldiering should be one of the most sorrowful ones. Like a shadow following a shape, child soldiering is inseparable from the course of human history. In other words, it is not limited to any civilization or country, which has been deeply rooted in the history of Western as well as non-Western civilizations (Honwana 2008).

In this book, child soldier means “any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including, but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers and spies, or for sexual purposes.” Child soldier does not only refer to “a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities” (UNICEF 2007). This “straight-18” definition is an operational basis for most of the published works in the literature of child soldiering (Andvig 2006).

With regard to this “straight-18” definition, it has origins in the universal definition of childhood found in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which defines childhood as beginning at birth and ending at age 18 (United Nations 1998a). Moreover, the 18-year cutoff could not be simply interpreted a Western construct, but an international legal standard for childhood agreed upon by more than 190 states and the most widely signed international law (Singer 2008).

Historically, the practice of child soldiering is more common than many people imagine, which occurs in most ancient civilizations, including ancient Greece, Egypt, Rome, Israel, India, and China, and the major religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism (Williams 2011). It was estimated that child soldiers fought in three fourths of the world’s conflicts (Singer 2005a), and 60% of the non-state armed forces of the world (77 of 129) use child soldiers (Singer 2005a, p. 30). In the early twenty-first century, for many countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, child soldiers still constitute a significant proportion of the armed forces and groups, such as those in Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Uganda, Chad, Iraq, Myanmar, Somalia, Syria, Colombia, Philippine,

and Yemen (Honwana 2006, p. 27; United Nations 2012). The estimated number of child soldiers ranges from 200,000–500,000 worldwide (Druba 2002, p. 271). As Dupuy and Peters estimate, the number of child soldiers in the twenty-first century might be around 250,000 (Dupuy and Peters 2010, pp. 55–56).

The ideas about what is (and should be) “childhood” and “adulthood” diverge widely between different societies and groups. They differ not only from group to group but also over time. The interpretation of childhood as a time of innocence is just a fairly recent construction (Dupuy and Peters 2010). The practice of child soldiering has only recently ended in some Western armies (Rosen 2012). Moreover, the straight-18 definition is strongly opposed by the United States (MacFarlane and Foong Khong 2006), and the United Kingdom still reserved the right to deploy under 18 years old where there is a “genuine military need” (Brocklehurst 2005, p. 262). To what extent is child soldiering in contemporary discourse different from what it used to be? It is necessary to do a brief comparison between child soldiering in pre-World War II (pre-WWII) era and that in pro-World War II era.

The literature of child soldiering could be tracked back to ancient Rome, when children were deployed as a central component of ancient Romans’ military force (International Bureau for Children’s Rights 2010). There were similar cases in ancient Greece, for example, both Athenians and Spartans recruited children into ranks (Dupuy and Peters 2010). In medieval Europe, children acted as minor or ancillary supporters of knights, such as boy pages in charge of arming and maintaining the knights (Singer 2008). In addition, it was recorded that tens of thousands of children participated in the Children’s Crusade of 1212 to fight against the Moors in Jerusalem (Dupuy and Peters 2010).

Since the seventeenth century, child soldiering was more frequent in the battlefields; boy drummers and boys who ran ammunition to cannon crews were deployed by many countries (Singer 2008). As a result, the word “infantry” is derived from the French word “enfant,” which means “child” (Dupuy and Peters 2010).

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, children still regularly presented in military life; for instance, the children were recruited by British Navy as “powder monkeys” and cabin boys in warships (Rosen 2012; Gates and Reich 2009). At that time, children were not only the supporters of the armed forces (e.g., the drummer boys of the Napoleonic era) but also the combatants charging the enemy line (Fonseka 2001; Rosen 2012). For example, large numbers of children fought on both sides in the American Civil War. The most notable example of child soldiers was the cadets from Virginia Military Institute, who joined the Battle of New Market in 1864 (Gates and Reich 2009; Singer 2008). In addition, the US Navy was permitted to recruit boys as young as age 13, while the US Marine Corps was allowed to recruit children as young as age 11 (Rosen 2012). In the poem entitled “The Child-Soldier”, Hamerton illustrated a British child soldier in the battlefield:

*He was a British Grenadier,
And he was ten years old;
And therefore what had he to fear,
A soldier brisk and bold?
The little lad was bravely clad
In English red and gold.* (Hamerton 1855, p. 303)

In the twentieth century, child soldiers became more attractive than what they used to be, especially for the states risking everything on a single throw, such as the Hitler Youth in WWII (Singer 2008). At the same time, thousands of children fought bloody battles across Eastern and Western Europe during WWII (Rosen 2012), while large numbers of Canadians under the age of 18 years did fight in the WWI and, though in smaller numbers, in the WWII as well (Beier 2011).

There were 300,000 children under the age of 18 serving as combatants in the world, which accounts almost 10% of all the combatants around the world. Child soldiers serve in 40% of the world's armed forces, rebel groups, and terrorist organizations and fight in almost 75% of the world's armed conflicts (Singer 2008). It's evident that child soldiers have been involved in the most protracted and deadly conflicts in the modern age, such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sri Lanka (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2006). The most remarkable modern uses of child soldiers might be the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. At that time, child soldiers were sent to clear paths through minefields and overwhelmed Iraqi defenses. Finally, around 100,000 Iranian boy soldiers were estimated to lose their lives in the battle field (Singer 2005a).

After a lion's share of children was killed and exploited, the international society gradually expressed great concerns over the protection of children vulnerable to war and armed conflict. For example, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 codified the laws of war and provided many new protections for children, but the issues of child soldiering were still unresolved. Until 1977, the Geneva Conventions Additional Protocols I–II prohibited children's involvement as combatants in national armed forces and other armed groups, while many human rights and humanitarian groups fervently campaigned against child soldiering in the world (International Committee of the Red Cross 1977; Rosen 2012).

Compared to the pre-WWII era, child soldiering could not be simply considered as “an isolated incident happening here or there”; it has been a component of a warfare strategy adopted by many countries around the world (Honwana 2008, p. 146). At present child soldiering presents the following three new features:

First, the main actors recruiting children have shifted from state armed forces to non-state armed groups. That is, most armed conflicts that involved child soldiering were not international conflicts or prevailing external national security threats, but the internal armed conflicts within the existing national boundaries (Denov 2010; United Nations 1998b). At present, almost no national army regularly and systematically recruits children into ranks (Gates 2011; Rosen 2012). Unfortunately, Myanmar is an exception.

Second, children become more vulnerable in armed conflicts, because the differences between civilians and combatants have become more blurred. In the contemporary armed conflicts, civilian populations become the primary targets. During the WWI, civilians accounted for some 5% of casualties. In the WWII, that figure rose to 48%. In the 1990s, up to 90% of conflict casualties around the world were civilians, with a major proportion and increasing number of the casualties being children (United Nations 1998b). There were more than 2 million children have died as a result of involvement in armed conflicts occurred between 1985 and 1995 (Hick 2001, p. 111).

Third, more and more children are involved in low-intensity armed conflicts. This is in “a sharp contrast to the past where they were almost never the central cadre of the fighting forces,” and children have been recognized as a significant part of armed forces and groups (Timothy 2002, p. 31; Wagnsson et al. 2010, p. 10). For example, 80% of the conflicts where children have been present in 60% of the non-state armed forces in the world (77 of 129) use child soldiers (Singer 2010, p. 159). In addition, Children have become the perpetrators of violence (United Nations 1996b). For instance, the first American soldier to die under hostile fire in Afghanistan, Sgt Nathan Ross Chapman, was killed in an ambush by a 14-year-old child soldier (Schofield 2010). It could not exclude the possibility that some of the atrocities carried out against children might be committed by child soldiers.

On 26 August 1996, child soldiering was finally appreciated in the agenda of international and humanitarian affairs. The then-United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali, presented a milestone report to the UN General Assembly’s 51st Session, which was the first major and multi-country study on the impact of war on children (Rosen 2012, p. 12; Machel 1996). Since then, the UN Security Council did achieve lots of progresses in managing child soldiering, and the international society began the studies of the armed conflicts’ negative impacts on children (United Nations 1996a). On 12 February 2002, the entry into force of the Optional Protocol is another milestone in strengthening the protection of children affected by armed conflict and helping to put an end to child soldiering (Singer 2005b). The most essential achievement should be the establishment of a global monitoring and reporting mechanism in 2005, which provides periodic reminders of the negative consequences of child soldiering around the world. In following years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on child soldiering, but few researchers addressed child soldiering in Myanmar, let alone that on the Myanmar–China border.

Actually, the contexts of child soldiering are diverse in geographical locations, though there are some similarities in children’s involvement in armed conflicts, (Dowdney 2006, p. 65). One of the early illustrations of child soldiers in Myanmar is a child soldier called “Doo Gler,” who witnessed the killing of his parents and sisters by the *Tatmadaw Kyi* soldiers, later he joined the Karen National Union (KNU) in the mid-1980s. When Doo Gler was of age 16 years, he was killed in a battle fought between the *Tatmadaw Kyi* and the KNU in 1992 (Buzzi 2007).

In the case of Myanmar, we could find that “the earlier ideas about children have not vanished in human society and culture” (Rosen 2005, p. 8). At present, Myanmar is still believed to have more child soldiers than any other countries in the world (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2002; Human Rights Watch 2003). It is reported that the *Tatmadaw Kyi* (Myanmar Army) recruited 70,000 or more child soldiers (Heppner et al. 2002). Besides this, many ethnic-based militias in Myanmar also got involved with child soldiering and are active in Myanmar border areas, such as the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), the Shan State Army-South (SSA South), the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) (Integrated Regional Information Networks 2012).

Though some works mentioned child soldiering in Myanmar (Rosen 2012; Wesells 2006), they do not offer in-depth discussions of this critical issue, not to mention child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border. Fortunately the United Nations system has been making efforts in investigating child soldiering in Myanmar. The brilliant UN publications are very inspirational to this book, such as the United Nations’ reports on children and armed conflict (United Nations 2012a, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2010, 2009, 2007, 2006, 2005), the annual reports of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (United Nations 2012b, 2011b), and the progress reports of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar (United Nations 2012c, 2011c).

Concerning the human rights and humanitarian organizations, they contributed some invaluable surveys and reports. For instance, in a report issued by Institute for Security and Development Policy in 2012, Selling and O’Hara focus on Myanmar’s main ethnic-based militias (e.g., the UWSA, the KIO, and the KNU) and discuss child soldiering of these ethnic-based militias briefly (Selling and O’Hara 2012).

In addition, Human Rights Watch, Child Soldiers International, and Human Rights Education Institute of Burma are also active in surveying child soldiering in Myanmar. Between February and July 2002, Human Rights Watch investigated the practice of child soldiering on the Myanmar–Thai border (Heppner et al. 2002). Between July and September 2007, Human Rights Watch mainly focused on the situation of child soldiering on the Myanmar–Thai border through interviews with some child soldiers (Heppner et al. 2007). In January 2013, Child Soldiers International examined the practice of child soldiering in some armed forces and groups, including the *Tatmadaw Kyi*, the Border Guard Forces, and two ethnic-based militias (Child Soldiers International 2013). Moreover, a report entitled *Forgotten Future: Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Burma*, issued by Human Rights Education Institute of Burma, also provides important clues for this book (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008).

It’s worth noting that a non-governmental organization (NGO) called “Images Asia” focused on child soldiering on the Thai–Myanmar border from October 1995 to January 1996 and conducted interviews with the commanding officers, teachers, medical workers, and other adults who were related to child soldiers (Images Asia 1996). From January 2008 to September 2008, another NGO called “YOMA 3 News” investigated and reported on the forcible recruitment of children and their deployment in the military operations by the *Tatmadaw Kyi* (YOMA 3 News Service 2009).

In short, the existing literature does give valuable references to this book. However, it should be pointed out that child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border does not receive equal attention in the academia and with policy makers, let alone a systematic research in this field, because the existing literature of child soldiering mainly focuses on the Myanmar–Thai border, with little concern about the dynamic of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border. Moreover, the published works ignored the potential roles of China and the private sector in reducing child soldiering.

Now, it could be asserted that the Myanmar–China border has been one of the worst-hit border areas of child soldiering in the world. It is noteworthy that a large

proportion of the child soldiers are children from the cross-border ethnic groups, HIV/AIDS orphans, or displaced children on the Myanmar–China border. Sooner or later, the stability and security of both Myanmar and China will feel critical pressures from child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border. However, there is no comprehensive research on this potential security crisis.

As a potential security crisis, child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border should be given more attention. If the evolution and negative impacts of child soldiering are not addressed until they develop into security crisis in the future, the consequences will be disastrous.

In fact, there are many questions about child soldiering need to be answered. For example, what are the current situation and negative consequences of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border? What are the structural factors of child soldiering? How to evaluate the relationships between child soldiers and their recruiters? Why other children are not recruited? Is there any optimal solution for governing child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border? If not, what is the most proper second best solution? What kinds of countermeasures should the stakeholders take? I hope this work will bring forward fresh insights pertaining to these questions. I also hope a Chinese perspective, will be of interest to most readers, because readers will be enlightened through listening to the arguments from both West and East, and avoid being implied that what is true of one subgroup of child soldiers is also true of other subgroups (Wessells 2006).

This book gives an account of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border improves our knowledge about child soldiering in this region, and provides new perspectives with respect to governing child soldiering in the coming future. In short, this book aims at making moderate contributions to the literature of child soldiering in the following four aspects:

First, this book conducts four comparisons of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border: first of all, comparison across time, that is, how different is current situation of child soldiering from the past? Second, comparisons between different areas, that is, how are the differences and similarities between the *Tatmadaw Kyi* and the ethnic-based militias? Third, comparison between child soldiers and other groups of venerable children, that is, why some children are involved in armed conflicts while others are not recruited? Fourth, confirm lessons learned from other countries, and apply them to manage child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border.

Second, this book highly addresses the structural factors of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border, and explore the relationships between child soldiers and their recruiters through scenario analysis.

Third, this book introduces a new approach of “limited statehood” into the studies of child soldiering. Through the approach of “limited statehood”, it examines the extent to which Myanmar’s limited statehood in governing child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border. Then this book evaluates the negative factors for the presence of an optimal solution, from the premise that Myanmar has limited statehood in governing child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border.

Fourth, due to the absence of any optimal solution for governing child soldiering, this book introduces the approach of “public–private partnership” into the security

governance of child soldiering, as a second best solution in the foreseeable future. According to the approach of “public–private partnership”, this book analyzes the possible countermeasures to govern child soldiering.

I hope that this book might be useful for the academia, students, policy makers and humanitarian activists from the fields of international relations, international security, human rights and public administration. Moreover, anyone who concerns child soldiering would also be interested in reading this book.

This book is divided into nine chapters. Chapters 1–2 illustrate the key purposes, outline of chapters and methodology of this book.

Chapter 3 overviews the current situation of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border, notes the new features of child soldiering, and highlights the negative consequence of child soldiering on Myanmar–China border.

In the following pages (Chapters 4–6), this book demonstrates that Myanmar has limited statehood in governing child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border. Chapter 4 explores the structural factors of child soldiering. Chapters 5 and 6 present comparisons between child soldiers and the other groups of children that are not recruited by the armed forces or groups.

Chapter 7 explores why there is no optimal solution for reducing child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border, and introduces the approach of “transnational public–private partnership” into governance of child soldiering, as a proper second best solution in the context that Myanmar has limited statehood in governing child soldiering and other stakeholders could not resolve this issues individually. Then, following the logic of public–private partnership, Chapter 8 suggests a series of proper countermeasures for all the stakeholders in governing child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border.

Finally, Chapter 9 remarks the main findings and throws up several questions in need of further research.

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Chapter 2

Research Methodology

Abstract This chapter describes the research approaches, methods, and data resources adopted by this book, and notes the geographic scope, time scope, and the main armed forces and armed groups in discussion.

Keywords Transnational public–private partnership · Limited statehood · Research methodology · Case analysis · Comparative analysis · Scenario analysis

2.1 Research Approach

There are not only differences between child soldiers in different army forces or groups but also variances from region to region (Images Asia 1996). Therefore, there should be no universal approach for governing child soldiering, but context-sensitive approaches applicable for child soldiering in different contexts.

In the field of international studies, the debate between the cosmopolitan and communitarian mainly focuses on whether individuals or states should be the subject of justice and moral consideration in normative international relations theory (Cochran 1999, p. 14). In fact, each has its strong points and weak points. I do agree with Linklater’s opinion that it might be “unwise to draw a sharp distinction between communitarianism and cosmopolitanism” (Linklater 1998, p. 55). With regard to the context-sensitive nature of child soldiering, I prefer the more synergetic approaches overcoming the divide between the cosmopolitan and communitarian.

2.1.1 Limited Statehood

The approach of “limited statehood” is introduced, because it is more convincing in interpreting what challenges facing the stakeholders, examining whether there is an optimal solution and finding a more proper solution in governing child soldiering on the Myanmar-China border. “Limited statehood” means central government is unable to implement and enforce rules in certain parts (or part) in its territory (Risse 2012). At present, it is still highly questionable whether the most powerful states are able to control their borders. In fact, only few states “have ever enjoyed the privilege to attain complete control and autonomy over their internal and external

environments” (Börzel and Risse 2005, p. 207). Following the logic of “limited statehood,” a failing state (or failed state) should be regarded as a specific case of “limited statehood”. In other words, there are many areas of “limited statehood”, where the states “lack the capacity to implement and enforce central decision and/or a monopoly on the use of force” (Risse 2012, p. 699). The governance of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border serves as a good example.

For better responding the limited statehood within Myanmar, it’s necessary for a proper solution to seek alternative partners outside Myanmar. In such a case, a non-hierarchical governance beyond the nation-state is of utmost importance, which could combine both public and private sectors to govern the area of “limited statehood”, such as child soldiering.

2.1.2 Transnational Public–Private Partnership

Given “limited statehood” on the Myanmar–China border, any all the stakeholders could not govern child soldiering individually and no optimal solution is available. Therefore, it’s necessary to introduce the approach of transnational public–private partnership (PPP) and examine whether it could be a “second best” solution in governing child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border.

Transnational PPP means “continuous and relatively institutionalized transboundary interactions between public and private actors that formally strive for the provision of collective goods, whereas private actors can be for-profit and/or civil society organizations” (Schäferhoff et al. 2009). A proper transnational PPP should be characterized by the following elements: first, non-hierarchical relationships among all and only relevant partners (e.g., civil society organizations, international NGOs, local NGOs and transnational corporations); second, priority given to disadvantaged groups; third, risk allocation between the public and private sectors; fourth, trust building among the partners.

