

Media representation on political changes of myanmar politics essay



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A year after Myanmar's first elections in 20 years, the country has taken important steps towards reforming its political system and its economy. It has surprised Myanmar citizens and the world with a series of important liberalizing measures.

The 2011-2012 Myanmar democratic reforms are an ongoing series of political, economic and administrative reforms in Myanmar undertaken by the military-backed government. These reforms include the release of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest and subsequent dialogues with her, establishment of the National Human Rights Commission, general amnesties of more than 200 political prisoners, institution of new labour laws that allow labour unions and strikes, relaxation of press censorship, and regulations of currency practices. As a consequence of the reforms, ASEAN has approved Myanmar's bid for the chairmanship in 2014. United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Myanmar on December 2011, to encourage further progress; it was the first visit by a Secretary of State in more than fifty years. United States President Barack Obama visited one year later, becoming the first president to visit the country.

Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy, participated in by-elections held on 1 April 2012 after the government abolished laws that led to the NLD's boycott of the 2010 general election. She led the NLD in winning the by-elections in a landslide, winning 41 out of 44 of the contested seats, with Aung San Suu Kyi herself winning a seat representing Kawhmu Constituency in the lower house of the Myanmar Parliament. However,

uncertainties exist as some other political prisoners have not been released and clashes between Myanmar troops and local insurgent groups continue.

Background

Myanmar was under military rule from 1962 to 2010. In 2008, the ruling Junta, State Peace and Development Council, announced the new constitution as a part of roadmap to democracy. The constitution, which reserves 25% of the Hluttaw legislature's seats for military, is seen by the opposition as a tool for continuing military control of the country. A constitution referendum was held in 2008 amid Cyclone Nargis. Observers criticized the referendum for voter intimidation, electoral fraud and advance voting. Nevertheless, on 15 May 2008, the junta announced that the constitution had been approved by 92.4% turnout in the two-thirds of the region that had held the vote. An election was held in 2010. The military backed Union Solidarity and Development Party declared victory. The United Nations and Western countries have condemned the elections as fraudulent.

National League for Democracy

Aung San Su Kyi popularly in Myanmar cannot be doubted. She is one of several candidates for the National League for Democracy (NLD). She has campaigned across the country, in a Western fashion, to the point of exhaustion in order to lock in voter support.

The by-election are also a test for the NLD, contesting elections for the first time since it won a majority of seats in Myanmar's 1990 elections, having refused to participate in a 2008 referendum on a new constitution and in the subsequent general elections.

Reforms

Nevertheless, the government has embarked reforms toward liberal democracy, mixed economy, and reconciliation although the motives of such reforms are still debated.

Corruption

In March 2012, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw passed a law that will increase the wages of all public sector employees, including soldiers, as additional cost-of-living allowance of 30, 000 kyat (\$38USD), along with a daily wage increase of 1, 100 to 2, 100 kyat (\$1. 40-\$2. 70) for full-time employees, purportedly to tackle corruption in the government. The law will be effective 1 April 2012, when the Myanmar by-election, 2012 take place.

Political Reforms

The pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest on 13 November 2010. After her release, she held a series of dialogues with President U Thein Sein and Minister U Aung Kyi. Although the discussions were not publicized, the state media reported that “ the two sides have agreed to set aside the differences and work together in matters of common interests that will really benefit the country and the people” Aung San Suu Kyi’s ability to travel freely throughout the country is seen as an improvement compared to her trips in 2003 which met with a government sponsored massacre. Aung San Suu Kyi’s party, National League for Democracy boycotted the 2010 election. The election law enacted by the SPDC did not allow ex-prisoners to become members of registered political parties. If NLD decided to register, it would have to expel its members who

were imprisoned. But in November, the government erased the clause in a parliamentary section. After the amendments, NLD leaders have unanimously decided to register for the by-election.

How Myanmar Changed and What It Means

Myanmar, which has been one of the most repressive states in the world for five decades, launched a sudden political transition in the past year. The government, run by President U Thein Sein, is preparing for by-election in April in which longtime dissident Aung San Suu Kyi will run. The government is inviting outside experts, observers, and even human rights activists to witness the elections. It is also apparently trying to end its numerous civil conflicts with ethnic minority armies and freeing a large number of political prisoners.

