

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 a 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 nonhierarchical 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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Comparative Study of Child Soldiering on
Myanmar-China Border
Evolutions, Challenges and Countermeasures

Chen, K.

2014, XII, 97 p. 1 illus., Softcover

ISBN: 978-981-4560-01-6