It is worth noting that this book does not regard private military and/or security companies as potential partners in transnational PPP, because security outsourcing (i.e., state’s shifting of the monopoly on use of force to private actors) does not always give priority to disadvantaged groups. In addition, the relationship between states and private military and/or security companies has fallen outside the form of a non-hierarchical relationship, but a kind of relationship between employer and employee.

2.2 Research Method

This book adopts the following three methods: first, it uses comparative analysis to examine child soldiering conducted by the *Tatmadaw Kyi* and the ethnic-based militias, and explore the situations of child soldiers and other groups of vulnerable children. In addition, from a comparative perspective, this book also evaluates the new features of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border, and checks the

availability of the lessons learned from other countries. Second, case analysis is adopted to address child soldiering in the Kachin and Shan States. Third, scenario analysis is introduced to explain the relationships between child soldiers and the armed forces or groups, in order to reflect the socioeconomic situations inherent to the different kinds of child soldiers and their different agencies.

2.3 Research Sources

Myanmar is the most conflict-ridden country in Southeast Asia (Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research 2011). At the time of writing, low-intensity armed conflicts still occur in the Kachin and Shan States. As a result, an in-depth survey is hampered by access limitations to areas of conflicts (United Nations 2007). It is very challenging to get access to the Kachin and Shan States, which are adjacent to the Myanmar–China border. In general, without an official permission to interview child soldiers in *Tatmadaw Kyi*, no interviews could be conducted within Myanmar’s territory (Emmons et al. 2002). Therefore, very limited systematic cross-border data of child soldiering have been collected, and there are also no comprehensive databases which keep track of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border (Gates 2011).

In addition, the researchers could not conduct long-term investigations for a variety of reasons. For example, researchers’ security could not be guaranteed in the conflict areas, so they could not spend considerable time in the Kachin and Shan States, let alone establish long-term relationships and mutual trust with the targeted communities and peoples. However, there are few exceptions of investigating the few inaccessible areas on the Myanmar–China border. From 4 to 6 February 2008, the researchers of Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB) investigated Laiza, a part of Momawk Township in Kachin State, which is located in the Myanmar–China border (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008). In December 2011, a United Nations (UN) mission visited the inaccessible areas along the Myanmar–China border where displacement was recorded (United Nations 2012).

The problems mentioned above would not cause researchers to abandon their research. For making up the deficiencies and reflecting the local voices from the Myanmar–China border and drawing references from the stakeholders, this book uses the following research sources:

First, the Western monographs, academic articles, working papers, and reports on child soldiering, which not only expand the references and area of knowledge, but also provide invaluable information of child soldiering.

Second, the surveys and reports written by the Myanmar scholars, local NGOs, and international NGOs (e.g., Human Rights Watch, Save the Children, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers), which update the conditions of child soldiering in Myanmar, provide important clues and opinions for governing child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border.

Third, the UN-led monitoring and reporting mechanism, which significantly increased available data on the practice of child soldiering (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2008). At the same time, the other units under the UN System also provide very useful resources, such as UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, UN Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and UN Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict.

Last but not least, the newspapers and media in Myanmar provide lots of useful information and clues, such as the *Shan Herald Agency for News*, *Mizzima News*, the *Irrawaddy Magazine*, and the *New Light of Myanmar*.

2.4 Research Scope

2.4.1 Geographic Scope

This book focuses on two areas on the Myanmar–China border: Kachin and Shan States of Myanmar (see Fig. 2.1), which are inhabited by many ethnic groups, most prominently the Kachin, Palaung, Shan, and Wa. Although population estimates vary widely, there are perhaps 500,000 Wa, 800,000 Palaung, 1.2 million Kachin, and some 6 million Shan people living in these regions (Stover et al. 2007). More importantly, the two states are the worst-hit states of child soldiering in Myanmar, where the armed forces and groups that recruit children are persistently active.

2.4.2 Time Scope

The time scope of this book is from 1947 to the present. This book mainly focuses on the events occurred in the past two decades. Since most scholars engaging in Myanmar studies have adopted the convention of dividing Myanmar's history into historical specific periods, that is, Myanmar's Independence in 1948, General Ne Win's coup in 1962, and the advent of a new military regime in 1988, which have been seen as critical turning points in Myanmar's history (Selth 2010), this book follows this convention.

2.4.3 Armed Forces and Armed Groups in Discussion

There are many militias on the Myanmar–China border. For instance, there were 42 different militias in Shan State alone (*Shan Herald Agency for News* 2003). Due to space limitations, this book could not present the details of all the ethnic-based militias on the Myanmar–China border. In addition, many of militias have suffered from



Fig. 2.1 Myanmar administrative divisions. (Source: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/cia-maps-publications/map-downloads/burma_admin.jpg. Accessed 21 May 2013)

splits and factional infighting, this often results in the formation of breakaway groups with similar names (Kramer 2012). Therefore, this book mainly focuses on the biggest armed forces and groups on the Myanmar–China border, that is, the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), and the *Tatmadaw Kyi* (including its Border Guard Force deployed in Kachin and Shan States), which could play more important roles in governing child soldiering.

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Chapter 3

Child Soldiering on Myanmar–China Border

Abstract This chapter begins by describing the current situation and new features of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border, then addresses the main armed forces and groups involved in child soldiering, and analyzes the negative consequences of child soldiering.

Keywords *Tatmadaw Kyi* • United Wa State Army • Kachin Independence Army • Negative consequences of child soldiering • Current situation of child soldiering

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section 3.1 confirms the definition of child soldiering and highlights that child soldiering is not a dichotomy between voluntary and coerced recruitment. Section 3.2 reviews the current situation of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border, including the main actors, process and new features of child soldiering. The last section explores the negative consequences of child soldiering.

3.1 Definition of Child Soldiering

Before I discuss child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border, the definition of child soldiering should be confirmed. In the literature of child soldiering, it seems there has been a dichotomy between voluntary and coerced recruitment in the definition of child soldiering (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2002, 2004, 2008; Abbott 2000; Lee 2009).

In the view of some scholars, child soldiering is defined as “the recruitment or participation of an individual or individuals under the age of 18 into an armed force or an armed group” (Network for Human Rights Documentation-Burma 2008). Some scholars consider that voluntary recruitment does exist. As Schmidt argues, voluntary recruitment refers to cases where children take the initiative of joining armed groups themselves, without being under immediate physical threat (Schmidt 2007). In the opinion of Singer, “children, particularly those orphaned or disconnected from civil society, may volunteer to join any group if they believe that this is the only way to guarantee regular meals, clothing, or medical attention” (Singer 2005a, p.62). In the opinions of Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, voluntary participation

primarily involves a child's motives driven by personal experiences or circumstances, such as physical or structural violence, peer pressure, or poverty (Cohn et al. 1994).

Concerning the existence of voluntary recruitment in child soldiering, some scholars express the opposite opinions. For instance, as Schauer and Elbert suggest, children's choices to join and remain in armed groups cannot be considered "voluntary" (Schauer and Elbert 2010). In the view of White, child soldiering is never truly voluntary. Even children who have "freely" chosen to join armed groups or armed forces may ultimately be forced or coerced into committing violence or staying in ranks against their will (White 2010). Moreover, some scholars consider that, voluntary recruitment is often coupled with hidden forms of coercion (Tiefenbrun 2008). Given that they may lack the ability to judge their situation correctly, and that while they may not be forcibly recruited in a physical way, but the structural or emotional factors may force them to volunteer (Schmidt 2007). In short, the line between voluntary and coerced participation is fluid and uncertain. As an outsider especially, it is hard to judge whether this or that child is really capable of "volunteering" in the way we would expect of an adult (Cohn et al. 1994). Bjørkhaug tries to find a middle way between voluntary and coerced recruitment. As Bjørkhaug argues, child soldiering is "voluntarily forced" to some extent, which refers to the group of children who had few options or choices in the recruitment process. However, Bjørkhaug also confesses that "voluntarily forced" is more closer to coerced recruitment (Bjørkhaug 2010).

In my opinion, truly "voluntary" should meet several preliminary conditions, which are often ignored. In the Optional protocols, Article 3 (3) clearly states the preliminary conditions of voluntary recruitment:

- a. *Such recruitment is genuinely voluntary;*
- b. *Such recruitment is done with the informed consent of the person's parents or legal guardians;*
- c. *Such persons are fully informed of the duties involved in such military service;*
- d. *Such persons provide reliable proof of age prior to acceptance into national military service.* (United Nations 2001)

In fact, the preliminary conditions mentioned above are not tenable to a large extent. For example, "genuinely voluntary" in Article 3 (3) is hard to measure. In addition, "the informed consent of the person's parents or legal guardians" or "provide(s) reliable proof of age prior to acceptance into national military service" is not applicable to orphaned children, displaced children or other children without identify certificates. In other words, it is hard to measure whether the relevant preliminary conditions of truly "voluntary" are met or not.

To sum up, there is no sharp dichotomy between voluntary and coerced recruitment, but overlaps between the two different scenarios. So the definition of child soldiering should refer to a process of associating any person below 18 years of age with any armed force or group which contains recruitment, training and deployment.

3.2 Historical Context of Child Soldiering in Myanmar

For gaining a more comprehensive insight into the current situation and new features of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border, it is essential to understand the context in which the armed conflicts last so many years in Myanmar. Child soldiering is a by-product of the long-lasting ethnic conflicts since the independence in 1948. There are two forms of conflict in Myanmar. One is conflict over what the nature of the state of Myanmar is, and the other is conflict over how Myanmar is governed (Kramer 2009). In the words of Sakhong, the rationale behind armed conflicts could be interpreted as “constitutional crisis” and “ideological confrontation” (Sakhong 2012).

3.2.1 *Inception of Armed Conflicts: 1947–1962*

Historically, the Burman people is the largest ethnic group inhabiting the central areas of Myanmar, with other major minority groups such as the Kachin and Shan peoples living along the Myanmar–China border (Fink 2001; Tan 2007). It is estimated that the ethnic minorities constitute a third of the 55 million population (Tan 2007). Moreover, there are further complications due to differences in religion, geography, and historical experiences.

In 1885, Myanmar was colonized by the British through a series of military campaigns. At that time, British colonial solution was to carve out a Burman core and a patchwork periphery of minority groups (Holliday 2011). After World War II, the Burmese nationalists were insistent on independence and the colonial government finally relented (Fink 2001). Britain granted independence in early 1948 on the condition that the ethnic minorities (e.g., Wa and Kachin) inhabited in the border areas could freely choose whether to join Myanmar (Zaw and Win 2007).

In March 1946, the then-Prime Minister U Saw held the first Panglong Conference, met with representatives of the Chin, Kachin, Karen and Shan to discuss the status of the border areas in the future. The second Panglong Conference was held in February 1947, and the *Panglong Agreement* was signed by Aung San and the representatives of the Chin, Kachin, and Shan, who agreed to the formation of a Union of Burma in return for promises of full autonomy in internal administration and an equal share in the country’s wealth (Seekins 2006). However, the leaders of the Mon, Pao, and Rakhine were not included in most discussions of this conference (Smith 2007).

Based on the Panglong Agreement, the *1947 Constitution of the Union of Burma* was drafted and came into force, which was regarded as the root cause of “constitutional crisis” in the following years. According to Chapter X, Articles 201–206 of the constitution, the “right of secession” from the Union after 10 years of independence was guaranteed to all ethnic nationalities that formed member states of the Union, which was adopted as one of the founding principles of the country (Sakhong 2012). Equally inconsistent, the designation of Karen State was left to be decided after independence; the Chin people received only a special division,

whereas the Kokang, Mon, Palaung, Pao, Rakhine, and Wa peoples were granted no ethno-political recognition at all (Smith 2007).

After Aung San was assassinated in 1947, U Nu came into power. Since then, the politics shifted to a retro-historical direction, which is characterized by U Nu's redrafting the *1947 Constitution of the Union of Burma* (Sakhong 2012). This shift was nothing more than aggravating the “constitutional crisis”:

They combined the power of the Burman/Myanmar ethnic national state with sovereign authority of the whole Union of Burma. Thus, while one ethnic group, the Burman/ Myanmar, controlled the sovereign power of the Union, that is, legislative, judiciary, and administrative powers of the Union of Burma; the rest of the ethnic nationalities who formed their own respective ethnic national states became almost like “vassal states” of the ethnic Burman or Myanmar. (Sakhong 2012)

Misfortune seldom comes alone. A civil war between some of the ethnic groups and Burman-led central government broke out shortly after independence in 1948. The Karen National Defense Organization (later Karen National Union) launched an insurgency in late 1948, which was documented as the prelude to the prolonged armed conflicts in Myanmar.

In 1961, U Nu government (1948–1962) opted for cultural and religious assimilation through promulgating Buddhism as the national religion (Sakhong 2012), which worsened ideological confrontation between Burman nationalism and ethnic groups. Some ethnic-based militias fought against the central government, in order to gain their political autonomy and self-determination. The most serious case was the Kachin Independence Army (Sakhong 2012), which is known as KIA.

3.2.2 *Intensified Period: 1962–1988*

In 1962, U Nu government was overthrown by a coup led by General Ne Win. During Ne Win's era (1962–1988), “ideological confrontation” and “constitutional crisis” overlapped and became more acute. On one hand, Ne Win government imposed Burmese language as the national language, as a means of creating a homogeneous unitary state, which finally reached its peak when the 1974 Constitution was promulgated. Although the ethnic languages were still allowed to be used for the communication purpose between the central government and ethnic states, no mechanisms or institutions were provided to preserve, protect, and promote ethnic languages in accordance with Article 198 of the 1974 Constitution (Sakhong 2012).

On the other hand, the Ne Win government launched a military campaign directed by the “four-cut strategy” (*Phyet-Lay-Phyet*) in 1968 (Sakhong 2012), that is, cutting food supply to insurgents; cutting financial links between villagers and insurgents; cutting intelligence sources of insurgents; and promoting the people fighting with insurgents, particularly encircling insurgents (Aung 2009).

It is reported that the *Tatmadaw Kyi* conducted brutal counterinsurgency campaigns in several ethnic states bordering Thailand, Laos, and China, which aimed to force villagers to move to government-controlled settlements. For flushing out the insurgent militias, thousands of villages across Myanmar were burned down and

villagers' food stocks and other assets were looted or destroyed (Terry 2011; International Crisis Group 2011; Smith 2007). The war is a particularly bitter one with no prisoners being taken on either side. As a result, the army has been unsuccessful in winning the hearts and minds of the civilians in the minority areas to the government cause (Silverstein 1986). The ethnic-based militias established sanctuaries on the Chinese and Thai sides of Myanmar's border, in which the militias could "retreat and recuperate before renewing their hostilities against the government" (Kin 1981, p. 111). The bloody confrontation lasted until September 1988, when a new military regime, the State Law and Order Restoration Council, took the power of Myanmar.

3.2.3 *Transitional Period 1988–Present*

Since 1988, the Myanmar government gradually established "three-pronged strategy" toward the ethnic-based militias, which are still implemented today. First of all, the Myanmar government use military power to gain control of areas under the ethnic-based militias' control; second, the Myanmar government is contented with semi-control in areas where a fair amount of autonomy has been given to organizations which would like to abandon insurgency; and to invest in infrastructure and provide a better livelihood for the people in order to consolidate the government's rule (Siemers 1993).

The most successful achievement of the "three-pronged strategy" should be the Myanmar government's signing cease-fire agreements with most of the ethnic-based militias in the 1990s, which enabled the militias "to pursue economic activities and to control territory" (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2011). Though these cease-fire agreements did relax the tensions for about two decades, they did not resolve "ideological confrontation" and "constitutional crisis", which are be essential premises of a sustainable peace agreement.

In April 2009, the Myanmar government promoted the "three-pronged strategy" in further, and issued a new instruction, which ordered the cease-fire militias to transform into Border Guard Forces (BGFs) under the partial command of the *Tatmadaw*. It said that each Battalion of Border Guard Forces should be made up of 326 personnel (International Crisis Group 2011).

Frankly speaking, this instruction obtain some results. Many ethnic-based militias handed over their weapons to the government, including New Democratic Army-Kachin (NDA-K), Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Front (KNPLF), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDA), Lahu Militia group, Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), Kachin Defense Army (KDA), battalions from Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) and Shan State Army-South (SSA-S), as well as other splinter branches from the other ethnic-based militias (Myanmar Peace Monitor 2013).

However, most of the large ethnic-based militias refused to join the BGF, including the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the SSA-N and the New Mon State Party (NMSP) (Transnational Institute 2011;

Armengol 2012). After several extensions of the deadline passed, the government announced all cease-fires “null and void” in September 2010. This carried a foreshadowing of the armed conflicts in the following days.

On March 30, 2011, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) formally dissolved itself and transferred power to the new government, headed by President Thein Sein, the prime minister for the SPDC (Human Rights Watch 2013). There is no reliable evidence that Thein Sein government would change the “three-pronged strategy” toward the ethnic-based militias in the coming future. For example, the *Tatmadaw* still maintain independence to large extent. For instance, 25% of legislative seats reserved for military appointees were filled by mostly low-ranking officers (majors and captains), which helps ensure that the military remains cohesive and compliant with the wishes of military superiors (International Crisis Group 2011). Soon after Thein Sein took office, the tensions with the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the SSA-N erupted into armed conflicts (International Crisis Group 2011). In March 2011, the *Tatmadaw Kyi* attacked the SSA-N, breaking a cease-fire reached in 1989, as the Shan army resisted pressure to demobilize and form BGFs (Human Rights Watch 2012).

Moreover, the ethnic-based militias’ lack of trust of the Myanmar government and the *Tatmadaw Kyi* (Martin 2012). At the same time, Thein Sein government did not resolve “ideological confrontation” and “constitutional crisis” thoroughly, but made great efforts to seek military solutions, using either force or cease-fire agreements (International Crisis Group 2011).

3.3 Current Situation of Child Soldiering

It is believed that child soldiers comprise a lion’s share of the armed forces and groups in Myanmar (Images Asia 1996). According to the interview-based research conducted by Human Rights Watch, 20% or more of its active duty soldiers in Myanmar might be children under the age of 18 years (Hangzo 2009). The *Tatmadaw Kyi* (Myanmar Army) has 70,000 or more child soldiers, and the UWSA probably has the most number of child soldiers among the ethnic-based militias, with possibly as many as 2,000 soldiers under 18 years, 600–800 of whom are under 15 (Heppner et al. 2002).

