



*"Freedom and democracy are
dreams you never give up"*

— Aung San Suu Kyi

University of Warsaw, Lech Wałęsa Institute, the European Commission
and UNDP are inviting for an open Kapuscinski Development Lecture by

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi ————— —————"Politics and Education"





AUNG SAN SUU KYI was born in 1945 as a daughter of general Aung San, commander of the Burma Independence Army, who negotiated Burma's independence from Britain and who was subsequently assassinated in 1947. She was educated in Rangoon until the age of 15 and continued her studies in India and the United Kingdom. Aung San Suu Kyi lived abroad until 1988 when she returned to Burma (renamed Myanmar in the following year) to take care of her ailing mother and found herself in the middle of major political turmoil. She founded the National League for Democracy (NLD) – a political party that won the 1990 parliamentary elections by a landslide, securing over 80 percent of seats, despite the fact that she herself was under house arrest and disqualified from standing. However, the military junta that ruled Myanmar at that time did not honour the results.

In 1991 Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize “for her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights”. Between 1989 and 2010 she had spent almost 15 years under house arrest. Following political thaw initiated after the 2010 parliamentary elections in Myanmar her detention was finally lifted. In 2012 as part of the first free by-elections she became a member of the parliament and NLD won 43 out of 44 seats it contested. Aung San Suu Kyi has been playing an increasingly important role on the political stage in Myanmar in recent years. She has announced her will to enter the presidential race in 2015.

Aung San Suu Kyi for over two decades has been an outspoken leader of Burmese opposition. She has become an international symbol of heroic and peaceful resistance in the face of oppression. Francis Sejested, the Chairman of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee, called her “an outstanding example of the power of the powerless”.

Myanmar or Burma

as it used to be called can be considered the most important country in the Southeast Asia at the moment. Coming from a very difficult situation Myanmar began its transition and started to reenter the international community in the recent years. Officially starting from 2010 the transformation accelerated rapidly from the by-elections held on the 1st of April 2012 – considered by the international community as the first legitimate, democratic and free elections organized since 1989. The enormous difference this time was that the government respected the outcome while in 1989 the junta realizing its defeat canceled the results and began a country-wide crackdown on opposition parties.



For the last 60 years Burma, as it used to be known till 1989, has endured enormous hardship. Having regained its independence in 1948 it seemed that there was a chance for bright although difficult future. With General Aung San as the leader of the war time opposition and later the negotiator of the independence treaty the possibilities of overcoming the destruction which the country suffered and uniting it under single flag were becoming real and Burma seemed to be on the track to take its right place on the political map of Southeast Asia. The first shock came after the assassination of General Aung San who was considered the father of the nation. From that moment on, the situation of the country began worsening rapidly. In 1962 the army used its military strength to overthrow the government which was struggling to keep Burma as a united country. Since then Burma ruled by military junta had embarked on a journey of isolation and nationwide experiments such as the Burmese way to socialism. The reclusive and brutal generals set a course that would see the resource rich country become one of the poorest in the world.

Governing with hard grip the military became detached from the citizens which led to nationwide protests in 1988. Hoping to calm down the desperate population the generals decided to hold free and democratic elections in 1990. The results were devastating for the junta with NLD led by Aung San Suu Kyi receiving 80 percent of the votes. Burma was not as fortunate as Eastern European countries which began their transition from communist to democratic systems the same year. The Burmese rulers decided once more to turn their back and began a ruthless campaign against anybody who would disagree.

It took another 23 years for Burmese junta to acknowledge the needs of the Burmese citizens. Aung San Suu Kyi spent most of this time under house arrest with a one way ticket waiting ready for her if she had decided to leave the country. The Noble Peace Prize given to her in 1991 had to be collected by her husband and two sons and she would have to wait till 2012 for her first trip outside Myanmar as the country would be call now.



Today Myanmar is on a rapid road of political and economic transition. With most of the sanctions having been lifted the rich resources of the country and its population ready to work for a better future the outlook for Myanmar is very promising. On political and economic sides there are serious challenges ahead. A new constitution needs to be drafted to cement the achievements gained in the last two years. Infrastructure needs to be improved to rise the living standards and attract foreign investments. With all these difficulties ahead it is important for the international community to share its knowledge with the people of Myanmar and assist in strengthening the transition process.

The next big step for the country will be the elections in 2015. All eyes of the world will be turned to Myanmar with hope that the Burmese citizens will be participating in their first nationwide free and democratic elections. The transformation in Myanmar will influence the whole region giving a chance for all of Southeast Asia to set a new course in history as it happened in Eastern Europe with Poland in 1989.



Top global thinkers discuss development in the European Union countries. The series “Kapusinski Development Lectures”, named for Ryszard Kapuscinski, a polish reporter and writer who covered developing countries, is organized jointly by the European Commission, the United Nations Development Programme and partner universities and development think-tanks. 49 lectures gathered since 2009 over 9,000 participants.

The lecture series offers students an unprecedented opportunity to learn and discuss about development issues such as climate change, human rights, aid effectiveness, Europe–Africa relations, Millennium Development Goals among other. The high-level events contribute to the debate and formulation of the European development policy. The lectures are livestreamed at <http://www.kapusinskilectures.eu> and their content is shared on this website. As of 2013 the initiative expands to other continents.

