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# Democracy and Social Policy in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Process Tracing Analysis

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## ABSTRAK

Hubungan antara demokrasi dan kebijakan sosial di Asia Tenggara adalah isu penting yang kurang mendapatkan perhatian. Secara umum, tren perbaikan kebijakan sosial sebagai bagian dari tanggung jawab pemerintah terhadap warga negaranya, tidak mengikuti tren demokratisasi. Pada negara-negara autokrasi, kebijakan sosial juga selalu menjadi agenda prioritas sehingga trennya juga semakin bagus. Studi ini menjawab pertanyaan apa yang bisa dijelaskan dari tren perbaikan kebijakan sosial yang berhubungan dengan demokratisasi di level negara? Melalui analisis *comparative process tracing*, studi ini menemukan bahwa terdapat perlakuan diskriminatif dalam pemberian akses pelayanan publik terhadap beberapa kelompok yang terkait dengan kekuatan politik yang tengah mengendalikan pemerintahan. Studi ini juga menyibak beberapa faktor yang tidak banyak dijelaskan dari periodisasi perubahan kebijakan sosial di Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand dan Filipina.

Kata Kunci: Asia Tenggara, demokrasi, kebijakan sosial, *comparative process tracing*

## ABSTRACT

The relationship between democracy and social policy in Southeast Asia is a critical topic that has received insufficient attention. In general, trends in improving social policy as part of the government's responsibility for citizens do not follow the trend of democratization. Even in autocratic countries, improving the quality of social policy is always a priority. This study answers the following question: what can the trend of improvement in social policy explain in relation to democratization at the state level? Through the comparative process tracing analysis method, this study demonstrated a discriminatory treatment factor in providing access to public services to certain groups related to the political forces that had been controlling the government. In addition, this study reveals several factors that have not been widely explained from the periodization of social policy changes in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Keywords: Southeast Asia, democracy, social policy, comparative process tracing

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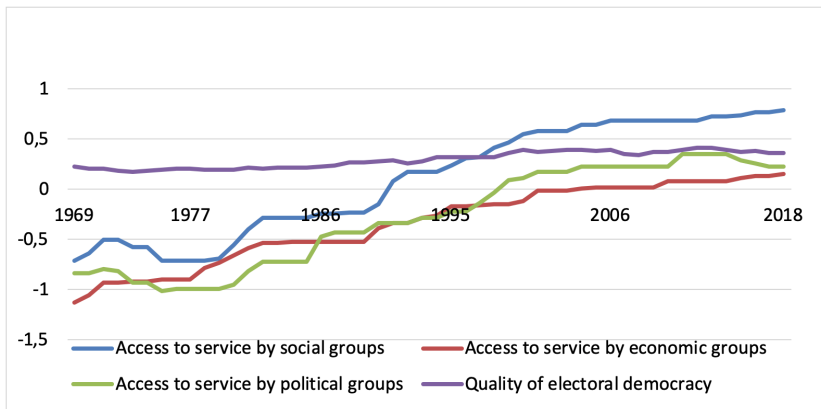
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INTRODUCTION

The Southeast Asian region has a dynamic historical record in the course of political regimes and has variations in the development of democracy. This region should be understood as a “neighborhood” where nonpolitical agreements exist. Each country in the region has a boundary that results in problems in their collective efforts to resolve conflicts based on problems with the seizure of natural resources, migration, border areas, and security. ASEAN, a regional cooperation organization, provides no space to open communication channels between communities. Consequently, high mobility among citizens cannot influence one another. ASEAN countries have been coming progressively under the control of “internationalist” coalitions and the grand strategy of these coalitions explains why a regional cooperative order has evolved over time (Solingen 1999). Until 1997, before most of the countries were affected by the economic crisis, almost no integration occurred at the level of, for example, civil society groups, defense ministers, economic or financial officers, and bureaucrats (Singh 2008).

Figure 1. Democracy and Equal Access to Public Service in Southeast Asia.