The *Tatmadaw Kyi* (including BGFs) and some ethnic-based militias (i.e., the KIA, SSA-S and UWSA), which are active on the Myanmar–China border have been listed in the annual reports prepared by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict. They are listed as the parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children, and/or commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflicts (United Nations 2011). In contrast with the initial stage of armed conflicts in 1948, both *Tatmadaw Kyi* and the ethnic-based militias have presented two new features in child soldiering. First, both parties have established special processes for training and deployment; second, there has been an evident gap between the commitments made to govern child soldiering and actual practices of recruiting children.

3.3.1 Main Armed Forces and Groups Recruiting Child Soldiers

3.3.1.1 *Tatmadaw Kyi*

The *Tatmadaw Kyi* refers to Myanmar Army, which is “an infantry-based force in keeping with its civil order and counter-insurgency priorities” (Child Soldiers International 2013). Officially, the *Tatmadaw Kyi* requires all recruits to be 18 years old, but actually it has been listed in the UN Security Council’s reports on children and armed conflict, as a party that recruits children (United Nations 2003; United Nations 2005; United Nations 2006; United Nations 2007).

There might be 70,000 or more child soldiers in the *Tatmadaw Kyi*, with several thousand child soldiers under 15 years of age (Heppner and Becker 2002). Actually, the *Tatmadaw Kyi* has made efforts to govern child soldiering. For instance, in 2011, a new military instruction continued to be issued on the prevention of underage recruitment (United Nations 2012). In 2011, 51 soldiers of the *Tatmadaw* had their pay and allowances cut, received a serious reprimand, or were demoted for recruitment and use of children (United Nations 2012).

Despite the recent progress, the situation is not improving as quickly as it should. Recruitment of children by the *Tatmadaw Kyi* and its BGFs is ongoing. For example, the Putao, Kawng Kahtawng village-based No. 46 Infantry Battalion has demanded that 200 students from Putao State High School be sent over to join *Tatmadaw Kyi*. The Munglang Shidee village-based No. 138 Infantry Battalion has asked for 100 students from Dukdang State High School and 30 students from a joint Dukdang State High School in Lungsha Yang village. In addition, the Machyangbaw town-based No. 137 Infantry Battalion wants 30 students from Machyangbaw State High School (The Kachin News Group 2007). Most of the underage recruits released by the *Tatmadaw Kyi* stated that their recruiter had not asked their age or had falsified age documentation for presentation at the recruitment centers (United Nations 2012). In June 2012, there is a gratifying progress that the Myanmar government signed a Joint Action Plan with the UN, and accepted that children should not be charged with desertion and should be released from prison (Child Soldiers International 2013). However, the *Tatmadaw Kyi* has obstructed the UN’s efforts to verify the practice of child soldiering. In 2012, it has refused UN personnel access to military bases for four times, which violated the signed action plan (Becker 2013). Concerning the BGFs under the command of the *Tatmadaw Kyi*, there is no program to verify the presence of children in their ranks, let alone plans to demobilize and rehabilitate them (Child Soldiers International 2013). Moreover, UN personnel’s access to the Border Guard Forces is denied (Becker 2013).

3.3.1.2 United Wa State Army

The United Wa State Army (UWSA) was established in November 1989, which was one of the first ethnic-based militias signing cease-fire agreements with the Myanmar government (Seekins 2006). The UWSA controls Shan State Region Special Region

2, updated into Wa Self-Administered Division in 2010 (*The New Light of Myanmar* 2010), which borders Pu'er City and Lin Cang City of Yunnan Province in China, with its headquarters located at Panghsang, a Myanmar–China border town (Seekins 2006). Due to the underdevelopment of Wa literacy and dominance of Chinese culture and business networks, the UWSA uses Chinese as the language of administration and commerce (South 2008).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the UWSA was reported as the most powerful ethnic-based militia in Myanmar, with a strength of 20,000 soldiers (Seekins 2006). In 2007, the UWSA is estimated to have a strength of 30,000–40,000 soldiers (United Nations 2007a). Concerning the practice of child soldiering, the UWSA agreed to further discussions to engage in an action plan to separate and reintegrate children associated with their forces (United Nations 2007b). In addition, the authorities of the UWSA asserted that they had not recruited children since signing the cease-fire agreement with the Myanmar government (United Nations 2007a).

According to the surveys of the United Nations, there is considerable discrepancy between the UWSA's statement and the facts. It was reported that the UWSA's primary school curriculum includes pre-military training in the controlled area of the UWSA. At the age of 12, children could be recruited by the UWSA and work in non-combatant positions; at the age of 15, children could join the UWSA as combatants (United Nations 2007a). Moreover, the eyewitness reports to the UN country task force in Myanmar indicated that many uniformed children, who were clearly under the age of 18, were present in the UWSA; this was proved by the United Nations Children's Fund in January 2008. Some children were regularly seen riding on the UWSA's trucks or presented in the UWSA's checkpoints (United Nations 2009).

As the armed conflicts escalated in Shan State in 2011, some children were reportedly present in the ranks of the UWSA (United Nations 2012). In some villages in the South of Shan State Region Special Region 2, the villages were requested to provide three to four children on a yearly basis. In the selected villages, households were selected on a rotational basis (United Nations 2009). If a household did not have a boy to meet the recruitment quota, the UWSA's authorities would request girls into ranks. Most of the underage recruits are aged 10 and above, live in training camps, and receive education there by the UWSA (United Nations 2009).

Obviously, the UWSA seems “respond to one motive but explain and justify their behavior with respect to another” (Lebow 2008, p. 96). First, the relations between the UWSA and the Myanmar government are in a subtle situation, due to the UWSA's refusing the proposal of BGFs advanced by the *Tatmadaw Kyi*. Second, the *Tatmadaw Kyi* has been combated and has suppressed the other ethnic-based militias on the Myanmar–China border, such as KIO. Though the *Tatmadaw Kyi* is still maintaining peaceful relationship with UWSA, it still could not exclude the possibility that it's a trick to gain time. Therefore, the UWSA still maintains a formidable force of 20,000 soldiers (Selling et al. 2012). According to the estimation of South (2008), the UWSA had a strong interest in maintaining its armed forces,

which in 2007 stood at an estimate of 20,000–25,000 men, plus as many as 50,000 reserves (South 2008).

3.3.1.3 Kachin Independent Army

Initially, Kachins stood by the promises set forth in the *Panglong Agreement* in exchange for ethnic autonomy and power sharing (*Panglong Agreement 1947*). Unfortunately, ten years after signing the *Panglong Agreement*, the Kachins expressed a desire to secede it, but was rejected by the Myanmar government. In response, a group of World War II veterans established the KIA in February 1961 near Lashio. Following U Nu's decision to make Buddhism the official state religion, this resistance gained pace quickly among the Kachins, a majority of whom are Christians (Selling et al. 2012; Heppner et al. 2002).

The KIA is one of the best-organized, ethnic-based militias in the border area, and it had approximately 8,000 members (Selling et al. 2012). The controlled areas of the KIA border Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture, Bao Shan City, and Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province of China. The KIA's controlled areas encompass much of Central and Eastern Kachin State and a portion of Northern Shan State, as much as 40,000 km² (Seekins 2006). In addition, the KIA also controls a long stretch of the territory along the Myanmar–China border (Kramer 2009).

It is estimated that the KIA may have child soldiers between 500 and 1,000 (Heppner et al. 2002). According to the UN country task force in Myanmar, there was an increased recruitment by the KIA in 2011, as tensions mounted in Kachin State and Northern Shan State. Moreover, it was reported that children joined the KIA purportedly to avoid being used by the *Tatmadaw* as porters on the front line (United Nations 2012).

In the view of the KIA, it's a form of welfare to deploy vulnerable children into non-combat positions. The KIA insists to recruit such kind of children without outside involvement. (Heppner et al. 2007). A senior KIA general acknowledged the use of child soldiers in the KIA. He emphasized the KIA's commitment to end the practice, addressing that the KIA does not actively recruit children:

We do have some child soldiers, and we are trying to find solutions. They are coming for many reasons, so we need to settle it. We are preparing pamphlets about child rights and child soldiers to be taught in schools.... (Smith 2012)

There are reports of a “one child per family” recruitment policy by the KIA. Some families apparently accept the “contribution” of one child to the KIA as their obligation (United Nations 2007). A senior KIA officer told Human Rights Watch that the KIA and its political movement the KIO have no formal policy on child soldiers:

Frankly speaking, in the past the KIO was not aware of international regulations restricting child soldiers so we recruited children. In Kachin culture there are no special rights for children so they didn't know it was wrong to do so. But now since the world is saying that child soldier recruitment and forced labor are human rights violations we have come to

realize that it is not right to mobilize child soldiers. But we still have not decided on how to respond to the issue. (Heppner et al. 2007)

3.3.2 *Training of Child Soldiers*

There was little information about the formal military training institutions in Myanmar (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2004). Initially, the recruit camps were known as “*Ye Nyunt*” (Brave Sprouts) camps, most of which are located in the southern Shan State, and the majority of the underage recruits were street children, orphans, and children captured from the ethnic-based militias or captured from the ethnic villages (Heppner et al. 2002; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2001). Until 2000, the SPDC claimed that “*Ye Nyunt*” was terminated, and all the underage recruits were subsequently transferred to Nationalities Youth Development Training Schools (Heppner et al. 2002).

It was reported that the *Tatmadaw Kyi* processed the underage recruits through “*Su Saun Yay*” recruit camps, which was a network of recruit camps for orphans and other boys run by the *Tatmadaw Kyi* and trained new recruits until the *Tatmadaw Kyi*’s basic training schools were ready to receive them (Heppner et al. 2002; Heppner et al. 2007).

The length of the training depends on how urgently the manpower is requested (Dupuy and Peters 2010). As a United Nations’ report showed, a full formal recruitment process would take approximately 4.5 months (United Nations 2009). The recruits are required to undertake approximately 4.5 months of training before being sent to their duty station (Child Soldiers International 2013). The daily training consists of early morning exercises and running, mid-morning military marching, afternoon combat skills training and weapons work, and evening lectures and theory classes (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2006). As some former child soldiers describe, 300 or more recruits were squeezed into a large room with wooden floors (Heppner et al. 2007).

Though children are generally not psychologically or physically mature to cope with the demands of soldiering, in some cases, they were forced to do heavy physical work and were punished if they failed in their training exercises (Heppner et al. 2007; Network for Human Rights Documentation – Burma 2008). Moreover, the commanders in the armed forces and groups could exert significant control and influence over the children, including the information they receive (MacVeigh et al. 2007). In many cases, the underage recruits are deprived of contact with their families and friends (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2006). In addition, most underage recruits were allowed little or no contact with their families after entering the service (Images Asia 1996). As Aung Kyaw recalled, who was forcibly recruited to the UWSA at the age 12 and fled in September 2001:

I wasn't allowed to write to my family. I missed them and I cried. The others too. Some of the older ones ran away, and some of them were caught. They were put in jail with sentences of one year, three years or five years. (Heppner et al. 2002)

3.3.3 *Deployment of Child Soldiers*

Actually, there has been increasing literature of children's involvement with both armed forces and groups, due in part to the fact that weaponry became cheaper and lighter to carry (International Bureau for Children's Rights 2010). More than 90% of the armed conflicts in the 1990s involved only light weapons (Dupuy and Peters 2010). For example, assault rifles and other military firearms are often be light-weight and easy to use. For example, a 10-year-old child wielding an AK-47 could be deployed an effective fighting force (Stohl et al. 2007; Wessells 1999).

In Myanmar, the prevalent utilization of small arms is frequently presented as one of the important factors for deploying child soldiers. AK-47s, B-40 rocket launchers, and other small arms are smuggled into Myanmar across the Myanmar–Thai border (Wyler 2010). In addition, the UWSA had started a small arms production line for AK-47s (*Mizzima News* 2012).

If children had completed their training and already been assigned to a battalion, this would be more difficult to release them. Because it required a complicated formal discharge process, rather than simply a phone call by the authorities to the officer in charge of the recruitment or training center (Horsey 2011). Most child soldiers are told about their deployments shortly before their basic training is completed. If assigned to an artillery or air defense battalion, they are often return to the corresponding units. In the cases that they are recruited by infantry or light infantry, child soldiers would be sent to wherever the man power need is most critical (Heppner et al. 2007). In some battalions, the officers would keep the youngest soldiers at the headquarters until they grow older. As Myo Aung described, who served a battalion headquarters' clerk in the period of 2004–2005:

Because I was young (age 11) I had to stay with the battalion commander as a sniper and bodyguard. I did this for one year. Then I did communications training, radio operator. (Heppner et al. 2007)

In the battle field, child soldiers are deployed for a variety of tactical purposes, such as detonating explosives, gathering intelligence, and carrying weapons and supplies (Rogers 2009). Sometimes, they are deployed as cannon fodder to draw the fire of their adversaries, and sometimes in human-wave attack tactics (Images Asia 1996). For the officers, deploying children in battle can induce difficult moral dilemmas for even the most hardened veteran soldiers in the opposite side (Tynes 2011).

In most cases, child soldiers do not realize beforehand that recruitment often means “once in, never out” and that their choice is irrevocable (Dupuy and Peters 2010).

When the child soldiers deserted the armed forces or groups, they would often be punished severely (Heppner 2007; Gates 2011). They will usually be court-

martialed and sent to a civilian or military prison (Horsey 2011). According to the interviews with former child soldiers who had fled from the *Tatmadaw Kyi*, harsh disciplinary actions were taken by the commanders, for instance, beatings, verbal abuse, and harsh punishments were frequently used (Child Soldiers International 2013; Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2006). The child soldiers often have few options: if they fled to their homes, they will face high risk of being arrested as deserters. Once they crossed the borders, their opportunities of reuniting with their families will be slim (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008).

3.4 Negative Consequences of Child Soldiering on Myanmar–China Border

3.4.1 *Negative Consequences on Child Soldiers*

Child soldiering does have devastating adverse effects on children’s psychological and/or physical well-being (Grover 2012). For example they might be exposed to landmines, unexploded ordnance, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases (International Bureau for Children’s Rights 2010). These negative effects may significantly damage or even destroy child soldiers’ opportunity for a good quality of life (Grover 2012).

Concerning the child soldiers on the Myanmar–China border, the negative consequences of child soldiering mainly present in the following two aspects:

First, physical injuries. For most child soldiers, the risk of injury and death is very high (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2006). In the ethnic-based militias’ controlled areas, a significant proportion of the children affected in landmine accidents are child soldiers (Geneva Call 2011). When medicine and health care are grossly inadequate, and wounded child soldiers were frequently left to die without treatment (Images Asia 1996).

Some commanders view child soldiers as an expendable asset, whose loss is bearable to the overall cause and who are quite easily replaced (Singer 2006). In some cases, children are used in suicide missions or “human wave” attacks, and they were likely to suffer greater casualties (Singer 2005b, p.119). Due to the limited scope of data collection and a lack of access to contest and cease-fire areas of Myanmar, many casualties remain unreported (United Nations 2009).

In some cases, child soldiers could operate with terrifying audacity, particularly when infused with religious or political fervor or when under the influence of narcotics (Singer 2008). Sometimes, they were blunted under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or other substances (Vautravers 2008). As one SSA-S brigade commander recalled in an interview with Human Rights Watch in 2002:

Last year in the Ba Kee fighting the SPDC used many child soldiers, that is why they suffered many casualties. I think more than 300 were killed and wounded on the SPDC side. The SPDC soldiers were drugged, probably on methamphetamines. (Heppner et al. 2002)

The experiences of deserted child soldiers seem more bitter. For instance, a former child soldier, who was recruited to the *Tatmadaw Kyi* at the age of 11 years, deserted the *Tatmadaw Kyi* twice and was sent to a labor camp. When he was released, he was suffering from scabies, malaria, and suspected hepatitis, with associated liver problems, and he has been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS (United Nations 2009).

Second, physical injuries. Child soldiers are one of the most severely traumatized populations (Klasen et al. 2010). They have little knowledge and understanding of the mid- and long-term consequences of their actions (Schauer and Elbert 2010). For example, the armed conflicts often cause child soldiers to feel great pain, grief, and fear. (Risser et al. 2007). According to a testimony of a 16-year-old child soldier, who was deployed in a light infantry battalion and was captured by the KIA on 24 December 2011 near Laiza: “I was firing guns at the KIA soldiers [but] I just fired the gun pointing in the air because I was very scared” (Child Soldiers International 2013). Some scholars argue that there are high rates of depression and emotional and behavioral problems in the former child soldiers. In other words, the former child soldiers display greater severity of mental health problems compared with the other children are never recruited (Klasen et al. 2010; Kohrt et al. 2008).

In some cases, child soldiers were forced to participate in human rights abuses (Heppner et al. 2007), such as rounding up villagers for forced labor and even massacring civilians (Human Rights Watch 2003). Nyunt Swe, a 14-year-old child soldier, who was deployed in Shan State with a Light Infantry Battalion and remained there until he fled the *Tatmadaw Kyi* at the end of December 2001, recalls:

If someone leaves a 1,000 m radius around their village, the order was to shoot them. I saw people shot about fifteen times. We had to shoot anything alive. I think all of them were civilian villagers, but we reported to headquarters that they were all Shan rebels. Two or three were women, the rest were men. All were adults. Twice I saw a soldier who was sixteen or seventeen kill a man with his weapon. I think they were villagers. The commander ordered him to do it. They captured them and killed them. (Heppner et al. 2002)

As Thiha, a former child soldier claims in an interview:

I saw so many people die right in front of me and I was full of anxiety. I couldn't stop thinking about when my turn to die would be. When we attacked and we won, I was happy but I felt devastated if our comrades were killed. The conflict images are still a nightmare for me. (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008)

The majority of former child soldiers have experienced highly traumatic events, often repeatedly and over many years (Dupuy and Peters 2010). In some cases, child soldiers ran away from the *Tatmadaw Kyi*, some attempted suicide, while most were harassed by their military experiences, which distorted their fundamental sentiments of right and wrong (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2006). In other cases, child soldiers turned to identify with their commanders; this phenomenon is explained as “Stockholm Syndrome”, “where in captives identify with their captors” (Wessells 2006, p. 66).

According to the research on child soldiers in Myanmar, Heppner finds an interesting phenomenon that most former child soldiers attempt to rationalize their behavior or distance themselves from what they have done. When they are asked

about things their units did, they openly admit that their entire unit committed human rights abuses, while keep themselves out of the affairs (Heppner et al. 2002). For this kind of former child soldiers, disclosure of their traumatic experiences of being child soldiers would be problematic.