This rapid shift has surprised many political activists in the country; only a year ago, most top U. S. officials argued the country's generals would never voluntarily hand over power. At the same time, it is worth noting the almost negligible impact of US and EU efforts to sanction and pressure the regime over the past twenty years.

Real reform?

As importantly, the by-elections are widely seen as a critical indicator of the genuineness of the extraordinary process of political reform that has been gathering momentum in Myanmar for the past 12 months. The new, quasi-civilian Myanmar Government under reforming President U Thein Sein has publicly committed itself to an election process that is better than that of

2010, when ballot boxes were famously stuffed with “ early ballots” which (unsurprisingly) favoured government-party candidates.

To ensure this, they have for the first time ever invited international election observers from Myanmar’s ASEAN-plus network, including Australia. Clearly, the process of these elections is as important as the political outcomes. The election process will probably receive a mixed report, rather than an unqualified “ free and fair” rating, as many relatively minor problems have already been reported (but not verified).

A Political Opportunity

The pace of change in Myanmar has sped up since national elections were held in November 2010. At the time, the international community condemned the polls as a way for the military to create a front government behind which it would continue wielding power. Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) declined to participate. Yet the elections do seem to have opened up some political space and provided a modicum of hope for change. The elections were followed by the installation of U Thein Sein as president and the creation of a civilian parliament.

Since then, both the parliament and U Thein Sein have shown significant signs of reform, while former junta leader Than Shwe has vanished from public sight. Freed from house arrest, Aung San Suu Kyi began a dialogue with U Thein Sein that resulted in the reintegration of her NLD into politics and the rebuilding of the party. The parliament, though dominated by former military men, has been unexpectedly active in questioning government policies. The government also has set up a national human rights

commission, invited political exiles to return, and dramatically loosened censorship of the domestic media.

Aung San Suu Kyi and Myanmar's small steps towards change

Only two years after general elections in 2010, the world had been watching Myanmar's by-elections to be held in April 2012. Although the results cannot change the overall political balance of power with only 45 seats contested, the attention is there for two reasons. First, to see if the election points to real democratic reform and second, to watch the Nobel Peace Prize-winning opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi stand for election for the very first time.

Aung San Suu Kyi's new role

Aung San Suu Kyi is a member of the National Assembly for the first time (but not in the government). She could continue to contribute actively but carefully to the new climate of public policy debate, criticizing government policy from time to time, but essentially from within the parliamentary system and without implying she is calling for the government's overthrow.

Even without a "government of national unity", the present informal understanding between President U Thein Sein and Aung San Suu Kyi is likely to continue. It is conceivable they will cooperate from time to time.

The reaction of the Myanmar Army to Aung San Suu Kyi's presence in the parliament will also bear watching. At this point it seems unlikely that they would be tempted to stage a counter-coup. Although no longer directly responsible for governing the country, the army still exercises certain "reserve powers" under the constitution, which it has not yet had to resort to.

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Nor is it absolutely certain that President U Thein Sein will continue indefinitely to enjoy sufficient support among his former military colleagues. But equally, there are no signs so far of active opposition to him, especially when the new policies are demonstrably so popular among Myanmar people.

Myanmar's first steps

Whatever happens among all these “firsts”, Myanmar's will have a new paradigm for its elections. They are a firm foundation for a transition to “democracy”, without foreshadowing what precise shape this might take. In the immediate future, some form of cooperation between Myanmar's political leaders would help lend stability to the process of change and reform, as well as of nation building, that Myanmar badly needs.

The History of Xinhua News Agency

The Xinhua News Agency is the official press agency of the People's Republic of China and the biggest center for collecting information and press conferences in China. It is the largest news agency in China, ahead of the China News Service. Xinhua is subordinate to the State Council and reports to the Communist Party of China's Propaganda and Public Information Department. The Xinhua press agency was started November 1931 as the Red China News Agency and changed to its current name in 1937.

