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***The Role of Public Bureaucracy in Policy Implementation in Five ASEAN Countries.***

**Edited by Jon S.T. Quah.** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. 487.

In the last decades, the development discourse has been increasingly dominated by the “good-governance” approach as a good government is deemed vital for development (Fukuyama 2013). Despite the burgeoning literature, there is little consensus on the definition of “good governance” and the even more problematic issue of measuring it especially in multi-country regression studies that pool together countries that are fundamentally different in economic and governance structures. Within this literature, public bureaucracy in the procedural sense is sometimes used as a measure of the quality of government, based on the Weberian argument that “public administrative organizations characterized by meritocratic recruitment and predictable long-term career rewards will be more effective at facilitating capitalist growth than other forms of state organizations” (Evans and Rauch 1999, p. 749). Apart from these economics perspectives, public bureaucracy is also researched in other fields such as political science where it is viewed more in terms of structures such as agencies instead of its functions as in the case of research in public administration (Bendor 1994). In another strand of the literature, the role of public bureaucracy has emerged as a research theme in policy implementation studies that seek to understand the difficulties encountered in policy implementation, especially in developing countries. This is where the book edited by Jon S.T. Quah fits into the expanding literature on public bureaucracy. It is part of a series of monographs that have been published based on a research project at the National University of Singapore, entitled, “Integration Through Law: The Role of Law and the Rule of Law in ASEAN Integration”.

The book fills an important lacuna in the literature as it seeks to compare the role of bureaucracy in policy implementation in five ASEAN countries,

namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam, since there are relatively few studies on ASEAN countries. The invaluable comparative cross-country perspective in this book is facilitated by the use of a common conceptual model for framing the analysis in each country. Two case studies in policy implementation — the ASEAN Cosmetic Directive (ACD) and the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime/Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC/SOMTC) — are used to illustrate the salient public bureaucracy issues involved in the implementation of ASEAN commitments in each of these countries. After the country studies, a comparison between policy implementation in ASEAN and the European Union is made in the penultimate chapter while an executive summary by the editor is provided in the last chapter.

The country studies confirm significant differences in the role played by public bureaucracy in policy implementation, with each country author presenting country-specific conditions for explaining their respective country’s effectiveness or ineffectiveness. Thus, according to Agus Pramusinto in Chapter 2, it is the democratization of its political system that has worsened the effectiveness of public bureaucracy in policy implementation in Indonesia. Malaysia’s twin weaknesses that have affected the effectiveness of public bureaucracy, as identified by Nik Rosmah Wan Abdullah in Chapter 3, are its ethnic preferential policies and entrenched corruption in public service. Vicente Chua Reyes, Jr. contends in Chapter 4 that it is systemic corruption and the weak rule of law that have made public bureaucracy dysfunctional and ineffective in the Philippines. Jairo Acuña-Alfaro and Anh Tran in Chapter 6 point towards the control of Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) over both policy formulation and implementation as the key contributory factor to the ineffectiveness of its public bureaucracy. On the other hand, Singapore’s exceptional effectiveness is attributed by David Seth Jones in Chapter 5 to its use of meritocracy, control over corruption, availability of resources and funding, decentralization of service delivery, and inter-

agency cooperation in its public bureaucracy. In the analysis of the implementation of the ACD and the AMMTC/SOMTC, the case studies verify that implementation is less likely to have problems when it involves a single issue and when there are fewer implementing agencies involved.

The country-specific nature of the difficulties encountered indicates that policy context is important and the nature as well as the problems of public bureaucracy in each country are complex. Therefore, although each country chapter has made policy suggestions for improving the conditions in their respective country, is there a common solution and can ASEAN contribute towards the formulation of such a common solution? Giulio Napolitano in the comparative study of ASEAN and the EU in Chapter 7 attempts to provide an ASEAN solution by suggesting the promotion of the development of a common administrative culture; developing stronger regulations and strengthening the roles and powers of a common supra-national organization such as the ASEAN Secretariat as possible ways to move forward towards improving policy implementation in ASEAN. These suggestions echo the constant refrain from ASEAN's detractors, that ASEAN needs to be more "rules-based". It also reflects the objective of the research programme that produced this book, which is integration through law, as opposed to the current practice of using discreteness, informality, consensus building and non-confrontational bargaining for cooperation and integration in ASEAN. Certainly, strengthening the rule of law is needed at the ASEAN level and also at the country level since corruption is a common issue that confronts most of the ASEAN countries in this book. It is prevalent in all the countries studied, with the exception of Singapore, even though the analysis of its role in public bureaucracy is quite disparate in each country chapter. Thus, a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between corruption and the rule of law is needed as the causes of corruption are varied and therefore multiple solutions are needed, with strengthening the rule of law as one of them.

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***ASEAN Economic Cooperation and Integration: Progress, Challenges, and Future Directions.***  
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This book provides a comprehensive overview of economic cooperation and integration in ASEAN through law since its early days. Chapters 1 to 3 give an introduction to the regional organization and a summary of broad economic indicators of its members, such as growth, population, trade and direct investment. While the first three chapters contain factual and statistical information on ASEAN, the subsequent three contain the core analyses of the book, which starts with the history of economic cooperation and integration among Southeast Asian economies (Chapter 4). This chapter includes an assessment of measures undertaken before the inception of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), borrowing from previous studies and in particular, from a book by the former ASEAN Secretary-General, Rodolfo Severino. Chapter 5 discusses initiatives that

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