3.4.2 Negative Consequences on Myanmar

3.4.2.1 Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers: A Potential Crisis

Child soldiers present an even greater burden, especially in post-conflict settings (Singer 2005b). There are tens of thousands the armed forces and armed groups active on the Myanmar–China border. If these child soldiers are disarmed and demobilized, their reintegration into the society will be a potential crisis to Myanmar. In my opinion, there are four negative factors preventing former child soldiers' reintegration.

First of all, in many instances, the child soldiers' families and communities may have been badly affected by armed conflicts, which could not provide necessary supports for these child soldiers (Rosen 2012). Second, it is hard to reunite many former child soldiers with their families, especially the orphaned and displaced children; Third, even if family members can be located, they could not afford the former child soldiers who have been disabled in armed conflicts or have drug addiction or suffer from HIV/AIDs. For many former child soldiers, especially the wounded child soldiers, there is slim opportunity to get health care, education opportunity or vocational training; Fourth, the Myanmar government could not provide enough funds and employment for these former child soldiers in the coming future.

3.4.2.2 Decentralization of Former Child Soldiers: An Immediate Challenge

Most of the former child soldiers have no education or vocational training, if they fail to reintegrate into their former community or society, they will definitely bear more pressures. For a former child soldier, who has traumatic experiences in military service, the situation will become worsen.

If a sufficiently large number of former child soldiers are exposed to traumatic stress, it would increase their appetitive aggressions and violent behaviors, even cause a cycle of violence, and another round of a cycle of violence seems inevitable (Weierstall et al. 2012; Schauer and Elbert 2010).

Some former child soldiers believed that they were above the law and, even above the "human being world" (Medeiros 2007). There has been such a precedent in Myanmar. In January 2000, a small splinter group called the God's Army took over a Thai hospital in Ratchaburi, which was led by a pair of 12-year-old twins, named Johnny and Luther Htoo, who were both child soldiers. In 1997, two twin brothers announced that they were the reincarnations of well-known Karen fighters

Saw Johnny Htoo and Saw Luther. Later, this armed group grew into a total of around 300 soldiers, a significant proportion of whom were child soldiers. With material support from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the God's Army continued its small-scale guerrilla operations against the *Tatmadaw Kyi* until late 1999 (Heppner et al. 2002). In addition, there is another similar armed group named Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors (VBSW) active on the Myanmar's border.

3.4.2.3 Prolonging U.S. Sanction against Myanmar

The existence of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border has been a critical barrier to terminating the U.S. sanctions against Myanmar. To some extent, where the costs of child soldiering are too high, in the form of a loss of legitimacy in the eyes of the world, child soldiers prove too costly to be used (Lasley 2010).

Recently, the presidential waivers of U.S. permitted the temporary suspension of sanctions, for instance, in July 2012, U.S. eased sanctions to allow American companies to invest in all sectors of Myanmar's economy, including the controversial and opaque oil and gas sector (Human Rights Watch 2013). In May 2013, the Obama administration decided on the termination of a 1996 ban on granting U.S. entry visas to the former Burma's military rulers, their business partners, and immediate families (Reuters 2013).

However, the actual removal of the existing sanctions may be a more complex proposition because of the overlapping provisions of the laws governing the current sanction regime (Martin 2013). Many U.S. sanctions against Myanmar are based on assessments related to certain functional issues, including child soldiering, drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, failure to protect religious freedoms, violations of workers' rights, and threats to world peace and the security of U.S., therefore, the repeal of Myanmar-specific sanction laws may not eliminate certain types of restrictions on Myanmar (Martin 2013). In other words, the U.S. would readily maintain certain sanctions on Myanmar if child soldiering were still not reduced to an acceptable level.

3.4.3 *Negative Consequences on China*

3.4.3.1 Insecurity of China–Myanmar Border

The main armed forces and groups active in Myanmar–China border get involved with child soldiering. At present, this area has become one of the worst-hit areas of child soldiering in the world. Now, there are two critical issues facing China. One is how to protect the Chinese children from being recruited by the armed force or group active on the Myanmar–China border. Due to historical and geo-strategic reasons, the child soldiers in Myanmar–China border mainly come from the cross-border ethnic groups, HIV/AIDS orphans and displaced children. On the other hand, it's essential for China to prevent the former child soldiers' entering into China's

territory. Because the former child soldiers gained experiences and took on roles that surpassed their age (Ryan 2012). If they could survive in the combats, they would gain combat skills and become shockingly proficient fighters. It's critical to note that some child soldiers' very ignorance of normal morality would make them extremely dangerous (Singer 2005). In the coming future, if China could not make responses to this crisis, it will finally constitute security threats to both Myanmar and China, which combine with a series of security issues, such as illegal migrants, drug smuggling and other forms of transnational crimes.

3.4.3.2 Threats to Chinese Strategic Investment in Myanmar

Child soldiering is often stimulated by the illegal cross-border activities, such as the flow of arms, the recruitment and abduction of children, and the displacement of populations (United Nations 2003). If there is any extreme group similar to the God's Army or Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors on the Myanmar–China border, the Chinese strategic investment in Northern Myanmar would be seriously threatened, such as large-scale mining ventures in Northern Myanmar (e.g., gold and other minerals) and exploitation (e.g., timber) project, the overland pipelines to transport oil and gas from the Bay of Bengal to Yunnan Province and so on (Transnational Institute 2010).

Recently, China has been playing a more constructive role than what she used to be. Since the Kokang Crisis, China has intervened on peace negotiations between the Myanmar government and the ethnic-based militias and promoted the stakeholders to refrain from seeking military solutions. For example, by acting as a coordinator between the KIO and the central government, China has positioned itself openly as a mediator and a tacit guarantor of any agreement reached between the KIO and the central government (Sun 2013).

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Chapter 4

Structural Factors of Child Soldiering

Abstract This chapter explores a series of structural factors, which have impacts on child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border, and demonstrates that the reach of the Myanmar government is quite limited to governance child soldiering.

Keywords Decentralization of security · Structural factor · Inadequate manpower · Displacement · Legal enforcement · Chronic poverty

Child soldiering is “not merely a result of individual coercion or individual life circumstances leading to individual choices” (Augustine 2010, p. 339). In my view, child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border is dependent on a series of structural factors, which make children more vulnerable to child soldiering and reflect Myanmar’s “limited statehood” in governing child soldiering to some extent. These factors would not only disconnect the children from the structure of society, but also debilitate the very institutions needed to solidify the state and prevent armed conflicts (Singer and The Brookings Institution 2006).

This chapter addresses the structural factors that have impacts on the armed forces and groups’ recruiting children, such as decentralization of security, inadequate manpower resources, insufficient legal enforcement, displacement of population, statelessness of children and chronic poverty.

4.1 Decentralization of Security

In Myanmar, the decentralization of security has been a long affair. For example, the *Tatmadaw Kyi* troops often operate in very rough environments where there is no guarantee of resupply of rations and ammunition or medical material. This is particularly true in the counterinsurgency operations of the *Tatmadaw Kyi* (Aung and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies 2009). As a former child soldier notes, who was recruited at age 14:

On the way [to the frontline], there was a food shortage; we didn’t have enough to eat, we were starving. During the shortage, we just drank water; nobody came to give us food in the jungle and the other soldiers who were sent to bring us new supplies were delayed about five days. Sometimes we ate banana plants and eastern gooseberries. (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008)

For guaranteeing supplies for the troops, the regional commanders of the *Tatmadaw Kyi* were given a wide range of powers for military mobilization (Aung and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies 2009). After the coup on 18 September 1988, the regional commanders of the *Tatmadaw Kyi* became supreme authorities in their respective regions. The decentralization of military power made the regional commands become somewhat like autonomous regions (Aung and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies 2009).

Moreover, according to a still-standing 1997 order issued to the field units in the Myanmar peripheral areas, the *Tatmadaw Kyi* authorized the field units to sustain themselves locally. This has resulted in a systematic extortion of supplies from locals and forced labor (McCartan 2012). A Shan nongovernmental organization (NGO) worker argues in an interview, who worked in Taunggyi City of Shan State:

The people fear *Tatmadaw Kyi*, Khonza and the other ethnic troops. Most people were used as porters in the war. The people had to give money to ethnic Troops and the *Tatmadaw Kyi*. (Keenan and Ethnic Nationalities Council—Union of Burma 2011)

Some military units maintain large commercial plantations or establish businesses. Some of the income generated goes towards sustaining the unit while the rest allegedly goes into the pockets of corrupt military officers (McCartan 2012). Under the banner of “welfare for the unit,” many military officers engaged in business and became unusually rich (Aung and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies 2009).

As a Kachin community-based organization (CBO) worker noted in an interview conducted by the Ethnic Nationalities Council Union of Burma in Bhamo Town of Kachin State:

We also have to pay money to every government official in schools, hospitals, post offices, etc. We also had to pay money to have the buildings of the Army painted. (Keenan and Ethnic Nationalities Council—Union of Burma 2011)

The low-intensity conflicts have caused gross mismanagement and corruption (Tan 2007). In some areas, some lower rank and/or field-level officers are responsible for recruiting children into the *Tatmadaw Kyi*. For example, as the post-discharge child soldiers argue, during the senior officers’ visits to recruiting centers, training camps, and operational units, child soldiers are instructed to hide until the senior officers complete their inspection and leave (United Nations 2009).

Even in the era of President Thein Sein, the trend of security decentralization did not ease off. For instance, President Thein Sein had instructed Commander-in-Chief General Min Aung Hlaing to order his troops to stop all offensives against the ethnic-based militias, but such attacks were reportedly continued. Nothing to be surprised that the *Tatmadaw* continued their past practices of looting in some conflict areas (Martin and Congressional Research Service 2012). As Steinberg explains, there is still a profound distrust within the military of civilian leaders and civilian-controlled institutions at all levels. Many nonmilitary organizations are likely to be controlled by retired military people, and retired military people will be prominent in the proposed legislature (Steinberg 2010).

4.2 Inadequate Manpower Resources

To some extent, child soldiering is a result of pressure to maintain or increase the number of combatants and maintain manpower in the armed forces and armed groups (Child Soldiers International 2013).

It was estimated that the *Tatmadaw Kyi* had fewer than 200,000 men before 1988 (Heppner et al. 2002). According to a report issued by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Myanmar has 406,000 active duty soldiers (the Army 375,000, the Navy 16,000, and the Air Force 15,000; International Institute for Strategic Studies 2010). The *Tatmadaw Kyi* still faces serious challenges in maintaining adequate manpower for military service, due to the following three reasons:

First, the *Tatmadaw Kyi* has suffered desertion for a long time. For example, between May and August 2006, it had a total of 9,497 deserters (Aung and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies 2009). McCartan argues that desertion has a direct bearing on low morale inside the *Tatmadaw Kyi*. As the deserters said, the soldiers are forced to purchase their own uniforms, food, and other basic items (McCartan 2012). In recent years, the *Tatmadaw Kyi* has continued to lose adult soldiers due to desertion. For instance, a border-based group, Network for Democracy and Development (NDD), quoting documents it had compiled reported on 23 March 2007 that the Myanmar Army, with 215 infantry battalions and 340 light infantry battalions totaling 555 in September 2006, had been losing about 10,000 men every 4 months, most of them through desertions (Fah 2010). In this case, there is a deficit between the establishments and the actual strength of *Tatmadaw Kyi*. Unit payrolls have been padded with nonexistent personnel in order to skim off funds and resources (Andrew 2009).

Ethnic-based militias are highly outnumbered, and child soldiering could expand their power to large extent. In a bid to encourage desertion in the *Tatmadaw Kyi*, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) has welcomed willing Burmese soldiers to join the KIA (The Kachin News Group 2011). This makes the situation more complex.

It could be asserted that child soldiering is largely a by-product of the pressure to meet recruitment quota, because child soldiering is a relatively low-cost solution to build out the armed forces and groups (Child Soldiers International 2013; Singer 2005).

Second, the population structure in Myanmar is imbalanced. Some previous research has found that countries with high levels of military participation, that is, countries that maintain higher proportions of their population as troops, have lower levels of infant and young child mortality (Bullock and Firebaugh 1990).

The total population of children within a country is obviously a key factor in determining recruitment costs (Tynes and Early 2011). Approximately 39% of Myanmar's population of 58 million, which is 23 million, is children under 18 years of age (UNICEF 2011). In other words, the shortage of adult soldiers will not change in the coming future, which will push the *Tatmadaw Kyi* and ethnic-based militias

to take child soldiering as an alternative solution to increasing their numbers, particularly in serious situations (Singer 2005).

Third, the *Tatmadaw Kyi* can't mobilize manpower from the entire nation; at the same time, the ethnic-based militias also compete against the *Tatmadaw Kyi* over this scarce resource, because there are also desertions from some ethnic-based militias in recent years. For instance, in 2012, 42 members of the KIA defected to the *Tatmadaw* (The Irrawaddy Magazine 2012).

In short, the longer *Tatmadaw Kyi* and ethnic-based militias fight each other, the more they would be in favor of child soldiering and increase the reliance on child soldiering.

4.3 Insufficient Legal Enforcement

Many studies examine child soldiering in the context of international law framework. For example, the extent to which the international laws protect children from child soldiering? How can the current situation be improved through the international laws, conventions, or regimes? (Fontana 1997; Rosen 2007; Michael and Gallagher 2001; Drumbl 2012). In the case of Myanmar, one of the most critical problems is insufficient legal enforcement.

Frankly speaking, the Myanmar government makes many efforts to manage child soldiering. For example, the government adopted tighter controls and promoted the release of child soldiers. Through the Committee for the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Underage Children, the Myanmar government has undertaken some efforts to address the issue of child soldiering, including the recent inclusion of preventing the recruitment of child soldiers in their national plan of action against trafficking (United Nations 2007a). Recently, Myanmar has revised the child law enacted in 1993, and defined a child as someone under the age of 16 years rather than 18 years.

However, the practice of child soldiering in the *Tatmadaw* did not alter significantly (United Nations 2011b). The current legal enforcement of preventing child soldiering is still insufficient, due to the following two reasons:

First, as Human Rights Watch criticizes, the government fails to substantively address the *Tatmadaw Kyi's* institutionalized and pervasive forcible recruitment of children (Heppner et al. 2007). For example, according to the 2008 Myanmar Constitution:

With the approval of the National Defence and Security Council, the Defence Services has the authority to administer the participation of the entire people in the Security and Defence of the Union. The strategy of the people's militia shall be carried out under the leadership of the Defence Services. (Republic of the Union of Myanmar 2008)

Second, though Myanmar has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991, there are some disagreements between the Child Law and Convention on the Rights of the Child, for instance, the restricted definition of the child

(up to age 16 rather than 18), the minimal age of criminal responsibility (7 years of age with conditional judgment and based on maturity up to 12 years; Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and UNICEF 2012). According to the country's Child Law (1993), Chapter XVIII, Article 71, a child should not be punished by death or imprisonment exceeding 10 years (United Nations 2010). However, there is incompetence in enforcing of the Child Law in Myanmar. For example, a child soldier named Aung Ko Htay, who was recruited into the *Tatmadaw Kyi* at the age of 14, has been sentenced to death for killing another soldier during a fight.

4.4 Displacement of Children

Some scholars recognize that internally displaced people are vulnerable in every aspect of their lives, they were geographically concentrated, which resulted in the increase of underage recruits in both absolute and relative terms (United Nations 2004; Achvarina and Reich 2006). In other words, the extent to which children are protected in refugee camps is a primary determinant of child soldiers' recruitment rates (Vera and Simon 2006; Achvarina and Reich 2006). At present, many refugee camps on the Myanmar borders could not provide basic supply for displaced children.

It is believed that some ethnic-based militias in Myanmar still depend on the refugee camps as important manpower source (South et al. 2010). There are reports indicating that the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council (KNU–KNLA Peace Council), a breakaway faction of KNU, recruited children from the Mae La refugee camp as well as from the villages in the border area (United Nations 2007a).

While armed conflicts remain a main reason of child soldiering, other factors, including human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and drug trafficking, lead to the displacement of children; in particular those living in the Myanmar border areas are vulnerable to child soldiering. In most cases, the recruiters would offer a good salary, continuing education, food rations for parents, and housing (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor—US Department of State 2012).

First, displacement evoked by armed conflict.

Since the collapse of social and economic structures in the rural areas, families often scatter and children are left behind or lost (Honwana 2008). Some children lose their parents or lose contact with family during armed conflicts between armed forces and groups, which creates a potential pool of child soldiering. In 2012, the internally displaced Kachin swelled to an estimated 90,000 and most of the refugees were the Kachins (Human Rights Watch 2013; The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict 2009).

In early 2011, the Myanmar government relaunched the “four cuts” policy and severed communication routes between the allied non-cease-fire ethnic-based militias, particularly in Shan State. In early March 2011, the *Tatmadaw* soldiers ordered the residents of 11 villages in Kunhing, Nansang, and Kyethi townships to leave their homes and burned at least 300 houses. In addition, the residents of three villages in Namsam Township were forced to abandon their homes and at least 300 houses were burned (Htwe 2011). There are more than 83,000 internally displaced persons in Myanmar’s Northern Kachin State, not far from the Chinese border. Some 47,000 people are in internally displaced person (IDP) camps in KIA-controlled areas, with thousands more staying with host families (IRIN 2013).

Many of the Kachin displaced people have been displaced for a prolonged period of time, some for over 20 months, triggering renewed and additional needs for the provision of basic services and protection. Furthermore, limited livelihood opportunities cause further protection concerns, with IDPs increasingly engaging in high-risk employment, including cultivation of land located in high-risk areas (UNOCHA 2013).

Second, displacement evoked by drug smuggling.

At present, the illicit opium production is concentrated in Afghanistan and Myanmar, which together account for more than 90% of the world (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2012). It was reported that the opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar has increased for the sixth straight year. In addition, during 2012, the potential production of opium increased by 13% to 690 metric tons (US Department of State 2013; United Nations 2012c).

Myanmar remains a major regional source of opium, heroin, and methamphetamine, particularly for neighboring China (US Department of State 2013). It is believed that large amounts of heroin have continued to enter China from Northern Myanmar through Yunnan Province (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2012). Significant quantities of methamphetamine tablets continue to be illicitly manufactured in Myanmar, most of which are manufactured in Shan State (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2012). In the Yunnan Province of China, which borders Shan State in Myanmar, a record 4.3 tons of methamphetamine were seized in 2010, an increase of 36% compared with 2009 (International Narcotics Control Board 2012). On 5 October 2012, the regime announced that its 15-year drug eradication plan, initiated in 1999, would not be completed by 2014 as scheduled and would be extended for another 5 years until 2019 due to “threats posed by amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS)” and to achieve a reduction in opium poppy cultivation (Global Times 2012; Bangkok Post 2013).

