Dan Sneider: Good afternoon. My name is Dan Sneider. I'm the associate director for research at the Shorenstein Asia Pacific Research Center here at Stanford University and I'm very happy to see a great audience here today. This event takes place in the connection to an annual award, which the Shorenstein Center has been giving since 2002, initially in cooperation with Harvard University Center for the Study of Press and Politics. It's an award, the Shorenstein Journalism Award for journalism, for coverage of Asia. And when we started this award, it was intended to honor American and western journalists who had spent their careers covering Asia and promoting in our view a greater understanding and mutual understanding of Asia and the United States and that was the concept we worked with for many years and many illustrious journalists were awarded the Shorenstein award during that time including one of our panelists today.

But three years ago, we decided to, when we proceeded on our own, Harvard went in a different direction and we decided to reconceptualize the award and to alternate it between western journalist and Asian journalist and the award to Asian journalists are meant not only to--of help to promote a better understanding of Asia and of particular areas of Asia to an audience outside, but also those who've been fighting for an independent media for the rights of a free press and have been engaged in the process of change, of social and political change in their societies. And it's very exciting to us this year to give that award to Aung Zaw who is at the far end of this panel who is the editor, founding editor of "The Irrawaddy". And I'll just say a few words about that in a second, and who has been intimately involved in the process not only of creating an independent media for Burma but also in the process of political change itself starting with his own activism in the late 1980s which landed him in jail and his founding of "The Irrawaddy" in exile eventually operating out of Thailand.

And we're extremely happy to have him here with us not only to receive the award but more importantly to talk about the changes and the process of change in Burma itself. And I think people who are aware of events generally in Southeast Asia know that probably for that region, there's been no more momentous development in the last few years than the process of transformation which is still an ongoing process of Burma from a authoritarian military dictatorship into hopefully a free and open society. And the purpose of this panel today is not so much to honor our awardee, we'll do that later tonight, but to allow him and our panelists to
really engage the central question which I think people who are watching Burma have, which is how real is the process of change in Burma?

What is the--what are the prospects for fundamental transformation. We still have a--the military has transformed itself, civilianized itself to some degree but everybody is aware that there are growing tensions within Burma, tensions that relate also to the role of the media as well as the issues of ethnic conflict, and there are many questions about where events are headed and how it impacts the broader region. So, the panel today is I think a great panel to discuss all of these questions, and we'll start with Aung Zaw himself to talk about these questions and particularly from his own perspective of the media in Burma. He'll be followed by Nayan Chanda who first of all I must say very importantly is a member of our jury, as I am, that decides the awardees but who is a veteran journalist. I've known him for, gosh, I don't know, a long time. I don't want to say how long. Back in the days when I think Nayan was sort of synonymous with coverage of Asia and particularly of Southeast Asia but was later the editor of the--he worked for many, many years for the Far East and economic review we were talking about this morning, one of the great publications of all time and there's a gathering of veterans of Far Eastern Economic Review coming up in April in Hong Kong which will as an event probably that many people will want to be at. And he has moved on, as some of us have, to academia, to Yale University, where he's a director of publications and the editor of YaleGlobal Online Magazine, a publication I hardly recommend for those who are covering both global events and particularly events in Asia.

He continues to write and most recently wrote a terrific book looking at globalization called "Bound Together: How Traders, Preachers, Adventurers and Warriors Shaped Globalization." He received the Shorenstein Journalism Award in 2005 and he will be, as I said, the second speaker in this panel. And the third, and certainly not the least, is my own colleague, Donald Emmerson, also a member of our panel, of our jury panel. He's the director of the Shorenstein APARC Southeast Asia Forum, but he's also a senior fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute, as well as the--I'm going to get this wrong so I better read it correctly. [Inaudible] The Abbasi, he's an affiliated scholar with the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies here at Stanford University, as well as an affiliated faculty with the Center for Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law here at FSI. And Don is I think everybody knows probably one of the leading experts on Southeast Asia, particularly regional institutions but also the leading expert in United States on Indonesia and he's going to address his remarks probably to Burma more broadly in the region and particularly in US policy which has been deeply engaged. So, we will have time I hope, if everybody [Inaudible] speak to him, for questions from the audience and we'll start with Aung Zaw.

[Applause]

Aung Zaw: Thank you very much, Dan. I have to first need to know do I need to turn on the microphone or it's on?

>> No, you're mic'd.

>> OK. Great. [Inaudible] oh great.
Aung Zaw: I would like to go through the timeline. I was thinking of preparing a remark before coming over here and I want to look at this. "Burma's Democracy: How Real?" I think I see that as how appropriate to see these leaflets or whatever we call it, because if you look at it here, from 2000--for 1962, 1942 up to now, they are pictures and some photos and Aung San Suu Kyi and state visit by Hillary Clinton. If you look at it and then you can go through the how things in Burma--up and down. So I'm going to go through from the 2010 because before 2010, Burma was a pariah as you all know that it has been outcast and people are not allowed to visit there and agency governments, there has been a disengagement with the Burmese military government. But since 2010, there has been a movement, a very interesting movement, including the opposition and the government, the [Inaudible] actors in the country. Including myself, since I've been living outside the country for the last 25 years, I was allowed to go back to my own country for the first time in 2012. So it was very interesting for me and for my staff, for all of us who live abroad to go back to learn and see with our own eyes what changes has been taking place. Let's go in 2010. 2010 is nothing. It's like a joke because of where Burma or the regime held election which they completely saw the election outcome and then fixed the outcome. So, it was the same status but only the outfit and dress has been changed. So 2010 was a sort of completely hopeless year for a lot of us. But 2011, since the beginning of 2011, we started to see the signs of movement in the country and then President Thein Sein give a speech asking [Inaudible] to come back and release some political prisoners and then partially they have lifted censorship and government trying to outreach or reach out at [Inaudible] groups and trying to get a ceasefire and that they start talk about peace.

