

# 2019

# Research Student Seminar Series

Date : 16 September 2019 (Monday)  
Time : 3:00 to 5:30 pm  
Venue : G7603, 7/F, CLASS Interdisciplinary Multi-function Room  
Yeung Kin Man Academic Building, City University of Hong Kong  
Language : English



## 'A Tale of Two Insurgencies':

How the effects of a-historical analysis, oversight of literature from other disciplines, & misplaced assumptions concerning the development of separatist movements in Southern Thailand since the early-Cold War have hindered analysis of the current conflict in decline.

by Mr Gerard Brian MCDERMOTT (Presenter 1, 3:00 - 3:45 pm)  
PhD Candidate, Department of Asian International Studies

**ABSTRACT:** Since 2004, the Malay-speaking provinces of south Thailand have been the stage for a surprisingly brutal wave of violence between the security agencies of the state supported by local defence organisations and an insurgent movement that is highly-secretive and excessively non-communicative. Since 2014, the level of violence has gone drastically into decline, without any substantial, thorough or convincing explanation being put forward by seasoned experts. This presentation aims to provide an explanation by analysing previous patterns of violence in the region and providing a survey of works from the fields of ethnology and anthropology.

Firstly, concerning the Cold War era insurgency (1960 - 1990), I offer an alternative point of view on the connection between this conflict and later patterns of violence, developing on Helbardt's assertion that the failures of the previous conflict shaped the development of Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) in the 1990s: I argue that both conflicts have essentially fallen into decline for the same or similar reasons. I also argue that certain factors at work during the late cold war intensified during the interregnum period (1990 - 2004) and went on to shape patterns of violence and target selection during the current conflict.

Secondly, this presentation also attempts to identify shortcomings in previous literature produced during the first ten years of **southern Thailand's most recent** separatist conflict (2004 - 2014). Nearly all of the main works produced have suffered from the same or similar short-comings: (i) a-historical analysis; (ii) a Thai-studies centred approach; (iii) omission or oversight of literature on the same topic from different disciplines, and (iv) lack of application of theory from the field of conflict studies. I argue that these shortcomings have led to an inability for most analysts to explain why the conflict has gone into decline. Overall, the omission of literature, both older literature on the Cold War conflict and literature from the fields of ethnology and anthropology, have severely undermined the ability of analysts to explanation the decline of the conflict since 2014.

Lastly, I argue that the shortcomings of recent analysis (2014 - 2019) can be explained by a continuation of the short-comings of earlier analyses, ultimately leading to a failure to predict or explain the current decline. I argue that by relying on these old frameworks, misplaced assumptions and **accepted 'wisdoms'**, analysts have failed to provide a complete or reassuring explanation of this conflict in decline.

**ABOUT THE SPEAKER:** Gerard McDermott is a researcher, writer & photographer from the Republic of Ireland. He has previously published with Peace Review, Politico and Peace Research. His research interests include separatism, resource-related conflict, ethnicity, nationalism, imperialism, and state-building.

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## *Soft Power Battlegrounds:*

### *China and Japan's Competing Strategies of Attraction in Southeast Asia*

*by Mr Daniele CARMINATI (Presenter 2, 3:45 - 4:30 pm)*

*PhD Candidate, Department of Asian International Studies*

**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to highlight the increasing value of Joseph Nye's concept of soft power in East Asian international relations and how major actors conceive and make use of it. Soft power is often praised by leaders and policymakers for its non-coercive nature and supposed limited costs. Yet it is also downplayed due to the difficulties in detecting its 'fuzzy' outcomes. These critiques will be addressed by constructing a methodology to operationalize its assessment. China and Japan are openly showing interest in advancing this form of power. The two are competing to gather sociocultural and political resources as enabling factors to pave the way to closer collaboration and improved economic relations across Southeast Asia. This analysis covers their actions in the region with Thailand as the main case study. The first part examines how China and Japan understand soft power while outlining their main objectives and strategies through a historical analysis of their official documents and policies in action. The second part investigates how the respective efforts are received by the target audiences in selected 'soft power battlegrounds'. Economic data, in-depth interviews, and surveys are used to evaluate the evolution of the two countries' influence, conduct, and reputation. The final part merges and juxtaposes the findings to determine which actor is proving to be more successful, and why. The significance of this research lies in addressing the concerns with soft power assessment while further developing the connection between soft and economic power, as much as identifying which features and strategies define the major influencers in the region and beyond.

**ABOUT THE SPEAKER:** Daniele Carminati is a PhD candidate in Asian and International Studies at the City University of Hong Kong. His interests revolve around the impact of globalization and the ensuing trends and issues across East and Southeast Asia with a particular focus on soft power dynamics. He has a mixed background in communication studies and international relations from several universities between Europe and Asia. Daniele is also a commissioning editor at E-International Relations.



## *Japanese Green Technology Policy: The Resilience of the Developmental State*

*by Mr Friso Godefroy Wilhem MORAND (Presenter 3, 4:45 - 5:30 pm)*

*PhD Candidate, Department of Asian International Studies*

**ABSTRACT:** For decades, the Japanese government has been cooperating closely with the private sector to promote the development and diffusion of green technology. While green technology does play a crucial role in the country's environmental policy, the Japanese government recognizes that it is also an important economic tool and the future engine for national economic growth. Examining Japanese green technology policy reveals a large number of state interventions in the economy. These interventions are aimed at reshaping the foundations of the Japanese economy and improving its international competitiveness.

Green technology represents, therefore, a window into Japanese political economy, revealing that Japan still evinces key characteristics of a developmental state in the green industry. This contradicts the belief that the Japanese developmental state has been disintegrating after decades of neoliberal reforms. Japanese green technology policy is also useful to reevaluate the developmental state. In particular, it shows that this kind of polity is not limited to 'catching up' to more advanced industrialized nations but that it can be applied to a new emerging industry, thereby highlighting the state's role in stimulating technological innovation.

**ABOUT THE SPEAKER:** Friso G.W. Morand is a PhD researcher at the Department of Asian and International Studies, City University of Hong Kong. He has a background in Japanese Studies and International Relations. His current research focuses on Japan's environmental policy.