Due to intravenous drug use, Myanmar has one of the highest rates in the world of HIV infection (US Department of State 2013). Since the spread of injecting drug use, the Myanmar–China border has been one of the worst-hit areas of HIV problem in Asia (Stover et al. 2007). In a survey by the Kachin National Consultative Assembly (KNCA) in 2006, 30% of young people whose ages ranged between 16 and 30 in Kachin State were drug addicts and the majority of

them were heroin users (The Kachin News Group 2007a). According to a survey in 2010, over 60% of Kachin youths are addicted to drugs like heroin, opium, Yama (Amphetamines), and formula (liquid) and are later infected by HIV (The Kachin News Group 2010). Drug smuggling directly causes the fragmentation of family and community networks on the Myanmar–China border. As a result, orphaned children along the Myanmar–China border were very vulnerable to child soldiering.

Third, displacement evoked by HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Myanmar has the third largest HIV epidemic in Asia (United Nations 2012a). At present, HIV transmission in Myanmar is not under control. It is estimated by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) that appropriately 216,000 Burmese were living with HIV in 2011 and around 18,000 Burmese died of AIDS-related illness (UNAIDS 2012). Though in March 2012 the Myanmar parliament approved a fourfold increase in health spending and a twofold increase in education spending for 2012–2013, this is still only 2.93 and 4.91%, respectively, of the overall governmental budget (United Nations 2012b). The Myanmar–China border was one of the worst hit areas of HIV. The first large outbreak of HIV in China was identified in 1989 among the injection drug users in Dehong, Yunnan Province, on the Myanmar–China border (Jia et al. 2008). An estimated 10 million people a year cross the Myanmar–China border in each direction (Stover et al. 2007).

The coverage of HIV treatment is relatively low. By the end of 2011, nearly 40,000 Burmese adults and children were receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART). In fact, the coverage remains low, in comparison with an estimated 120,000 people in need of treatment. In terms of geographical coverage, over 70% of the total number of people receiving antiretroviral (ARV) drugs were in Yangon, Kachin State, and Mandalay. The coverage in other states and regions remained relatively low (UNAIDS 2012).

HIV infection in Kachin State has spread mainly from gold mining, jade mining, and border areas. The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO)'s health department statistics from 2007 to 2010 report that there are over 4,000 HIV positive people living along the border areas of the KIO headquarters in Laiza Township (The Kachin News Group 2010). About 30% of the total deaths in the Kachin community are from HIV/AIDS in Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State (The Kachin News Group 2007b).

4.5 Stateless Children

In the major cities (e.g., Rangoon and Mandalay) of Myanmar, births are registered immediately. In these larger cities, births must be registered to qualify for basic public services and to obtain national identification cards. However, in the smaller towns and villages, birth registration was often informal or nonexistent. Access to public services in remote communities was sometimes complicated by lack of

birth registration but more often by a lack of availability (US Department of State 2012).

According to a research conducted by Save the Children UK, which focused on the situation of Myanmar children living in the Myanmar border areas, since 1988 there has been a steady increase of migration across the Myanmar–China border. Those migrants from Myanmar to China are largely illegal, either lacking documentation or not abiding by the terms granted in their entry permits (Caouette 2001).

Due to strong cultural and kinship ties, the Myanmar–China border constitutes a shared social community. As a survey in Jinghong City of Yunnan Province indicates, there are 505 cases of transnational marriages, 97% of which are marriages between the Chinese and Burmese. Among the 505 cases of transnational marriages, 123 cases conducted marriage registration (24.43%) and 382 cases did not conduct marriage registration (75.57%; Zhao 2011). In many transnational marriages on the Myanmar–China border, many couples have neither Chinese nationality nor Myanmar nationality, they even did not register their marriage, as a result, their children easily fall into a stateless condition (Zhang 2012).

Without a birth certificate or National Registration Card (NRC), children face a higher risk of being forcibly recruited (Child Soldiers International 2013). An NRC is the most important identity document in Myanmar (Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and UNICEF 2012). Though a birth certificate is not required to obtain an NRC, applications do require the NRC details of parents, grandparents, and some information concerning the registration of great-grandparents (Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and UNICEF 2012).

The absence of family is a crucial predictor of recruitment into armed forces or armed groups. It is much easier to enlist children who are all on their own, without the protection normally afforded by the family environment, in a war-torn setting (Barstad 2008).

Children without a demonstrable legal identity may be excluded from other state services that are essential for survival (Bhabha 2011). At the age of 10, children are eligible for temporary NRCs, later converted to permanent cards at the age of 18. The process for obtaining an NRC is difficult and expensive, often requiring families to travel long distances to the township government offices. A temporary NRC can cost as much as 35,000 kyat (approx US\$ 40), with the cost varying according to the applicant's circumstances and another payment is required as a conversion fee to receive a permanent NRC when the applicant reaches 18 (Child Soldiers International 2013).

4.6 Chronic Poverty

In many countries, chronic poverty has a tremendous impact on the way children improvise their own survival strategies, that is, joining the armed groups or the military forces (Honwana 2006).

According to the 2012 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index, Myanmar is placed at “low human development” (149 out of 187) of countries surveyed (Malik and United Nations Development Programme 2013). A quarter of the population is currently believed to live below the poverty line. An estimated 34% of the rural population has no access to clean water and for 43% of that population there are no safe sanitation facilities available (United Nations 2006a). Poverty is twice as high in rural areas, where 70% of the population lives, as urban areas. The border areas (mainly populated by Myanmar’s minority ethnic groups) and areas emerging from conflict are particularly poor (United Nations 2012).

There is a certain causal relationship between child soldiering and access to education. For example, in Afghanistan, where approximately 90% of children have no access to education, the proportion of child soldiers is estimated to rise in recent years from roughly 30 to at least 45% (Brett et al. 1996). Under the difficult economic circumstances many families face, often children in Myanmar must work from a young age to contribute to the household income (Images Asia 1996). Only 43% of the children who enroll actually complete the primary cycle, because of the cost of schooling, poor conditions in many schools, language barriers, and a shortage of qualified teachers and learning materials (United Nations 2007b). In 2006, only 40% of children completed 5 years of primary education, particularly fewer in the conflict-affected border area (United Nations 2006b).

Parents of primary school students usually have to purchase uniforms, textbooks, stationary, and other supplies. According to some figures, the costs to parents to send their child to a typical government primary school, including annual fees, uniform and school materials, can reach 60,000 kyat (US\$ 67; United Nations 2011c). In addition, the case of the military use of schools exemplifies the complexity of the situation and clearly impedes children’s access to education and puts them at risk (United Nations 2011a).

Moreover, Myanmar’s health system is networked by 1,481 Rural Health Centers (RHC), staffed by midwives and public health inspectors. In addition, there are community health workers and auxiliary midwives based in villages, who provide a more limited level of primary health-care services to the community.

In short, the weakened social structure in Myanmar is then generally unable to steer their children away from war (Singer and The Brookings Institution 2006). In such cases, some armed groups took advantage of children’s desperation and immaturity (Singer 2008). In the next chapter, the individual agencies that have impacts on child soldiering will be discussed.

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Chapter 5

Why Children are Involved in Armed Conflicts?

Abstract In this chapter, scenario studies are presented to explore three kinds of relationships between child soldiers and their recruiters, that is, victim–coercer relationship, patron–client relationship, and comradeship.

Keywords Recruitment quota · Victim–coercer relationship · Abduction · Patron–client relationship · Comradeship

In the literature of child soldiering, it is a recurring theme to treat children as victims of structural violence or outright war; the nonstructural factors of child soldiering should not be a simplistic “dichotomy between victim and perpetrator” (Wagnsson 2010; Medeiros 2007). However, a purely structuralist approach fail to consider the role of individual actors; agent-oriented accounts are confined to their excessive “voluntarism,” that is, “actors are entirely unconstrained and untouched by social structures.” The emphasis on individual agency does not adequately consider the effects of structural features, such as “forms of power and domination on the (micro-) interactions of people in their everyday lives” (Denov 2010, p. 42).

Which angle of view is more applicable to explain the nonstructural factors of child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border? Most published works of child soldiering tend to ignore an important question about the relationships between child soldiers and the armed forces or groups, but with few exceptions. For instance, Andvig and Gates suggest that members of a military group are kept attached to the organization through three forms of incentives, which are present at the soldier level, whatever the forms of leadership motivation: force, non-pecuniary benefits, and economic incentives (Andvig and Gates 2007). For revealing how children respond within the constraints and possibilities of the structural factors, this chapter explores the child soldier–recruiter relationships from three perspectives: victim–coercer relationship, patron–client relationship, and comradeship.

5.1 Victim–Coercer Relationship

Victim–coercer relationship means children are recruited into an armed force or group against their will, with use of threat, force, or violence. Within this kind of relationship, children are passive victims, and fear is a major determining factor in their obedience and performance (Images Asia 1996).

5.1.1 Recruitment Quota

Due to the shortage of manpower resources, it is difficult for the battalions and recruitment centers of the *Tatmadaw Kyi* to meet their recruitment quotas. Therefore, they not only offered incentives (e.g., money and rice) to maintain recruitment quota, but also established a league with the civilian brokers and police (United Nations 2007; Heppner 2007). In other words, child soldiering has been transformed into a kind of profitable business (The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict 2009).

For example, officers are assigned to find recruits and are rewarded with cash and food for each recruit they obtain. Soldiers are also required to gain new recruits in order to obtain leave or a service discharge (Heppner 2007). It was reported that a newly-recruited soldier should get three new recruits for a year (Yoma 3 News Service 2009). Soldiers who bring in new recruits are usually paid 1,000–10,000 K in cash and 15–50 kg of rice per recruit (Heppner and Becker 2002). Brokers receive up to 40,000 K (approximately US\$ 30) and a bag of rice from local commanders for each new recruit (United Nations 2007). As a result, around a one third of births are not registered and age documentation is falsified by military recruiters (Child Soldiers International 2012).

A former battalion commander interviewed by Human Rights Watch proved the situation of child soldiering in *Tatmadaw Kyi*:

The high ranking officers realized that recruitment by recruiting offices alone was insufficient, so they issued orders that recruitment should also be done as part of each battalion's operations. We had a quota system: we recruit for our battalion and also for other units like the Regional Command. Our battalion was ordered to recruit 12 people every four months. We couldn't meet this quota, so at every meeting they scolded the battalion officers. To solve the problem, battalion officers pressured their junior officers to recruit We set a rule that soldiers who wanted their 30 days' annual leave must guarantee that they will return with at least one recruit. Any soldier who wanted a discharge after 10 years of service had to get four new recruits for the battalion before we would approve his discharge. That's why there is a problem of child soldiers. (Heppner 2007)

Concerning the ethnic-based militias on the Myanmar–China border, they are also faced with similar difficulties of meeting recruitment quota. For instance, some ethnic-based militias are reported to impose recruit quotas and require villages or households to present a certain number of recruits. The villagers living in the conflict zones are often subjected to “multiple masters” pay “tribute,” such as their sons, to two or more armed groups (South et al. 2010). In such cases, the villagers often send their children under 18, in order to retain the older and more productive children for the families (Heppner 2007).

5.1.2 Abduction

Abduction means children are kidnapped or seized to join armed forces or groups; these children are threatened with arrest for loitering or not being in possession of an identity card and offered military service as an alternative option (Heppner 2007). In most cases, children are abducted while they go to school or market, or wait for buses or trains, or hang out with friends (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008). As Thiha, a former child soldier recruited at the age of 12, recalls in an interview:

One night, two of my friends and I came back from watching a movie at the village, on our way the recruiters took us. They brought us to one police station, after that they sent us to a recruiting center and asked us “Do you want to go to jail or do you want to be soldiers?” They explained that if we would serve in the army, we would just need to serve three years but if we chose jail we’d be imprisoned for five years. (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008)

The frequently-occurring places of abduction are railway stations, streets, and way to or from school. According to the reports received by the UN country task force, the typical technique often used by military personnel is to threaten children with arrest or imprisonment on fictitious charges, such as truancy or loitering, and give them the choice of prosecution or enrollment into the *Tatmadaw* forces (United Nations 2009; Heppner 2007).

For the children abducted by the *Tatmadaw Kyi*, there is a same old excuse that children do not possess identification documents. The most common method is to ask the children to show their identity cards. When they cannot produce one, they are threatened with a long jail term or told that they can join the army instead (Heppner and Becker 2002). As Myin Win noted, who was a child soldier recruited for the second time in 2003:

When we reached Toungoo railway station a lance corporal approached me. He asked for my ID card and I told him I had a pass letter. He said no, an ID card is required, otherwise you’ll go to prison. I was afraid so I said, “I’ll give you money.” He said, “I don’t want money.” I said, “I’ll call my mother and she can vouch for me.” He said, “I don’t want to see your mother or father and I don’t want money. I want you to join the army.” I said no but he dragged me to a cell at the police station and told the police, “Detain him for a while” but without any charge. I think they had connections. (Heppner 2007)

In many cases, the children’s names have been deliberately altered to make tracing them more difficult (Horsey 2011).

5.2 Patron–Client Relationship

Within this kind of relationship, children join an armed group or force, as a result of their need for survival or desire for military prestige, but without explicit use of force. Within patron–client relationship, power is dependent on developing entourages through personal loyalties, which encourage factionalism. This entourage language, system has been called the patron–client relationship or clientelism. In Burmese language, it is called *saya-tapyi*. Because military members have been in

leadership positions for almost half a century, such power entourages are usually dominated by the *Tatmadaw* (Steinberg 2010).

5.2.1 *Need for Survival*

Faced with violence and chaos, some children consider that they are safer with guns in their hands (United Nations 1996). If the official state structure, community, or family cannot protect children, they might feel that they have to turn to armed forces or groups for help, which might be a perceived means of survival (Schauer and Elbert 2010). For example, orphans and displaced children frequently decide to join armed groups, as a means of gaining food, security, and health care (Wessells 2005; Brett et al. 1998).

According to a report of UN, a 15-year-old boy presented himself to a recruitment center of the *Tatmadaw Kyi* and was rejected due to the fact that he had not yet attained the age of 18. He was told to return when he was 18 years old. Since his family was very poor, his mother helped him to get into the *Tatmadaw Kyi* by presenting the birth certificate of her elder son, who was 19 years old. The recruiting officer accepted the boy, despite commenting that the boy did not look 19 years old (United Nations 2009).

Unlike adults, children cannot be expected to distinguish between competing causes and often have unrealistic expectations of what a soldier's life involves. Children are also more impressionable and thus more likely to be influenced by the rhetoric of military recruiters (Emmons et al. 2002). In some cases, the villagers sought some protection by providing their sons as conscripts for one or more armed groups. For these villagers, the rights of their sons are "sacrificed" for guaranteeing the well-being of their families or communities (South et al. 2010).

5.2.2 *Gaining Privileges*

For some children, education and health service mean further prestige, and there are few alternatives to military life. For instance, the *Tatmadaw* established its own profit-making corporation to supply its battalions with goods and materials. Moreover, the *Tatmadaw* operates its own health-care system, educational system, housing, and private banks (Stover 2007). There are approximately four million Burmese (both personnel and family members) associated with the *Tatmadaw* (Matthews 2006). For the children who have grown up in chronic poverty, the gun and the military uniform confer a measure of power and prestige that they could not have obtained through other means (Wessells 2005). In this case, material privileges or an early promotion are equally effective to promote the loyalty of conscripted children toward their commanders and the armed force or group (Dupuy and Peters 2010).

There is a similar pattern in the ethnic-based militias. For example, Kachin Independence Organization/Kachin Independence Army (KIO/KIA) have created their own local government and made efforts to empower their staff and communities. According to the report of the UN country task force on monitoring and reporting in Myanmar, KIO/KIA provide education for children in the ranks. The girls are trained for teaching, nursing, midwifery, or administrative office positions, while the boys are cultivated through military training (United Nations 2007). As a senior KIA officer noted:

We house child soldiers in the army compound and they are allowed to stay with the officers. They stay as if they are the dependents of the officers and the officers become like a parent to them. (Heppner 2007)

For the child soldiers who never studied formally in civilian education, military education does make a poor replacement for civilian education (Images Asia 1996). As Brang Ja says, who joined the KIA at the age of 13:

I stopped my studying because I don't want to go school anymore and I had no friends... I want to be a soldier and I want to carry a gun. I also love the uniforms... (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008)

Moreover, some underaged recruits, while already registered as soldiers, continue to attend school, whereas others work around base camps. As the KIA admits, there are some underaged candidates in the officers' training program of the KIA. If a candidate graduates from high school, they could participate in officers' training regardless of age (Heppner 2007).

5.3 Comradeship

Comradeship is based on identity, which presents "higher solidarity preferences than other types of groups" (Gates 2011). Within comradeship, child soldiers fight for the loss of family members or for their community. For this kind of child soldiers, there is a kind of "surrogate family" phenomenon, that is, commanders could replace the position of a caretaker or a parent, and fellow child soldiers could take the place of peers (Schauer and Elbert 2010). As a result, desertion becomes less likely.

5.3.1 *Revenge for Family Member*

Some child soldiers do believe the rightness of child soldiering, because they are motivated by a desire to avenge loss of their family members. Since the 1970s, the ethnic-based militias have been increasingly composed of individuals with marginal to mainstream Burmese life. Many are the children and grandchildren of people who joined the armed resistance at its onset (Thawngmung 2011). In the words of

Schauer and Elbert, this kind of child soldiers consider that they have to take the place of a family member, who would otherwise be enlisted, or to avenge a family member, who has been killed by the “enemy” (Schauer and Elbert 2010). As Wessells notes, in a psychological perspective, their desire for revenge “justifies killing as a form of retribution” (Wessells 2005). In addition, family and peers can both be important as push factors, especially the families with military background or those that have peers in the ranks of armed forces or groups.

