**Political Change and Institutional Resilience? Lessons from Southeast Asia**

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**Format**

**The panel is a single session (1X90mins) and hopes to have 4 presenters including the convener. Each presenter should be working on issues of political or institutional change of a particular Southeast Asian country or doing comparative work on political change. While the panel hopes to probe the validity of the institutionalist argument in explaining political change or the lack of it, in countries like Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia, the panel welcomes eclectic conceptual framing of change and democratization in the Southeast Asian context, for a more robust discussion. The convener is Abdillah Noh, an Associate Professor in the Department of History and International Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam. Abdillah works in the area of institutions and institutional change that has seen him working on various issues in public policy, political economy and politics. His most recent publication is an article published in Contemporary Politics that discusses Malaysia’s flawed democratization. His first book is on “Issues in Public Policy and Administration in Malaysia: An Institutional Analysis. His latest book will be published in February 2024 titled “Malaysia’s State Formation: Small Steps and Large Outcome of a Contested Leviathan.” Abdillah obtained his DPhil (Politics) from St Antony’s College, University of Oxford.**

**Description of Panel**

Myanmar’s rocky road to democratization, Thailand’s on-again, off-again military rule, Malaysia’s broken election reform promises and the increasing worry of an “illiberal turn” in Indonesia and the Philippines bring forth the issue of institutional quality and institutional resilience. Why is consolidating political change difficult? And, why are change agents so promising in making reform ideas during a political transition yet so dismal in delivering them after assuming power? This panel invites discussions on political change in Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia. The panel hopes to raise few key issues. The first is to probe the extent of Southeast Asia’s efforts at political change and consolidation. The second, is to raise the issue of institutional resilience. It hopes to broach the issue of idiosyncratic institutional qualities in Southeast Asian political economy and whether they are crucial in explaining and determining state's ability or inability to democratize and consolidate change. The panel also hopes to raise debates on the viability of the institutionalist argument in explaining the nature of political transitions in selected Southeast Asian countries. The panel invites debates on the validity of the institutionalist argument and discussions on ideas of institutionalism and whether concepts like path dependence, increasing returns, and institutional density are reliable tools to provide answers to issues of democratization, political change and consolidation. Another issue that the panel hopes to discuss is the role of political agents or political entrepreneurs and the extent to which they are able to provide and sustain change. It wants to tease out the question of whether consolidating change is highly elusive in the Southeast Asian context because change agents are highly invested in existing institutional logic. Finally, the panel invites discussions on the need to unpack our understanding of institutional change, that change, perhaps, might not be transformative over the short run, unidirectional or teleological in nature. This panel is intended for a book project. We are hoping that contributors to this panel will be part of the book project.

The panel hopes to discuss issues of institutional resilience and to debate on the viability of the institutionalist argument in explaining the nature of political transitions in selected Southeast Asian countries. Specifically it wants to broach the idea of idiosyncratic institutional qualities or particularism in Southeast Asian countries and whether they are crucial in explaining and determining state's ability to democratize and consolidate change. Second, the panel hopes t want to probe into efforts at political change in Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia and ask the question on whether change agents are themselves hostage to state’s institutional qualities that are products of state’s historical, political, social and economic processes. Also, the panel hopes to ask on the nature of change and how institutional change should be understood in the Southeast Asian context, on whether change should be treated as unidirectional, teleological or transformational in book argues that institutional change and consolidating political change are complicated; they are never unidirectional, teleological, or transformational in character.