

**University of Hamburg, Department of Southeast Asian Languages and Cultures  
Public ZOOM Lecture Series in the Summer Semester of 2022**

**Democracy and Civil Society in Southeast Asia**

Friday 14 – 16 h CEST, Digital – Zoom

Learn more about and find the ZOOM address:

<https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/soa/sose-22-ringvorlesung.html>

08.04.2022

Introduction

(only for students who have registered for the class on STINE)

29.04.2022

Civil Society in Myanmar – Back to Ground Zero?

Prof. Dr. Marco Bünte, *Institut für Politische Wissenschaft, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität, Erlangen*

06.05.2022

Imagining the Polity – Protest, Law and History in Thailand

Prof. Dr. Tyrell Haberkorn, Associate Professor, Asian Cultures and Languages, University of Wisconsin-Madison

13.05.2022

Democratization and Civil Society in Malaysia

Dr. Andreas Ufen, German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg

27.05.2022

Welcome to Singapore – Authoritarianism and Civil Liberties

Kirsten Han, journalist, *We, The Citizens*, Singapore

03.06.2022

Rightless Resistance – Rural Indonesians vs Palm Oil Companies

Prof. Dr. Ward Berenschot, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, University of Amsterdam

10.06.2022

Between Authoritarianism and Democracy – Civil Society and Political Change in the Philippines

Prof. Dr. Aries Arugay, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Philippines Diliman

17.06.2022

A Transition Interrupted? Peace, Politics, and Power in Cambodia

Dr. Katrin Travouillon, Department of Political and Social Change at the Coral Bell School, Australian National University and *DFG-Kooperationsprojekt* “No access. How the State of Peacebuilding Archives Undermines Democracy“, *Philipps-Universität Marburg*

24.06.2022

The Political Landscape of Laos – an Overview

Dr. Kearrin Sims, Development Studies, College of Arts, Society & Education, James Cook University, Australia

01.07.2022

Roundtable Discussion

Arkar Oo, Bopha Phorn, and other representatives of the civil society in Southeast Asia

20.05.2022

Why History does not End – Vietnam’s Politics from Comparative Perspective

Prof. Dr. Pham Quang Minh, Faculty of International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi

Coordination

Prof. Dr. Jörg Engelbert, Vietnamese Language and Culture / Jun.-Prof. Dr. Elsa Clavé, Austronesian Languages and Cultures

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## **Background**

The first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Konrad Adenauer (1878-1967), was once quoted: “No democracy can survive without democrats.” He referred to the short-lived Weimar Republic (1919-1933), and saw it as a lesson for the Second German Republic which he had helped to create.

Elections and parliaments are preconditions for a liberal Western democracy, but they alone are not enough. In many countries of the world, and indeed in the region of Southeast Asia, there are elections and political parties, but there is often no such thing as a “democratic culture”, for instance the acceptance of electoral defeats, the guarantees of the rights of the opposition and of political, ethnic, religious and other minorities, the freedom of the press, the rule of law which is above politics, political neutrality and non-interference of the armed forces, or a fair distribution of power and resources between the center and the regions.

The so-called Democracy Index of the British journal *The Economist* is one of several other academic attempts to give a quantitative picture about the situation of democracy in the world.

It is established on a regular basis by the Economist Intelligence Unit, and it analyses the election processes, the degree of pluralism, the functioning of the government, political participation, and civil rights. The highest score is ten (Norway: 9.81 points, 2020), the lowest zero (North Korea: 1.08 points, 2020).

The eighth survey of 2020 listed 167 countries in the world. Only 23 of them were called “full democracies” (2006: 28), 52 are “flawed democracies” (2006: 53), 35 “hybrid regimes” (2006: 31), and 57 “authoritarian regimes” (2006: 55). Only 8.4 % of the world population live in the first group (2006: 16.8 %), 41.0 % in the second (2006: 31.6 %), 15 % in the third (2006: 18.6 %) and 35.6 % in the fourth (2006: 32.9 %). A comparison of the figures from 2006 and 2020 seems to be, at first glance, sobering, and apparently reveals the lacking progress of democracy since 2006.

According to this index, none of the Southeast Asian countries was in the first group in 2020. From Asia, only Taiwan (9th rank), Japan (21) and South Korea (23) can be found there. Malaysia (39), the Philippines (55), Indonesia (64), Thailand (73) and Singapore (74) were listed in the second group. There was no hybrid regime (third group), but there are several authoritarian regimes (fourth group): Cambodia (130), Myanmar (135), Vietnam (137), and Laos (161). East Timor was not mentioned. China, of course, is fully authoritarian (151), but the USA, astonishingly, were listed in the second group (25), between France (24) and Portugal (26), Estonia (27), Israel (27) and Italy (29). Greece is only ranked in the 37th position, two places higher up than Malaysia.

In other words: According to this survey, Southeast Asia does not yet have a single fully developed democracy, but it is catching up with Europe when it comes to the question of “flawed” democracies. What could be the reasons? Is this situation a reflection of the overall very positive socio-economic development of this region during the last decades or does it point to the imperfection of these regimes after so many years of successful development? Or could it mean that the so-called development dictatorships (like Japan until 1945, China, Vietnam or Singapore) are more successful than “flawed democracies”?

Perhaps it could mean, indeed, that despite the recent backlashes in Thailand and Myanmar (military coups in 2014 and 2020, respectively), the overall picture is not too gloomy, and the glass is perhaps more half-full than half-empty. Anyway, the transition from an authoritarian to a fully developed democratic system is more of a marathon than a sprint run, as the examples of France (1789-1871) and Germany (1848-1949) exemplify

The Ringvorlesung (cycle of lectures) attempts to discuss these questions on a thematical basis. We will look especially, how democracy starts, and how it is developing on the grass-root level of civil society.

Questions could be, among others: Are there labor and other professional unions, and what is their role and place? Are there discrepancies between cities and country-sides, between the capital and the regions, between low and highlands? Are women active and equal in the economy, society and in politics? What is the situation regarding religious freedom and ethnic minorities? Are environmental and citizens initiatives active and successful?

The political parties, what are they: “Kopfparteien” (head parties), organized around one person, one family, or one regional patronage system, or have they a discernable program, ideological and political differences? How is the burning question of corruption dealt with? Is the judiciary

independent, are elections free and fair, or are there vote purchases and rampant rigged elections?  
How do powerful political and economic players influence or abuse the media and the judiciary?