Strategic partners of the project include DEVEX and the Global Master’s in Development Practice Association.

The lectures honor the name of Ryszard Kapuscinski, a Polish journalist and writer, who died in 2007. Kapuscinski, whose books were translated into many languages, was often named the “Third World Chronicler” or the “Voice of the Poor” for his famous reportages and books describing developing countries on all continents. Among other books, he was famous for: “The Emperor” on Ethiopia, “Shah of Shahs” about Iran, “The Shadow of the Sun” about Africa, “Another Day of Life” about Angola, and “Imperium” about the Soviet Union.

Upcoming Kapuscinski development lectures:

» 18th September at 17:00 CET / 15:00 GMT

Angel Gurría in Paris

Secretary-General of OECD will speak about tackling inequalities in development and about the role of inclusive growth, particularly in the context of the post 2015 development agenda.

» 24th September at 18:00 EDT / 22:00 GMT

Esther Duflo & Jose Antonio Ocampo in New York City

Jose Antonio Ocampo of Columbia University (former UN Undersecretary General for Social and Economic Affairs) will outline the prospects of the post 2015 / post-MDGs development agenda. Esther Duflo, director of the Poverty Action Lab at MIT and co-author of the best-seller “Poor Economics” will present innovative approaches to poverty reduction. The speakers will be introduced by Andris Piebalgs, European Commissioner for Development and Helen Clark, Administrator of UNDP.

More about “Kapuscinski Development Lectures” and planned events:
<http://kapuscinskilectures.eu>

ABOUT THE ORGANISERS:



European Commission's Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid is responsible for defining the EU development policy and ensuring effective programming and implementation of EU's external aid instruments. EuropeAid coordinates the actions of the EU institutions, the EU Member States and other EU actors around the Union's core values, objectives and common priorities. EuropeAid's work is carried out with the ultimate aim of: reducing poverty in the world; ensuring sustainable development; promoting democracy, peace and security. <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid>



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Resilient nations.*

United Nations Development Programme is the UN's global development network, an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. UNDP, on the ground in 177 countries and territories, works closely with national partners – including governments, civil society and the private sector – supporting country needs and priorities related to: poverty reduction; democratic governance; crisis prevention & recovery; environment & energy; HIV, health and development. <http://www.undp.org>



University of Warsaw (UW) is the top higher education institution and leading research centre in Poland offering studies and specializations within the humanities, mathematical and natural sciences. UW is recognized by prestigious international rankings, such as, the ARWU Shanghai Ranking, the QS Top Universities, and the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. *POLITYKA* weekly ranks UW as the best Polish university due to its highest quality of research and scientific pursuit. The University of Warsaw is the biggest Polish university with over 53 500 students, studying at 20 faculties and 30 divisions. University's scholars and students achieve outstanding global success in the areas, such as, IT sciences, archaeology, astronomy, and physics.



Lech Wałęsa Institute is an apolitical, non-profit, non-governmental organisation founded by President Lech Wałęsa in December 1995 as the first institution in Poland to mirror the American example of presidential libraries and foundations established by the former heads of state. The intention behind the establishment of the Lech Wałęsa Institute was, first and foremost, to bring together many social groups around the never-ageing ideas of democracy, solidarity, state decentralisation, ethics in politics and necessity to nurture the tradition of independence. Almost twenty years of the Institute's activity mean both national and international presence. Among other activities we carry the "Solidarity with Burma" programme (see the following pages for more details). <http://www.ilw.org/pl/>



Solidarni z Birma

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“**SOLIDARITY WITH BURMA**” started in 2010 as a mutual project of People in Need and Lech Walesa Institute. Until 2012 the main objective of the project was to spark interest in Burma among general public by organising meetings with exiled burmese community as well as film screenings and seminars.

With political transition expanding the possible scope of operations for foreign civil society organisations (CSOs) in 2012, Lech Walesa Institute decided to move its project to Burma in order to have greater leverage and establish stronger partnerships with local actors. Drawing from Polish experiences with political and economic transition, as well as likewise expertise in nonviolent resistance against oppressive authorities, Lech Walesa Institute decided to focus its activities on supporting Burmese civil society and youth leaders.

Adjusting means according to the needs, Lech Walesa Institute has ever since been running workshops, seminars and film activities in close cooperation with local NGOs.

Our first visit on the ground coincided with April 2012 by-elections, for which Lech Walesa Institute has dispatched a team of grassroots observers. Only a month later, we have accompanied Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs on his visit to the country and co-hosted Community of Democracies workshops for political leaders and activists.

These visits were game changing for our activities. Not only did we strengthen our relationship with National League for Democracy and its leader – Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, but also we started scouting local partner organisations.

Luckily enough, we were introduced to a dynamic group of local youth activists known as ‘Pandita Development Insitute’ that has become our primary partner and co-organiser of almost every single event we run in Burma.

Together with Pandita Development Insitue we have created a Resource Center – an open, friendly space for youth equipped with WLAN, office facilities, computers and impressive traditional as well as audiovisual library. It serves as a venue for workshops, seminars, discussion clubs and classroom not only for Lech Walesa Institute, but most importantly for local CSOs and informal groups.



