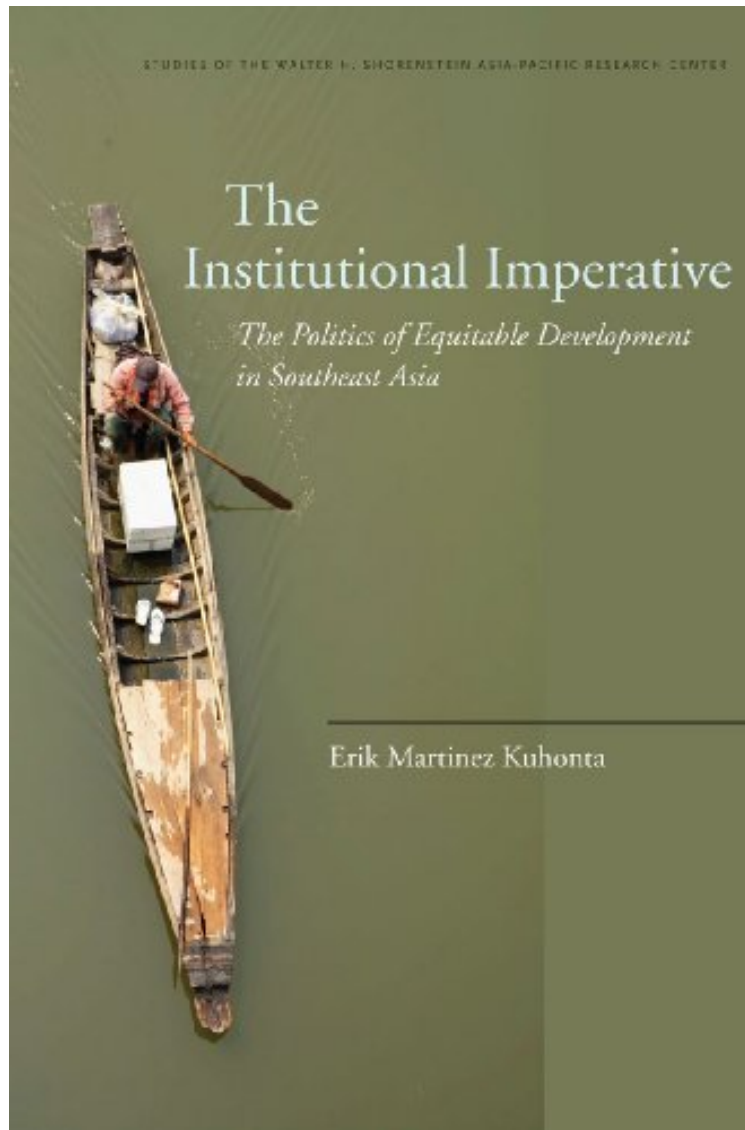


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## The Institutional Imperative: The Politics of Equitable Development in Southeast Asia (Studies of the Walter H. Shorenstein Asi)

*Erik Kuhonta*

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**Erik Kuhonta : The Institutional Imperative: The Politics of Equitable Development in Southeast Asia (Studies of the Walter H. Shorenstein Asi)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Institutional Imperative: The Politics of Equitable Development in Southeast Asia (Studies of the

Walter H. Shorenstein Asi):

Why do some countries in the developing world achieve growth with equity, while others do not? If democracy is the supposed panacea for the developing world, why have Southeast Asian democracies had such uneven results? In exploring these questions, political scientist Erik Martinez Kuhonta argues that the realization of equitable development hinges heavily on strong institutions, particularly institutionalized political parties and cohesive interventionist states, and on moderate policy and ideology. *The Institutional Imperative* is framed as a structured and focused comparative-historical analysis of the politics of inequality in Malaysia and Thailand, but also includes comparisons with the Philippines and Vietnam. It shows how Malaysia and Vietnam have had the requisite institutional capacity and power to advance equitable development, while Thailand and the Philippines, because of weaker institutions, have not achieved the same levels of success. At its core, the book makes a forceful claim for the need for institutional power and institutional capacity to alleviate structural inequalities.

"This boldly comparative book will be widely read, widely assigned, and widely debated in the field. There are few comparable works out there. Kuhonta's book should be required reading for those interested in development, political institutions, state building, social welfare policies, and Southeast Asia." (Allen Hicken University of Michigan)"[T]he book makes a significant contribution to the both the institutional and Southeast Asian literature. . . . The book's comparative approach presents an advance in regional knowledge accumulation?the call for which was sounded by Kuhonta's own co-edited volume, *Southeast Asia in Political Science: Theory, Region, and Qualitative Analysis* (2008)." (Veerayooth Kanchoochat *Southeast Asian Studies*)"Erik Kuhonta's fine new book offers two advances over this literature [of newly industrializing economies]. First, it places equity on an equal footing with growth as an outcome that policy-makers hope to achieve. Second, it offers an analytical explanation for cross-national variation in equitable development, arguing that institutionalized parties are the foundations upon which governments create the policy environment that makes shared growth possible." (Thomas B. Pepinsky *Political Science Quarterly*)"The *Institutional Imperative* is a well-written and convincing book which draws our attention to four fascinating cases that are not always very well known outside Southeast Asia. Even people who know little about these cases but have a strong interest in equitable development should read this book because it offers profound insight into how political parties and state institutions can make a difference in shaping the problematic yet imperative balance between economic growth and redistribution, in the developing world and beyond." (Daniel Beland *Political Studies* )"One of the remarkable features of this book is that it provides a single-factor explanation, with the attendant pitfalls to which such an approach could succumb, yet manages to make a convincing argument . . . The depth yet readability of the politico-historical analysis of the two countries is impressive." (Philip Hirsch *Pacific Affairs*)About the AuthorErik Martinez Kuhonta is Assistant Professor of Political Science and Member of the Institute for the Study of International Development at McGill University. He is coeditor of *Southeast Asia in Political Science: Theory, Region, and Qualitative Analysis* (Stanford University Press, 2008).