And then later in 2011, because all this concession, the gesture have been made including the suspension of China from that Myitsone dam projects in northern part of Burma. And Hillary Clinton has visited Burma. That has opened the floodgates to Burma. With her, a lot of governments, western governments and being--having visited the country. I think the Myitsone dam decision is a cue, is a signal to the west. It has been I think carefully, I think made that decision to signal the west that we are ready to engage with you. And then, Aung San Suu Kyi who has been living in a house arrest or put in a house arrest and being free in 2010, then she has been allowed to go abroad and she can always come back, and she can make a comment, she can fly to Norway to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. So these are these concession and gesture have been very positive, that is very appealing to the west. And in 2012, we saw another milestone, which is by election. Aung San Suu Kyi and her party had decided to take part in that election and they have won the majority of seat in that election and she became an MP, members of parliament. But two months after the election, what happened was, there was a--criminal violence took place in Arakan State, that was the start of backsliding, a small backsliding I would say that, and there's a Muslim issues and there's a hate speeches and they're targeting against the minority Muslim population and those Rohingya, who were accused of entering the country from neighboring country, Bangladesh.

And then in 2012, late 2012, we saw that President Obama visited the country, Burma, and he praised the reform in the country. But if you look at the signs of regression today, these are pretty much--his visits are--some may say that I would say that premature congratulation to the unfinished reform in our country. So this is very, very interesting to how the regime has carefully
manipulated the international and public opinion and trying to open the door to the international community. And now, what we see now is backsliding, a very, very serious backsliding since last year. And this violence against Muslims, violence against Rohingya has been increased. Whatever protest taking place have been prevented. Censorship, we also have faced a lot of limitation. In the past we were given our treatments, multiple entry to enter the country. But recently, we were informed that by the ministry information which controls a lot of power to issue their journalist visa do the reporters from outside, that we will be given only two weeks to enter the country. And some of our friends who were trying to go to the East-West Center Conference to be held in two or three days in--within two days, I think it's on Sunday, it would be held in Yangon. They were not given visa to enter the country, I just learned it. So I think they are backsliding. Why? The question is--I mean the answer is very difficult because of whether government has gained the confidence or government thinks they're going too fast, or government, within the government there are some conservative or how the elements are gaining upper hand again. They just think that they don't have to give--provide any more concession because of last two years, EU has lifted sanctions. The US has suspended sanctions and investment coming in, the [Inaudible] donations, a lot of offices being open inside the country.

So government may also see that it is enough that we have made enough concession to the international community. But if you look at inside the country, very hard to comprehend what kind of reform has taken place. A reform--whether the reform has benefited ordinary people, I don't see that. Because I've been visiting my country since I was given a chance to visit there--revisit there 20 times and almost every month and then I went around the country and the countryside particularly. And the lives of ordinary people haven't changed much, and they complain and complain about land grabbing, the poverty, they continue human rights violation and abuse of power, and also this is very, very serious issue going on in the country. But when you spoke to or when you speak to international friends and of foreign governments or ambassadors, they were a bit different. I think they are quite happy with these changes. I think the perception towards Burma has been changed. This is how the government trying to deceive and trying to, I would say manipulate the opinion of the western government has been very, very, very sophisticated and then very, very I think clever. And also I think they are very good at repackaging, I would say that. They provide you a very different package so that if you don't have an institutional memory of what happened 30 years ago or 40 years ago, you will know that and you would think that these changes in the last two years are real.

To me, the more I visit Burma, the changes there are become more and more superficial for us. Because of, it doesn't really trickle down to the ordinary people and people have been complaining all the time about the changes are not real. So this is what I want to, you know, share with you and as a timeline from 2010 and starting to backslide to 2013 and 2014 and also you can see that when Clinton came to visit Burma, one of the conditions she made is that Burma had to stop the relationship with the North Korea. But today, we see the news that Burmese army continues to buy arms and weapons from North Korea. So I think this is also very--I mean you can look at it also in this news. And also the President Thein Sein who is claim to be the reformist is now proposing, ask the parliament to have a law, intermarriage law, preventing Buddhist women to marry the other faith. So this is from reformist to becoming nationalist which I think because of election is coming in within two years, less than two years, I think the government is cleverly manipulating or stoking the fear of anti-Muslim and trying to create the
instability and unfounded fear among the public. Because of they know that public don't support them. So they have to keep--drum up this anti-Muslim and instability in the country so that the military and those former military leaders who are wearing the civilian outfit can remain in power, which is very simple. Last 50 years, Burma has been ruled by the military illegally. Since 2011 and 2012, they want to rule the country legally. I think this is the plan, this is the plot that what they have been trying to do.

But I'm sorry to be a little bit cynical and a bit critical, but if you ask me what are the positive signs of Burma is I think the press freedom, even though it has been quite limited, we can write and report a lot of sensitive story which we couldn't imagine to write in the past. And so they are unintended consequences in the country because of this opening. There is the civil society movement, NGOs are getting stronger and people can communicate each other and they can make a--form groups and parties and these are the good signs for us. And also, genie out of the bottle, I mean it's very hard to put it back, unstoppable. If we are strong, if we are united, if we have a vision, if we know how to go about it, if we know that the military is still a key, a call in the shot, then I think 2015 can be a game changer. In that sense I think the--Aung San Suu Kyi is--yes I'm almost done. Aung San Suu Kyi is still the key. I think she realize that she has to come back with the people, so you can see the reunion with 88-Generations and ethnic leaders and she's been trying to come back because she knows--I'm going to finish--she knows that the government cleverly used our political legitimacy to advance their own goal. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

>> Is it possible to dim the light?

>> Can we dim the lights? [Inaudible] There you go. Thank you.

**Nayan Chanda:** Timing. Good afternoon. Aung Zaw made my job easier by giving a very brief but very interesting historical perspective at this present moment. But I would like to go a bit further back and look at historically how and why Burma is or is not ready for democracy. Now the first--the four factors involved here that are some of the things he mentioned and just one sees is a long traditional democracy--I'm sorry, despotism in Burma, which is the Burma, Burmese rulers have had a way of governing the country that is still present in the--among the general that we see in Burma today. Second is the power of the Buddhist Sangha. Buddhism has been an integral part of Burmese recent--also the last thousand years of development. And the third is the ethnic discord that exists in Burma today, and the fourth is the geopolitical interests about Burma on the--big neighbor China to United States, those geopolitical interest also impinge on democratic development. Now, the founder of the Pagan Dynasty, Anawrahta, his power was based on military power. He conquered most of current Burma, but also he boosted his legitimacy by raiding among state and bringing back a Buddhist text. So here in the image, you can see he's holding the holy text of Buddhism and that was his legitimacy that I'm not only a powerful military leader, I'm a [Inaudible] person and I have the backing of Buddhism for me. And from then onwards, the Buddhist ruled. The Burmese military rulers have used Buddhism to bolster their provision. So building pagodas is bringing divine backing for the military rulers and that has been a practice that is continuing today which is very interesting. And also, the other
thing was, the use of—they would raid the bordering states and bring back slaves, those slaves who built the pagodas and the palaces and so using slave labor for building state has been a very, very long practice and we have seen that even in modern times, building oil pipeline using [Inaudible] labor.

