

# Current political developments in Thailand

Date: *2015 May 26 (Tue)*

Venue: *AC3-11-256, City University of Hong Kong (CityU)*



Organized by the Southeast Asia Research Centre (SEARC)

## Speakers:

Dr. Charnvit Kasetsiri

<charnvitkasetsiri@gmail.com>

Dr. Pavin Chachavalpongpun

<pavin@cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp>

Dr. Prajak Kongkirati

<prajakk@yahoo.com>

Dr. Federico Ferrara

<fferrara@cityu.edu.hk>

Prof. Mark R. Thompson

<mthompso@cityu.edu.hk>

## Schedule

<i>Time</i>	<i>Titles &amp; Speakers</i>	<i>Page no.</i>
13:30 – 14:00	<p><b>Twilights in Siam and Thailand: The Two Reigns of King Rama V and Rama IX</b></p> <p>Dr. Charnvit Kasetsiri</p>	1-2
14:00 – 14:30	<p><b>Coup, King, Crisis: What's Next for Thailand?</b></p> <p>Dr. Pavin Chachavalpongpun</p>	3-4
14:30 – 15:00	<p><b>Transitional Coup and the Consolidation of the Military's Semi-authoritarian Regime</b></p> <p>Dr. Prajak Kongkirati</p>	5-6
15:00 – 15:30	Tea Break	
15:30 – 16:00	<p><b>Understanding Thailand's Domestic Political Conflict: Democracy, Social Identity, and the Struggle for Recognition</b></p> <p>Dr. Federico Ferrara</p>	7-8
16:00 – 16:30	<p><b>When 'good governance' breaks bad: Thailand and the Philippines Compared</b></p> <p>Prof. Mark R Thompson</p>	9-10

**Charnvit Kasetsiri** is a Professor Emeritus of Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand, born 1941; he is a prominent historian and Thai Studies scholar. After obtaining his bachelor's degree in Diplomacy with Honor from Thammasat, 1963, he pursued his 1967 M .A. in Diplomacy and World Affairs at Occidental College, Los Angeles, California, under a Rockefeller scholarship and his 1972 Ph.D. in Southeast Asian History at Cornell University.

His thesis: *The Rise of Ayudhya and a History of Siam in the 14th and 15th Centuries*, was published by Oxford in Asia, 1972. He served as Lecturer of History at Thammasat from 1973-2001 and founded, in 2000, the Southeast Asian Studies Program. He was the President of Thammasat University in 1995-96. He has written approximately 200 articles and a number of publications on Thai and Southeast Asian History. He has launched a 'Siam not Thailand' campaign to rename the country as to reflect the reality about its ethnics, languages and cultural identities.

His latest works deal with questions of war and peace and good ASEAN neighbor relations, especially between Thailand and Cambodia. He is a co-author, along with Pavin Chachavalpongpun (Kyoto) and Pou Sothirak (Phnom Penh), '*Preah Vihear: A Guide to the Thai-Cambodian Conflict and Its Solutions*', 2013.



**Pavin Chachavalpongpun** is Associate Professor at the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University. Earning his PhD from SOAS, he is the editor of “Good Coup” Gone Bad: Thailand’s Political Developments Since Thaksin’s Downfall. Pavin is also editor of Kyoto University’s online journal “Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia”. After the coup of May 2014, the military summoned Pavin twice for speaking out about its political intervention. He rejected the summons and subsequently, the Thai junta issued a warrant for his arrest thus forcing him to seek refuge from the Japanese government.



**Prajak Kongkirati** is lecturer at the Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University. He is also editorial board of *Asian Democracy Review*. Currently, he is a Head of Southeast Asian Studies Center, East Asian Institute, Thammasat University. He has published widely in the field of Thai politics, conflict and violence, party and electoral politics, democratization, and social movements. His comments on Thai politics have been regularly appeared in many 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 Toyota Foundation's Best Book award of 2005 in the field of social sciences in Thailand. Prajak received his MA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2008, and 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).





