Democracy and development in Asia

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Description
This lecture was delivered on the occasion of the Conferral of an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Education from Seoul National University on February 1, 2013.

Abstract
It is a pleasure and an honor to be addressing all of you today. First of all, I must thank the University for conferring this honorary degree on me, and I hope that I will be able to do enough for education in Burma to deserve such an honor. There is much that we have to do and there is much support and help that we need from our friends.
The apologists of authoritarian regimes in the newly independent states have spent fifteen years of sovereign development creating and spreading the myth of so-called enlightened authoritarianism as the most desirable and implementable political model (principle) for these states. This conception has been surfacing more and more frequently in political discourse recently. It looks like a product of the crisis that hit the political research of democratization issues in the post-Soviet (particularly Central Asian) countries. We can say very provisionally that the democratic rhetoric in the new Sixteen scholars examine the relationship between economic development and the spread of political democracy in Taiwan, South Korea and the Philippines. There are two very good essays on the Philippines. Richard Hooley of the University of Pittsburgh provides evidence that Philippine living standards have been on the decline since 1968, even as per capita income has risen. The Philippines has few of these characteristics of the Asian model. Instead, it possesses many of the traditional Hispanic characteristics: a traditional landed elite dominating key social institutions; a patronage-oriented civil service and political parties; industrialists protected from domestic and foreign competition; massive unemployment. The challenge of authoritarian development has a long history in Southeast Asia, and the Chinese growth experience is but the latest example of an authoritarian developmentalist regime that challenges the superiority of democracy for producing a stable platform for economic growth. China’s economic policies and diplomatic actions do not directly encourage authoritarian capitalism or incentivize countries to follow a particular national political or economic model. Rather than trying to “re-couple” democracy and accountability within Southeast Asia, advocates for better governance and democracy in Southeast Asia ought to recognize that the two may be pursued separately.