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Student Activism in a Transitioning Myanmar

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For more than fifty years of authoritarian military regime, Myanmar higher education students have represented the “*vanguard in the vacuum*”, the country’s 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 during the transition, the “Action Committee for Democratic Education” (ACDE) protest against the “National Education Law” (NEL).