Maru P., a boy who moved from a Kachin village in Northern Shan State to Laiza after his father was killed by the *Tatmadaw Kyi*, joined the KIA in October 2010, when he was 15 years old. As he said in an interview with Human Rights Watch:

The officers said I was still young, but that if I was very interested and want to fight the Burmese army, we will let you. They told me to go back too but I have so much hatred against the Burmese army so I insisted on staying. I kept insisting. Even if I go to school, it is not attractive to me anymore. I just want to fight Burmese army soldiers. But when the political situation becomes stable I will think of going back to school. The officers have talked to me about that. (Smith 2012)

Many children who joined the ethnic-based militias resent the *Tatmadaw* and are determined to take revenge against soldiers who attacked their villages (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008). As a child soldier notes, who joined the KIA at the age of 14:

I decided to become a soldier to fight the Burman soldiers. They come to our village, drink a lot, and take people away as porters and as fighters for the front lines. They also use Kachin prisoners on the front lines (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008)

For the child soldiers like Maru P., in the absence of a family, their need for security, to have someone to love and respect, may be transferred to the commanders (Gates 2011). Unlike conventional military units, militia groups are not interchangeable. Fighters who serve on a part-time or semi-voluntary basis tend to lack the logistical capability and training necessary to operate far from their homes or with advanced technology. Additionally, their loyalties are primarily to a single local leader, and they may refuse to be integrated under a conventional chain of command. In some cases, the armed forces or groups have ulterior motives to cut off the contact between the child soldiers and their families and the outside world, which aim at promoting child soldiers to substitute these relationships by building up relations with their peers and commanders (Dupuy and Peters 2010).

5.3.2 *Ideological Indoctrination*

The chronological boundaries between childhood, youth, and adulthood are highly varied and are rooted in the historical experience of each society and culture (Rosen 2005). In some societies, military life may be the most attractive option. They regard military participation as a part of becoming an adult and encourage children to participate in military activities (United Nations 1996; Lee 2009). Child soldiers can be influenced not only because of their limited knowledge and

life experience, but also because ideology provides meaning and identity to adolescents who are typically seeking to create their identity (Ward 2004).

In this case, Myanmar's military history plays an important psychological role in encouraging children to become involved in the military. Due to the prominent role that General Aung San played in liberating the country from the British and Japanese occupations, the Burman public has turned him into an idolized national hero. Children, especially young boys, are raised to revere General Aung San and other military leaders of the past, and to look on military induction as a sign of manhood. The ethnic groups have their own revered military leaders, whom children are taught to adore and often fear from an early age. Among all ethnicities, to be a soldier is to occupy a position of great honor and self-sacrifice. The emotional pull of such a prestige should not be underestimated (Images Asia 1996).

A weakened social structure provides an ideal background for the indoctrination of ideologies in children (Singer 2006). Children might be told and believe that they have to "stand up" against an enemy, who would otherwise kill them or hurt their families (Schauer and Elbert 2010). As La Htung, who joined the KIA at the age of 15, says in an interview:

I want to fight the Burmese soldiers and stop their military control. I want to free my people and to make Kachin State independent. (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008).

In some cases, children are encouraged by their families to join to fight for a just cause or to safeguard the family or village (Dupuy and Peters 2010). For some child soldiers recruited by the armed forces, they are often told that they are protecting their families, homes, and motherland against rebels who have no right to challenge the government (Dupuy and Peters 2010).

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Chapter 6

Why Other Children are not Recruited?

Abstract In the case of the Myanmar–China border, child soldiering is just one of most crucial ways in which children are affected by armed conflicts. This chapter presents comparisons between child soldiers and the other groups of children that are not recruited into ranks but vulnerable to the negative consequences of armed conflicts.

Keywords Child labor · Disabled children · Evacuation · Vulnerable situation

The structural factors facing child soldiers are largely shared in common with non-recruited children. However, the majority of children in the high-risk environments do not respond to the risk factors by joining an armed force or group (Dowdney 2006). It is also true in Myanmar. Why other children are not involved in armed conflicts, even if they encounter similar circumstances and constraints facing the child soldiers? The answer to this essential question seems to be ignored to large extent. This chapter focuses on why other children on the Myanmar–China border do not join the *Tatmadaw Kyi* or the ethnic-based militias. By comparing the differences between child soldiers and other groups of vulnerable children, we could learn more about both.

6.1 Disabled Children

On one hand, armed conflicts would seriously affect the children with disabilities; on the other hand, the long-lasting armed conflicts would probably make more children disabled. Myanmar's first ever survey on persons with disability showed that around 318,000 children aged under 15 were disabled; 249,000 of them were of school age (6–15 years) and close to 480,000 women and girls were older than 15. As much as 60% of childhood disability was found to be due to congenital factors, with children most likely to be affected by intellectual or hearing impairment, often as a result of preventable causes such as anoxic birth injury, polio, and micronutrient deficiencies (Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and UNICEF 2012).

The children continued to be victims of landmines, explosive remnants, mortar and rocket-propelled grenade attacks, and of cross fire between the ethnic-based militias and the *Tatmadaw Kyi* (United Nations 2012). According to a report of the Kachin News Group, on 15 October 2012, a 7-year-old boy sheltering as a temporary refugee inside China suffered serious injuries after being hit by bullets reportedly fired by the *Tatmadaw Kyi* soldiers stationed across the border inside Kachin State. At the time the shooting occurred, armed conflicts between the *Tatmadaw Kyi* and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) were taking place (The Kachin News Group 2012). Among these threats, landmines are a persistent, hidden one, because “they can lie dormant for years in fields or in areas where children play, walk to school, or collect firewood or food or fetch water” (Dupuy and Peters 2010, p. 43).

In Myanmar, the use of landmines in rural areas is a military strategy, which is used by the conflicting parties (Ashley et al. 2010). For example, the *Tatmadaw Kyi* is one of the few government armies that still use landmines (Geneva Call 2011). Until 2011, both the *Tatmadaw* and the ethnic-based militias, such as United Wa State Army (UWSA) and the KIA, still deployed antipersonnel mines in order to restrict the movement of people, hinder the movement of troops, or to mark areas of operations (United Nations 2012). As child soldiers in the *Tatmadaw* claimed, all the soldiers were trained to handle mines and they witnessed many mine casualties in Bago Division and Mon and Shan States (Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor 2012).

Some areas bordering Bangladesh and China are mined, and mine accidents have occurred there (Geneva Call 2011). In the mined areas, security could not be guaranteed without several months or years of demining operations (United Nations 2000). It was estimated that 5 million people live in townships that contain mine-contaminated areas (Geneva Call 2011). Landmine explosions can cause children to lose their sight, hearing, or one or more limbs, permanently disabling them (Dupuy and Peters 2010). In addition, the lack of emergency medical care in conflict areas increases the chances of death (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008). Moreover, when Myanmar troops suffer casualties as a result of landmines or booby traps, they often take out their anger on the civilians and nearby villages for retaliation (International Crisis Group 2011).

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimates that the total number of amputees in Myanmar is 12,000, of whom the majority is probably mine victims (Geneva Call 2011). Many children accidentally explode mines while performing routine activities around the community (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008). In 2012, the UN country task force in Myanmar verified that 43 children had been killed or maimed as a result of conflict-related violence in 22 separate incidents; a total of 9 occurred in Kachin State as a result of fighting between the *Tatmadaw* and the KIA (United Nations 2012). In 2011, the media reports and information from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) indicated that there were at least 381 landmine casualties, including 84 deaths. However, as for the displaced people, they continue to suffer serious threats from antipersonnel mines.

Since the scope of data collection is limited, there may be more casualties that remain unreported (IRIN 2013; United Nations 2010).

6.2 Child Labor

In Myanmar, the law sets a minimum age of 13 for the employment of children. The law provides for the protection of children in the workplace by classifying children aged 14–17 as youths and limiting them to light duties; however, the legislation does not define “light duties.” In practice, the law was not enforced. Child labor remained prevalent and highly visible (US Department of State 2012). Due to the prolonged duration of the low-intensity conflicts, many families’ incomes have been lowered or lost completely, which pushed children to engage in income-earning activities and support their families. Older children, especially girls, might be called back from school to do income-generating work or to carry out domestic duties (Dupuy and Peters 2010).

Some children operate in the shadow economy as beggars or pickpockets, and many others work in more or less legitimate areas of national economies, including agriculture, construction, fishing, domestic service, and manufacturing (Holmes 2010). For instance, some children work in the informal sector, mostly in family business. This kind of self-employments includes small landholding farmers, fishermen, merchants, home-based shop operators, food hawkers, carpenters, and brokers or middlemen who charge fees to provide various services. As Thawng-hmung estimates, the members of this group probably constitute the majority of Myanmar’s employed ethnic minority populations (Thawng-hmung and East-West Center 2011). It is worth noting the self-employments of children are tacitly agreed by the ethnic-based militias, because most of them rely extensively on the material support of the local civilian population (Heppner et al. 2002).

Many other children, with no opportunity to engage in self-employment, have to seek employment in the food-processing and light-manufacturing industries, as street vendors or refuse collectors and as restaurant and teashop attendants (US Department of State 2012). Some of the children worked for vendors at the pagodas, and sold trinkets and cheap souvenirs (Schober 2011). It is reported that they work for much lower wages than adults—between 300 and 1,000 kyat (US\$ 0.25–0.85) per day for children, compared to wages of 1,500–3,000 kyat (US\$ 1.25–2.50) per day for adults (The Irrawaddy Magazine 2009).

However, in some cases, some child laborers were forced to be porters of the *Tatmadaw Kyi*. For example, Shee Meh, who was forced to porter three times at ages 15 and 16, has such experiences:

In our village, we had to struggle for our daily survival because of economic hardship. We had a lot of trouble [because] the SPDC soldiers would often come and bother us. They would abduct the young girls and other villagers and use them as porters. I myself was made to be a porter three times. I remember carrying very heavy loads of bullets and rice from village to village (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008).

6.3 Children Seeking Evacuation

Some families in the border area send their children to monasteries, where they can access education more easily, which is a tradition in Myanmar. Buddhist monks were prominent in trying to fill the vacuum in the Myanmar government's response at the community level, which enjoys great respect in their communities. For most boys in Shan State, the only opportunity to learn to read and write their native tongue is either at the school in Loi Tailang or a Shan temple on the Thai side of the border (Graceffo 2008).

Therefore, many parents, particularly those who cannot afford education for their children, send their children to the monasteries where they can learn Buddhist teachings, acquire some education, and receive better meals than the parents can afford to give them (Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and UNICEF 2012; Steinberg 2010). In the Yangon Region, the Chinese monks mainly come from the cross-border ethnic groups in Shan and Kachin States (Wu 2006).

Some families in conflict areas sent their children to friends or relatives (United Nations 1996). In some cases, different individual members of particular families may move into areas controlled or influenced by different nonstate armed groups, in order to diversify the family's protection strategies and maximize opportunities to secure livelihoods (South et al. 2010). However, evacuation also poses a long-term risk to children, including the trauma of separation from the family and the increased danger of human trafficking or of illegal adoption (Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and UNICEF 2012). Many other children are trafficked for adoption purposes, which sometimes results in them virtually becoming slaves to their new families (Holmes 2010).

Some criminal gangs find it more attractive to smuggle humans than drugs, because human trafficking has two additional advantages over drugs and weapons trafficking. First of all, there is an almost limitless supply of the "product"; second, whereas the return on a particular batch of illicit drugs or weapons is a one-off, a trafficked person can generate income for the traffickers for several years (Holmes 2010).

According to Myanmar's Anti-Trafficking Unit, in 2009, 84.8% of trafficking victims assisted were trafficked to China, 9.8% to Thailand, and 6% were trafficked within Myanmar (The United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking 2010). It was reported that up to 700 Myanmar migrant workers in a pineapple factory in Thailand's Southern Prachuap Khiri Khan Province, who are victims of forced labor, including 50 children below the age of 18, were forced to process pineapples for up to 80 hours weekly, in contravention of Thai law (IRIN 2013).

The Palaung Women's Organization (PWO) has documented 72 cases of actual or suspected trafficking involving 110 people, which took place along the China–Burma border, mostly during the past 6 years. A disturbing trend is that 11 of the cases were children under the age of 10, 5 of whom were under the age of 1. Some of these children were simply kidnapped from their homes, but others were sold by parents who were alcoholics or drug users (Palaung Women's Organization 2011). In addition, trafficking of girls into marriage was also frequently reported by girls

and young women from minority communities in Northern Shan State, who often were forced into marriages deeper into China. Trafficking of young children and babies from Myanmar into China was also reported (Caouette et al. 2001).

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Chapter 7

Transnational Public–Private Partnership: A “Second Best” Solution for Reducing Child Soldiering

Abstract This chapter discusses why there is no optimal solution for reducing child soldiering, and then analyzes the feasibility of resolving this issue through a “second best” solution, that is, “transnational public–private partnership”. Then, this chapter analyzes the current situation of transnational public–private partnership in Myanmar.

Keywords Optimal solution • Transnational public–private partnership • Second best solution • Humanitarian assistances • Private military and security corporation

Governance by government is not sufficiently inclusive and that governance without government suffers from problems of functionality as well as legitimacy (Friesendorf and Daase 2010). There are several solutions available for governing child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border. This chapter analyzes why there is no optimal solution for reducing child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border, and points out that the conventional solutions (e.g., state-centered partnership and international intervention) are no longer adequate in dealing with child soldiering that extends beyond the scope of the traditional understanding of security. Further, this chapter explores the extent to which public–private partnership (PPP) will be a “second best” solution, due to the presence of no optimal solution. Finally, this chapter reviews the existing achievements by PPPs in reducing child soldiering in Myanmar.

7.1 Why There is No Optimal Solution for Reducing Child Soldiering?

During the past decades, a divided international community took three different solutions to Myanmar. While most Western countries imposed a series of escalating economic and other sanctions; Myanmar’s neighbors keep normalizing relations with Myanmar; International organizations tried to adopt a third way, that is, directly engage with the Myanmar government, as well as the non-state actors in Myanmar (Pedersen 2013). There is no optimal solution for reducing child soldiering, because all the stakeholders are facing different critical challenges. Moreover,

the situation becomes more complex, and most of the conventional solutions are not suitable to reduce child soldiering on the Myanmar–China border, such as humanitarian assistance, international intervention sponsored by United Nations, and intervention under the international law framework.

7.1.1 Limited Accesses to Disadvantaged Populations

Some 65 international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) operate in Myanmar (Saha 2011). The Yangon-based INGOs and UN agencies generally take a long-term, incremental solution to expanding access into conflict-affected parts of the country. They tend to start programs in areas adjacent to state capitals, and gradually move into more remote locations (South et al. 2010).

In general, the Myanmar government cites safety concerns for its refusal to allow access to ceasefire areas, non-ceasefire areas, and “mixed administrative areas” (United Nations 2011; Stover et al. 2007).

In fact, the Myanmar government does not worry unnecessarily. The safety concerns do exist. For example, low-intensity conflicts have damaged roads and bridges in the conflict-affected regions; since mid-July 2012, the UN-led aid convoys have been on standby, as the permissions have yet to be granted (IRIN 2012b). In addition, there are some mixed administrative areas in the border areas, which are controlled by dozens of small-scale militias. These small-scale militias may have fewer than 20 men, whereas others may number up to 300. In many cases, these militias serve as buffers between the *Tatmadaw* and ethnic-based armed groups, and as counterforces to deny opposition groups access to territory, population, and strategic trade routes (Kramer 2012).

Moreover, some demining activities are being undertaken by the *Tatmadaw* and non-state actors (e.g., NGO), but the government refused to grant permission for humanitarian demining (Geneva Call 2011). One type of demining that does take place is when armed non-state actors (NSAs) clear a path in the jungle to enable the movement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and humanitarian aid agencies between one area and another. However, NSAs’ clearance methods do not meet the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), and mines may be re-planted by the NSAs in other areas (Geneva Call 2011).

It is asserted that the safety concerns are not simply excuses. The Myanmar government does grant greater access to specific INGOs. For instance, in 2010, the government allowed United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), on behalf of the UN country task forces on monitoring and reporting, to investigate the recruitment units to observe recruitment procedures (United Nations 2011).

Except for the access restrictions, expatriate staff members of INGOs are limited in their ability to travel in Myanmar. To travel outside Yangon, they must apply for travel authorizations, which can take several weeks to obtain. This increases their reliance on local staff for monitoring programs (Saha 2011).

Until the present time, most international agencies and donors had no direct access to conflict-affected parts of southeast Burma. In some conflict-affected areas,

except the clinics and medical outreach teams run by independent local NGOs and CBOs, others are run by the military and administrative/civilian wings of militias. (South et al. 2010). In addition, no travel permits are given for short-term consultants or international trainers and INGO employees have to state exactly their planned length of stay in Burma on visa applications (Burma Medical Association et al. 2010). As a result, the lack of data has an impact on planning for healthcare provision for child soldiers and medical services are likely to be at best inadequate and at worst nonexistent (Uppard 2003).

7.1.2 *Imbalance of Risk Allocation*

In practice, the INGOs, the local NGOs and communities all suffered from the imbalances of risk allocation, which could be concluded in the following three aspects:

First, lack of long-term funding. Most agencies (e.g., US Agency for International Development (USAID)) provide funding for periods typically from 1 year to 18 months (Wessells 2004). In Myanmar, the period of funding is even shorter; much funding available is short term in nature, often from 6 months to 1 year (Saha 2011). The bilateral and multilateral aids are still allocated to specific and narrow development activities, and donors focus on short-term projects rather than longer-term programs (Picard and Buss 2009). In other words, some long-term projects are operated through short-term funding. For example, long-term financing for the development of drugs and vaccines is mostly directed to the middle- and high-income countries. For low-income countries, only the affordable vaccines and drugs could be introduced (World Economic Forum 2005). History provides little comfort to those who wish international donors would provide more welfare support to the poor anywhere. Even if they are willing, they may never be able to provide a sufficient amount for a sustainable period (Peou 2009).

Second, insufficient security guarantee for local staffs. Local staffs often take risks for working in the INGOs. In some cases, they work in secret. If they are caught or arrested, they would probably confront arrest, ill treatment, or unlawful killing (Human Rights Education Institute of Burma 2008). For instance, the *Tatmadaw Kyi* reportedly has still not revoked its “shoot on sight” order that is in place in areas where civilians live and work (Burma News International 2012). In August 2012, Myanmar’s President, Thein Sein, pardoned three local UN-linked staff (Radio Free Asia 2012). In addition, it is reported that two employees of the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) were held, and the staffs of World Food Programme (WFP) were also detained (The Guardian 2012).