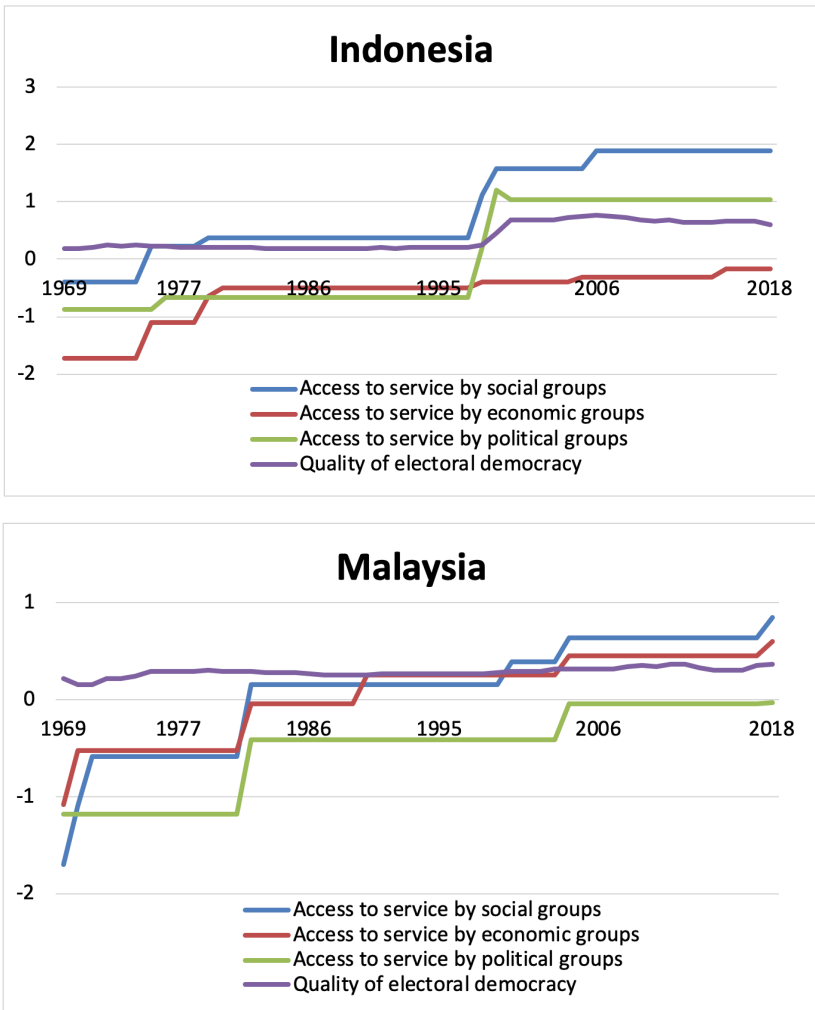


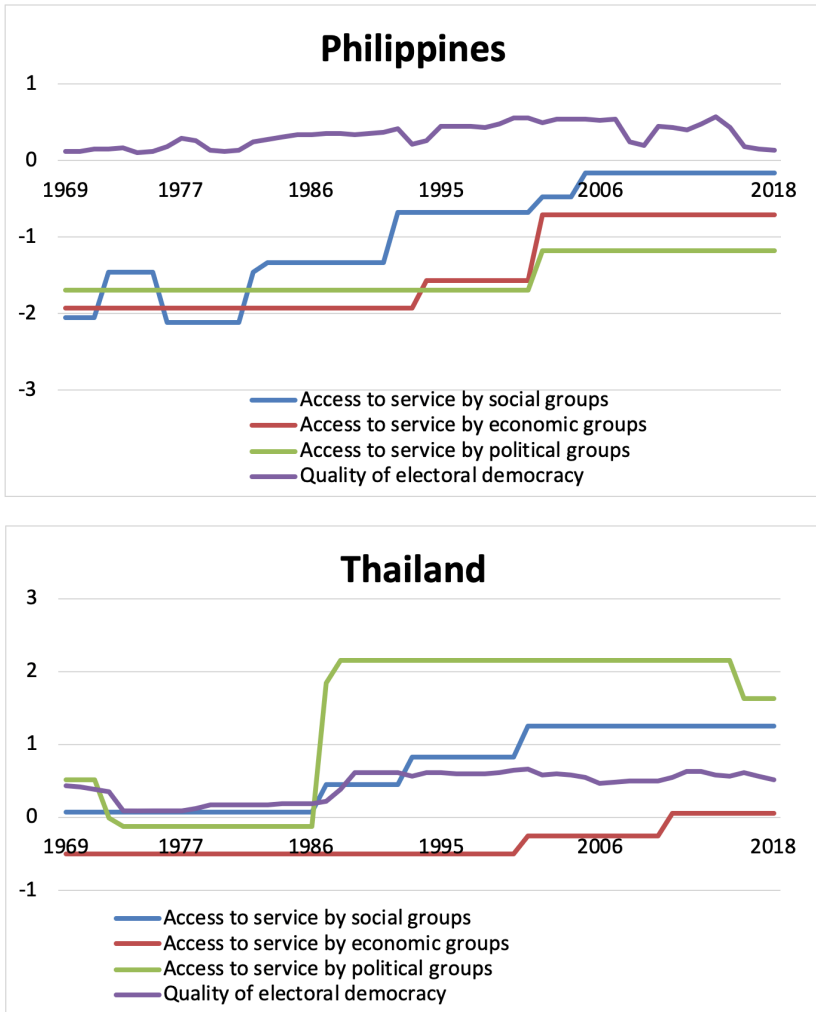
Source: Coppedge, Michael et al. 2019.

The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) data demonstrate trends that started from 1970 to 2018 (Figure 1). We observe an upward trend between three notable aspects: the electoral democracy index, civil

society participation index, and citizens’ access to public services. This general trend demonstrates that there is a reason for the relationship between the improvement of democracy and the increasing participation of civil society. First, we must explain in detail whether the trend applies equally to countries categorized as democratic in Southeast Asia.

Figure 2 Electoral Democracy, Access to Public Services, and Public Participation: Comparison of Four Countries





Source: Coppedge, Michael et al. 2019.

Figure 2 depicts how each country differs in its dynamics and historicity. In Indonesia, the upward trend in all variables was from 1999 to 2000; in Malaysia, it was in 1985; in the Philippines, it was from 1986 to 1987; and in Thailand, it was in 1997. From the variables of electoral democracy and civil society participation, the space for democratization was the determinant of the increasing trend. Indonesia became a democracy in 1999, and this change was followed by a major change

in the variable accessibility of public services. The Philippines demonstrated an improving trend that started when the elected president, Corazon Aquino, entered office in 1987 and launched various reform programs. In 1985, Malaysia recorded an upward trend, which was influenced by the results of the earlier New Malaysian Economic Policy, which began in 1971 and was successful under the leadership of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. In Thailand, where strict fluctuations occur in the performance of electoral democracy and the participation of civil society, access to public services has a gradual upward trend, especially in the era after the economic crisis, which was followed by the publication of the 1997 Thai Constitution. This study answers how the mechanism of democratic instruments affects changes in social policy. In the case of the Southeast Asian democratic countries, why do the models of causality in each country have different characteristics?

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Discussions on the relationship between democracy and social policy have been attracting researchers for at least 30 years. The political-institutional aspect has made significant contributions to delivering social policy. In this context, researchers have focused on aspects that have a stronger impact on welfare, namely, political or economic. Frank Castles and Robert McKinlay (1979) argued that political aspects (e.g., a government system, electoral model, or political party orientation) have a stronger significant impact on public spending on education, mortality rate, and gross domestic product (GDP) than economic aspects, and that the level of the economic growth variable is only significant when combined with political variables. However, most of the research on this topic has focused on developed countries and has not elaborated on how the political institution model applies in middle- and lower-income countries. This essay attempts to elaborate on the development of social policy within the political context of developing countries, especially in Southeast Asia. In the literature on India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Thailand, countries with an unstable political history, the absence of democracy and the strengthening of civil society have had

a relatively stabilizing effect on social spending (Koehler 2017). Additionally, in Brazil, the impact of the open, competitive political system of democracy has not necessarily resulted in a notable eradication of poverty and an increase in other programs to increase equality (Hunter and Sugiyama 2009).