Today, Xinhua News Agency delivers its news across the world in six languages: Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish, and Arabic, as well as news pictures and other kinds of news. It has made contracts to exchange news and news pictures with more than eighty foreign news agencies or political news departments. Xinhua is also responsible for handling, and in

some cases, censoring reports from foreign media destined to release in China.

The agency began to coverage its news and electronic media coverage and has increased its English coverage through its wire service and chinaview. cn web site. Xinhua acquired commercial real estate on New York's Times Square and is developing a staff of top-tier English-language reporters. Xinhua has started an English-language satellite news network. The Xinhua News Agency runs the prominent news website Xinhusnet. com, which provides news in six different languages. The domain xinhuanet. com attracted 430'000 unique visitors between February 2008 and February 2009 according to a Compete. com survey

Research Question

To what extent does Xinhua News Agency website reported on the political changes in Myanmar?

Did the media frame the Governmental transition positively or negatively?

Statement of the problem (rational)

Rationale and priorities

While Western governments might be tempted to credit the sanctions they have imposed for the transformation of Myanmar's politics, the changes have come out of an internal process, and have been influenced by domestic and regional realities. Myanmar has fallen far behind most other Southeast Asian countries in its socio-economic development. Its leaders may also have felt uneasy about their country's increasing dependence on China. More

specifically, the new government has apparently reassessed the country's position in light of three priorities for the future. Firstly, Myanmar is due to hold the chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2014, and wants to ensure that it can do so – it was due to hold the position in 2006, but withdrew following international pressure. Secondly, for its economy to thrive it needs to ensure that it meets the conditions for joining the ASEAN free-trade area planned for 2015. Thirdly, the USDP wants to win the next elections in 2015. More generally, there appears to have been a fundamental change of view and an acceptance that the best way to assure the security and stability of the state is through reform rather than repression.

Objective

This topic is going to present the way of news presenting by website xinhuanet.com concerning news of by-election held on 1st April, 2012, highlighting prominent political transformation of new Myanmar Government.

The significant of political reforms of Myanmar being made by the President's, U Thein Sein, new government got not only interest of Myanmar people but also have been appreciated and watched by other nations around the world. Especially citizen want citizenships to know the actual conditions of his/her country's political and economic sectors. The government has been obliged to disclose their processing transparently to the public from time to time. Moreover, the media should act as a bridge between the public and government and they should inform real transformation progress of the

government to the public exercise of media laws and journalist ethic without any bias.

As a mass media publication about the by – election surged, public awareness and curiosity of whether this by-election will result in political change or not had been raised. Mass media publications on such political occurrences raise not only public interests and awareness but also valuable cooperation from the public. It is therefore very important to track and assess political transformation news that raises public's awareness and interest from time to time.

Nowadays, more and more powerful and updated media have been used. So, news can be spread around the world immediately when it was on the web page. Therefore, the media should consider well and press important news such as Political and Economic news which can be effect to the public.

Brief Literature Review

Media plays an important role around the world and also in Myanmar. Today, Information Technology age, the power of media is bigger and bigger day by day and placed as one of the essential parts for every country. For the betterment of the country, people should apply media effectively. Media is mainly separated into two main types; such as printed media and electronic media. Electronic media is the communication delivered via electronic or electromechanical energy. Communication today is fast-pace and interactive due to modern technology. Global audiences swap information through modern online technologies that are interactive and fast-changing.

Developments in media and communication technology include interactive

websites and use of videos and virtual environments instead of printed content to convey information.

The new media, including the internet offer higher opportunities for interaction with the public participation, beyond the time and space constraints of traditional media. In addition, new media technologies easily by passing national and international boundaries, thus bringing citizens of each country into contact with diverse culture and distant events. In the middle and late time of 1990, internet becomes important in journalism. Internet user should know the believable website of the news sources. The website is the one kind of online journalism. Today, online journalism is popular in the world. The bulk of online journalism has been the extension of existing print and broadcast media into the web via web versions of their primary products.

Online journalism is defined as the reporting of facts produced and distributed via the internet. As of 2009, audiences for online journalism continue to grow in 2008, for the first time, more Americans reported getting their national and international news from the internet, rather than newspapers, and audiences to news sites continued to grow due to the launch of new news sites, continued investment in news online by conventional news organization, and the continued growth in internet audiences overall, with new people discovering the internet's advantages for convenience, speed and depth.

