Building Trust in Government in Southeast Asia[1]

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Abstract

Citizens of Southeast Asia put their trust in government, like the rest of Asia, but unlike most other regions of the world. They accord this trust even though they have low levels of generalized trust, and have governments that do not seem worthy of their trust. Governance deficits are evident in the performance of order institutions in service delivery and access, transparency, accountability and anti-corruption, military and police performance and judicial independence. There are also problems in representational institutions involved in electoral and parliamentary processes, which are accorded less trust than other institutions. A major set of challenges is to make government more trustworthy through improving service delivery and access, making civil servants content but challenged, stressing equality and justice in providing services, taking available solutions to reduce corruption seriously, providing civic education to forestall approval of military rule, improving representational institutions, and engaging civil society. The final challenge is to improve trust in government by making government accord trust in its citizens also.

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Introduction

The ISI Web of Knowledge shows that trust as a keyword or in the abstract was found in 1,956 articles in scientific journals in 2005, compared to 129 in 1990 (Rothstein and Uslaner 2006). This demonstrates the accelerating interest on the topic, whether to explicate the concept, trace its roots, or find its effects. This paper is a very modest contribution to the burgeoning field as it focuses on a small aspect of the concept in a limited geographic area. In support of the United Nation's thrust on reinventing government, I am focusing on the issue of trust in government in Southeast Asia. Given the limitations of data and time constraints, the bulk of the paper is concerned with how trust in government is implicated in various mechanisms of governance in certain SEA countries rather than the region as a whole. I will discuss the association of trust and these mechanisms when this is provided in the literature. Where it is not, I shall take the normative view that citizens' trust in government is a positive value and show how governance mechanisms may be improved to lead to that end.

Since this is a library and desk research, I have trusted (yes, that word) data given in extant surveys and research, taking into account their specific limitations of sampling and issues chosen. I have used a variety of assessments and papers to validate these findings, and point out whenever appropriate the important commonalities and contradictions of the different sources. There are also significant limitations in the fact that I could only use English sources and did not have access to all relevant materials available in print or on line.

The Concept of Trust

The growing body of studies on "trust" suggests a complex concept. It is, as Hardin (1998: 11) states, "a fundamentally cognitive notion," such that an individual trusting is presumed to have some knowledge of the object of such trust. I take the view that trust is both rational and relational. Hardin puts forward the notion of "encapsulated interest," ego trusting alter if alter's reason for her action takes ego into account in some relevant way. But beyond rational calculations, ego may repose trust in alter if he deems alter is worthy of that trust whatever interests they may or may not have in common (Hardin 1998: 11; Levi 1998: 78). Such relational trust may have been cultivated by close proximity, "thick" interactions, transference from experience with similar objects, or simple liking of certain characteristics of the trusted (e.g., the somewhat irrational "I trust men in uniform; they look so straight and cleancut.").

Trust is usually seen in a positive light, but trust as a virtue has its limits. For example, one may trust an untrustworthy person and be led to ruin. This is how scams are perpetrated by "con(fidence)" men and women. They are asked: "How can you swindle a person who trusts you?" And they respond: "How can I swindle them, if they did not?" Thus a certain limitation of trust or a certain amount of distrust may be necessary not only to maintain interpersonal and even person-to-institution relationships but also to protect the parties in the transaction.

My concern is "generalized trust," one beyond the trust accorded known individuals and reposed on large groups and impersonal institutions. Such generalized trust is probably the most important part of social capital (Fukuyama 1995, Rothstein and Stolle 2007).

The primary object of trust in this paper is government. Government is a large-scale institution that is perhaps impossible to know intimately. Yet it may be and has been trusted by citizens even though they may be acquainted with only an infinitesimal part of it (the neighborhood cop instead of the police force, a public school teacher rather than the whole Ministry of Education, a senator rather than Parliament). Such trust may arise from characteristics of both the truster and the trustee, the citizens as well as government. On the part of the citizens, trust may be engendered or repressed by cultural characteristics, or by such socio-demographic qualities as level of education, income status or even gender. Higher income, education and social status all seem to work against the ability of individuals to trust government institutions (Albritton and Bureekul 2005). Even more knowledge about an object of trust may push someone toward distrust. Some civil society organizations have become more distrustful of government as it has become more familiar to them. Transparency may not be an unalloyed virtue, and balance or even a certain asymmetry of information may be necessary to keep trust from decreasing.

Trust is related to governance. Trust in government provides a "governance capital" that gets citizens to cooperate with government even when it makes unpopular decisions whose benefits will accrue only in the long run (Bratton, Chu, Lagos and Rose 2005: 62). In addition, a general trust in other people may produce considerable support for democracy. For instance, Ikeda, Yamada and Kohno (2003), using Asian Barometer Survey data, have found that social trust[3] is positively correlated with both election-related participation and "active participation."[4] On the other hand, they also found that institutional trust, defined as confidence in various political institutions, is either not related to political participation or negatively related to it in Japan, Taiwan and Thailand. This counter-intuitive result may be empirical evidence of familiarity breeding contempt. However, it contradicts findings of Mishler and Rose that "interactions with government are significantly more important than cultural factors in producing trust in government" (quoted in Albritton and Bureekul 2005: 8) or Albritton and Bureekul's own findings that a general trust in other people produces considerable support for democracy.

Rothstein and Stolle (2007) distinguish between two types of governmental institutions – the representational, and what they called the "order institutions." Their basic difference lies in the partisanship-impartiality continuum. Rothstein and Stolle argue that institutions dominated by politicians are trusted on the basis of their

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[3] "Social trust" is indicated by answers to a four-point scale between "most people can be trusted" and "One can't be too careful in dealing with them."

