The Development of Political Institutions: Power, Legitimacy, Democracy

While the literature on “new institutionalism” explains the stability of institutional arrangements within countries and the divergence of paths of institutional development between countries, Federico Ferrara takes a “historical institutionalist” approach to theorize dynamic processes of institutional reproduction, institutional decay, and institutional change in explaining the development of political institutions. Ferrara synthesizes “power-based” or “power-distributional” explanations and “ideas-based” “legitimation explanations.” He specifies the psychological “microfoundations” of processes of institutional development, drawing heavily from the findings of experimental psychology to ensure that the explanation is grounded in clear and realistic assumptions regarding human motivation, cognition, and behavior. Aside from being of interest to scholars and graduate students in political science and other social-scientific disciplines whose research concentrates on the genesis of political institutions, their evolution over time, and their impact on the stability of political order and the quality of governance, the book will be required reading in graduate courses and seminars in comparative politics where the study of institutions and their development ranks among the subfield’s most important subjects.

Publisher: University of Michigan Press

Crafting Parliament in Myanmar’s Disciplined Democracy (2011-2021)

This book offers a compelling account of Myanmar’s halting efforts to develop the institutional framework and practice of a parliament-based democratic governance between 2011 and 2021. It charts the stages of such a legislative resurgence, tracing its causes, and exploring how various institutional and political legacies both informed and constrained the re-establishment and operations of the Union legislature, or Pyidaungsu Hlutaw. Embracing both ethnographic observations and a methodical engagement with legislative proceedings and historical material, Renaud Egreteau investigates how parliamentary life (re)emerged in Myanmar in the 2010s. His analysis concentrates on key legislative mechanisms, processes, and tasks pertaining to government oversight, budgetary control, representation, and lawmaking and interrogates how they were learned, (re)appropriated, and (mis)performed by Myanmar’s new breed of legislators and parliamentary staff until the 2021 army takeover.

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Unity Through Division: Political Islam, Representation and Democracy in Indonesia

Indonesia, like many other countries around the world, is currently experiencing the process of democratic backsliding, marked by a toxic mix of religious sectarianism, polarization, and executive overreach. Despite this trend, Indonesians have become more, rather than less, satisfied with their country’s democratic practice. What accounts for this puzzle? Unity Through Division examines an overlooked aspect of democracy in Indonesia: political representation. In this country, an ideological cleavage between pluralism and Islamism has long characterized political competition. This cleavage, while divisive, has been a strength of Indonesia’s democracy, giving meaning to political participation and allowing a degree of representation not often observed in young democracies. While the recent resurgence of radical Islam and political polarization in Indonesian politics may have contributed to democratic erosion, these factors have simultaneously clarified political alternatives and improved perceptions of representation, in turn bolstering democratic participation and satisfaction. This compelling book effectively challenges the wisdom of the role of Islam in Indonesian political life and provides a fresh analysis for debates on democratic backsliding in Indonesia and beyond.

Publisher: Cambridge University Press

Presidentialism and Democracy in East and Southeast Asia

As a contribution to the ongoing global debate about presidentialism, this book assesses how ‘perilous’ presidentialism has been as a political system in East and Southeast Asia due to conflicts between separately elected presidents and legislatures, the key question of the ‘first wave’ of presidentialism studies. It also covers the ‘second wave’ debate about presidentialism, which has concentrated on semi-presidentialism and the interplay of presidentialism with other institutions as well as other variations in institutional design among political systems in which there are many in East and Southeast Asia. Finally, the book considers a third body of literature concerning institutionalization with a focus on ‘executive aggrandizement’. In recent years, a trend toward growing executive power has led to rising concern about imperious chief executives and growing personalization of power. The volume analyses six country cases in East and Southeast Asia: relatively ‘pure’ cases of presidentialism (in South Korea, the Philippines and Indonesia), semi-presidentialism (in Taiwan and Timor Leste) and a hybrid system (Myanmar). It is argued that despite wide variation in presidential conflict and instability in the region, presidential systems in the region have often been resilient. This is true both in wealthy (South Korea and Taiwan) and developing societies (Indonesia and Timor Leste).

Publisher: Routledge

All are welcome.
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