

NCCR Trade Regulation Brown Bag Series

Sungmin Rho, Assistant Professor of International Relations and Political Science at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies

ATOMIZED INCORPORATION: STATE-LABOR RELATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

Tuesday, 9 May 2017, 12.30 – 13.30

Anna Nussbaum Auditorium, World Trade Institute, University of Bern
Hallerstrasse 6, 3012 Bern, Switzerland

Abstract

It has been assumed that non-democratic regimes repress labor rights and collective action of laborers in order to attract capital investment and maintain regime stability. Yet, few studies address why some non-democratic regimes have an incentive to discard economic exploitation as their labor management strategy. This study shows that the Chinese labor management strategy has evolved away from economic exploitation of unskilled laborers towards limited incorporation since the mid- 2000s. By adopting pro-labor laws, the state has redistributed economic resources from capital investors to unskilled laborers; collective protests of unskilled workers have also been tolerated as long as they remain economic and limited in scope. This paper argues that changes in the socioeconomic conditions since the early 2000s have rendered the traditional strategy of economic exploitation less profitable for the regime, while increasing its costs. The pro-labor

approach has been utilized by the regime to geographically redistribute industries and workers rather than to promote labor rights.

Biography of the Speaker

Sungmin Rho is currently an Assistant Professor of International Relations and Political Science at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. Before joining the Graduate Institute, Sungmin Rho obtained her PhD from the department of Political Science at Stanford University and was a post-doctoral fellow in the Center for the Study of Contemporary China at University of Pennsylvania. Her research bridges international and comparative political economy with a regional focus on China. Her book project, Atomized Incorporation, examines how the state-labor relations have evolved in China since the reform era, focusing on the role of migrant labor in low-skilled industries.

**Participation is free of charge, no registration is needed.
We warmly welcome you to join our seminar at the World Trade Institute!**

NCCR Trade Regulation Brown Bag Seminars are 30-minute presentations, given by external or in-house researchers. The presentations are followed by a 30-minute Q&A session. The Brown Bag concept comes from the US; it means that people bring their own lunch and eat it during the presentation.