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Student Activism in a Transitioning Myanmar

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For more than fifty year of authoritarian military regime, Myanmar higher education students have represented the “vanguard in the vacuum”, the country sole, mostly underground opposition to authoritarian regimes. By applying the “dynamics of contentious” approach to social movements, this paper argues that a new trajectory for student activism has been created by the country’s transition toward a more democratic government, started when Thein Sein became President in 2011. This new socio-political environment is pushing activists toward micro-actions of contention rather than toward nation-wide mobilizations that are nowadays difficult to brokerage, as proved by the failure of the only nation-wide students protest happen during the transition, the "Action Committee for Democratic Education" (ACDE) protest against the “National Education Law” (NEL).