

City University of Hong Kong

Department of Public Policy

*Research Student Seminar*

**Origins of Regional Human Rights  
Systems: exploring historical  
contingencies and implications for  
Asia**

by

**JOO Haeri**

*PhD Student*

Date:	9 Sep 2019
Time:	1600-1730
Venue:	Room Y7-529, Yeung Kin Man Acad. Building City University of Hong Kong
Language:	English

*Abstract:*

When World War II ended, the international community recognized a need for interstate cooperation on human rights. The United Nations, established with the primary goal of promoting peace and international cooperation, adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1949. Since the foundation, the scope, guidance and coverage have expanded, as has the use of their terms. Thus, the HK Basic Law specifically uses such terminology and it formed part of the Belt & Road agenda for China as two examples. In addition to the international system, transnational cooperation for protecting human rights at a

regional level have become institutionalized in Europe, the Americas and Africa in the 1950s, 1970's and 1980's, respectively, However, Asia has not so far developed such institutionalization. This study tries to find out the origins of the existing regional human rights systems; under which backgrounds and conditions individual countries decided to participate in the systems by exploring domestic and international situations of the regions and explore whether these provide indications of whether Asia will join a system. This study hopes to contribute to the current debate on inter-state cooperation on human rights in Asia. It is not concerned with evaluating rights themselves, such as whether some rights are more important than others or whether there are universal or culturally specific rights. Rather I look at whether the underlying principles of a rights-based view of international relations has currency, particularly in Asia.