**Federico Ferrara** was awarded a doctorate in political science by Harvard University in 2008. Since then, he has served as Assistant Professor at the National University of Singapore (Department of Political Science, 2008-10) and City University of Hong Kong (Department of Asian and International Studies, 2010-current), where he teaches courses on comparative politics and social science theory and methodology. His scholarly work on subjects including comparative political institutions, political parties and elections, contentious politics, and Thai politics and history has appeared in academic journals such as the *American Journal of Political Science*, the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, the *International Political Science Review*, the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, and *Electoral Studies*. He is the author of the book *The Political Development of Modern Thailand*, which was published by Cambridge University Press in March 2015.



**Mark R Thompson** is acting head of the department of Asian and International Studies and Director of the Southeast Asia Research Centre (SEARC) both at the City University of Hong Kong. He taught in the United Kingdom (Glasgow), Germany (Muenster, Dresden, Passau and Erlangen-Nuremberg), and Japan (Keio University) before coming to CityU. He is outgoing president of the Asian Political and International Studies Association, APISA. 2007-08 he was Lee Kong Chian Distinguished Fellow for Southeast Asian Studies at Stanford University and the National University of Singapore. He recently completed a German Research Council funded project on dynastic female leaders in Asia and has received a research grant from the Hong Kong government (together with William Case) for "Democracy and its Discontents in Southeast Asia." He is also currently working with Stephan Ortmann on a project about China and the "Singapore Model."

## When 'good governance' breaks bad: Thailand and the Philippines Compared

Advocates of 'good governance' in Thailand and the Philippines overthrew corrupt and brutal dictatorships in the so-called 'black May events' of 1992 and in the 1986 'people power' uprising, respectively. In subsequent national elections 'angel' narrowly defeated 'devil' parties with promises of reform—constitutional, economic, and social. Yet soon self-proclaimed reformists in Thailand and the Philippines were acting illiberally, overthrowing popularly elected governments in both countries by military coups or military-backed insurrections. The elite advocates of 'good governance' had broken bad vis-à-vis democracy because populists, Thailand's Thaksin Shinawatra and the Philippines' Joseph E. Estrada - had won overwhelming electoral victories (in 2001 and 1998, respectively) by mobilizing support along class lines threatening traditional establishment elites (the 'network monarchy' in Thailand, the 'cacique democrats' in the Philippines). The discourse of 'good governance' was employed by their opponents (who, coincidentally, in both Thailand and the Philippines, often use the colour yellow to symbolize their righteous reformist cause) to discredit populists' electoral victories (attributed to vote buying), their administrations' performance (said to be riddled by corruption), and their reckless use of force (Thaksin's anti-drug campaign and violence in the south, Estrada' 'all out war' on Muslim secessionists). After taking divergent paths in the last national executive elections - the pro-Thaksin party won parliamentary elections in Thailand in 2011 while the "reformist" Benigno 'Nonoy' Aquino, III won presidential elections in the Philippines in 2010 – reformists have now also emerged 'triumphant' in Thailand after a May 2014 military coup which brought to power a military junta pledged to carrying out reforms led by 'good people'. But both the Thai putschists and the Aquino forces may soon face further electoral challenges from populists, with the junta once promising elections in 2015 and then 2016 (a promise on which it looks likely to renege). The latter year is also the one in which the Philippines will elect a new president with the populist oriented vice president, Jejomar ('Jojo') Binay currently leading in the polls to the chagrin of reformist elites despite his being involved in a major corruption scandal which his opponents are widely seen to have 'uncovered' at just before the electoral cycle begins. In Thailand and the Philippines, the struggle between political factions acting in the name of good governance and those claiming to speak for ordinary people has not been resolved, only postponed.

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**Southeast Asia Research Centre (SEARC)**

City University of Hong Kong  
1B-307, Block 1, To Yuen Building  
31 To Yuen Street  
Kowloon Tong

URL: <http://www.cityu.edu.hk/searc>

Tel: (852) 3442-6330