Third, unintended consequences for local communities. For example, in China’s opium substitution program, there are some unintended consequences at complete odds with the rhetoric of what is supposed to uplift ex-poppy farmers (Kramer and Woods 2012). In some cases, local ex-poppy farmers are hired by rubber plantations; but, they find it difficult to tend to their fields as planting and weeding coincide with rubber plantation maintenance, which further decimates their food security. Moreover, most plantations hire migrant laborers from other poor areas

of Myanmar. As a result, these farmers who are in most need of alternative sources of income following the opium substitution program receive only little material benefits (Kramer and Woods 2012).

7.1.3 Limitations of International Law Framework

The actual gap between the aspirations of law and the practical reality of child recruitment is one of the greatest problems in ending the recruitment of child soldiers (Rosen 2012). There are three defects of the international law framework in preventing child soldiering.

First, double standards prevail in the Optional Protocol. As Rosen argues, the Optional Protocol’s double standards permit sovereign states to recruit child soldiers but bars non-state groups from doing the same (Rosen 2007). For example, Article 3 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC) permits voluntary recruitment below 18 years; it imposes the obligation on the states to “raise the minimum age in years” for voluntary recruitment from the present age limit of 15 years. As this obligation does not apply to military schools, it opens a possibility for circumventing the age limits set for recruitment (United Nations 2001). As a result, “it remains largely ignored by conflict groups, as there has been little action on the enforcement side” (Singer 2005).

Second, the existing legal protections on children is inadequate. The international human rights law and international humanitarian law do not adequately protect children. Differing levels of children soldiers’ protection leave them vulnerable to particular abuses (Breen 2007). For instance, the Committee of the Red Cross (CRC) required that state parties ensure that children under 15 years of age do not take a “direct part in hostilities” (International Committee of the Red Cross 1977). However, the Optional Protocol stipulates that “armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of the State should not, under any circumstance, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of 18 years” (United Nations 2001). As a result, most cases of recruitment were of children between 15 and 17 years of age (United Nations 2011).

Third, “the erratic nature of compliance and ratification of international law” (Cohn et al. 1994). Since there are defects in the international law framework, the signing and ratification of the international conventions or protocols could not guarantee that child soldiering on the Myanmar-China border is truly prevented.

7.1.4 Rise of Private Military and Security Companies

The identifying marker of the privatized military industry is their offer of services traditionally falling within the domain of national military, such as combat operations, strategic planning, military training, intelligence, military logistics, and information warfare (Singer 2003). The rise of private military and security companies

(PMSCs) is stimulated by both low-intensity armed conflicts and the limitations of the statehood to govern them. PMSCs, which engage in combat, training, logistics, policing, risk analysis, and guarding have expanded rapidly in recent decades (Williams 2010). As a result, PMSCs have changed the practice of humanitarian assistance and international intervention, because states and non-state actors, even individuals, could lease military capabilities of the highest level in the world (Singer 2003).

In order to confront the increased security challenges around the world and provide protection for the 12,000–14,000 UN facilities worldwide, close to 60% of the UN offices have been using the services of PMSCs. Most of the PMSCs are local companies, which provide guard services for the UN office, as well as residential security for the UN staff (United Nations 2010). Moreover, humanitarian organizations like (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) and the WFP have used armed escorts extensively in transporting aid to populations in need (Perrin 2012).

The world’s largest security company, Group 4 Securicor (G4S), employs nearly 600,000 people and is the second largest private employer in the world. It is present in some 30 countries in Africa and 22 countries in Central and Latin America (United Nations 2010). In Myanmar, the French firms ABAC, OGS, and PHL Consultants are all rumored to have helped train the local military and assist it in actions against rebels (Singer 2003).

This raises a bigger question: if UN will engage in reducing child soldiering on the Myanmar-China border, it will not exclude the possibility that more PMSCs will be introduced into Myanmar. This will make the situation on the Myanmar-China border much worse than it used to be.

In the conflict situation, the use of PMSCs would lead to reprisals between warring parties. At the same time, insecurity is the basic raw material for PMSCs; therefore, peace will always remain antithetical to its growth (Bharadwaj 2003). In the long run, using PMSCs to reduce child soldiering might be very problematic, such as blurred responsibility, lack of standards and broad policy review of PMSCs, and secrecy and opacity within the UN system (Pingeot 2012).

7.2 Transnational PPP: A “Second Best” Solution of Reducing Child Soldiering

Over the past decade, transnational PPPs have proliferated widely, and they can be found in many issue areas, such as corporate social responsibility, health, or humanitarian aid (Campe and Beisheim 2008). A transnational PPP is a multi-stakeholder partnership including local NGOs and community-based organizations, national governments, INGOs, international donors, transnational companies (TNCs), and neighboring countries.

In general, a transnational PPP means “continuous and relatively institutionalized trans-boundary interactions between public and private actors that formally

strive for the provision of collective goods, whereas private actors can be for-profit and/or civil society organizations” (Schäferhoff et al. 2009, p. 455).

Although the definitions of transnational PPPs are verified in accordance with different economic and cultural contexts, there should be some similarities. I draw on Reich’s three-point definition of a PPP (Reich 2000), and advance four essential elements of transnational PPP: first, non-hierarchical relationships among all and only relevant partners (e.g., civil society organizations, international NGOs, local NGOs and transnational corporations); second, priority given to disadvantaged groups; third, risk allocation between the public and private sectors; fourth, trust building among the partners.

The transnational PPP is a second best solution, because Myanmar is facing the double challenge of limited statehood and human insecurity, and the optimal solution is not available in the foreseeable future. The situation of Myanmar has become more complex, and the number of actors involved in preventing child soldiering has multiplied; this has raised the need to consider partnership among a range of actors. Recently, the policy coordinations and commitments, which establish the basis for partnership in preventing child soldiering have become more evident in Myanmar.

Efficiency is also a major reason for international organizations to contract out certain functions to private actors. In both development aid and the humanitarian sector dealings with complex emergencies, the UN and the EU increasingly contract out the provision of humanitarian aid, health services, and other functions to private organizations, charities, churches, and INGOs (Börzel and Risse 2005).

For a firm that makes the business decision to remain in a conflict environment, doing nothing is not an option. In most instances, host nations are unwilling—or, more typically, unable—to provide security; hence, TNCs are compelled to seek self-help solutions (Rosenau 2009). If the outcomes of philanthropic activities benefit both TNCs and vulnerable populations, it would have positive feedbacks on TNCs’ performance in transnational PPPs.

There are opportunities of promoting transnational PPPs, both home and abroad. Through public–private partnership, Indonesian government is funding civil society agencies, and established 21 centers to support emergency tracing, which work with governmental social service provider and extend service to vulnerable children in rural villages (Sarrouh and Boothby 2011) For the Myanmar government, this is shaping PPP stronger and stronger by reciprocally assisting private-sector-led organizations which are key drivers of the national economy (Min 2012). For the international society, as Noeleen Heyzer, the Executive Secretary of the United States Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) states, the Myanmar government should boost partnerships between the private and public sectors, in order to accelerate development and job creation in Myanmar (UN News Centre 2012).

In the context of Myanmar, transnational PPPs have been playing an active role, and non-state providers are major contributors to service provision in health—greatly outweighing state-supported services (Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and UNICEF 2012). For example, INGOs attract increased

government funding by “matching” government expenditure in priority sectors and encouraging specific “joint-venture” development projects (International Crisis Group 2002). Concerning the achievements of transnational PPP in reducing child soldiering, it could be represented in the following aspects:

7.2.1 Establishment of Monitoring System and Complaint Regime

The UN Security Council adopted solution 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) calling for the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2008). Therefore, in Myanmar, a task force on monitoring and reporting has been established by the UN, which comprises United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), International Labour Organization (ILO), WFP, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Vision, and Save the Children (United Nations 2006; United Nations 2012b). In February 2007, a complaint mechanism was established by the ILO under which individuals can bring cases of forced labor (including child soldiering) to an ILO liaison office in Yangon (Child Soldiers International 2012).

After that, the Myanmar government and the UN signed an action plan to prevent the practice of child soldiering by the *Tatmadaw*, and promised to release underage recruits (United Nations 2012b). By signing the plan, the *Tatmadaw* and the government have committed to preventing underage recruitment, as well as identifying, discharging, and reintegrating underage recruits (McLaughlin 2013).

With the cooperation of the Myanmar government, the *Tatmadaw*, and the ethnic-based militias, the monitoring system and compliance mechanism do provide specific and reliable information on child soldiering, and gain some effects.

Since February 2007, the task force has helped secure the release of more than 500 children from military service and reintegrate them back into their communities, although it has remained difficult to verify whether the children had actually been released. In September 2008, it was able to get permission from the Ministry of Defense to enter four military recruitment centers—one each in Yangon, Magwe, Mandalay, and Sagaing regions—and provide training on topics such as humanitarian law, human rights, and children in armed conflict (Lwin and Myat 2012).

According to government figures, between 2004 and July 2012, the *Tatmadaw Kyi* released 600 child soldiers (Bureau of Democracy et al. 2012). In addition, the Myanmar government rejected 417 potential new recruits at the recruitment unit screening between January and the end of September 2011 for being under 18 years of age (United Nations 2012a). The ethnic-based militias also made progresses with the assistance of monitoring system and complaint regime. For instance, in January 2013, the Kachin Independence Army released eight underage recruits from the *Tatmadaw* captured during the fighting in Kachin State.

The ILO acted as an intermediary between the government and the Kachin, and it is working with the Myanmar government to have them formally discharged (McLaughlin 2013).

In response to complaints lodged by the ILO on underage recruitment by *Tatmadaw Kyi* officers, recruitment of child soldiers during 2012 dramatically decreased, with 25 cases of children recruited, and compared with 119 cases in 2011, following a general trend of decrease over the past several years: 133 recruited in 2010, and 175 recruited in 2009. The decreased reports of cases from the calendar year could imply that the recruitment of child soldiers was slowing down and attributed increased reports of recruit child soldiers from prior years to increased awareness of rights (Bureau of Democracy et al. 2012).

7.2.2 Partnership in Public Health and Humanitarian Assistancess

In the field of public health and humanitarian assistances, transnational PPPs also present outstanding performance, which shrink the recruiting pool of potential child soldiers to some extent.

In recent years, many new initiatives have been launched that are conducting research into new drugs, vaccines, and treatment options. Some of the most prominent among these partnerships are the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (DNDi), the GAVI Alliance, and the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI). These groups are able to coordinate scientific expertise from the private sector, with financial contributions from governments and the philanthropic sector (Zacher 2008). For example, in November 2012, through the partnership between the Myanmar government, World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, and the GAVI Alliance (a PPP engaging in improving health in the world's poorest countries) and other partners, Myanmar's Ministry of Health officially introduced a new pentavalent vaccine to protect children against five potentially life-threatening diseases (such as diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, Hepatitis B, and influenza) (UNICEF 2012). For Myanmar, this transnational PPP is a timely contribution, because pneumonia and meningitis account for 35% of under-5 deaths in Myanmar (UNICEF 2012).

In short, transnational PPPs in public health afforded both an opportunity for policy influence and a means of effectively responding to calls for greater corporate responsibility. In a more attenuated sense, corporate involvement in partnerships also opened up potential avenues to new markets and products (Long 2011).

In addition, PPPs also makes a contribution to remedy the shortage of doctors in Myanmar. In 2011, Myanmar had 26,435 doctors nationwide; but most (15,508) are in the private sector, where services are unaffordable to most of the population. In 2008, it was reported that there were fewer than 15 health workers for every 10,000 people, short of the internationally recommended 23 needed to provide basic life-saving services (IRIN 2012a). Through a transnational PPP, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has been working closely with the Ministry of Health to empower

the technical capacities and resources of the various human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) care programs in Myanmar. By the end of 2011, MSF has been the largest antiretroviral (ARV) treatment provider in Myanmar, with over 23,000 HIV patients enrolled at its clinics in Kachin, Rakhine, and Shan States, and Tanintharyi and Yalong regions (Médecins Sans Frontières 2011). As a result, the transnational PPP has saved the lives of more than 23,000 people in Myanmar (Médecins Sans Frontières 2012).

Concerning the partnership in humanitarian assistances, in July 2012, the U.S. Secretary of State’s International Fund for Women and Girls and the Abbott Fund announced a PPP to address critical community needs in Myanmar. The key areas of partnership focus on health awareness, prevention, and treatment; education and training; and expanding economic opportunities for women (Abbott Laboratories 2012). In addition, some humanitarian agencies established partnerships in demining; for instance, the UNICEF and Danish Church Aid have been working with the Myanmar government since November 2012 on demining issues (IRIN 2013).

7.2.3 *Opium Substitution Programme on the Myanmar-China Border*

In the Myanmar–China border area, the opium is mostly cultivated by marginalized farmers in isolated mountainous areas of Shan and Kachin States (Kramer 2012). As the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates, about 300,000 households were involved in opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar, the majority in Shan State (United Nations 2013). China has supplied emergency aid to ex-poppy farmers in Shan and Kachin States for years. China donated 10,000 metric tons of rice directly to local cease-fire authorities across the border in 2007 and again in 2008 (Transnational Institute 2010).

For confronting the threats of drug smuggling, the Chinese government has launched opium substitution programs since 2006, which aim at the disadvantaged populations in the areas of cultivating opium poppy and promote the sustainable substitution development in the local area. Chinese companies invested in large-scale rubber plantations and other crops such as sugarcane, tea, and corn. However, it is worth noting that most contracts are made with local state and central government and companies rather than with local communities (Transnational Institute 2010).

The Chinese companies often invest in the areas that are more easily accessible (Transnational Institute 2010), which could receive several state-subsidized financial incentives, including easing bureaucratic hurdles for investment; relaxation of labor regulations, subsidies, and import tax and value-added tax (VAT) waivers; and, most importantly, permission to import crops produced under the scheme (Transnational Institute 2010).

According to a report in *Mizzima News*, the number of Chinese companies investing to develop alternative crops to poppy in the Golden Triangle has risen

from 42 to 180 since 2005, with total financial investment up to 1 billion yuan (\$ 157 million) during that time. In the past 5 years, more than 200,000 ha in the area have been planted in substitution crops, such as sugarcane, corn, tea, and tropical fruit (*Mizzima News* 2012). Many investments in opium substitution are located within areas controlled by the Myanmar government. The Myanmar government has advanced a 30-year rubber development plan, with a goal of 600,000 ha and an annual production of 300,000 metric t to be reached by 2030 (Transnational Institute 2010).

7.2.4 *Private Mediation in Myanmar Peace Talks*

When it's too sensitive for governments to launch peace talks, private mediators could effectively facilitate communications among the stakeholders. In most cases, private mediators have no political interests (Papagianni 2011). Recently, prominent businessmen have been mediating peace talks between the government and the ethnic-based militias, who have vested interests in industrial and resource extraction of Myanmar. For example, Kachin businessman Yup Zau Hkaung of the Jadeland Company established a group with other Kachin businessmen (e.g., Lamai Gum Ja, Hkpara Khun Awng, and N'Shen Hsan Awng), in order to mediate peace talks between the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the government (Burma News International 2013).

The mediation of the private sector also occurred in the peace talk between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the government. The mediator is the Dawei Princess Company, which not only provided financial support and travel arrangements for the government peace delegation, but also invested in establishing the KNU liaison office in Dawei town. As a subcontractor for the US\$ 60 million Dawei Special Economic Zone, this company is partly located in the KNU controlled area (Burma News International 2013). However, private mediators have their own limitations. For example, they could not convene conflicting parties to sign a peace agreement (Papagianni 2011). Therefore, it's critical to have partnership of governments to reach a sustainable peace agreement.

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Chapter 8

Possible Countermeasures to Govern Child Soldiering

Abstract In accordance with the principles of public-private partnership, this chapter suggests a series of countermeasures in order to govern child soldiering on the Myanmar-China border.

Keywords Discipline · Building trust · Flexibilities · Supervising mechanism · International awareness

A proper transnational public-private partnership should have the following three principle objectives: in the short term, education and vocational training are the most available countermeasures for reducing the negative consequences of child soldiering. Concerning the medium-term countermeasures, mutual trust and established monastery-based children protective mechanism should be established, while the long term countermeasure should seek to eliminate the underlying causes of child soldiering.

8.1 Enforcing Discipline

Humanitarian and human rights groups have sought to have profound effects on the development of international law frameworks preventing the practice of child soldiering. However, the international law framework seems to have only limited efficacy, which cannot replace the delivery of national justice (United Nations 2011a; Rosen 2012). For Myanmar, one of the most urgent matters is the enforcement of disciplinary process, which should be implemented in light of local conditions.

Making laws is not the same as finding ways to enforce them (Singer 2005). For the Myanmar government, first of all, it should keep on taking disciplinary actions against the personnel or group responsible for child soldiering, and place a tighter mechanism to prevent child soldiering and demobilize child soldiers, in coordination with the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting (United Nations 2007a, 2009). In addition, the government should support legislation for and promote an international ban on both state and non-state actors recruiting children under the age of 18 (United Nations 1996).

For the *Tatmadaw*, it does enjoy a de facto independence (International Crisis Group 2011a). For example, the *Tatmadaw*'s power could rival that of the president. It not only holds 25 % of the reserved legislative seats but also maintains considerable

executive authority, such as appointment of a presidential candidate and appointment of the ministers in charge of defense, home affairs, and border affairs (International Crisis Group 2011b). Therefore, the *Tatmadaw* must play a more active role in preventing child soldiering. First, the *Tatmadaw* should set a good example, undermine the sense of impunity, and strike out the unofficial league of interests in child soldiering, which will not only create a network of civilian brokers but also entice military personnel to ignore the minimum recruitment age restrictions enacted by the law (Child Soldiers International 2013). Second, prevention of child soldiering should be clearly specified in appropriate clauses in peace agreements and relevant documents. Both, the *Tatmadaw* and the ethnic-based militias should guarantee that all children enrolled in educational programs have regular contact, including visits, with their families. At the same time, any educational opportunity offered to children should not be conditioned on military service (Heppner et al. 2007).

For the ethnic-based militias, especially the militias in delicate situation or strained relation with the Myanmar government and the *Tatmadaw*, model agreements with non-state actors not to recruit or use children as soldiers is one possible way forward (Maslen 1998). In other words, it is recommended that they sign “deed commitment” of preventing child soldiering with UN system organizations or international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), which is an alternative option to promote the enforcement of disciplinary process in the militias. There has been a precedent to go by. In 2012, the Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army (KNPP/KA) and the New Mon State Party/Mon National Liberation Army (NMSP/MNLA) signed a “deed commitment” with Geneva Call, a Swiss-based rights group. Signatories must ensure that children aged below 18 years are not recruited into or used by the militias, and the militias are also required to ensure the well-being and rights of children in their controlled areas (IRIN 2012a). For the militias signing “deed commitment,” it could be regarded as a way of maintaining dialogue, securing humanitarian assistance, and keeping their credibility in the international society.

