
9 October 2017, Monday ✦ 12.30pm – 1.30pm

Lee Sheridan Conference Room, Eu Tong Sen Building, NUS (Bukit Timah Campus)

Constitutionalization of Political Parties in East and Southeast Asian Democracies

Speaker: Associate Professor Erik Mobrand, Seoul National University

Chairperson: Assistant Professor Swati Jhaveri, NUS Law

ABSTRACT

Many constitutions reflect the central role of political parties in modern democracy. While classic liberal visions of democracy gave little attention to parties, a transformation occurred after the Second World War as constitutions in Europe began to include references to parties as essential for aggregating interests, sustaining pluralism, and reflecting freedom to organize. The constitutionalization of political parties has been documented for Europe but not for Asia. Given the priority placed on the state above party attachments in several parts of the region, it is reasonable to think that this subject is worth exploring in Asia. How do constitutions in Asia's democracies describe parties? What does the constitutional codification of parties suggest for how democracy is envisioned in the region? A database of constitutional references to political parties forms the empirical basis of this paper. The database, compiled by the author, includes all references to parties in current and historic constitutions in the democracies of East and Southeast Asia. The analysis reveals that most constitutions do give significance to parties. Comparison of the themes associated with parties shows similarities and differences within the region and between Europe and Asia. In particular, there is a tendency in the region's constitutions to imagine parties not mostly as electoral bodies but as organizations that need to be limited so as not to undermine democracy, or as public bodies that should be regulated so as to serve public interests. Given that both of these views depart from common ways parties in Asia have been studied, this paper points to the need to think about the region's parties in relation to public law.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Erik Mobrand is Associate Professor in the Graduate School of International Studies at Seoul National University. His research interests include Korean and Chinese politics, legal regulation of politics, labor migration and urban management, and democratization. His current research examines legal regulation of the electoral sphere in South Korea with comparisons more broadly across Asia. Erik was previously Assistant Professor of political science at the National University of Singapore. His articles have appeared in outlets such as *Journal of Asian Studies*, *Modern Asian Studies*, and *Pacific Affairs*.

REGISTRATION

There is no registration fee for this seminar but seats are limited.
Light refreshment will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

Closing Date: **5 October 2017, Thursday**

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