

ering marginalized groups or as continuing the previous economic dynamics that fueled social polarization.

Two shortcomings should be pointed out: First, the author does not provide explanations of the technical terms related to Islamic finance and to digital technologies. This makes it sometimes difficult for the non-specialist reader to follow the argument. Second,

the writing style is occasionally rambling, with the same information appearing at different parts of the text. Thus, the book can be a tough read, also due to the intensity of the details and the wide range of the author's concepts. Nevertheless, it is certainly worth the effort. It will appeal to both students and academics interested in the contemporary economy of the Middle East, Islamic economics, and the digital economy.

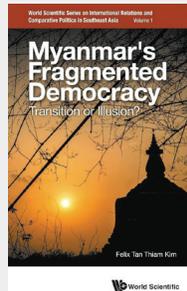
## Myanmar's Fragmented Democracy: Transition or Illusion?

By Felix Thiam Kim Tan

World Scientific, 2022, 296 pages, \$90.00, ISBN: 9789811251351

Reviewed by Aniruddha Babar, Tetso College

In *Myanmar's Fragmented Democracy: Transition or Illusion?* by Felix Thiam Kim Tan, a comprehensive analysis of Myanmar's political landscape in the post-junta era is presented. The book delves into the intricacies of Myanmar's democratization process, exploring the challenges, complexities, and limitations that have shaped its path toward democratic governance. Tan's work offers valuable insights into the country's political institutions, civil-military relations, ethnic dynamics, and the role of external actors. Through a critical examination of the 2008 Constitution, the influence of the military, and the persistent ethnic conflicts, the author unravels the complexities of Myanmar's political system and its implications for democratic consolidation. The book also addresses the role of external actors such as China, the U.S., and ASEAN, in Myanmar's political developments, highlighting the need for an understanding of the



country's unique historical and cultural context. While the book provides a comprehensive analysis supported by empirical data, historical context, and interviews, there are certain limitations in terms of depth and inclusion of diverse perspectives. Nonetheless, *Myanmar's Fragmented Democracy* is a valuable resource for scholars, policymakers, and those seeking to comprehend the intricate challenges and opportunities in Myanmar's ongoing democratic journey.

The book begins with an insightful overview of Myanmar's political history, emphasizing the country's decades-long military rule and the subsequent transition to a civilian-led government. The author highlights the challenges faced by Myanmar's political actors, both domestic and international, in navigating the complex landscape of democratic reforms. Tan skillfully explores the multifaceted

dimensions of Myanmar's democracy, focusing on the role of the military, the centrality of the 2008 Constitution, and the ethnic conflicts that continue to pose significant obstacles to democratic consolidation.

One of the book's strengths lies in its in-depth analysis of Myanmar's political institutions and their impact on the democratization process. Author provides a critical examination of the 2008 Constitution, highlighting its inherent limitations and undemocratic provisions. The author delves into the powers of the military, its influence over key institutions, and the challenges faced by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) in navigating the military-dominated political landscape. This analysis sheds light on the complexities of Myanmar's political system and its implications for democratic governance.

Another key aspect of Tan's work is his exploration of Myanmar's ethnic dynamics and their impact on the democratization process. The author provides a nuanced understanding of the diverse ethnic groups in Myanmar and their struggles for autonomy and self-determination. Author highlights the importance of addressing ethnic conflicts as a crucial component of Myanmar's democratic transition, emphasizing the need for inclusive political dialogue and power-sharing arrangements. His analysis of the peace process and the challenges encountered in achieving a comprehensive settlement offers valuable insights into the complexities of Myanmar's political landscape.

Furthermore, the author critically examines the role of external actors in Myanmar's democratization process. He analyzes the influence of regional and international players, such as China, the U.S., and ASEAN,

on Myanmar's political developments. Tan acknowledges the complexities of external involvement, highlighting both positive and negative aspects. The author argues that while international pressure and engagement can play a constructive role in promoting democratic reforms, they must be accompanied by an understanding of Myanmar's unique historical, cultural, and political context.

Tan's book provides a comprehensive and well-researched analysis of Myanmar's political landscape. His thorough examination of key issues, such as the military's influence, the 2008 Constitution, ethnic conflicts, and external actors, offers valuable insights into the complexities of Myanmar's democratic transition. The book is enriched by a wealth of empirical data, historical context, and interviews with key stakeholders, providing readers with a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities that Myanmar faces.

However, there are certain limitations to Tan's analysis. While the book covers a broad range of topics, some sections could have been further expanded to provide a deeper analysis of certain aspects. For instance, the discussion on the role of external actors could have delved into the motivations, strategies, and impacts of specific countries and organizations in more detail. Additionally, while Tan acknowledges the importance of civil society and grassroots movements, further exploration of their role and agency within Myanmar's democratization process would have been beneficial.

Furthermore, the book could have included more nuanced perspectives from different actors within Myanmar, including voices from ethnic minorities and other political parties. While the author draws on a wide range of

sources, including interviews and scholarly works, incorporating a diverse range of perspectives would have strengthened the analysis and provided a more comprehensive understanding of Myanmar's political landscape.

*Myanmar's Fragmented Democracy: Transition or Illusion?* by Felix Thiam Kim Tan is a valuable contribution to the study of Myanmar's political transition. The author's insightful analysis, supported by empirical

evidence and thorough research, sheds light on the complexities, challenges, and opportunities that Myanmar faces in its pursuit of democratic governance. The book offers a nuanced understanding of Myanmar's political institutions, ethnic dynamics, and the role of external actors. Despite some limitations, Tan's work provides an essential resource for scholars, policymakers, and anyone interested in understanding the complexities of Myanmar's democratic journey.