So the workers, citizens are chattel of the ruling class, they can use them for what they want. And so this was—this is an image of course from Angkor Wat in Cambodia, but this is this practice that was all over Southeast Asia but particularly in Burma, use of slaves for working in the construction of great projects. And so this politics of raiding and bringing slaves and enriching the country finally met its end with the arrival of the British because the Burmese—we can see the arrow on the west going up to Arakan State, that is where it conflicted with the British empire growing in India and so they finally—the British--Anglo-Burmese War led to the arrival of the British in Burma and creation of the Burmese set of dominion for the British. And so the British presence in Burma brings us to the more modern period, and this was what the British inherited is a multiethnic state. And here, I don't know—we can see the Rakhine State is here and this is the bordering to this Bangladesh and from where Burmese accused the Rohingyas of coming—the Muslim Rohingyas, but they have been actually living there for a long time, but that's the area which is now one of the most contested areas. And so this ethnic—this bordering all the different ethnic groups, they have been fighting the central government, they want to maintain their own control over the resources and the autonomy. And this has been a continuing struggle of modern Burma.

In fact, General Aung San made his best effort to actually win over the support of the ethnic groups with some limited success. And then, this was the—the students who organized the first set of place [Inaudible] is the British and you can see that Aung San is sitting there in front row and Aung San's emergence from the student leader to a leader of a pro Japanese nationalist and this was picture taken when they were in Japan and they were recruited by the Japanese to form an army to oppose the British and they did that initially and eventually, they realized that Japanese have their own agenda in Burma and they turn against them and eventually did a deal with Britain for independence and Burma became independent in 1948. And this--and U Nu was the first prime minister of independent Burma and he was a devout Buddhist and he wanted to actually make Burma a Buddhist state which was registered by some is more secular minded colleagues and one of them of course was General Ne Win who was a long associate of Aung San in the past and he became the Burma's new king in khaki and he used a ruthless sort of oppression. At the same time, he wanted to maintain a secular state, a socialist--[Inaudible] social state in which he also used Buddhism to both start his provision. In fact he--one of the standard practice of a successful Buddhist Burmese king is to build a big pagoda and devoted to his name and he actually built one just at the foot of the Shwedagon Pagoda, the [Inaudible] pagoda that is built by Ne Win.

And so this was--this is—this statement in the constitution actually sums up the attitude of the rulers towards the people, basically their resources and people that chattels that the government can use to build for their own glory. And eventually Burmese people I think had enough of that and in the famous episode which actually predates Tiananmen just a year—short—just a little before—a year before Tiananmen. This was a massive uprising in Burma, 8th August 1988. And that uprising was brutally suppressed. Thousands of people were killed and that was when Aung
San fled the country. He walked for two weeks through the jungle to reach the safety of Thailand. And so, that was when the latest [Inaudible] of Burmese struggle for democracy began in 1988. And this was the reason why the SLORC--so called SLORC was--who took power from Ne Win and build--bring a halt to the deteriorating conditions on all sites. That was the purpose. And this was the time when accidental tourist, Aung San Suu Kyi, she was visiting from London. She was visiting Rangoon to visit her mother and she found herself caught in the country when this depression began, and she could not not in all good conscience go back to her--the safety of her home in London and she stayed back and that was how she became a kind of a pawn in the hands of the military. They basically kept her under house arrest because of of who she is, not that she had any political following in the country, but people absolutely adored her father and the [Inaudible], the general is absolutely widely revered in Burma and she is now the lady, the daughter of this famous general. And so, by keeping her in the house arrest, they were--she was treated very well. They didn't actually harm her because they knew that people really respected her father. So she was under house arrest and--but she indeed formed the party and the junta actually organizing the election in May 1990 and that election brought great surprise because her party swept the polls and that was something the military didn't expect. And so, they simply refused to accept the results of the election and put everybody in jail including Aung San Suu Kyi went back to her house arrest.

So--and then this General Than Shwe, he is the new boss and he again, the same Buddhist tradition, and then he actually was frequently presented in the official television and newspaper as praying to Buddha and setting up Buddhist pagodas and he was a very, very pious man who has now come to rule Burma which is [Inaudible] by chaos and disorder. And Burmese isolation as a result of the 1988 clampdown was the opportunity the Chinese had been looking for. Chinese had been actually publishing some material even five years before that that Burma would have been a useful channel for them to access their Bengal and oil supply could be coming through Burma rather than along the entire coast of Southeast Asia and South China Sea. And so, isolation of Burma as a result of the clampdown in '88 allowed the Chinese to become the benefactor and the supporter of the regime and this oil pipeline has been--actually been big time and the Chinese also building a deep water port there and this is the laying of the pipeline. But also, they have allowed these Burmese military to attain merit by sending, lending to Burma the Buddha's tooth, supposedly Buddha's tooth was in China and just sent to Burma. And this was with a great procession with elephants, and the general showed how hard Buddhist they are and how they have brought back Buddha's tooth to Burma and people are lining up the streets to pay homage to Buddha's tooth. And this is an image I took from the Pagoda in Burma in Rangoon. You can see General Than Shwe is here. He is seen along with the venerable monks devoting this Pagoda to the huge marble statue of Buddha that was brought down from Mandalay.

