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The Soldier, Above All Others, Prays for Peace

The *Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies* (CPCS) is grounded in careful analysis of the conflict situations where we work, including the key actors involved in these conflicts. In the case of Myanmar, our analysis efforts have led us to engage with communities from ceasefire areas, share the words of those directly involved in the peace process, explore the complexities of the Kachin conflict, and reflect the perspectives of those affected by communal violence.

During 2016, CPCS undertook a project to better understand the perspectives, motivations and interests of one key party to the Myanmar conflict: the Myanmar armed forces, or Tatmadaw. Most of the research was carried out during the first half of 2016, and was based largely on desk research and interviews with individuals who have worked directly with the Tatmadaw. The analysis was drafted in the run up to the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong held at the end of August 2016, and the paper was published soon after.

Since the report was written, challenges facing those working for peace in Myanmar have intensified. Civilian communities, ethnic armed groups, and rank and file Tatmadaw soldiers have seen a tragic increase in deaths, casualties, displacement, and insecurity. This has caused great anguish for those engaged in peace efforts and for the communities they serve.

The current situation urges us to deepen our understanding of all actors engaged in the conflict – from analysis comes the opportunity to seek creative openings for genuine dialogue and compromise. *The Soldier, Above All Others, Prays for Peace* is intended as an analytical resource for actors inside and outside Myanmar as they seek to deepen their understanding of one central actor in the Myanmar conflict.

It is our hope that the analysis provides useful insights that support and guide the long-term journey towards the crucial end goal of shared peace. As our Myanmar partners continue their tireless endeavours to build genuine and sustainable peace, CPCS stands firmly in support of their important and complex work.

