

Compromising Democracy: Agents of Democratic Regression in Southeast Asia

Proposed Format: Double session workshop panel (back to back); 3-4 presentations each session; 2 discussants

Convenors:

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Confirmed Presenters:

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Explanation of the chosen format: Workshop format

This proposed double panel adopts a workshop format to bring together a team of early-career scholars and country experts of Southeast Asia from around the world to present comparative case studies focused specifically on Southeast Asia. We will invite senior country experts and leading scholars of comparative democratization as discussants to get feedback on selected papers for further revision, while circulating the papers among panel participants in advance. We intend to turn the revised papers into a special issue after the meeting, while advocating cross-national comparisons and conversations among international scholars of Southeast Asia.

Panel Description:

There is a mounting concern about the global state of democracy (Diamond 2020, Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019; Waldner and Lust 2018). In Southeast Asia, regimes there too seem to have been pulled into this global wave of democratic backsliding. Across the region, there has been widespread gross violations of political and civil rights (Kuhonta and Truong 2020), the sidelining of minorities by illiberal forces (Hamayotsu forthcoming, Soedirgo 2018), and the intimidation of journalists and the political opposition (Aguilar Jr, Mendoza et al. 2014, Toha and Harish 2019). Although regimes in Southeast Asia may be affected by the worldwide illiberal turn, democracy in the region is not newly on the retreat. Southeast Asian nations have had their own prior struggles with democratization. Further, recent regressions or failures to consolidate democracy are also deeply rooted in distinct domestic struggles and histories.

This proposed panel will explore the actors and forces that have worked to compromise and/or diminish democracy in Southeast Asia. Through a comparative examination of various drivers—and various patterns—of democratic backsliding in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand, the papers in this panel will make unique contributions to the study of regimes in Southeast Asia.