

Book Launch on Constitutionalism and Legal Change in Myanmar



Professor Andrew Harding presenting a copy of his book to the Director of the Centre of Asian Legal Studies (CALs), Associate Professor Dan W. Puchniak, in appreciation for the support provided by CALS

On 31 March 2017, the Centre for Asian Legal Studies (CALs) was pleased to organise a book launch for Professor Andrew Harding to celebrate the publication of his book entitled “Constitutionalism and Legal Change in Myanmar”. The collection of essays is edited by Andrew and Dr Khin Khin Oo, who was formerly a CALS Visiting Research Fellow.

In 2014, a group of international legal and political science scholars from several countries, including Myanmar itself, commenced a project to assess Myanmar’s constitutional reforms under the 2008 Constitution and discuss the issues of constitutionalism that have arisen. They also wished to assess the prospects for the future.

Myanmar's Constitution of 2008 was the “road map” for the reform process that began in 2011. Despite extensive criticism of this Constitution for its emphasis on the role of the military, much progress has been made towards constitutional government and law reform. With the election of the opposition NLD to government in the general election of November 2015 and the presidential electoral college election of March 2016, the time was ripe to consider the Constitution, and

prospects and needs for constitutional change as Myanmar moves towards democracy and the rule of law. Much has been made of the Constitution's rigidity, which is seen as an obstacle to reform and inconsistent with embracing the rule of law, human rights and multi-party democracy, especially with a rapidly transforming state and society. Nonetheless, the Constitution is also seen as having potential to be a very positive force for reform. Many issues arise now for constitutionalism and constitutional change: presidency; federalism and territorial governance; the status of minorities and freedom of religion; civil liberties in what is described as a 'discipline-flourishing democracy'; the courts, justice and the rule of law; the electoral system; and many more.

The result of the scholars' work is the publication of a 312-page book, *Constitutionalism and Legal Change in Myanmar*, which was published by the highly respected international legal publisher Hart Publishing/ Bloomsbury in January 2017. This book is an attempt to gauge the extent and potential for the entrenchment of constitutionalism in Myanmar in a rapidly changing environment.

The book is available from Hart Publishing / Bloomsbury [here](#).



Director of CALS, Associate Professor Dan Puchniak facilitating the Question & Answer session at the book launch.



NUS Law Dean, Professor Simon Chesterman receiving the book on behalf of the Faculty of Law which provided the funding for the research project leading to the book publication.



Professor Andrew signing books for participants at the Book Launch