On the topic of Southeast Asia, studies linking the relationship between democracy and social policy have been dominated by the main studies of democratization that affect public policy-making in general (Bertrand 1998; Croissant 2004; Kuhonta, Slater, and Vu 2008), as well as the studies that have focused on conditions within a country. In the Philippines, the rise of Aquino in 1986 was accompanied by the problem of the absence of socioeconomic reforms that are fundamental because of various obstacles in the old elite leadership model (Bello and Gershman 1990; Wurfel 1990; Putzel 2010). Implementing policies in the health sector strengthens civil society and consolidates social fermentation as part of democratization in Indonesia (Hadiwinata 2003; Antlöv, Brinkerhoff, and Rapp 2010; Aspinall 2014). In Malaysia, discussions on fiscal policy and the weakness of civil society have been held (Jesudason 1995; Greenberg and Pepinsky 2007). In Thailand, a similar study was conducted on microeconomic policy (Ammar 1997; Muscat 2015). Other studies have limited their scope to Southeast Asia and discussions on the relationship between democracy and development or social policy, democracy, and development (Putra 2019; Aminuddin and Purnomo 2019).

This study assesses the direct link in the causal relationship between democracy and social policy from a historical perspective. Three aspects compose this study's contribution to the literature. First, we provide an explanation of the antecedent factors that form the change in political regimes to democracy. Second, we observe that regime change is followed by simultaneous changes in social policies. Third, we explain the difference in the degree of change that occurs in all social policy variables in each country.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to identify the mechanism of a process (democratic institutions) and outcome (social policy) that is beyond the dimensions of space and time. Thus, we use the historical institutionalism approach to include the institution as the unit of analysis, combined with process tracing to explain the process involving the actors, institutions, dynamics, and results. Process tracing analysis considers landscapes, such as the analysis presented by Charles Tilly (George and Bennett 2005). The process-tracing method is often defined as the study of causal mechanisms. According to them, cause (X) refers to causal factors such as condition, co-variables, exogenous variables, explanatory variables, independent variables, input, or intervention; outcome (Y) refers to the variable bound, descendant, effects, endogenous variables, output, or response; and mechanism (M) refers to the process of the tracing analysis, causal narrative, or micro foundation. The models below demonstrate the causal mechanism in this method:

A (antecedent)→X (cause)→M (mechanism)→Y (outcome)

Based on the research on this method, we apply process tracing to explain rather than describe (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 85–86). Process tracing is a systematic effort to support or strengthen the claims of social causation explanations (Bennett and George 1997; Hall and Taylor 1996). Van Evera (1997) proposed the following: this link is a cause and effect link that connects independent variables, the outcome is unwrapped and divided into smaller steps, and the investigator searches for the observable evidence in each step. Furthermore, the process tracing is a method with a strong inference if it can present theories and sustainability on the basis of historical explanations based on the cases demonstrated to be significant and impactful by a particular theory. Process tracing is more persuasive to the extent that the researcher has guarded against confirmation bias (Bennett and Elman 2006). This method is connected with Mahoney's (2010, 125) argument that a tracing process is a careful description. Inherently, there are tra-



jectories of change and causation, but the analysis is unsuccessful if the phenomena observed in each step in this trajectory are inadequately described (Collier 2011).

The causal mechanisms tests associated with process tracing have helped researchers establish that (1) a specific event or process occurred, (2) a different event or process occurred after the initial event or process, and (3) the former caused the latter. This method has also been used to evaluate hypotheses on the cause of the impact of a particular case. In qualitative research and case studies, this method has become the most important tool of causal inference (George and Bennett 2005; Collier 2011). In the process of tracing, this method tracks history in order to raise the possibility of a new explanation unanswered by the hypothesis, on how they relate and demonstrate causal mechanisms. Notably, the goal of this method is to validate causal explanations through detailed observations that would collaborate with some causes while ruling out others (Bennett and Elman 2006, 459–460).

This study, as its unit of analysis, also explains what occurs in each country and then compares those results. We combine theoretical foundations regarding democracy and social policy with historical factors that are chronic, to identify and then attract inferences. We use the comparative process tracing (CPT) method, which is influenced by historical institutionalism in political science and comparative historical analysis in sociology (Bengtsson, Annaniassen, Jensen, Ruonavaara, and Sveinsson 2006; Bengtsson and Ruonavaara 2010). CPT is a two-method approach that combines theory, chronology, and comparison (Bengtsson and Ruonavaara 2017).

We use three stages of analysis. First, we build a theoretical framework for the relationship between democracy and social policy. Second, through the time series data from V-Dem in Figures 1 and 2, we identify the notable year period (1970s–2013) in which the change occurred and record two aspects—events and the mechanism of policy formation in each country—to create the case. Third, we draw inferences from the explanation of each case. The inferences comprise the similarities

among the causal factors and the differences in the processes. Finally, we propose our conclusions based on the results.

## DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL POLICY

### *Theoretical Framework*

The term democracy in this essay mostly refers to liberalism norms, namely, free fair elections, competition among political parties, rule of law, and freedom of speech. Those norms are also the manifestation of the UDHR's concept of democracy article 21 (3): "the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government" (UN General Assembly 1948). Peter Schumpeter (in the study by Ido 2012) argued that as long as there are regular elections, free political competition, and absence of repressive power that controls the everyday politics, the political system is a democracy. In the context of developing countries, who struggle to manage the basic problems of societies, such as poverty, severe unemployment, low-quality health care, and limited access to education, scholars have argued for the consideration of the "welfare reward" that democracy provides, otherwise people's trust in democracy declines (Fukuyama, Diamond, and Plattner 2012). The success of undemocratic countries, such as China and Singapore, in elevating their economies increases the relevance of these sorts of questions.

