Seminar


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Date: 14 April 2014 (Monday)
Time: 4 pm – 5:30 pm
Venue: Y4-702, AC1, City University of Hong Kong

Abstract
This seminar will examine the relationship between political violence and democratic structures in Thailand since 1975. The main objective of the research is to identify the primary factors and processes that enable violence in elections and to explain the variation in Thai electoral violence across time and space. Since democratization began in the mid-1970s, electoral processes in Thailand have been tainted with various forms of violence. In the last fourteen national general elections from January 1975 to July 2011, hundreds of people have died or been injured as a result of election-related violence. Arising from this are two important elements of variation that call for investigation.

First, the patterns and degrees of violence have shifted over time. Election-related violence first manifested itself in the 1975 and 1976 elections. The intensity and degree of violence increased in the 1980s and remained relatively constant until the late 1990s. Thai society then observed a sharp rise in violence in the 2001 and 2005 elections, and a sharp decline in 2007 and 2011. In explaining the changes in forms and patterns of violence over time, I focus on the characteristics of the state, the changes in electoral and party systems, the impact of decentralization, and the relative importance of ideological politics.

Second, electoral violence in Thailand is unevenly distributed in spatial terms (some provinces are more violent than others). Since electoral violence in Thailand is province-specific, my research focuses specifically on the local factors that promote violent conflict. I compare three provinces harboring chronic electoral violence, namely Phrae, Nakhon Sawan, and Nakhon Si Thammarat, with three provinces that are relatively peaceful: Phetchaburi, Buriram, and Sa Kaeo. Collectively, they illuminate the dynamics of political contestation and violence in other provinces throughout the country.

Short Bio
Prajak Kongkirati is lecturer at the Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University. His comments on Thai politics have been regularly appeared in Thai-language newspapers, as well as the Bangkok Post, the Nation, New York Times, and other media. His book, And Then The Movement Emerged: Cultural Politics of Thai Students and Intellectuals Movements before the October 14 Uprising (Thammasat University Press, 2005), received the award in 2005. Prajak received his Ph.D. from the Department of Political and Social Change, ANU in 2013, with a dissertation titled “Bosses, Bullets and Ballots: Electoral Violence and Democracy in Thailand, 1975-2011.” His study has been supported by the Australian Leadership Award (ALA) of AusAID. His latest book is The Not-So-Bloody Election: Violence, Democracy and the Historic July 3, 2011 Election (Kobfai, 2013).

All are welcome.
Language: English

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