And so, this kind of activity was to keep the people happy that these are very meritorious generals who are ruling the country despite the murders they have been committing. And--but the monks, there was an uprising of the monks in 2007 and these are kind of the continuation of the democratic struggle by the students who have been basically barred from university, university has closed down for years and years. That simply students protest shutdown the universities, so no school. And--but the monks who were there, the monks came out on the street to protest the government and eventually in 2010 as Aung Zaw mentioned, the regime said, "OK,
we are going to change." So they took off their uniform and became a civilian party and they contested the election, of course they won, but at the same time they released Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest. And this again did not impress many people, but as Aung Zaw mentioned, towards the end of 2010, they began releasing some political prisoners and this was the beginning also of an attempt to woo the west by making this gesture of opening the jail and also distancing themselves at least in public from China. So, anti-Chinese demonstration has been growing in the country. This is the demonstration in Mandalay against Chinese businessmen. Chinese have taken over the city of Mandalay, 85 percent of Chinese. Mandalay is actually now run by the Chinese from Mainland who had come and assume Burmese nationality and they're running the business there. And the Chinese have many hydroelectric projects but biggest one was what Aung Zaw mentioned, Myitsone caused a tremendous uproar because huge area will be flooded to build this dam and the power would go essentially to China. So this was a deal which has very little for the Burmese. And the protest against this dam and public anger against China, all these combined, the generals thought maybe this is one way we can appease the Americans who have been really upset with us for our rule. So, they released some more people and eventually Hillary Clinton arrived there after the Chinese dam project was suspended and followed by Barrack Obama's visit. So, Burma was becoming more acceptable to the west because of the gestures towards political prisoners and [Inaudible] with China.

And there are the election in which the NLD got 43 out of 45 seats and that was again a very positive development, but the--and Thein Sein visited White House and that was again a great sort of medal of--value of honor that they could wear in the country, that we have met Barrack Obama in the White House. But inside the country, things were not going so well. As Aung Zaw again mentioned, this monk, Ashin Wirathu, he is a monk in Mandalay and he is absolutely the most racist monk possible. He has been urging people to basically take on the Muslims and they have--he had been supporting this movement called 969 which says the Burmese should not--should only deal with Burmese people. Businesses should be only Burmese. But more importantly, the Muslims, he said has a plan to basically convert all of Burma, and this is ridiculous because Burmese Muslims are not even 4 percent of the population. And--but this politician by this Shin--by this monk was actually backed by the military who in their own interest they want to keep the Burmese monks happy and perhaps to create instability in the country to justify their continued domination and that is why there are some 200 people at least who are killed and Muslims are killed and then only recently again some 48 people are killed, and the government is taking very tough line. Those who criticize the government's handling of this have been called anti-regime and for now like [Inaudible] has been just thrown over the country. And so General Thein Sein visited Rakhine State only in October 2013 after two years of massacres taking place there. He didn't have time to visit there and he sat there and he said, "We have to be very careful about accusing people. These are many--it's complex issue." And essentially what it means is that Burmese democracy is not a given despite all the positive things we have seen the last one and a half year. And it remains a subject to these concerns that I just mentioned. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

**Donald Emmerson:** Well, I think we've had a wonderful tour de raison. We've gone well back into Burmese history. We've had a very cautious, I think appropriately cautious assessment of
Burma today. And I want to put this in an American context, those as perhaps an act of intellectual imperialism on behalf of an American. But I think my assignment is really to try to link what's going on in Burma with US policy. And therefore, I'm going to begin not in Burma but in Washington. With the following remarks which I'm going to have to abbreviate a bit I also want to make comments about China and ASEAN in relation to Burma. But I don't think I'm going to have time to do that so maybe that can come up during the question period. I want to start in Washington today. As you may have already known if you watch CNN, the US Congress today is preoccupied with an effort by the black caucus to remove the chair of the oversight committee on procedural grounds. This is important because it illustrates the paralysis, the political paralysis inside Washington. So, when we talk about US policy toward Burma or any other country, perhaps it's appropriate that we begin by objectively looking at the preoccupation, especially in an election year 2014 of the decision makers who presumably would be making decisions with regard to Burma and the rest of the world. And what is happening in Crimea? Forgive me. This is a long way away from Burma, but it's important. Russia reportedly has sunk one of its own boats off the Crimean coast in order to block Ukrainian naval vessels from accessing the Black Sea. This is a dramatic escalation. A Russian controlled plebiscite will be held within ten days on whether Crimean wants to stay with Ukraine or to join Russia. The answer is predetermined not join Russia. So, I would anticipate that by the end of this month, Crimea will have been annexed by Russia. I could be wrong but that's my prediction. And you can imagine the response not only in Washington but in Brussels, around the world, the preoccupation that that will attract a focus on Russia, OK?

And in the Middle East, John Kerry continues to pursue his so far almost entirely fruitless diplomacy regarding Iran, Syria, Palestine, Israel. Kerry and therefore Obama seems to me to be so committed to this particular effort that he is unlikely to stop given the domestic political cost in election year of admitting failure. This doesn't add up to a terribly promising context within which one could say that America is really going to pay serious attention to Myanmar, to Burma. I'm not saying no attention will be paid on wanting to reduce expectations to something that's realistic. The American pivot to Asia really is a pivot and not a rebalance as the Defense Department tried to rechristen it, because it's awkward to think of how you rebalance a balance, but a pivot towards something clearly implies that one can also pivot away from it. There are two other complications I want to mention that are limiting the ability of the United States government to cooperate closely and develop creative relations with the Burmese government. The Rohingya have already appropriately been mentioned. Representative Dana Rohrabacher from our beloved state of California among others in Congress is arguing that the US must above all defend the Rohingya and he insists that the Burmese authorities in [Inaudible] and their complicity in the racist Burma Buddhist repression of the Rohingya and this is not pure rhetoric. I have not so far met any Burmese official who is willing to even credit the Rohingya as deserving citizenship in Burma. They're often referred to as Bengalis, as if there were foreigners. The racism is absolutely astonishing to me but my anthropological inclinations which I'm not been entirely repressed by political science, you know, lead me to think try to put myself in their position in the context of a history that Nayan has demonstrated. It's very, very difficult on ethical grounds for me to do that. And if the priority here on human rights overrides any kind of an economic or political or strategic priority with regard to developing relations with the Burmese government, let alone with the Burmese military, you can see where I'm heading. And the Burmese government is not helping its relations with the US when it comes to the Rohingya.
Five days ago, in the capital, the government ordered Doctors Without Borders to stop all of its activities in Burma, accusing the organization of having shown partiality toward the Rohingya, a highly dubious charge.

