

Vortrag am Mittwoch, den 06.06.2012,
Zeit: 18 Uhr,
Ort: Raum 209,
Hamburg Universität,
Asien-Afrika-Institut,
Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1, Flügel Ost

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Civil-Military Relations in Democratizing Thailand

In contemporary Thailand, civilian control remains a daunting challenge with the armed forces having succeeded in operating within a parallel state insulated from most civilian directives. At the same time, Thai politics have since 2005 been polarized around ex- Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Such national disunity has helped the military maintain its autonomy. With a monarchical power vacuum soon at hand, this may give the armed forces an even further excuse to seek more sway. This paper seeks answers to three questions. First, what explains the persistence of military power in Thailand? Second, why in Thailand is there a separation between elected authorities and military autonomy? Third, what prospects exist for demilitarization and a weakening of military clout?