



Executive Accountability in Southeast Asia The Role of Legislatures in New Democracies and Under Electoral Authoritarianism

Policy Studies East-West Center Washington

By William Case

East-West Center. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 90 pages. Dimensions: 9.1in. x 6.0in. x 0.2in. In an influential study, Fish and Kroenig argue that overarching institutional designs (i.e., presidential, parliamentary, and dual systems) tell us less about the prospects of a new democracy than does the particular strength of the legislature. Specifically, executives are best checked where legislatures are powerful, generating horizontal accountability. In addition, ordinary citizens are better informed by the robust party systems that strong legislatures support, fostering vertical accountability. In comparing Freedom House scores with their Parliamentary Powers Index (PPI), Fish and Kroenig show clear correlations, leading them to conclude that democracies are made strong by legislatures that are empowered. In this monograph, this thesis is tested in five country cases in Southeast Asia: the Philippines and Indonesia, both new democracies, and Malaysia, Cambodia, and Singapore, cases of electoral authoritarianism. Analysis uncovers that in the new democracies, though their legislatures may be rated as powerful, members are geared less to checking the executive than to sharing in state patronage. In addition, although the legislature is evaluated as weak under electoral authoritarianism, it features an opposition that, with little access to patronage, remains committed to exposing executive...

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