

1. The Plight of Kachin People – Cho Chan Myei Oo, Utica College, New York, USA

Abstract: The recent ethnic war which occurs between Kachin minorities and the government is challenging the newly elected government whether it implies human rights obligation of responsibility of a state. This paper explores which steps the newly elected Burmese government has done so far in the conflicts and how the government should processes to protect human rights of ethnic minorities. Myanmar has not ratified International Covenant of Civil and Political rights; therefore, this paper discusses comparison to other countries which have done ratified it and how they handle the similar issues. Subtopics include Rights to self-determination- Article 1 of ICCPR-ICESOC, Rights to life, rights not to be objected to torture, Forced Labor and Due Process, Effective Remedy and Investigation. State's practice torture on political prisoners and ethnic leaders is very common in prisons and conflict area. Causes of issues come from ethnic wars, instability of border area and conflict of interest in economic resources in minority's land. The paper explore each issues in detail such as defining terms, explaining how to relate to articles in international treaties and how international community responds. The paper used international treaties such as and UN bodies to support arguments. To be recognized as minimum-functioning state and legitimate government, Myanmar new government needs to imply international treaties and respect international law. Minorities had suffered discrimination and minority issues had not explored deep enough to make public aware. A certain structure of power distribution and political autonomy towards federalism should be formed in the future. Myanmar should do legal reform to comply rights of defense not only in the legal documents but also in practical court. Therefore, national reconciliation need to occur with consent, actions and results both from government and ethnic armed forces.

2. Examining the Kachin Region: Evolving Identities and Political Ambitions – Damini Roy, Singapore Management University

Abstract: From “the land of jades and gold” to a region marred with internal strife, the transition of the Kachin region's identity is one that must be examined closely. Beginning with a summary of key historic events and movements leading up to the current times, the paper will delve into a string of issues based around the political identity of the Kachin people. These issues will be mainly focused on political, sociocultural and humanitarian ramifications of a growing and assertive Kachin people's identity. Specifically, this paper will discuss the broader issues of rule of law, civil liberties and national unity with reference to the Kachin independence movement in Burma. It will also characterize the transformed understanding of the Burmese national identity with particular emphasis on the Kachin people's movement. A close examination of the cultural nuances that have evolved into political ambitions of the Kachin people will be followed by a comparison of the Kachin people with other minority communities in Burma - mainly the Rohingya and Chin. While providing an assessment of the political influence that each minority community wields in Burma's power landscape, the paper will summarize a few scenarios highlighted by scholars so far, followed by an evaluation of why they fail to wholly bridge the gap in understanding minority issues in the region.

The conclusion will cover thoughts on the impending 2015 general elections in Burma and what this will mean for the Kachin people in particular.

3. Changing the Education System in Burma: Preparing to Repatriate Karen Refugees – Keila Franks, Elliott School of International Affairs at The George Washington University, Washington DC, USA

Abstract: Recent democratic developments in Burma (Myanmar) and the 2012 ceasefire agreement between the Burmese government and the Karen National Union (KNU), ending 63 years of civil war, have led to discussions about the repatriation of Burmese refugees in Thailand. Many refugees belonging to the Karen ethnic group (the majority of the Thailand refugee camp population) are concerned about repatriation, with a major issue being a lack of educational opportunities for Karen students in Burma. From interviews with Karen refugees in Thailand and organizations working with these refugees, this research finds that many students had moved to Thailand's refugee camps to obtain better educational opportunities, and that many did not wish to return to Burma because of the lack of recognition of educational certificates received in the refugee camps, a differing curriculum and language of instruction in Burma, and the poor quality of Burmese education. Many Karen, as well as other ethnic minority groups in Burma, desire an education system which incorporates ethnic languages, histories, and cultures into the standard curriculum. This research suggests that one of the outcomes of the peace process between the Burmese government, the KNU, and other Karen actors should be a decentralized national education system which incorporates these desired elements. This thesis highlights the lessons learned from the education systems in South Sudan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and India to provide guidance in establishing a decentralized ethnic education system in Burma.

4. The Weakest Link? A Defensive-Realist Critique of US-Burma Relations 1948-2010 – Gareth Robinson, School of International Political and Strategic Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

Abstract: US-Burma relations have steadily improved in recent years, resulting in closer ties between the two states. However, this has not always been the case. Since its independence in 1948, Burma has been a largely isolated and overlooked 'backwater' of Southeast Asia which has only intermittently attracted the attention of the United States. When the US has exercised a degree of involvement in the country, as it did during the Cold War, it has been in response to greater perceived regional threats, most notably from China and the Soviet Union. Following the brutal crackdown on protestors by the ruling Burmese military regime in 1988, even this limited involvement was scrapped. Instead, the US adopted a policy of disengagement, accompanied by wide-ranging sanctions against the country. This thesis will seek to explore the reasons for the shift in US policy towards Burma, from limited involvement before 1988 to complete disengagement afterwards. In doing so, the thesis will adopt a defensive-realist theoretical framework of analysis. Of particular importance will be the assumption that states seek to maintain their position in the international system rather than maximise power. Consequently, the thesis

will argue that the reason for the US's transition to a policy of disengagement in Burma was not primarily motivated by a new-found humanitarian agenda, but rather the dissipation of Cold War regional threats. The contrast between the US's policy approaches to Burma will be addressed through an examination of both the varying contexts of relations and the different variety of policy tools used by the American government in these two periods. By doing so, an understanding of the current trajectory of US-Burma relations will be reached.