Another reason for cautioning you about the possible sort of upsurge of constructive interest in Burma on the part of the US government, at least in the coming months is sanctions. Now, the European Union lifted sanctions against Burma last year. The US, however, is doing it in stages. Inside the treasury, an outfit that many of you may not have heard of, the Office of Foreign Assets Control, OFAC, administers the sanctions that remain in place from the time when Congress originally authorized them to isolate the former regime of Than Shwe. If you want to make a new investment in Burma or if you want to export financial services to Burma, you need to apply to OFAC for a license to do so and the process can be cumbersome. American businessmen complain loudly. Americans are still forbidden from doing business with individuals and companies on a list of "especially designated nationals". Business people say they can't find out in advance whether the Burmese partners that they're engaging with are connected to this banned individuals or banned companies, so they're complaining on those grounds as well. Meanwhile the JADE Act, so called the JADE Act that authorizes various measures against Burma remains valid. Now, one could argue on the positive side that because there are movements towards democracy, although I share Aung Zaw's caution in this regard, the United States does have a reason to support Burma's transition to a more democratic regime. A couple of quick comments, first of all, to what extent was the American romance with Burma on grounds of democracy personalized in the person of Aung San Suu Kyi? It's hard for me, at least in recent history to recall any case where a country was reduced to the status of a single person, more than in the American imagination, especially the American political imagination but also generally. If you knew anything about Burma, it was Aung San Suu Kyi. You know, Joan of Arc, I mean the--if I may I don't want to say deification, that's perhaps unfair, but the focus, it almost Hollywood like focus on Aung San Suu Kyi, it seems to me stimulated certain unrealistic expectations in the American public with regard to the trajectory that Burma would end up undertaking. Now Aung Zaw can tell us during the conversation that unfortunately I'm postponing whether or not Aung San Suu Kyi will become the president of Burma. No. That's what I hear. That's exactly what I hear. She may end up being perhaps a head of the assembly something like, but not the president of Burma and that may in effect the another disappointment added to the existing disappointment that she has not defended the Rohingya. And if you look at it from her point of view, in so far as she is now a politician operating inside the system, you can understand why given that the overwhelming majority of Burmans, you know, have what in my judgment are extremely negative feelings with regard to the Rohingya, that's the last group that you want to defend if you want to be elected to public office in Burma, that's just a political fact.

And there's one other footnote that I'd like to add briefly which is the general, how can I put it? The sort of loss of faith or the disillusionment with regard to democracy generally as an objective of American foreign policy, that Americans have already undergone, partly of course thanks to the disaster in Iraq and the claim since we didn't find weapons of mass destruction, oh well, the real reason here is so we can democratize the Middle East. You know that's the ghost of Paul Wolfowitz is somewhere in this room frowning, OK? So I guess what I'm saying is that in this regard, the rationale for supporting Burma could shift away. I'm not saying it's going to disappear but could shift away from helping to consolidate democracy and towards a more geostrategic
consideration that values Burma in a regional context as a potential counterweight to Chinese primacy in Southeast Asia. Here, Crimea is extremely relevant. If the US and Russia, as could well be the case are embarking on a new cold war, Washington may have new reason to pay attention to Asia and in particular to pay attention to China. And in particular to have good relations with Beijing so as not to have simultaneously bad relations with Moscow and Beijing, but then of course, how Burma fits in to that larger strategy is a separate question. It is even conceivable that to some extent, and I'm speculating wildly here, I'm a completely irresponsible academic. And I enjoy being irresponsible because there's no censorship and I have nobody that I have to report to as far the content of what I'm saying fortunately.

It is conceivable that Washington could think of itself, although the reality may differ, as outsourcing foreign policy towards Burma to Tokyo. Particularly economic policy but conceivably also to the extent that Prime Minister Abe is really going to promote, you know, the democratic diamond and so forth and he has certainly, his pivot, has gone towards Southeast Asia, no question about it. That I think is an interesting speculation, and the last comment I want to make on U.S. foreign policy is that the personnel have changed. Exactly as Aung Zaw has suggested, the personality, not only of Hillary Clinton, but in particular of Kurt Campbell, the Assistant Secretary of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, under Hillary Clinton. And the two of them had a very, very close and congenial relationship. And it's important to note as well that Kurt Campbell was a political appointee. So he was not perhaps accustomed to the strictures necessarily that a Foreign Service officer or staffer would have experienced. Danny Russel, his replacement, interestingly enough, actually used to run the Japan office in the state department. So he has kind of familiarity there already, I'm not sure what's that going to mean for the future. But he is definitely a civil servant inside of the U.S. government and therefore perhaps might be a little bit more cautious specially with regard to traveling to Burma to in a sense, you know, provide the accolade to the regime before it had become fully democratic. I don't know if I should skip my comments on China and ASEAN entirely, we have one half hour for discussion.

>> Take a few minutes and talk about China.

**Donald Emmerson:** Well, a fascinating question with regard to Burma, China, Russia, foreign policy generally is the extent to which two tracks can be sequestered. The economic track and the security track. It's quite clear for example that Russia would like those to be kept separate so that they don't suffer sanctions that are now being prepared in Washington against the Putin regime. And China also would like to keep the two tracks separate. It's interesting in the Myanmar case however that China has illustrated its inability to keep those two tracks separate. In the aftermath of what my colleague has already referred to as the crisis over the Myitsone incident, the Myitsone Dam on the Irrawaddy River. I find it interesting to note that China's annual FDI this is fresh FDI coming in to Myanmar climbed very rapidly. In 2008, it was a roughly U.S. 1 billion dollars. By 2011, it was 13 billion dollars, a remarkable increase over a period of only three years. And Myitsone Dam obviously was an important part of that. There's a copper mine as well without going into the details. In 2011, in response--in part at least to the suspension of the dam project, new Chinese investment fell down to 407 million dollars in 2012. And difficulties in the Chinese economy suggest that, in fact we do have the evidence already beginning to come in at that level of EFDI is declining further.
Now, on the security side, it so happens that the periphery of Burma as we could see on Nayan's map, is populated by ethnicities, a number of which are in virtual or actual rebellion or prior or current or possibly future rebellion against the center, against the Burmese government. And this of course is the source of security concern for China. I wish I could go into the details of this particular case, I wish I could. But I don't have a security clearance and I lack the knowledge, perhaps Aung Zaw, you know, can follow up on this. But just to take one example which I find extremely interesting, the case of the Kachin and the Kachin independence organization. We know that the leadership in Naypyidaw would like very much to have a ceasefire generally around the fringes of the country. You know, provided certain conditions are fulfilled in order to establish sort of reasonable peace and security where they can promote economic growth that apart from the trickle-down side. At least they can get the GDP moving up and the military incidentally wants western weapons because they feel they've been too dependent upon Chinese weapons. And so the opening up has, I supposed, a precondition which is stability on the borders of Burma.