Thus, a democratic government might be responsible for providing all its constituents last-resort protection against poverty. The government should be able to secure the equitable distribution of resources within society (Meyer 2007). In Amartya Sen's capability approach, freedom comprises political, social, and economic aspects. Therefore, threats to freedom could be poverty, tyranny, and poor economic opportunities, neglect of public facilities, political intolerance, or overactivity of repressive states. Thus, the development of policy requires the removal of those aspects (Sen 1999; Stasavage 2003), and the political commitment of a state to welfare programs covers all areas of distribution vital for societal welfare (Lucas 1988; Sengupta 1991; Esping-Andersen 1999). In relation to equal distribution and freedom, the government should

collect taxes from individuals who accumulate large amounts of money and then redistribute the money collected to individuals with lower incomes through social programs (e.g., vouchers or cash payments), to increase the latter group's social and economic freedom. Social policy, in this context, has been defined as an instrument to conduct income redistribution policy (Sen 1991; Pierson 1996; Esping-Andersen 1999; Haggard and Kaufman 2008).

Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman (2008) discussed the relationship between democracy and social policy in developing countries. Their research contributed to the literature by assessing all the existing theories that have been demonstrated to influence the pattern of social policy, for example, power-resource theory, economic factor determinants, social policy legacy, development strategies, regime type, the electoral system, and political institutions. The authors asserted that regime type (democracy) significantly affects social policy because democracy (electoral competition) provides greater political freedom of association by which civic organizations could pressure a government to allocate more money to welfare programs (Nelson 2007; Chen 2008; Haggard and Kaufman 2008). This essay contributes to the literature by conducting a more in-depth examination of the political settings that influence the development of social policy in the Southeast Asian context, including the early emergence of social policy and its effect on the contemporary state's attitude toward social policies.

## FINDINGS

### *Case 1: Indonesia*

Formally, the early occurrence of social policy has been organized by the material, modern state context since 1901. During this time, the Dutch colonial government applied the *Ethische Politiek* (Ethical Policy), which was inspired by Max Havelaar. The Ethical Policy was a form of "debt of honor" or moral responsibility through which the Dutch government was willing to recompense all indigenous people who had supported wealth creation for the Netherlands. For example,

the social policy support from the Dutch government to the Indonesian people included education, health care, infrastructure, and irrigation systems (Vlasblom 2005; Olsson 2007).

In the early years after Indonesian independence (1945), social policy in the country was insufficient. The harsh situation occurred because of the absence of inherited social development in Dutch colonialism. The Dutch colonial government in Indonesia focused less on schooling than the British colonial government in Malaysia, the French in Indochina, and the United States in the Philippines (Bjornlund, Liddle, and King 2008). Likewise, during the presidency of Suharto (1965–1997), the government’s focus on social policy was insufficient, and its main focus was economic growth. The efforts to pursue rapid economic growth have generated a fundamental weakness in social policy, a deteriorated democratic system, and restricted enforcement of human rights (BTI 2012), which was caused by his authoritarian leadership. After 27 years in power, in 1992, Suharto’s administration issued a social policy program in the health sector through the Health Law No. 23/1992 (Noh and Jaafar 2011). Five years later, in late 1997, in response to the political changes in mid-1997, coupled with the economic crisis and a natural disaster (i.e., El Nino drought), Suharto’s administration developed the social policy called *Jaring Pengaman Sosial* (or Social Safety Net) (JICA 2002).

On May 21, 1998, because of the mass protests called “Reformasi 1998,” President Suharto stepped down from office, and Vice President Habibie was sworn in as president. During this post-authoritarian period, social policies entered the political arena as the result of political behaviors in which political parties attempted to compete for votes by offering voters a “cleaner” government, development, and welfare (Rock 2013). Major social policies in the post-Suharto era provided various programs, such as the provision of subsidized rice for the poor (*Raskin, beras untuk rakyat miskin*), targeted health care subsidies (*Jamkesmas, jaminan kesehatan masyarakat* or health assurance of society), school block grants (*Biaya Operasional Sekolah*), job creation (*Padat Karya*),

and community block grants. These programs were first introduced under Habibie's administration in 1999/2000 (BTI 2012).

As part of the reform process, in October 1999, the Ministry of Health extended its social policy in the health sector through a program called Healthy Indonesia 2010. The program was implemented at either the central or regional level and received a substantial budget for operation. To reduce poverty in 2000, Indonesia also incorporated poverty reduction initiatives in its National Development Programs. The poverty eradication policy comprised three programs: equitable fulfillment of basic needs; access to the food, basic health, and education essential to well-being and the country; and housing services for poor families and communities (Bappenas 2004).

In 2002, President Megawati's administration formalized a program called Rice for the Poor (*Raskin*). Although during the first decade after Reformasi 1998 these policies were mainly initiated by elites, these policies demonstrate that democratization in Indonesia has increased the focus on the development and welfare of society. Prior to the 2004 presidential elections, the Indonesian government issued Law No. 40/2004, regarding the National Social Security System. The law mandated universal coverage for social security programs, namely, pensions, health insurance, unemployment insurance, and death insurance, with a compulsory contribution and subsidy for individuals who could not afford to pay a premium (ADB 2013).

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono won the first (2004) and the second (2009) through direct presidential elections. In President Yudoyono's administration, the community block grants were integrated into *Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat* (the National Program for Community Empowerment) (Widjaja 2012). One year later, other schemes introduced new, centralized funding to expand health and education coverage. The largest social policy in education was the *Bantuan Operasional Sekolah* (BOS; the School Operations Fund), which provided funds for schools on a per-pupil basis to cover operational costs. In 2008, the BOS policy increased the national budget for educational spending by 23%. Additionally, in 2010, *Jamkesmas* (health care) accounted for

approximately 20% of total national spending on health (Kanapathy, Hazri, Phongpaichit, and Benyaapikul 2014).

In July 2007, Indonesia introduced mandatory legal requirements for corporate social responsibility (CSR) after the passage of legislation of Law No. 40/2007 on Limited Liability Companies. In article 74, the law explicitly states that companies are obliged to provide social services. Regarding social policies for people with disabilities, the government and the parliament officially ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2011. This ratification was followed by several high-level meetings related to the implementation of the CRPD in Indonesia (Evans, Purwadi, Setiadi, Losert, Wello, Bimo, Noni, Tate, and Savitri 2012; UNESCO 2014:).

