



The Politics of Accountability in Southeast Asia: The Dominance of Moral Ideologies (Oxford Studies in Democratization)

By Garry Rodan, Caroline Hughes

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Calls by political leaders, social activists, and international policy and aid actors for accountability reforms to improve governance have never been more widespread. For some analysts, the unprecedented scale of these pressures reflects the functional imperatives and power of liberal and democratic institutions accompanying greater global economic integration. This book offers a different perspective, investigating the crucial role of contrasting ideologies informing accountability movements and mediating reform directions in Southeast Asia. It argues that the most influential ideologies are not those promoting the political authority of democratic sovereign people or of liberalism's freely contracting individuals. Instead, in both post-authoritarian and authoritarian regimes, it is ideologies advancing the political authority of moral guardians interpreting or ordaining correct modes of behaviour for public officials. Elites exploit such ideologies to deflect and contain pressures for democratic and liberal reforms to governance institutions.

The book's case studies include human rights, political decentralization, anticorruption, and social accountability reform movements in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. These studies highlight how effective propagation of moral ideologies is boosted by the presence of powerful organizations, notably religious bodies, political parties, and broadcast media. Meanwhile, civil society organizations of comparable clout advancing liberalism or democracy are lacking. The theoretical framework of the book has wide applicability. In other regions, with contrasting histories and political economies, the nature and extent of organizations and social actors shaping accountability politics will differ, but the importance of these factors to which ideologies prevail to shape reform directions will not.

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Latin America, the Caribbean, Southern and Eastern Europe, and relevant experiences in Africa and Asia. The series editor is Laurence Whitehead, Official Fellow, Nuffield College, University of Oxford.

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Review

"Rodan and Hughes' book shows the importance of bringing politics back into the accountability debate in Southeast Asia... Given the growing politicization of anti-corruption agencies, the judiciary and accountability organizations across the region, theirs is an argument that should be taken seriously by academics, civil society organizations and development agencies alike when assessing accountability reforms across the region." -*Newsletter of the Association of Southeast Asian Studies in the UK*

"This important study offers a constructive appraisal of ideologies informing accountability politics in Southeast Asia, with the authors asserting the primacy of morally conservative notions over liberalism and democracy in shaping demands for responsible governance." -Edmund Terence Gomez, University of Malaya, Pacific Affairs

About the Author

Garry Rodan, *Professor of Politics & International Studies, Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University*, Caroline Hughes, *Professor of Conflict Resolution and Peace, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford*

Garry Rodan is Professor of Politics and International Studies at the Asia Research Centre, School of Management and Governance, Murdoch University, Australia. He is also a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia. He is the author of *Transparency and Authoritarian Rule in Southeast Asia* (RoutledgeCurzon 2004) and *The Political Economy of Singapore's Industrialization* (Macmillan, 1989). His edited and co-edited books include *Neoliberalism and Conflict in Asia After 9/11* (Routledge 2005), *The Political Economy of Southeast Asia* (OUP, 1997, 2001, 2006), *Political Oppositions in Industrializing Asia* (Routledge 1996), *Singapore Changes Guard* (Longman 1993) and *Southeast Asia in the 1990s: Authoritarianism, Capitalism and Democracy* (Allen & Unwin 1993).

Caroline Hughes is Professor Conflict Resolution and Peace in the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford in the UK. She was previously Director of the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University in Australia. Her research has focused upon the political economy of regime change and post-conflict statebuilding, in Cambodia and East Timor in particular. She is the author of *Dependent Communities: Aid and Politics in Cambodia and East Timor* (Cornell SEAP, 2009) and *The Political Economy of Cambodia's Transition 1991-2001* (Routledge, 2003).

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