A significant tools of online journalism are internet forums, discussion boards and chats, especially those representing the internet version of official

media. The widespread use of the internet all over the world created a unique opportunity to create a meeting place for both sides in many conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the First and Second Chechen Wars. Often this gives a unique chance to find new, alternative solutions to the conflict, but often the internet is turned into the battlefield by contradicting parties creating endless “online battles”. The claim that online sources are less biased and more informative than the official media is often backed with the belief that online journalists are merely volunteers and freelancers who are not paid for their activity, and therefore are free from corporate ethics. But recently many internet forums began to moderate their boards because of threat of vandalism. Some online journalists have an ambition to replace the mainstream media in the long run. Some independent forums and discussion boards have already achieved a level of popularity comparable to mainstream news agencies such as television stations and newspapers. Internet radio and Broadcast are other growing independent media based on the internet.

Covering political news

Parliament and State legislature become major news centres when in session. The Government is bound to make all announcements in the house. Political news also comes from in and around the house in session as political parties express their views on various issues and the relative strength of various parties is tested in the house. There are moves and counter-moves by ruling and Opposition parties which find place in news columns. A reporter should know the rules and procedures of Parliament. State legislatures follow similar rules and procedures with a slight difference here and there. During

inter-session periods there are conferences of presiding officers of all the houses presided over by the speaker of the House of the People. This makes rules and procedures more or less uniform.

Political reporting: This could be called the most tricky area of reporting. Here one has to understand the political process and the actors involved in it. The assessment of the situation or personality may go wrong and this may lead to embarrassment of the correspondent. A correspondent covering a political party should always locate key persons who matter in the party. Then he should cultivate some of them just by meeting them occasionally and discuss with them national or party affairs. Such meetings may yield news also but they will surely help the correspondent in making an assessment of the man and his role in the party affairs.

The correspondent should also be on good terms with the office staff of the party. Sometimes these people can be of much help in getting information or a story. Many a time politicians try to use reporters. They may plant something with a vested interest in mind. A reporter should be careful about such moves of politicians. A reporter should have a broad field of contacts in a political party. If one has just one or two sources they are not enough. You have to keep on looking for news sources all the time.

A political correspondent with deep understanding of party affairs can do interpretative reports. He should always be cautious while interpreting alignments and movement of various political forces within the party.

Coverage of political party conventions or conferences requires advance planning. A team of reporters or correspondents is dispatched to the site of

the conference. Normally a senior political correspondent does a curtain-raiser telling what may come up at the conference.

Such conferences have a lot of routine speeches and resolutions to be covered but they provide an opportunity to political correspondents to meet and discuss various issues with prominent politicians of the party.

Information or equations arising out of such conferences help in understanding the party politics and trends that may help in future. Many parties have a system of regular press briefings. The concerned correspondent should never miss such briefings. Sometimes these briefings may not yield much but on other occasions they may give crucial news stories. But a correspondent should not confine himself to official party briefings. He should try to contact other sources or groups to more information.

Political correspondents can also attempt 'situationers' on the health and dynamism of the political party and various trends and alignments within the party. Political correspondents have to deal with relationships and political alignments of different political parties. When the legislatures are in session their strength and alignment may become crucial.

During elections political correspondents have to travel to key constituencies where prominent leaders may be contesting and assess the situation. At times, based on quick surveys or assessments of various correspondents in different areas, a national interpretative story may emerge. (K. M. SHRIVASTAVA, 2007)

Method

This study employed a content analysis to examine the website's coverage of the political changes of Myanmar (by-election).

This is quantitative study. It will use a content analysis method to examine the website's coverage of the political changes of Myanmar.

About sampling, available sampling will be used. Stories will be chosen from the website to get sufficient number that will help to make clear analyzation and generalization. This is important because the coverage is not daily and may be it could take many days difference between the two coverage.

Data will be presented and analyzed quantitatively using mathematical guidelines like graphs and percentages. The findings will provide answers to questions about how news websites covered issues concerning Myanmar's political changes with by-election.