



Tonan Talk

A Brown Bag Lecture Series

Title: Explaining Reform Politics in Thailand, 1980–2012:
Coalition, Constitution, and Economic Consequences

Speaker: Dr. Veerayooth Kanchoochat , Assistant Professor at the
National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies

Date: December 5th (Thurs.), 2013, 12:00 - 13:30

Place: Tonan-tei (Room No. 201), CSEAS, Inamori Foundation
Memorial Building, Kyoto University

Abstract:

This paper provides an explanation for Thailand's long-term policy-making patterns and their economic consequences from 1980 to 2012. First, and primarily, I develop a typology of reform orientation in Thailand, conditioned by two factors: (a) government type (strong or fragmented party), and (b) ruling-coalition type (unelected or elected elites). When under strong leadership, reform was substantively implemented; its orientation was forged into fiscal restructuring and 'exclusive industrial policy' when ruled by unelected elites (the Prem, Anand, and Surayud governments), but into an expansionary budget and 'selective industrial policy' when ruled by elected elites (the Chatchai, Thaksin, and Yingluck governments). In contrast, when under multi-party governments, political leaders were not capable of, and deterred from, pursuing meaningful reform; instead, they either focused on provincial, pork-barrel projects or conformed to internationally dominant discourses. It is further argued that government type hinges upon constitutional design while the two-elite struggle has resulted from the political turmoil of the 1970s.

Second, I argue that the assessment of economic consequences should begin with a debunking of problematic theoretical assumptions about inflation, competition, and industrial policy. To move beyond the middle-income level, Thailand needs a systematic industrial policy for enhancing its manufacturing competitiveness, while its macroeconomic policy should be more production- and innovation-supportive rather than cleaving to an inflation-targeting regime. To be discussed in my presentation are influential arguments in the literature, including: 'the bifurcated state', 'competitive clientelism', 'systemic vulnerabilities', and other institutional explanations.

Bio note:

Veerayooth Kanchoochat is an Assistant Professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS, Tokyo). He holds an MPhil and a PhD from the University of Cambridge, UK, and has obtained Engineering (BEng) and Economics (MA) degrees from Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. His interests include: the politics of development; institutional economics; and state-building, with a focus on Thailand and Southeast Asia. Veerayooth's past

research and teaching experience is affiliated with Chulalongkorn's Political Economy Centre, the Thailand Development Research Institute, Cambridge's Centre of Development Studies, the Brooks World Poverty Institute (Manchester), and the Overseas Development Institute (London).

Moderator: Hau Caroline, CSEAS, Kyoto University

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