### *Case 2: Malaysia*

In the late 1920s, discussions of social policy began to emerge in the context of the relationship between the colonial government and the Malaysian people. Demands for the government to provide effective social policy were in parallel with the awakening of the nationalist movement. In this period, Malay leaders began to have more concerns about the disparity and poor conditions of the Malays, particularly in relation to education, social, and economic concerns. In response, Malay leaders organized a political party (*Kesatuan Malaysia Singapura* [KMS]) to address these demands (Ryan 1976).

The greatest emerging momentum of social policy in Malaysia was the endorsement of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971. The NEP was the government's reaction to the ethnic riots (Malay vs. Chinese) that occurred in 1969. The Malaysian government attempted to ameliorate the conflict by implementing the NEP (1971–1990), which provided social assistance for the Malays to improve their socioeconomic status (Neher 1995; Torii 1997). The main problem with the NEP was that Chinese and Indian laborers were excluded from the benefits. Shortly after the implementation of the NEP, four major social welfare policies—the National Social Policy in 2003, the National Integrity Plan, the Malaysia Institute of Integrity in 2004, and the National Mis-

sion in the Ninth Plan, implemented in March 2006—were revised to remove their strong ethnic bias (Embong 2007; Zin 2012).

The Malaysian government's low commitment to democracy resulted in significant social policies. In 1988, the government issued a policy that reserved 1% of job opportunities in the public sector for people with disabilities (MoW 2013). In the education sector, in 1988, the National Education Philosophy (later: the 1996 Education Act) was issued to strengthen the education system in Malaysia, namely, to expand access to education and improve the quality of the education sector (MoE 2013). Another example of social policy in Malaysia is the 1999 National Welfare Policy, which allocated a greater amount of funds for and expanded the scope of social policy in Malaysia.

The NEP officially ended in 1991; however, its philosophy continued in relation to the rights granted to *bumiputera* as the main beneficiaries of development in Malaysia (BTI 2014a). The new policies, such as the New Development Policy (NDP), included many of the NEP's objectives (ANFREL 2012). The NDP (1991–2000) replaced the NEP and added language on the importance of capital-intensive and sophisticated technology industries (Noh and Jaafar 2011). In 1996, the government issued the Education Act by amending the 1961 Education Act, to establish additional private universities and to include preschools in the National Education System (MoE 2013). In terms of the economy, Malaysia experienced rapid economic growth during the Mahathir Mohammad administration (Kanapathy, Hazri, Phongpaichit, and Benyaapikul 2014).

In 2000, the government issued the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) policy, insurance that covered more than half of the workers in the private sector throughout Malaysia (BTI 2014). In the same year, the National Vision Policy (2001–2010) was issued to establish a united, progressive, and prosperous Malaysia by living in harmony and engaging in full, fair partnerships (Noh and Jaafar 2011). The noncorrelation between democracy and social policy was apparent in 2003, when the social policy was expanded in the form of National Social Policy (NSP), focusing on fairness and equity of social services, especially for rural

communities. However, the government was simultaneously receiving strong criticism over the decline of judicial independence and the limited freedom of assembly, association, speech, and the press (Center for Systemic Peace 2010).

Despite its low commitment to democracy, the Malaysian government was proactive in social policy development. In 2006, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development agreed to provide a grant of up to a maximum of USD 820 (MYR 2,700) to encourage persons with disabilities to become small-business entrepreneurs. From the grant's inception to 2012, a total of 1,027 persons with disabilities benefited from the grant (MoW 2013). In the education sector, public expenditure on education, 5.8% of the GDP in 2009, was considered high even based on international standards (BTI 2014a).

In 2011, the GDP percentage of Malaysia's public expenditures on basic education was more than double than that of other ASEAN countries (3.8% vs 1.8%); 1.6% higher than the Asian Tiger economies of South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore; and slightly higher than the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development average of 3.4%. By this year, the percentage of students who had dropped out of primary school had significantly decreased from 3% (1989) to 0.2% (2011), and the enrolment rates at the lower secondary level increased to 87%. In 2012, with an education budget of MYR 37 billion, the government continued to devote the largest proportion of its budget, 16%, to the Ministry of Education. This act demonstrates the government's strong commitment to the education sector (MoE 2013).

### *Case 3: Thailand*

In the 1870s, motivated by anti-colonialist and national integrity agendas, the Thai government began to formally create social policy. At that time, the Thai Kingdom instated intensive policies of integration and centralization. Various activities were conducted to encourage cooperation, agreements, and dependencies among the regions of Thailand. For example, the central government-built schools to provide lessons in the central Thai dialect to people throughout the country. The goal was to



provide graduates of these schools the opportunity to be recruited into government and military positions. This policy, initiated by King Mongkut, was a milestone in the early development of Thailand's modern education system. King Chulalongkorn continued these transformative education policies. During this time, people began to demand reforms to create a universal education system (London 1979).

Following the young doctors' movement, in the 1980s and 1990s, other groups, such as labor unions, teachers, and farmers, demanded social security policies for their members. In 1983, organizations that supported people with disabilities actively influenced national and local government policies, especially policy on career development and networking to protect the rights of persons with disabilities at the regional, provincial, district, and community levels (McGuire 2008; JICA 2012). In the employment sector, labor organizations succeeded in influencing the government to introduce the Provident Fund Act (1987), which provided financial assistance and insurance to workers. This policy was followed in 1990 by the legalization of Thailand's Social Security System, requiring all enterprises to register their employees in the system and pay contributions to the Social Security Office (ADB 2013).

The Chuan Leekpai government's commitment to social policy was also strengthening. The Eighth National Economic and Development Plan (NEDP) 1997–2001 stated that when development only pursues economic growth, it damages the environment and causes social problems. Therefore, this development planning document emphasized the balance between economic development and social development (NESDB 2012). On December 3, 1998, the prime minister signed the Declaration of Rights for People with Disabilities, which became the basis for providing basic services to people with disabilities in Thailand (JICA 2012). In 1999, the government provided assistance to the nation's approximately 8 million orphans in the form of scholarships and shelter (Kane and Boontinand 2011) and established a policy of decentralization, especially for health and education services.

