



Political Engineering and Ethnic Politics in the Asia-Pacific

A Public Lecture presented by Professor Benjamin Reilly,
Australian National University

An intense scholarly and public policy debate concerns the optimal design of political institutions for new democracies, particularly those facing deep ethnic or cultural cleavages. Drawing on a book length study of political engineering in the Asia-Pacific region, this paper examines how democratizing East Asia states have responded to ethnic diversity by reforming their political institutions. States such as Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Taiwan and East Timor have embarked upon far-reaching overhauls of their parliamentary structures, electoral laws, party systems and other key democratic institutions. Many of these reforms were driven, in part, by the need to manage the consequences of social diversity upon political stability by the design of political institutions. This paper examines the record of these reforms, arguing that collectively they constitute an emerging 'Asian model'.

Thursday 23rd April 2009

3:30 pm

Senate Room

All Welcome

Benjamin Reilly is Director of the Centre for Democratic Institutions and Professor of Political Science in the Crawford School of Economics and Government at the Australian National University. He is the author of six books and over 60 journal articles and book chapters on issues of democratisation, constitutional reform, party politics, electoral system design and conflict management, and has advised governments and international organisations on these subjects. His latest work includes a study of democratisation and political reform in Asia and the Pacific, *Democracy and Diversity: Political Engineering in the Asia-Pacific* (Oxford University Press, 2006), and an edited volume, *Political Parties in Conflict-Prone Societies* (United Nations University Press, 2008).