Now in the case of the Kachin, the Chinese were involved in what turned out to be, at the least on the surface, a four-way conversation between the Burmese government, the Kachin independence organization, the Chinese government, and I'm told the United States represented through, I'm not sure whether this is track 2, it's not track 3. It may have been track 1 in disguise, I'm not sure. But in any case, the United States also has an interest, obviously I supposed you could expect that in somehow reducing the conflict on the borders of Burma. And apparently the Chinese who are trying to protect their economic investments, their concern about refugees coming across, behave so frantically in this conversation. That they were essentially thrown out, that is to say that both the KIO and the Burmese government could agree on one thing, you know, with the Chinese please the leave the room which apparently they did. Now, this is interesting because, of course, China talks about sovereignty. Oh, yeah, we believe in sovereignty. We aren't like the Americans, you know, they go out and meddle everywhere, we're not going to do that. But on the borders, the northern borders in particular Burma, we may have a different situation. The last thing I want to say about ASEAN and then I really will quit is that, of course as you know, I'm sure as many of you know, Burma is the chair of ASEAN on this year. A critical position leading to the declaration one hopes next of an ASEAN community which will be a dramatic, although perhaps a little bit more fancy for them--one would like, representation of ASEAN's success. So in that context, the question arose as soon as we knew actually that Burma would be in charged this year. Well, what will their position be towards China, right? And I think the first thing to be said is that the Burmese government, more or less like every other government in Southeast Asia even the ones in the Philippines and Vietnam who are ostensibly the most anti-China, would like to have their cake and it eat it too. They don't want to side with the U.S. against China. They don't want to side with China against the U.S. There's a lot of hedging that's going on and it's going on in Burma as well. Having said that, however, I find it interesting without having time to go through the background that in January of this year, at the very first meeting of Asian that was hosted by the Burmese chair held in Bagan an informal retreat where all the foreign ministers got together presumably at a luxury hotel and chatted.

Now, there was no final communicate, but it's interesting to note the official account of the meeting specifically mentioned freedom of navigation as something that was really important
and freedom of over flight. Why is this important? Well, freedom of navigation is the American concern, the concern of the American Navy in particular both in the East China Sea and also in the South China Sea. And freedom of over flight refers to the Chinese unilateral declaration of an air defense identification zone over the East China Sea. This was therefore--although China was of course not mentioned, a clear indirect criticism of China on both counts because of the nine-dashed line in the South China Sea and [Inaudible] in the East China Sea, which suggested to me, you know, at least the modest at the level of rhetoric kind of optic in concern with China and willingness to talk about it. Now, whether that lasted or not, I have no idea and maybe, I'll end here, what really motivates Myanmar as chair of--sorry, Burma as chair of ASEAN this year is to survive the year without a disaster, kind of like Putin in the Olympics, you know. If we can just get through this so I don't want to exaggerate the sophistication of geostrategic thinking in Southeast Asia. Thank you.

>> Thank you.

[Applause]

Daniel Sneider: Well, a lot of things have been put on the table and I suspect there are a lot of questions and maybe other--and comments out there. I would ask two things. One is--well, three things, one is wait for the microphone, there are microphones there. Secondly, please identify yourself so the panelist know who's asking the question. And third, this is very important, try and keep your questions and comments, if you have a comment, very brief. So we allow the most discussion possible, so no speeches. Anyway, so the floor is open and I'll recognize people. I see you over there. OK, on the left, yeah.

Question: Thank you so much to the whole panel for speaking today. My name is Renee. I'm the editor in chief of SmartyGirl Leadership Media. We are new media. I oversee 17 journalist who leverage Twitter to write about the repressive governments. I'd like to ask the panel, what are some things they hope to see, for example in--for young journalists, what they've done toward Arab Spring and such. How to overcome difficulties with VPNs?

>> Maybe I'll me call you and then we'll give you that question.

Aung Zaw: Well with regard to Burma even before the opening and the social media and then activist are very active particularly since 2007. And people having communicating send the information, share information and inside and outside of Burma. If you look at it, we have now over 1 million active Facebook users inside and outside of Burma. And before it was very difficult to even to open a Gmail account. If you want to open a Gmail account you have to send a message to your friends living outside of the country. And he or she will send open account and then send it back the password and the account to you. Even now I heard that to open Facebook account inside the country has been extremely difficult. So they would ask me or other friends outside to open account so that they can have their own account inside their country and post a pictures post information. It hasn't very active but with the same there, there's a downsides of it. Because of our--even a government official is using the social media to spread the hate speech. And it has been very alarming and our--we have a president spokesman name is Ye Htut. He is known as ministry of Facebook. And he and some of the officer anonymously open
account maybe several hundreds of accounts. And spreading a lot of rumors and raising a psychological warfare against the, you know, the opposition or other groups that has been reported in our publications.

So I think it's a miss back for me to see that it's growing it's very encouraging to see that we have a young reporters and social media groups and become very, very active. At the same time the government has been very sophisticated in using this technology to counter as well as to spread the hate speech. If you look at for instance if you have a Muslim--anti-Muslim incident take place in somewhere in Burma. Within that few second a few minutes you will see that the distorted or doubter pictures of monks and a Muslim being killed or somewhere in the river or along the roads which is not true. Being just the all the distorted picture has been posted. And I saw that to get the public out crying against the minority of the population. So it is been very I will say that very challenging for us to counter all kinds of abusive comments and hate speeches. And I think we are in the very early stage. Thank you.

**Question:** Thank you I love the presentation very much and I love the strong attitude that you have that's wonderful. I think we all the people of Burma would want to see that. My name is Myra Dahgaypaw from U.S. campaign for Burma a Burmese myself from Karen ethnic group. OK being an advocate on behalf this--of the people of Burma in Washington, DC. We're trying to inform the U.S. Government in many different ways about the situation on the ground. But we're also facing with the stumbling block, the biggest one which is the State Department. And so for instance right now we're trying to advocate for military to military relation because the U.S. is already started that off. And we wanted to--the U.S. Government who have their relation with the Burma's military but with a condition which we haven't seen it yet. I wonder if you have any thought any input or advice like how do we persuade the State department the White House that the U.S. Government to think about when they wanted to have that engagement. But at the same time to think about the value of human rights if they care about humanity. If you have any suggestion I'd love to take that in. Thank you very much.