Concerning the militias’ refusal to stop child soldiering, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and interested state governments should lobby and pressure the international community to withhold recognition and all the benefits that accrue to any group that seizes power through the use of child soldiers or to those that aid them. This would send an effective message to other groups that they will not be able to achieve their aims if they continue using child soldiers (Singer 2004).

8.2 Building Mutual Trust

Lack of communication and understanding is also a major reason that deep ethnic cleavages and distrust still exist.

First, cooperation with the ethnic-based militias. Some ethnic-based militias and their affiliates have formed NGOs in their areas (Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and UNICEF 2012). It has been an established fact. In some conflict-affected areas, except the clinics and medical outreach teams run by

independent local NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs), others are run by the military and administrative/civilian wings of militias (South et al. 2010). For example, the NGOs and CBOs in Northern Myanmar, including the Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS), Metta Development Foundation, Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), and the Shalom Foundation, with access to the *Tatmadaw* and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), have played a key role in addressing the needs of thousands of displaced populations (IRIN 2012b).

If militias have already replaced state agents as the providers of protection in the local communities, then trying to remove them will only add to the impetus for short-term predation and further endanger human lives. On the other hand, defending the position of militia leaders and solidifying their ties in a local community encourages them to form a vested interest in the community's sustainability and productivity (Ahram 2011).

Communicating and building trust with the ethnic-based militias is likely a more constructive method for increasing access. As Terry notes, "aid organizations make some serious compromises when working in the country, particularly in relation to whom they are permitted to assist" (Terry 2011). In fact, some cross-border aid organizations in the highly dangerous working environment have cooperated with the ethnic-based militias active in the area, which could provide them with intelligence, transportation, logistical support, and physical protection (The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict 2009). For some aid agencies working in zones of ongoing armed conflicts, they have little choice but to keep some form of relationship with ethnic-based militias (South et al. 2010). For a sustainable transnational public-private partnership, ethnic-based militias are not only recruiters of child soldiers but also could be a part of the solution in governing child soldiering.

8.3 Extending Flexibilities

The Myanmar government has limited influences to persuade the ethnic-based militias in negotiating humanitarian assistance or protect humanitarian workers in areas of armed conflicts.

How to improve the current partnership for preventing child soldiering? It is an issue of flexibility to some extent. Concerning the complex situations in Myanmar, any sustainable transnational PPP should conform to the situation and retain flexibilities within the limit of what ought to be allowed. In my opinion, the current partnership should seek compromises in the following three aspects:

First of all, adjustment of the established standards and norms is required. All the partners, especially the donors should recognize that, in the context of Myanmar, it is not necessary to choose between promoting political change and supporting social development in Myanmar, because both strategies need to be part of an integral effort to create stability and improve social welfare (International Crisis Group 2002). In addition, it is necessary to lower standards of transparency and accountability in exceptional circumstances, where security requires full confidentiality,

and it is not applicable to the established standards and norms (South et al. 2010; International Crisis Group 2002).

Second, staged demobilization of child soldiers is required. The immediate and unconditional release of all child soldiers seems to be divorced from reality, especially for the *Tatmadaw Kyi* and some non-cease-fire ethnic-based militias. In addition, even if all the child soldiers are demobilized, how could Myanmar make proper arrangements for them in the long run? It will be a very knotty problem.

Third, as a more desirable alternative, it is recommended for the armed forces and groups to grant a right to voluntary discharge to any soldier who was recruited as a minor (Heppner et al. 2007; Child Soldiers International 2013). At the same time, cash allowance should not be paid to the voluntarily discharged child soldiers because cash allowance would result in the discharged child soldiers becoming the objects of hatred and resentment (Rosen 2012). It was reported in Liberia that a cash allowance of US\$ 300 had significantly negative impacts on child soldiers and they were abused by their commanders, who cast greedy eyes on the cash allowance (United Nations 2006b). When allowances are considered necessary, they should be delivered in small payments over a longer period, in order to ensure a peaceful integration more effectively (United Nations 2006b).

8.4 Improving Protective Mechanism

Concerning the current transnational PPP in preventing child soldiering, there are two essential improvements that are needed urgently.

First, the International Labour Organization (ILO) complaints mechanism should develop alternative methodologies to identify orphans and displaced children, and establish liaison office on the China side along the Myanmar–China border.

Since, the ILO has acted only on the basis of complaints by parents or guardians, it seems unlikely that orphans or children without guardians would be demobilized (Heppner et al. 2007). According to the cases reviewed by Human Rights Watch, children were released from the *Tatmadaw* only when a parent or guardian advocated on their behalf (Heppner et al. 2007). The ILO might extend the methodologies identifying underage workers, which relies on a combination of alternative sources, to help the orphans and displaced children with no parent or guardian. The alternative sources include official family lists, education records, testimonials, and statements from village headmen and religious leaders, and formal attestations signed in the presence of a lawyer (Child Soldiers International 2012).

The low rates of demobilization represent only a small percentage of the total number of children who are recruited into the armed forces and groups in Myanmar (Heppner et al. 2007). Moreover, without a specific ILO complaint, the Myanmar government does not actively seek out children in the *Tatmadaw* or take proactive action on requests to investigate, even when released children confirm the presence of other children in the ranks (United Nations 2009). Therefore, the ILO should establish other complaint channels (e.g., liaison office) on the China

side along the Myanmar–China border. Comparing with the ILO liaison office in Yangon, the new complaint channel in the Myanmar–China border is more accessible, especially for the child soldiers or other victims in Kachin and Shan States. In addition, through a liaison office in China, it is more convenient for the ILO to accept and hear complaints from the child soldiers or other victims who fled from Myanmar to China.

Second, China and Myanmar should improve their birth registration mechanisms, including free birth registration and alternative mechanisms for age verification.

The lack of a birth certificate or other official document attesting to a child's age and identity becomes more problematic, which not only increases their vulnerability to child soldiering but also perpetuates the difficulty of verifying child recruitment (United Nations 2007b; Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and UNICEF 2012). Concerning the cases without birth certificates or other official identity documents, alternative mechanisms for age verification should rely on other reliable proof of age, which might include school diplomas, school records, and cross-checking with families and local officials (Child Soldiers International 2013). Both Chinese and Myanmar governments should establish marriage registration administrative offices in the ports of entry along the Myanmar–China border and provide free birth registration, which will save time and economic cost for inhabitants along the border. For the displaced population and refugees fled from Myanmar to China, inflexible repatriating policy is not applicable; the Chinese government should establish protection regime to guarantee their basic human rights in China until they could return in safety to Myanmar.

Third, it's necessary to establish monasteries-based protection mechanism, which is developed and managed by Buddhist communities, which have played at times a divisive role in the construction of civil society (Schober 2011). If a degree of normalcy could be maintained for children in armed conflicts, it will effectively protect them from child soldiering (United Nations 2011c). In the context of Myanmar, establishment of monasteries-based protection mechanism would be a feasible option. In Myanmar, many politicians submit themselves to Buddhist causes in the hope that their patronage will bring political legitimacy. For example, Aung San Suu Kyi's has made extensive use of salient Buddhist narratives, idioms, and imagery to convey to Burmese audiences (Schober 2011).

At present, the Buddhist communities and the Military are the two most powerful institutions in Myanmar (Schober 2011). In Myanmar, many monasteries serve as schools and orphanages at the same time. The monastic schools do have unique advantages in education. For example, monastic schools are free of charges (e.g., enrollment fees) and usually provide teaching materials such as books for free. According to the Myanmar government's figures, there are 1183 of this kind of monastic schools, which have been recognized as a kind of co-education system in Myanmar. Children could engage in formal education in some monasteries, which could teach them the government curriculum. In contrast, the NGOs' vocational training programs could not provide children with officially recognized degrees (Lorch 2008).

8.5 Raising International Awareness

How to raise international awareness for preventing child soldiering? The possible countermeasures should be divided into two aspects, one is to establish an information-sharing platform, and the other is to adjust the strategy of publicity.

Concerning the establishment of an information-sharing platform, it is determined by the weak communications infrastructure in Myanmar and urgent situations. It is reported that the communications infrastructure in Myanmar is still underdeveloped. For example, telecommunication systems are poorly developed, with few fixed-line telephones, faxes, and mobile phones. Moreover, internet connectivity is not available in many of the peripheral locations (UNAIDS 2012). Though, the Myanmar government has made email services (e.g., Gmail, Yahoo, and Hotmail) accessible, internet access within Myanmar is very low, at less than 1% of the population. In addition, Myanmar still maintains a domestic Internet system separate from the global Internet (Price 2011).

It is important to establish a mechanism to exchange information among Myanmar and other neighboring countries. Because incomplete intelligence would increase more risks to the former child soldiers and vulnerable children. There have been initiatives to develop the systematic documentation of child soldiering in conflict situations, such as the databases in Uganda and Sri Lanka, which were developed by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF; United Nations 2005). Historically, there have been informal police-to-police cooperations between Myanmar and China, such as a number of Border Liaison Offices established along the Myanmar–China border to resolve human trafficking (Smith 2010). Considering the strategic interests and current situation, China should take the lead in establishing an information-sharing platform, aimed at collecting information for preventing child soldiering: information of individuals and groups suspected of child soldiering in the border area, information of former child soldiers, deserted child soldiers and other victims, and information of birth registration and marriage registration in cross-border families. The information should be shared with the Myanmar government, INGOs, local NGOs, and CBOs active along the Myanmar–China border, which will make great contributions to joint investigations, exchanges of intelligence, and faster identifications of child soldiers and other victims.

With regard to the strategy of publicity, there should be three improvements in the future. First, publicity should be a popular subject form for the ethnic groups living along the Myanmar–China border (e.g., Kachin and Wa), which should be written in the subdialects of these ethnic groups, with supports from the CBOs and local NGOs familiar with the local culture. Second, it is vital to reinforce local understandings and norms about child protection from armed conflicts (Honwana 2008). For example, the communities and their leaders should raise awareness about the rights of children, the negative consequences of child soldiering, and the tactics of child soldiering. Third, child soldiers should be allowed to express their opinions and share experiences freely. The depictions of child soldiers as morally stunted and relentless killers are quite common and are often uncritically propagated by the media

(Wainryb 2011). It is necessary to highlight the significant variations of child soldiers' experiences and circumstances, but not take them as homogeneous, in order to avoid the public opinion on child soldiers falling into a dichotomy between victim and perpetrator.

8.6 Initiatives of Private Sector

Major transnational corporations (TNCs) do have the potential to serve as an engine of longer-term growth and provide income and jobs for many impoverished communities and families. In other words, whatever corporate behavior actually takes place is defined as pursuit of perceived shareholder interest (O'Neill 2001). Corporate philanthropic giving is often subject to geographic limitations, focusing on areas that host corporate operations or are seen as potential markets (World Economic Forum 2005). These conclusions are proved by the TNCs engaging in the extractive industry of Myanmar.

For most TNCs, low-intensity conflicts would be regarded as an important incentive to depart. Disruption of current projects deters foreign investors from Myanmar despite the immense potential as the "last frontier" and the rich natural resources the country enjoys. Most of these natural resources are located in ethnic regions and several megaprojects, such as gas pipelines, industrial zones, and the Dawei megaproject, have already started in these areas. At present, armed conflicts and communal violence in ethnic regions are already hurting these foreign development project sites. The Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA), KIA, and TNLA have been clashing with the Myanmar army in the Northern Shan State where the Shwe Gas pipeline is being built, which will connect China's Yunnan province to Kyaukpypu in Rakhine State, Myanmar (Burma News International 2013).

However, some TNCs, most often those involved in the extraction of natural resources, such as oil, natural gas, and minerals, would decide to operate in zones of acute conflict because they engage in the extractive industry, which is impossible to relocate natural resources, and always involve long production cycles and extensive capital investment for gaining expected returns in the future (Rosenau 2009).

The majority of Myanmar's foreign direct investment (FDI) is located in resource-rich ethnic states. About 25 % of the total FDI, or US\$ 8.3 billion, has been invested in Kachin State where jade and gold are mined and hydropower projects are located, followed by Shan State, with US\$ 6.6 billion (Shein and Thu 2011). Recently, Myanmar has been making efforts for attracting foreign investment and expertise in the extractive industry. Myanmar's extractive industry continued to attract a lion's share of foreign investment. For example, on 17 January 2013, the Ministry of Energy invited bids for exploration licenses for 18 onshore oil and gas blocks (Reuters 2013). In March 2013, it was reported that the Myanmar government planned to put over 20 offshore oil and gas exploration blocks up for auction (Kinetz 2013).

In Myanmar, a lack of corporate responsibility (social or otherwise) can lead to boycotts and termination of business arrangements (Lall 2012). If the TNCs engaging in the extractive industry could invest in less politically sensitive sectors, such as education, health, and livelihood, they would play significant roles in preventing child soldiering in the Myanmar–China border. There are three turning points for the initiatives of these TNCs.

First, community-based health programs.

In Myanmar, the distribution of essential drugs and the management systems are too centralized to be effective (Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and UNICEF 2012). For example, the methadone program has still only a few distribution points, but it demands daily presence by the clients. Moreover, the daily transportation costs and the time spent traveling add to the difficulties in scaling up methadone maintenance therapy (UNAIDS 2012). It is critical to invest more resources to the community-based programs, which are not only sensitive to the needs of returning child soldiers but also beneficial for all conflict-affected children (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2008). For example, disabled children should be specifically included in microfinance and community-based projects (United Nations 2006a).

Second, community-based education and training.

TNCs with a long-term presence in a community have the greatest incentive to commit resources to basic education on a similar time frame (World Economic Forum 2005). There is a positive development for the provision of education and training outside the state education system by civil society groups and NGOs, with the tacit or explicit permission of the Government (United Nations 2011b). The most rural monastic schools often center on one individual monk and are more or less independent from the Myanmar government interference. However, the proper functions of these monastic schools require a certain degree of partnership (Lorch 2008). TNCs funding in collaboration with monastic schools should be one approach to increase access to education and training.

Third, opium substitution in the Myanmar–China border.

Though, accesses to most areas along the Myanmar–China border are still limited, the exception being parts of Shan State, where the UN Office for Drugs and Crime, World Food Programme (WFP), and other international agencies engaged with cease-fire groups, in the context of opium eradication (South et al. 2010). This expresses that Myanmar pays more attention to opium substitution along the Myanmar–China border. In December 2011, the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC) outlined an alternative development plan for the first time. Myanmar's alternative development plan will cost approximately US\$ 500 million over 3 years. However, despite Myanmar's appeals for aid from the international community, no international donors had pledged to support the plan during 2012 (US Department of State et al. 2013).

In this case, the Chinese extractive companies could take this chance. For bringing more benefits for the local communities, Chinese companies could use a small-holder plantation model and hire farmers from the local communities (Kramer and

Woods 2012), which provide opportunities for job creation and skills training of the former child soldiers and other vulnerable children. For example, apprenticeship is one of the most important options related to the successful recovery of many of the former child soldiers (Boothby 2006). In addition, the TNCs could arrange the former child soldiers to repair the damaged community infrastructure, or locate a landmine, which would have a powerful redemptive effect for both the child and the community (Singer 2005).

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Chapter 9

Conclusion and Outlook

Abstract This chapter assesses the main findings of this book, and highlights several questions reserved for future work.

Keywords Conclusion · Girl soldier · Rehabilitation · Reintegration · Applicability

This book conducts comparative study of child soldiering on the Myanmar-China border, examines the extent to which Myanmar's limited statehood in governing child soldiering, and introduces the approach of "public-private partnership" into the security governance of child soldiering. The findings of this book have two implications for future policy practice: first, there is no optimal solution for security governance, and a proper second best solution should include both states and non-state actors; second, a proper solution should be a non-hierarchical partnership, which reflects various public-private relationships. As a result, the countermeasures should be implemented in multiple levels. A useful study should unearth more questions than it resolves (Long 2011). Another finding of this book is to find four questions deserved for future research.

First, the possibility of China-U.S. cooperation in governing child soldiering on the Myanmar-China border. An underlying stability exists in U.S.-China relations not only because Washington faces multiple constraining power centers but also because Beijing's cooperation is required to address many problems (Lampton 2008). In contrast with the issues in North Korea and South China Sea, child soldiering on the Myanmar-China border would provide a strategic opportunity for China-U.S. security cooperation in the future, because both great powers have fewer differences on governing this issue.

Second is the prospective and consequences of security privatization in Myanmar. The current armed conflicts in Myanmar would probably bring the discussions of the private security companies. Would private security companies or private military companies fill the voids that the armed forces or ethnic-based militias cannot provide, or begin to occupy an essential niche in Myanmar?

Third is the research on the medium-term and longer-term reintegration of former child soldiers on the Myanmar-China border. Most studies examining the well-being of former child soldiers have been conducted shortly after their return, while less is known about the former child soldiers' psychosocial well-being and the factors impacting them in the long run (Vindevoel and Coppens 2013). Moreover,

violence and trauma at the time of parents' childhood may result in problematic attachment relationships that have long-term consequences for mental health and interpersonal relationships for their children (Schauer and Elbert 2010). Their experiences of rehabilitation and reintegration are critical to prevent further violence on the Myanmar–China border. It will be important to identify why and how former child soldiers reintegrate well.

Fourth, girl soldiers on the Myanmar–China border are still unrecognized, as the existing data are very limited. According to the existing literature, the Kachin Independence Army reportedly has significant numbers of girl soldiers in Myanmar, who are included in regular units and are not segregated, though the witnesses testified that prior to the ceasefire, they were assigned mainly to guard military posts rather than go into combat (Heppner et al. 2002). However, many questions related with the girl soldiers on the Myanmar–China border are still unknown, such as what are the similarities and differences between girl soldiers and boy soldiers? What are the specific problems that girl soldiers face? How to adjust countermeasures to prevent more girls from getting involved in child soldiering?

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About the Author

Kai Chen, PhD is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Center for Non-Traditional Security and Peaceful Development Studies, College of Public Administration, Zhejiang University, China. From November 2013 to May 2014, he takes the position of visiting scholar at East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore. From 2009 to 2011, he was a postdoctoral fellow at School of International Relations and Public Affairs, Fudan University, China. His research focuses on international security, geo-strategic relations, and security governance in East Asia, especially Southeast Asia and China.