Social policy developed along a slightly different path during the next administration. The main objective of the Thaksin administration

was to ameliorate rural poverty, and two social policies in this era are notable: the Farmers Debt Moratorium policy, which granted a 3 year debt suspension to farmers who borrowed money from the government's agricultural bank, and the Village Fund, which allocated THB 1 million to each village as a credit fund for the people of the village (UNRC 2004). The Thaksin government also expanded coverage of the THB 30 Universal Health Care Policy to include all citizens of Thailand. Other social policies introduced by his government were the Elderly Fund, which provided financial assistance to poor, elderly (older than 60 years of age) individuals in the form of THB 300 per month (UNRC 2004) and an allocation of approximately 28% of the total education budget to secondary education (World Bank Thailand Office 1999).

In 2007, the Persons with Disabilities Quality of Life Act was issued to provide a comprehensive rights-based law for individuals with disabilities and contained an anti-discrimination component (Siriruttanapruk, Wada, and Kawakami 2009). In 2008, when the political situation in Thailand was chaotic, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security of Thailand, the WHO, and the UNESCAP cohosted the first Community-based Rehabilitation Asia-Pacific Congress from December 9 to 11, in Bangkok (JICA 2012). In the education sector, children from all socioeconomic groups were granted access to education at the lower secondary level (World Bank Thailand Office 1999). From 2008 to 2009, the Thai government initiated the *Chek Chuai Chat* program or the National Check Project. This project aimed to provide short-term economic protection for the poor with a one-time THB 2,000 per person grant to people who had a monthly income of THB 15,000 or less (ADB 2010). Social policy, as in the earlier periods, continued to be implemented uninfluenced by the political chaos in Thailand.

#### *Case 4: The Philippines*

Social policy existed long before the Philippines gained independence under the *ilustrados* (the group of young, educated men who initiated the Philippines Revolution in 1896). In the beginning, the *ilustrados* resistance movement and its supporters were only able to address reform

discourse and educational equity concerns. Subsequently, the demand for social policy, especially in education, became part of the independence movement. Although these demands were met with no response from the Spanish colonial government, this movement inspired political leaders in the Philippines during the early years of independence.

In the 1930s, the poor workers in Pampanga established an organization called *Aguman ding Maldang Talapagobra* (AMT), to demand that social justice be upheld. In 1938, another group of lower-class workers formed an organization called *Kapisanang Pambansa Makbubukid ng Pilipinas* (KPMP) in Central Luzon. The membership of the KPMP was much larger and more organized than that of the AMT. These two organizations were very active in demanding social policy in the Philippines, especially for poor, marginalized communities (Schirmer and Shalom 1987). The major downturn in social policy in the Philippines occurred during the regime of President Ferdinand Marcos. During the period of authoritarian rule, democratic institutions weakened, along with the government's commitment to social policy. The only purpose of social policy, as a "political bribe" of the public, is to dampen internal conflict and obtain political support for the authoritarian regime (Tadem 2013).

In 1987, the constitution was revised by Aquino to make the Philippines' political institutions more democratic and to incorporate aspects of the social policies largely ignored during the Marcos administration, especially in the sector of education. The commitment to social policy in the constitution is observed in section 13, article 13, which clearly indicates the importance of improving services for people with disabilities and specifically designates which agencies are responsible for carrying out these tasks (DRPI 2009). With the constitutional reform, the Filipino government became relatively more active and quickly took the initiative to implement creative social policies.

In 1992, Fidel Ramos (1992–1998) won the election to replace Aquino as president. During President Ramos' administration, economic development and social policies were balanced. In terms of social policy, they implemented the Countrywide Development Fund, which was

renamed the Priority Development Assistance Fund in 2010. In 1995, National Health Insurance was passed. This new policy replaced the old health policy—the Medicare Act of 1969. With the new health policy, access to health services in the Philippines, especially health insurance, increased. The agency that implemented this universal insurance program was the Philippines Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth). The health insurance program was universal and was expected to cover all family members, regardless of the number of children.

Social policy slightly strengthened after President Joseph Estrada was impeached and then resigned in 2001. During President *Gloria Macapagal*'s administration, the government passed the Basic Education Act of 2001, which emphasized the importance of ensuring basic education for all Filipino children at the elementary and high school levels. This policy also stated that education services must be decentralized to reach grassroots groups—the schools and communities (UNESCO 2014). In Arroyo's second term, many undemocratic policies were implemented to maintain the administration's power. Weak democratic institutions in the Philippines, at that time, were accompanied by a weak governmental commitment to social policy.

In the election in June 2010, Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino, the son of former President Aquino, easily won by a large margin of votes. The Aquino administration established strong communication with various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups. Thus, the policies the government implemented were more relevant to community needs than those in the Arroyo administration (BTI 2014b). The expansion of social policy continued, for example, the number of poor people eligible to enroll in PhilHealth was increased. To support this policy, a subsidy was provided to the poorest 20% of the population (FES 2012). The government also proposed the National Objectives for Health (2011–2016), which governed the provision of health services at all levels of society to improve quality of life and achieve the targets of the MDGs (WHO 2012). In 2012, the Aquino administration passed three policy packages: the Poverty Alleviation Program, the Anti-Cor-

ruption Campaign, and the Freedom of Information Bill (CADI 2012; Weber 2012).

DISCUSSION

*Antecedent Factors: Colonial and Initial Era*

Ideally, social policies should protect and promote freedom (Sen 1999; Stasavage 2003; Meyer 2007), accommodate public demand (Nelson 2007; Chen 2008; Haggard and Kaufman 2008), and support economic development (Sengupta 1991; Lucas 1998; Esping-Andersen 1999). Notably, the social policies in the four countries were not always formulated with the intention to achieve these goals. The general findings of this research indicate that the pattern of social policy under authoritarian regimes is similar to that of the social policies when these policies were first introduced. During the colonialism period, social policy was merely a tool to maintain the power and domination of the ruling class.