**Don Emmerson:** Well, you know, it's hard for me to respond specifically to your question because we've never met we haven't had a conversation. But I do sense that your implicit goal here has some internal tension, which you yourself have mentioned. You started by arguing that one ought to increase or upgrade the military to military relationship. But at the very end you talked about human rights. And so the question then becomes really not for the U.S. but for you and the people that you work with what are your conditions? And to those conditions then correspond to the conditions of people inside the Pentagon. It is my subjective impression because I'm the son of our foreign service office and I'm more familiar with the State Department much more actually than I am with the Defense Department. But it is my impression that in the Defense Department and so far as Burma is as it we're on the screen. There is a desire to improve military to military relations. That would fit in to my expectation that I mentioned earlier as to the possible tilting towards geostrategic rationale for U.S. relations with Burma. As opposed to the previous somewhat romantic notion of democracy in Aung San Suu Kyi. But that makes even more relevant the question of your conditions.

And, you know, I mean do you bifurcate the Burmese Government. Now the Tatmadaw the military in Burma is of course internally differentiated. There are some personalities that if they
flew to San Francisco, they would be turned back because they're on that list, right? And so presumably the first thing to say is that if the--that U.S. military gets in bad so to speak with these individuals that's a real problem. I mean never mind the ethics it's a practical problem, right? They can never meet inside the United States one on one, right? And I think my recommendation if I may presume to give you a recommendation is to go back, you know, in a quite room with your colleagues. And work out exactly what the balance that you want. Unless you've already done this between the conditions on human rights and your desire at the same time to upgrade the relationship.

>> If I may make a comment.

>> Yes.

Aung Zaw: It's just I think--I think the--the U.S. has been very shy and very reluctant to speak up on various human rights violation taking place in our country. That is true. In the past it was the U.S. is the one vocal critic and wise. That Obama has been was and then [Inaudible] issue because either because Aung San Suu Kyi adding a conflicts or [Inaudible] on those being locked up in prison for 20 years. And--but suddenly since the opening in the country. Even in spite of continuation of abuses in all different areas. U.S. has been very, very reluctant to criticize. I think they don't want to jeopardize this--I think this continuing relationship between the two countries which I don't think is great. I think there has been tension back and forth between Russia [Inaudible] because of there are some concern that the U.S. has express with regard to some of the conflicts and balance and American State. So it's very difficult and also military to military engagement has the new collaborate and then that very, very stay very limited. I don't want U.S. to go too far at the moment and I want them to be very cautious about how to engage with the Burmese military government which in fact they want to of course they want to buy and [Inaudible]. They want to go to great modern technologies and weapons from the U.S., you know, without making any fundamental meaningful concession change in the country. So I think the humanize group had to be very, very, you know, you have to use presentation of language how going to manage your case. Because I think U.S. campaign for Burma in past being the very loud voice. Even if you have a loud voice now I think State Department a lot of people don't want to listen to you which is very sad.

Question: Thank you very much for coming. I am [Inaudible], I am secondary MBA student in Stanford. And I am leaving a trip to Burma in two weeks I studied there from Stanford. And so Mr. Aung Zaw mentioned that Burmese Government is proposing a package to that international society to achieve their goals in long term or short term. And since we are meeting a president on House Speaker Shwe Mann as well I have to ask what do you think is the key political functions and objectives that the Army Government is trying to achieve by expressing the package, democratic package or whatever you mentioned. Is it clear?

>> Not entirely to me but go ahead. Thank you for that.

>> Are you talking about package or--

Question: So yeah. You mentioned that they are trying--they are proposing the package, the nice
package to international societies to achieve their political goals. That's very hard. And now, it's trying to clarify what do you think their goals that they are trying to achieve.

**Aung Zaw:** I think--I'm not saying--I'm not sure what difference if I say that package, but I said that the government has been very clever at using the Aung San Suu Kyi and other people political legitimacy to achieve--advance their own goal which is to remain and to maintain our remaining power, that's the goal. And if you know the goal, then I think the opposition and those who care about Burma and is wanting to see true new Burma, and they had to change attack and strategy on how to, you know, approach these--or make it--get them--that's the desired result. So I don't know about the package but--

[Pause]

[Inaudible]

**Question:** I had been to work in Myanmar. I spent two weeks going to the southeast and west. I came back--I just [Inaudible] for example started in Myanmar after I did Laos, I did Cambodia and I did to Myanmar after I came back from Myanmar trip. As [Inaudible] goes [Inaudible] and particularly in the border of Thai and in Myanmar [Inaudible]. My question to you is Suu Kyi, we don't know whether she can be present or not, very questionable. Very questionable this time. But we like to relay a message, something like South Korea, I'm from South Korea. When South Korea woman run for president, people believe she cannot handle complexity of presidency. After she inaugurated one year past her popularity runs 57 percent or 63 percent. Previous two presidents, popularity after one year of presidency 36 percent and 33 percent. She is pretty high. She has a two mission. One, corruption. Secondly, on issue of society. Capitalism, try to making money without honesty, eventually, you will run into to be a criminal.

So, law and honesty in society. They make realist South Korean people cheer up. In other words, women presidents in Asia, then Pakistan has a prime minister first woman president in Asia doing wonderful job so far. Making foreign relations, good job, and a really promoted image of Korea in global community. How can we delay this to women people? When I as in Burma, every family hold you visit her picture was on the wall. So popular. But people in intellectual level really concerned about she can run the complexity being a president. And so was it very negative. So I think the South Korean example is a good example, if we can--workable for Burmian people. Thank you.

>> Well, I hope--if I may just respond quickly here, unless Nayan, I've already spoken in--are you sure?

>> Yeah.

**Don Emmerson:** OK. So I think Aung Zaw will deal with this I hope as well in a more specific way. Look, like you, I'm a gender feminist. Not just an equity feminist, but a gender feminist. You know, I believe in the superiority of women.

