

Review of Hnin Yi, "Myanmar's Policy toward the Rising China since 1989." May 31, 2013

Hnin Yi, in her paper, "Myanmar's Policy Toward the Rising China Since 1989", takes an intellectual journey through the past two and a half decade of the policies that have driven both Myanmar and China's policies toward each other to illustrate the how and whys of those policy changes. The result is a competent reiteration of those policies and some light analysis of the rationale for the policies from Myanmar's perspective.

My first recommendation for making this good paper into a good journal submission is a rewrite of the introduction. This is a very common issue for young scholars. While first paragraph is interesting, its role is to lead the reader into the tale that is about to be told. So rather than explain rising China, it may be superior to introduce the realities of Myanmar-China relations. Moreover, while the second paragraph is adequate, it would be greatly enhanced by stating the thesis of the paper, which is not fully revealed until pages 21-22, i.e. Myanmar has pursued a hedging policy, mixed with some bandwagoning, toward China (and other major powers.) This is a sound thesis that is well supported by the author's subsequent arguments. Finally the author should assure that this thesis is pulled throughout the entire paper. Hnin Yi concludes paper with the observation that, "Myanmar has not stood on the Chinese side ... as Myanmar is now free from its past over-reliance on China." This is a strong, positive assertion that can easily be woven into the earlier narrative, which is done once on page 11.

Next, it is standard practice to remove an academic "Literature Review" before submitting a paper as an article. In this case, however, I recommend that the author use swathes of this section to define what she means by "hedging" or "bandwagoning" or "Pauk-Phaw" when these terms are used in the body of the paper. Even seasoned readers can use an occasional reminder of the meaning of these terms. And some of the explanation of these terms, especially concerning their application to the Myanmar situation, was quite enlightening.

Also, pages 6-8, while interesting in terms of earlier Myanmar-China relations, do not honestly fit under the title of “Myanmar's Policy toward the Rising China since 1989.” One possibility is to eliminate these pages or simply condense them into a few phrases. Another possibility, which I recommend, is to frame these pages and their discussion, within the context of the post-1989 era. That is, explicitly connect the recent history discussion to what comes later. In truth, the 1967 riot is related to what is happening in the current era.

Finally, while the paper reflects sound English language usage, it might benefit from a proofreading by a native speaker. Some of the phraseology, while technically correct, is awkward to a native English ear. This is a small and simple issue. For instance, standard English refers to a country as “it” rather than “her.”

One of the most appealing elements of this paper is the lack of standard rhetoric that pours out of most analyses of this type. The author makes no allusions to whether a government or policy is “good” or “bad”, rather she focuses on what is—and the implications and rationales. As I reviewed the paper, I found the reading to be relatively smooth and easy and I found myself learning quite a bit.

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