Table 1. Social Policy during the Initial Era

Country	Colonizer	Form and Time	Motive
Indonesia	Dutch	Ethical Policies: Education, welfare concerns, infrastructure (1901)	Increase popular support for the colonizer
Malaysia	British	Education, social assistance, Malays' special rights, the KMS (1926)	Political support (elites) for the colonized through granting Malays special rights
Thailand	British/French (Semi-Colonial)	King Mongkut's modern education system (1850s)	Prevent Western colonialism, strengthen the central government's control
Philippines	Spain and the USA	Education and social assistance for the poor, AMT, and KPMP (1930s)	Instrument of colonization, Westernized the young people

Source: *Compiled by author from related sources*

Table 1 presents the social policies during the early emergence of social policy, during the colonial era. Social policy in the early era was merely a tool to strengthen the dominion of a colonizing power and gain political support from the public. Social policy in the colonial period was identical to that during the authoritarianism era. Haggard and Kaufman (2008) explained that social policy in an authoritarian regime is generally designed to strengthen the legitimacy of a dictator and used as a

tool to counter mass protests and insurgency movements. The findings of this thesis confirm this argument. In Indonesia, the Ethical Policy issued by the Dutch government was intended to strengthen public support for the colonial government. The policy of the social safety net (*Jaring Pengaman Sosial*) introduced by Suharto in 1997 was also intended to create public support when the legitimacy of the Suharto regime experienced a dramatic downturn (JICA 2002). The NEP issued by the Malaysian government in 1971 was also in response to ethical conflicts reported in the press in the coverage of the riot on May 13, 1969 (Neher 1995). King Mongkut's motivation to strengthen Thailand's education system in the 1870s stemmed from the public's feelings of anti-colonialism (London 1979). Marcos introduced populist policies to generate public support after declaring Martial Law in 1973 (Tadem 2013).

During the democratic era, social policies in Indonesia that emerged after 1998 were more responsive than those introduced during the authoritarian and colonial eras. Post-1986, social policies in the Philippines became more responsive, despite the slight decline during Estrada's and Arroyo's administrations. The initiation of the Rural Doctor Forum in Thailand to formulate health care policies was also influenced by democratic institutions. By contrast, in Malaysia, the democratic and authoritarian eras were similar to a degree such that they could not be clearly separated; hence, our analysis of the social policy differences under these two political systems produced unremarkable results.

Table 2. Social Policy in the Post-Colonial Era

Country	Social Policy Plan	Political Stability	Popular Demand
Indonesia	Evolving	Affecting	Moderate
Malaysia	Stagnant	Not Affecting	Low
Philippines	Evolving	Affecting	Moderate
Thailand	Fragmented	Not Affecting	Polarized

Source: *Compiled by author from related sources*

Table 2 indicates two distinguishable similarities between Indonesia and the Philippines, and between Malaysia and Thailand. Indonesia and the Philippines do not take a long-term, consistent approach to implement

their social policies. The development of social policy in these countries shifts and evolves in line with contemporary circumstances. By contrast, in Malaysia and Thailand, the development of social policy was less affected by the political situation and popular demand.

In Malaysia, social policy is a result of the NEP and NDP. Notably, social policy was not influenced by political and democratic shifts. During this research period (1970s–2014) Malaysia never experienced a significant power shift in its political history. Power shifts have not occurred in Malaysia since 1957, when the coalition of the UMNO and *Barisan Nasional* managed to maintain their ruling power. By contrast, the development of social policy in Malaysia experienced positive growth with the implementation of the NEP and NDP. The difference is the result of the rapid changes in the political situation of Thailand. From 1973 to 2013, Thailand experienced six military coups coupled with mass protests; however, because of the very short duration of each regime, these political dynamics did not significantly affect the implementation of social policies; therefore, the coordination of long-term programs was difficult to analyze.

In Indonesia and the Philippines, social policies during democratic and authoritarian eras clearly differed. During Suharto's authoritarian administration, social policies were merely a tool used to strengthen patrimonialism in Indonesian politics (JICA 2002). By contrast, social policies in Indonesia's post-1998 democratic era have been more diverse and comprehensive, cover a variety of sectors, and are conducted by diverse ministries. Although the drivers of such developmental policies were economic growth, in the Philippines, Marcos issued similar social policies. His social policies were merely used to gain political support from the citizenry (Overholt 1986; Tadem 2013). Social policy in the Philippines after the EDSA I (post-1986) was more responsive and systematic. Corazon Aquino further expanded social programs to incorporate social policy (budget allocation) in the Philippines' 1987 Constitution; next, under his son's administration, the commitment to social policy accompanied an increased commitment to democracy.

Another finding of this research relates to the role of popular demand and public participation in the initiation or expansion of social policy. Theoretically, when democracy was weak, opportunities for the expression of popular demand in the public policy-making process were low, and the quantity and quality of welfare policies decreased (Castles and McKinlay 1979; Haggard and Kaufman 2008). For example, Malaysia was the only country in which the role of popular demand and public participation was relatively low in social policy. The *Bersih*, *Hindraf*, and opposition movements were striving only for democratization and free and fair elections, without demands on social policy. An example of the role of popular demand and public participation in initiating social policies is observed in Indonesia, where Law No. 40/2007 regulates the CSR obligations of companies to help people affected by their business activities. In Thailand, a forum was established for rural doctors that enacted social policies in the health sector. In the Philippines, the role of NGOs in initiating social policy is obvious, particularly in the administration of President Aquino II.

Table 3: Mechanism and Causality

Country	Critical Juncture	Political Support	Foreign Intervention	Core process	Exclusion
Indonesia	1999–2000 Reformasi era	Political parties, civil society	World Bank	Decentralization,	Minority groups and the eastern part of country
Malaysia	1985 Continuation of the New Economic Policy	UMNO Political Party	The British	Affirmation to the Malays	Chinese and Indian
Thailand	1997 Constitution	Royal Thai, military	USA and European	Rural development, education, and health services	Urban poor
Philippines	Democracy Post-Marcos 1986–1987	Military, civil society	World Bank, USA	Anti-dictatorship, social justice, pre-martial law	Agrarian reform, international loan

Source: Compiled by author from related sources

The 1987 Constitution was created by Aquino II to make the Philippines' political institutions more democratic and to incorporate aspects



of social policies, which were largely ignored during the Marcos administration, especially in the sector of education (UNESCO 2012). The 1987 Constitution also stipulated basic rights, such as the recognition and enforcement of human rights, which increased liberty and freedom for all citizens. Another notable aspect of this constitution is section 13, article 13, which clearly indicates the importance of improving services for people with disabilities and designates which agencies are responsible for conducting these tasks (DRPI 2009). In general, the 1987 Constitution was a very strong commitment by the Corazon Aquino administration to democracy and social policies.