[Laughter & Applause]
I do. Actually, I'm not joking. Look, if the world were ruled by women, you know, would there have been fewer wars? The answer is yes. It's an empirical fact. We know that women commit violence less often than men, right? Now, there's a ceteris paribus condition that has to be met and so forth but anyway--without going into that. Unfortunately, for your argument and for my argument, the women who have led Bangladesh in recent years have contradicted our optimism and our hope, I mean, there is virtually a civil war in Bangladesh between two women who simply hate each other. They just can't get along and actually, it's not simply that they hate each other, there are people who have died in the streets as a consequence of that hate. So, you know, I would caution you in that regard. And maybe one could say with regard to Burma that it would be a good thing if Aung San Suu Kyi were not to become president. As I understand at the moment, the constitution has not been amended and so she can't become president, right? Although--

**Aung Zaw:** She cannot.

**Don Emmerson:** Right. She can't. So the door is closed. The only way it could be opened is through a constitutional change, whether that will happen between now and the next election, I mean I think the election has to be held before November 7th of 2015. So we do have a little bit of time. But it might be better for her to end up in a lesser position because as president, she would be really, you know, in the fire line. She would be required to make decisions to compromise, to make pragmatic choices that would remove her popularity or at least damage it. So she may be better off in a lesser position. But I agree, I share your bias.

>> Yeah.

[Inaudible]

>> Well, I think to move on because we only have a few more minutes left. So--

[Inaudible]

>> OK. I want to get over on this side of the room over here, so sorry.

**Question:** Hello. Rebecca Davis, Yale University. With the topic of today's conversation, I'm wondering if you could speak briefly about the Burmese diaspora communities, not just in the US which we briefly touched on, but in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore and how the return of some of those diaspora communities as well as their ongoing basis in exile countries is contributing to the modern day efforts for democracy.

>> Since you're part of that, I think you need to speak.

**Aung Zaw:** Yeah. Well, yeah. I think are -- there has been a fast wave of our Burmese [Inaudible] going back to the country. But a lot of Burmese living in Malaysia or Thailand or even in the U.S. or E.U. or Scandinavian countries, they hold back. They have so many reason because of they don't trust the regime and more--become [Inaudible] and live there because of
the condition and hardship there. So these two have a lot of people living in other countries have wait and see attitude. But what is important is those who try to go back determined to stay there and work, trying to change their system. Those are human rights activists and media, people like us, and journalists and reporters. And they have taken a high risk. But accommodation has been very hostile. If we are criticizing the government, we've got a different treatment. At the same time, those exiled who go back to work with the government in a ceasefire I got or some other, you know, health and education, they have received a different kind of treatment from their governments which I think is very encouraging at the same time. Government may also find that they need skills and capacity from those who live abroad. And then we only go back to Burma, it's very distinguished that there are a lot to be done, our country has been falling apart, and with things that we have learned from and our experience abroad and we can do a lot there. But question is whether we are--chance for us to able to repair the country because of the government and military stay very reluctant if we are not in there singing the same songs.

>> Let me take one more in the back there.

Question: Hello. My name is Rick Heizman. I have been in Burma 25 times including 6 times in the Ne Win days and I've worked with many political groups here as a liaison to congressional offices. I worked with the government-in-exile in [Inaudible] and I worked with opposition people inside Burma doing work like depicted in Burma VJ day as Ko Aung Zaw knows. And my concern here is that so far, there's been no mention or nothing positive about the Rakhine Buddhist population which is being affected also in our Arakan State. And I've written 150-page report about the Arakan conflict for Arakan human rights group which is in the hands of government offices. And their concern is there is a lot of misinformation and media manipulation out there. And for example Don, you mentioned the 48 people--48 Muslims supposedly killed recently. Well, that story has been investigated and investigated and is concluded that there was no massacre there. And that's coming from human rights groups and so on. And this has been happening before. Now ever since independent--ever since 1942, World War II times, the largest massacre in contemporary Burmese history occurred in Maungdaw where 30,000 Buddhists were slaughtered and since that time, the Bengalis, and I have to correct you on this, at that time, the word Rohingya did not exist, it was not used. U Nu never used the word Rohingya. It was after that fact that the Rohingya was--

>> You know, let me just stop you--

>> OK.

>> --because we were running out of time.

>> OK.

>> There won't be a chance for people to respond to you, so--

>> OK.

>> --we can just ask for--
**Don Emmerson:** Well, I mean, I think look, you misunderstood. I was not giving a historical account. And so the term Rohingya is very much of a contemporary term. You're absolutely right in that regard. And I was not taking a position on the ostensible death of 48 Buddhists. And I'm also very much in agreement with you that one ought not be carried away by emotion to make empirical assessments that are false. I mean, it's important to run against the green. And I think if we say that the only people in Myanmar who are suffering are the Rohingya, that's a gross oversimplification. And therefore, all I can say is I agree with you and congratulations on your scholarship and I hope it makes a difference.

>> Do you want to say anything also?

**Aung Zaw:** Yeah. I think this issue is a very, very difficult story to cover even for an experienced journalist. So I think we have to be very, very careful because of--I think we have to look at the Arakanese side of stories which has been unreported which is very important to highlight the--what they have been thinking. And we have to look at it--are the three countries we live with, China, India, and Bangladesh, total population I think is about 2.7 billion people. And we are sandwiched between these three countries. You know, there is a profound fear among the Buddhist and the Arakanese that this Burma country will be gone one day, and Buddhism will be gone one day. This is a profound belief. That's why since two years ago, there has been 969 movement, there has been a growing anti-Muslim violence, also, there has been elements who are political opportunists and the government--and a world financed campaign against the Muslim has been launched against these minority or Muslim population. So I think this story is very, very complex and very difficult to cover for all of us. So I think as long as we have a cool head and a very calm heart to look at it and investigate it, otherwise, this is going to be a--really [Inaudible] for all of us, this is going to be very difficult for us because of before prior to the--let me finish. Before--prior to the election, I think there were more massacre, there were more killing against Muslims because of I think government wants to drive to that position because they want to win election again.

**Daniel Sneider:** I hate to cut off this conversation but we kind of have to do that. And I'm sure that people can come up and have a little bit of conversation for a little while afterwards in private. But I hope you'll join me in two things. One, affirming that we've made a really great choice in giving the Shorenstein Journalism Award to Aung Zaw and congratulating him on that award. And secondly, thanking all the panelists for a terrific discussion and thank the audience as well.