

## “The Breakdown of Credible Power-Sharing: Evidence from China under the KMT”

Speaker: Erik WANG

### Abstract

Why do some power-sharing arrangements unravel? We argue that a publicly observable decline in the health of a senior patron can destabilize elite bargains by lowering expectations about his future ability to protect clients, influence appointments, and resist rival encroachment. We test this argument using an attempted assassination in China in 1935 that left Wang Jingwei, one of the two most powerful leaders in the ruling Kuomintang coalition, permanently incapacitated after the attack missed its intended target Chiang Kai-shek, the head of the regime. Drawing on a monthly panel of 211 senior officials, we show that Wang's associates became significantly more likely to leave government after the attack. Their presence in party institutions also declined, while Chiang's faction expanded its presence in key decision-making bodies. Exit effects were strongest among officials with better private-sector alternatives, suggesting particular fragility during early regime formation before insiders' expected payoffs were firmly locked in.