After reforming its democratic institutions, the Filipino government became relatively more active and was quicker to take the initiative in implementing creative social policies. For example, in 1990, the Aquino government participated in the events of the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in Thailand. Soon after, the government issued a policy to implement the declaration through the 10-year EFA Philippines program, from 1991 to 2000. This plan included national objectives in the education sector, such as policies and strategies, and mandatory plans at the regional level for local governments to improve the quality of education services across the Philippines (UNESCO 2012). Space was opened for the active participation of civil society that was more organized (Hutchcroft and Rocamora 2003, 277).

Indonesia has been a member of the World Bank since 1954 (Thompson and Manning 1974; Dick, Houben, Lindblad, and Wie 2002). Relations with the Indonesian government were intimate again during the Suharto period. One of the structural adjustment products sponsored by the World Bank is a social safety net program that targets groups; unfortunately, this program was not entirely successful due to the 1997 economic crisis. After the 1998 reforms until 2000, when regional autonomy law was implemented, various social policy programs were developed and implemented up to the level of the regional government. The governance structure that provides greater local government authority was followed by an obligation to provide support for the central government's social policy programs. This was also supported by

various donor agencies working for social policy development, even in the framework of mutual partnership, so as not to force the Indonesian government to apply certain specific models (Kaasch, Sumarto and Wimsen 2018).

Major social policies in the post-Suharto era were first introduced under Habibie's administration and offered a variety of programs (see the findings in Case 1: Indonesia). The government also applied many structural policy changes. In the economic sector, select reforms to macroeconomic regulations were undertaken, such as reducing the domination of large-scale corporations, improving the banking system, and reducing foreign debt (BTI 2012). In mid-September 1998, a new health program was introduced that focused more on health promotion and prevention activities and less on curative and rehabilitative services (WHO 2006). In the meantime, the consolidation of democracy was increasing, and since the beginning of 1998, dozens of new political parties, civil society organizations, and unions have been established (Bjornlund, Liddle, and King 2008).

The Government of Malaysia, in 1951, passed the EPF Ordinance, a trust fund that later became the basis for the EPF Act in 1991, which covered workers in the private sector and public workers not categorized as recipients of pensions from the government. This completed the pension scheme for public workers and was refined through the Pension Trust Fund Act 1991 (Sim & Hamid 2010). Another main concern was the exclusion of Chinese and Indian laborers from the NEP. Four major social welfare policies in Malaysia, the NSP in 2003, the NIP and the Malaysia Institute of Integrity in 2004, and the National Mission in the Ninth Plan March in 2006, were revised to remove their strong ethnic bias (Embong 2007; Zin 2012). These revised policies increased the inclusivity of social welfare programs, including an imperative effort to implement democratic principles. In 1988, a policy was issued that reserved 1% of job opportunities in the public sector for people with disabilities that aimed to help qualified persons obtain a position and salary in the public sector (MoW 2013). In the education sector, the National Education Philosophy (later, the 1996 Education Act) was is-

sued in 1988 to strengthen and increase access to the education system in Malaysia. Social policies in Malaysia covered additional aspects of society, for example, the 1999 National Welfare Policy.

The constitution enforced in Thailand in 2013 was passed in 2007, and it replaced the 1997 version. As a result of democratization in the 1980s, the process of democratic decision-making involving multiple stakeholders was implemented in Thailand. For example, the formulation and establishment of the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) policy in 2009. Notably, the UHC policy-making process was long and inclusive, and various consultation forums were conducted by involving various elements of society (Tantivess, Werayingyong, Chuengsama, and Teerawattananon 2013). The government's policy of a cash transfer to poor families is also notable. In 1994, for example, this program covered 0.3% of households in Thailand (World Bank 1996). Pension plans were more prevalent for government employees, and 10% of private workers were covered. Only in 1998, through the Labor Protection Act, was there improvements in wages and social security for workers. In addition, access to health care for countryside residents improved, and the budget allocation for the health and welfare of the community reached 10% of the national expenditure in 1998 (Phoolcharoen 1998, 1874).

## CONCLUSION

Based on our explanation, we conclude that social policy in Indonesia and the Philippines was relatively more motivated by public participation and government efforts to accommodate popular demand. However, in Malaysia, the stagnation of political and social policy means that democratic institutions were influential in the development of social policy, because the development of social policy in Malaysia is mostly the result of elite initiatives, rather than public participation. Extreme conditions occurred in Thailand: through increased budget allocations and the implementation of social policy, frequent changes in short-term regimes hindered the government's coordination of the implementation of social policy. Extreme political fragmentation in Thailand separated

social policy from the political dynamics and political institutions in that country.

The development of social policies is difficult to detach from political settings. One of the findings in this research displays the partisan aspect of social policy, which excludes some groups or issues. The main argument is whether the presence of democratic institutions encourages governments to be more open, citizen-oriented, and responsive, or whether the inclusive political conditions create more open public participation in the policy-making process. Thus, in the context of developing countries, public participation is more likely to demand social policies. The social policies produced by democratic processes are more effective in delivering inclusive economic growth to the citizenry.

Donors and multilateral organizations must combine democracy with social policy. Any democratic strengthening and social assistance program should conform with public concerns, including its development through a participatory process. The public must feel a sense of belonging to these programs to increase the rate of success. Hence, we expect public support to maintain these programs (democratization and social policies) to strengthen. In the context of ASEAN, the implementation of social policies (in the ASCC and ASPC) must be complemented with the internalization process of democratic values. Thus, the public may directly use democratic institutions and norms to achieve their pragmatic needs (through democratic social policies). With this, the demands for democratization will then rise from the people, instead of ideas suggested by foreign donor agencies.

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