

The National Thai Studies Centre



Thailand's Twin Crises: Restoring Democracy, and Violence in the South

Thailand Update Conference
31st August 2007

University House
Australian National University

We are grateful for sponsorship from
The Australia - Thailand Institute
Thammasat University

PROGRAM

08.30 **Registration**

09.00 **Introduction from Professor James Fox**
Resource Management in Asia-Pacific Program, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU

Session 1: Political Year in Review

Chair: **Mr Roland Rich, Executive Head (designate), United Nations Democracy Fund**

9.15 **Political Overview**
Professor Chairat Charoensin-o-larn, Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University

10.00 **Seven Threats to Thailand's Democracy**
Dr Andrew Walker, Resource Management in Asia Pacific Program, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU

10.45 ***Morning Tea***

Session 2: The Troubled South

Chair: **Dr Greg Fealy, Australian National University**

11.00 **Reform and Tradition in Islamic Education in Southern Thailand**
Dr Joseph Liow, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Singapore

11.45 **Perceptions of Violence from the *Ponoh* School**
Ms Suleemarn Wongsuphap, Anthropology and Politics, LaTrobe University

12.30 ***Lunch***

Session 3: The Economy During Political Uncertainty

Chair: **Professor Peter Warr, Australian National University**

13.30 **Economic Overview**
Professor Bhanupong Nidhiprabha, Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University

14.15 **The Impact of Political Uncertainty on Business**
Glen Robinson, ASEAN Focus Group

15.00 ***Afternoon Tea***

Session 4: Keynote Address

Chair: **Dr John Funston, NTSC, Australian National University**

15.15 **Thailand's 2007 Constitution and Re-emerging Democracy: Will Political Polarization Continue?**
Professor Suchit Bunbongkarn, Senior Fellow at the Institute for Security and International Studies (ISIS Thailand) and Emeritus Professor Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University

16.30 **Conference ends**

Thailand Update 2007

For two years Thailand has had successive crises, initiated by public protest against the rule of Prime Minister Thaksin, then the military coup on 19 September 2006, and subsequent attempts to restore constitutional democracy. Alongside this, and to some extent influencing the disquiet in Bangkok, has been a sustained period of violence in the Muslim south, an area that has become the main arena of terrorism and conflict in Southeast Asia.

With the process of re-establishing a constitution now complete – following a referendum on 19 August – and elections scheduled for December, it is timely to conduct a detailed look at the direction of political change in Thailand.

The conference will include political and economic overviews of the past twelve months. The keynote address and other presentations will address such topics as:

- The objectives of the new constitution
- The role of political parties, civil society, independent institutions and the military
- The impact of political uncertainty on business, particularly the foreign sector
- Why conflict in the south has persisted and intensified since the coup against Thaksin
- How can the southern conflict be resolved – what is the role of Islamic education?

About the Speakers

The keynote speaker, **Professor Suchit Bunbongkarn**, is currently Senior Fellow at the Institute for Security and International Studies (ISIS Thailand), Emeritus Professor at the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, and an appointed member of the National Legislative Assembly. Previously he was for many years Dean of Political Science at Chulalongkorn University, and Chairman of ISIS Thailand. In 1997 he was a member of the Constitutional Drafting Assembly, which wrote the 1997 'People's Constitution'. He was also a Justice of the Constitutional Court from February 2000 to December 2004, and has been a member of the National Poll Watch Committee and President of the Political Science Association of Thailand. He has published extensively on Thai politics, particularly in the area of democracy, elections, and the political role of the military. His *The Military in Thai Politics, 1981-1986* is an excellent work, that remains relevant following the last year's coup.

Associate Professor Chairat Charoensin-o-larn is a respected analyst from the Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University. He has published numerous works in the area of political theory, political development and civil society, both in English and Thai. His books include: *Understanding Postwar Reformism in Thailand: A Reinterpretation of Rural Development*. Bangkok: D.K. Books, 1988 (in Thai); and *Development Discourse: Power, Knowledge, Truth, Identity and Otherness*. Bangkok: Vibhasa Press, 2006. Fourth Edition. His most recent publication is *Nation-State and the New World (Dis)Order*. Bangkok: Vibhasa Press, 2006.

Dr Andrew Walker is Fellow, in the Resource Management in Asia-Pacific Program, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies. He is an anthropologist with interests in rural development, resource management, and politics in Thailand and Laos. He is also a blogger for the *New Mandala* website, focused on providing "new perspectives on mainland Southeast Asia". He has published extensively on these issues, including *The Legend of the Golden Boat: Regulation, Trade and Traders in the Borderlands of Laos, Thailand, Burma and China*, Curzon Press, 1999 and (with Tim Forstyth) *Forest Guardians, Forest Destroyers: The Politics of Environmental Knowledge in Northern Thailand*, University of Washington Press, 2008.

Associate Professor Joseph Liow, is Head of Research at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Singapore. A key area of his research is on Islamic politics in Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia and Thailand. He has published extensively in this field, including *Muslim Resistance in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines: Religion, Ideology, and Politics* (East-West Centre Washington, 2006).

Ms Suleemarn Wongsuphap, is an Assistant Professor at the Prince of Songkla University in Pattani. She is also currently researching a PhD in Anthropology and Politics, LaTrobe University, on the topic of "The Development and Identity Politics of Malay Muslims in Southern Border Thailand: A Case Study of *Ponok/Private Islamic Schools*." She has published widely on women's issues and the Chinese in southern Thailand. She received the Best Thesis Award from the Social Sciences Association of Thailand in 1987 for her Sociology MA at Thammasat University on Thai masseuses, and the subsequent book is now in its 5th edition.

Associate Professor Bhanupong Nidhiprabha, is one of Thailand's foremost economists, from the Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University, specialising in Macroeconomics, Monetary Economics and International Economics. He has published extensively in these areas, including co-authoring *Thailand's Macroeconomic Miracle: Stable Adjustment and Sustained Growth* with Professor Peter Warr from ANU. One of his most recent works is *Adjustment and Recovery in Thailand Two Years after the Tsunami*, published this year by the Asian Development Bank Institute.

Mr Glen Robinson is the Executive Director of the ASEAN Focus Group. His experience and expertise lie in the operational business areas, with specific emphasis on cross border business through strategic management. He has more than 25 years experience in corporate assistance and advisory and has worked with a wide range of industries from agriculture through to manufacturing and distribution. He sits on the board of many Asian related business organisations and has for many years advised a number of Foreign Investment Boards in the ASEAN region.

We would like to thank you all for joining us for the Thailand Update 2007. Please contact us at any time if there is anything we can assist you with.



<http://www.anu.edu.au/thaionline/>