

## Introduction

*Jirayudh Sinthuphan*

This issue of *Asian Review* brings together four research articles that examine critical dimensions of political economy, governance, and institutional transformation in Southeast Asia. Each article offers a unique analytical lens on the evolving challenges, contradictions, and pathways shaping the political and administrative landscapes of Thailand and the Philippines. Together, they provide an integrated perspective on the interplay between historical trajectories, institutional arrangements, legal frameworks, and digital innovations in these countries, enriching our understanding of their contemporary governance and political development.

The first article, *Revisiting Thailand's Developmental Miracle: The Rate of Profit, Social Structure of Accumulation, and Trajectory of Economic Development between 1957–1997*, explores Thailand's economic rise through the lens of Marxist-inspired Social Structure of Accumulation (SSA) theory. It traces how specific institutional configurations — including state-led planning, labor control, and U.S. geopolitical influence — generated long-term cycles of capital accumulation and profit, while also exposing structural vulnerabilities that culminated in the 1997 financial crisis.

The second article, *Juridification, Legitimacy, and Authoritarian Survival in Thai Politics from the 2014 Military Coup*, analyzes how the military-led government in Thailand has institutionalized its authority through legal mechanisms such as the 2017 Constitution and the National Strategy. Drawing on the concept of juridification, the study shows how legal frameworks are employed not to reinforce democracy but to entrench authoritarian rule under the guise of legality, thereby filling legitimacy gaps and fortifying regime survival.

The third article, *Thailand's Party Financing Regulation: A U-Turn to Patronage System*, critically assesses the regulatory framework governing political party finance in Thailand. Through qualitative fieldwork and interviews, it reveals how despite state subsidies and the Political Party Development Fund, political parties remain heavily reliant on private donors and business conglomerates. This dependency perpetuates patronage politics, undermining the original goals of financial reform and threatening party stability and democratic development.

The fourth article, *The Philippine Digital Paradox: Challenges, Opportunities, and the Way Forward*, shifts the focus to digital governance, examining the Philippines' ongoing efforts to digitize public administration. The paper provides a systematic review of initiatives, infrastructure challenges, cybersecurity risks, and digital inclusion issues. It proposes concrete strategies to advance e-government, emphasizing that effective digital transformation must combine technical capacity, institutional reform, and citizen engagement to ensure equitable and transparent service delivery.

Taken together, these articles reflect a shared concern with how structural, institutional, legal, and technological forces interact to shape political and economic governance in Southeast Asia. They offer valuable insights not only for scholars and practitioners focused on Thailand and the Philippines but also for broader debates on state capacity, legitimacy, and reform in comparative politics and public administration. We hope this volume will stimulate further inquiry and dialogue on the complexities of governance and development in transitional and contested political settings.