

Freedom and Fear in Myanmar

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As Aung San Suu Kyi prepares to form a government in Myanmar, the political agenda she is likely to pursue remains unclear. In an iconic essay published 25 years ago, however, she did identify a firm political priority: freedom from fear. Moreover, there is today still a measure of fear in Myanmar. Partly it is vertical: ongoing fear of the state and its agents. Partly it is horizontal: resurgent fear of society and the institutions, associations and identities that constitute it. Partly it is in some sense programmatic: deep-seated fear as a habit of mind after decades of dictatorship. The talk will consider how Myanmar's new government might address prevalent fear and thereby mark a decisive break with authoritarianism. Drawing on Judith N. Shklar's liberalism of fear, Jacob T. Levy's multiculturalism of fear and Václav Havel's writings on hope and fear, it will examine the policy implications of a political agenda premised above all on Aung San Suu Kyi's celebrated commitment to freedom from fear.

Ian Holliday is Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) at the University of Hong Kong. He has a long interest in and engagement with Myanmar, and regularly takes undergraduate students to teach English inside the country and along its border with Thailand. He has a major collection of contemporary paintings, many of which are on public display and most of which can be viewed at thukhuma.org. His most recent book is *Burma Redux: Global Justice and the Quest for Political Reform in Myanmar* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). Before joining the University of Hong Kong, he worked at City University of Hong Kong in the 2000s and at the University of Manchester in the 1990s. He was educated as an undergraduate student at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and as a graduate student at New College, Oxford.

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