

vulnerable communities that must be addressed if meaningful democratization is to succeed. Such a tendency is evident in international governmental and media focus on Burma, a multinational society with one of the most tragic and costly of the failed democratization processes in Asia. International attention is focused on the heroic battles of National League for Democracy (NLD) leader Aung San Suu Kyi against the Rangoon regime, all but ignoring the equally heroic battles being fought in ethnic minority regions. In the words of a participant, Khun Okker, an ethnic Pao lawyer and foreign affairs spokesperson for the National Democratic Front, an alliance of 11 parties seeking the federalization of Burma:

When several hundred NLD supporters were recently arrested, there was much international concern but, fortunately, most have since been released. In ethnic minority areas, however, our people are still being killed everyday, and thousands of people are being forced from their homes. It is in ethnic minority areas that you can see the real suffering and volatility in Burman, but it does not attract anything like the same degree of attention (Smith 1996).

The paper grows out of an academic conference and policy round table focusing on Democracy and Identity Conflicts in Asia, held under the auspices of the University of Toronto-York University Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies on 4-5 December 2000. Following these events, and also organized by JCAPS, a smaller group of scholars, governmental, and non-governmental representatives met to discuss the policy issues flowing from the conference and round table. Funding for both the policy round table and workshop was generously provided by the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development through the John Holmes Fund.