

Mandy Sadan, ed.. *War and Peace in the Borderlands of Myanmar: The Kachin Ceasefire, 1994-2011*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2016. xxii + 517 pp. \$38.00, paper, ISBN 978-87-7694-189-5.

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In late 2017, sharp international focus was brought upon the plight the Rohingya people of northwestern Myanmar (formerly known as Burma). What has not caught the attention of Western media to such an extent is the situation facing many of the other ethnicities within Myanmar. This volume's focus is upon the Kachin, a significant minority who inhabit Kachinland in the north of the country. Kachinland borders China to the east and India to the west, while Myitkyina is the principle city. Myitkyina is approximately 1,185 km north of Yangon (Rangoon). In 2011, the Kachin ceasefire with the Burmese military, the Tatmadaw, came to an end. One of the central questions that this book answers is why the Kachin were willing to return to conflict after a seventeen-year ceasefire, just as the Burmese government seemed to be moving towards a more democratic rule. It does this by presenting eighteen collaborative chapters authored by a diverse, international mix of doctoral candidates, established scholars, independent analysts, and, importantly, diasporic Kachin. The result is a coherent and informative analysis of why the Kachin ceasefire "could shatter so completely" (p. 5).

A central concept of the volume is that the term "ceasefire" should be revised to "armed peace" (p. 4) to better understand the pressures upon Kachin society and how times of less overt

violence have had a transformative impact upon the Kachin. It is asserted that the Kachin have been subject to a cyclical history: a "ceasefire" from 1944 to 1961 was followed by conflict that lasted until 1994, followed by a seventeen-year "armed peace" that ended in 2011. The book convincingly argues that multiple influences during periods of armed peace have made the ceasefires unsustainable, not least because borderland societies such as the Kachin are more sophisticated than they have been given credit for. Although the two periods of armed peace brought political opportunity, both came to an end because the expectations of both political and economic progress were dashed by a lack of critical engagement from the Burmese government. Using this framework to understand the Kachin situation, the authors hope that conflict with other minorities in Myanmar can be better analyzed and understood, which in turn could help contribute to finding longer lasting stability in the country.

After establishing the historical context in chapter 2, and the idea of no tangible peace dividends for the majority of Kachin people in chapter 3, chapters 4 and 5 further examine the "armed peace" of 1994-2011, exploring the idea of "ceasefire capitalism" as a means for the Burmese government to pursue its objectives by methods other than the gun. "Ceasefire capitalism" is pre-

sented by Kevin Woods in chapter 5 as economic counterinsurgency, or the “commercialisation of insurgency” (p. 124). Thus, it is argued, at the root of the return to armed conflict is the appropriation of Kachin lands and resources through the granting of concessions to domestic business and foreign capital, for example, the building of hydro-electric dams. Linked to the dam projects, chapter 6 continues the economic theme, situating Chinese economic interest in a broader international relations setting and demonstrating how both national Burmese and specifically Kachin concerns can be influenced by global politics. Chapter 7 zooms back in on Kachin society by contrasting how Kachin are treated by the state on the Chinese side of the border compared to within Myanmar. The historical, cultural, and linguistic connections between the Kachin communities on either side of the border are revealed, contributing to the book’s aim of exploring “issues beyond the mere signing of ceasefires” (p. 13).

The next six chapters offer a variety of insight into Kachin life, from an exploration of how ethnically diverse Kachin society is to the experience of women over the decades of conflict and ceasefire. Of particular value are the chapters contributed by Kachin writers who are able to provide personal insight into aspects of the struggles endured in Kachinland, and the work of Kachin in the diaspora. The final four chapters complete the “borderlands” offer boasted in the title of the volume by connecting Palaung, Karen, and Mizo ethnonationalist struggles to the Kachin experience. The chapter on conflict in northeast India compares and contrasts the colonial and postindependence histories of tribal areas of India and Myanmar, explaining how these areas were “outside the mainstream of the new nation-state,” thus reinforcing claims for political autonomy (pp. 412-13). In both Myanmar and Burma, the intersection of ethnicity, resources, power, and foreign capital in contested lands, it is argued, produce a multilayered conflict which the Indian government has recognized and responded to where the

Burmese government has not. The book finishes with a brief chapter which reinforces the contention that an “absence of fighting is not peace” (p. 467) before offering some ideas about what needs to change if Myanmar’s borderland conflicts are going to be effectively addressed.

The aims of this volume, of creating a book that explores social, cultural, and economic issues “beyond the mere signing of ceasefires” have been entirely met. Its strength lies in the range of contributors and the many perspectives and insights it offers into the Kachin experience and how the Tatmadaw have managed the ceasefire periods to their benefit. It successfully elucidates how Kachin society has transformed over the decades since independence from the British Empire, struggling for its cultural survival in war and peace. The chapters have been superbly interwoven and presented, making it a coherent read for someone interested in the cover-to-cover journey as well as those interested in a specific chapter. Overall, this is a hugely important contribution to our understanding of contemporary issues in Myanmar, particularly at a time when the country is under international scrutiny.

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