[4] Participation experiences included: contacting government official, officials at higher level, elected representatives at any level, political parties or other political organizations, NGOs, and media and engaging in demonstrations, strikes or sit-in.

partisanship, such that people sharing the ideology of the ruling party are likely to trust it and the institution it dominates, such as the parliament or elected executives. On the other hand, trust is supposed to be reposed on the army, the police, judges and the bureaucracy for their impartiality and even-handedness.

Trust makes governing easier. Trusting citizens give governments leeway in the programs and methods they use in carrying out their tasks. Their trust allows governments to be bold in instituting innovations or forwarding programs with time lags in producing benefits. They are more willing to cooperate in their programs and provide inputs (information, time, even taxes) to make them work (Ramesh 2006).

Government, too, may engender trust. Levi gives several examples of how this may happen, such as by lowering personal investments in monitoring actions of other individuals; by enforcing contracts that give buyers and sellers reason to trust each other; by "restricting the use of coercion to tasks that enhance rather than undermine trust"; by "eliminating risky personal reliance on another" (e.g., through freeing families of burden of caring for sick members) (Levi 1998). Rothstein and Stolle (2007) are even more forthright. Rather than seeking society-centered reasons for low trust and social capital, they conclude that it is dysfunctional institutions that cause the lack of social capital.

Peri Blind (2006) introduces five kinds of trust that a government must show to make itself deemed trustworthy. They are moral trust, with focus on ethics and morality; economic trust, with emphasis on economic efficiency and non-partisanship;[5] political trust, with stress on political legitimacy; social trust, focusing on the catalyzing effects of social capital; and technological trust, which zeroes in on how technology can bring about more democratization. This multi-pronged strategy is expected to strengthen citizens' trust in government. Missing in most discussions of trust is the contention of Kaifeng Yang (2006), that liberalism "implies that government officials should trust citizens' goodness and self-governance unless there is evidence to the contrary." Bearing this in mind, I think the strategy can be enriched by making it bi-directional to incorporate ways on how governments may evince their trust in their citizens also.

The Plan of this Paper

In the body of this paper, I shall focus on two issues – the level of trust accorded different institutions in Southeast Asia, and how that trust can be engendered and maintained by governance mechanisms. The first will be based on surveys on citizens' trust in government. The second will describe the quality of governance that may be related to that trust. I will first discuss the governance processes associated with order institutions, describing in turn the executive and the judiciary. I tackle service delivery and access, the military and police, and accountability, transparency and anti-corruption in the section on the executive branch and the civil service. I have a shorter section dealing with judicial independence to end the discussion on order institutions. In focusing on trust in representational institutions, I will delve into electoral and parliamentary

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[5] My copy of the manuscript identifies the value as "partisanship," but I have used its opposite here, which I think is more in keeping with Blind's discussion.

processes, and decentralization and local governance. This will be followed by a discussion on civil society engagement. Finally I shall discuss key issues, trends and challenges towards understanding and improving trust in government.

I have relied on several trust and governance-related indices found through the internet and the UN Governance Indicators Handbook (2004) as well as studies of individual countries and the region for relevant material. They will be introduced in the appropriate sections.

This paper is focused on the region called Southeast Asia, encompassing ten countries. Information on the level of trust their citizens accord their public institutions, and the governance mechanisms related to trust in government is not uniformly found for these countries. Moreover, most studies on the mechanisms to be tackled do not explicitly relate them to trust. Underpinning these limitations is the fact that the region itself is little more than a geographic reality. Thus, while I attempt to supply a regional perspective, I shall be circumspect in ascribing situations in one country as applicable to the whole. These constraints should be borne in mind in reading this paper.

The Geographic Focus: Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is "the area stretching from the Southern border of China east across the South China Sea, west to the Andaman Sea and South to the southernmost edges of the Indonesian archipelago" (Crossette 2006). All but one of the countries covered by this geographic description are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), an organization of states created in 1967. The geography and ASEAN are the main commonalities of the countries of the region. After that, they vary greatly in just about everything else.

ASEAN has ten members, with the newest country in its geographic area, Timor-Leste, getting ready to join it. ASEAN quotes Kofi Annan in the homepage of its website:

> ASEAN is not only a well-functioning, indispensable reality in the region. It is a real force to be reckoned with far beyond the region. It is also a trusted partner of the United Nations in the field of development" (Annan 2000).

The accolade is perhaps merited by the fact that although ASEAN is a disparate collection of nations, it was born out of the desire to resolve conflicts between neighbors, and has largely succeeded in doing so for forty years. Its members have a host of colonial histories. Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and Myanmar were under the British, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam under the French, Indonesia under the Dutch, and the Philippines under the Spanish and the Americans; only Thailand escaped colonization. Their wars of liberation affected their historical trajectories – from the Philippine war of independence from Spain only to be under the yoke of the Americans afterwards, the Indonesians against the Dutch, the Vietnamese war against the French and then against the United States which defined not only Vietnamese and American histories but also those of Cambodia, Laos and Thailand, the relatively peaceful transfer of power in Singapore, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Brunei from Britain and the Philippines from the United States.

The countries have had their own share of authoritarian rule under indigenous leaders. Indonesia and the Philippines had long-time dictators ousted by non-violent people's uprisings in the 1980s. Cambodia's recent history includes Vietnamese domination and a bloody civil war that necessitated a UN tutelage. Timor-Leste, colonized by Portugal, was occupied by Indonesia in 1975 and got its independence in 2002. Separatist movements and terrorism have rocked Indonesia, the Philippines and even Thailand. The region is not alien to wars and rumors of wars, and trust here would be an important commodity.

With a total population of around 500 million people, ASEAN ranges from Brunei's population of 383,000 and Singapore's 6.5 million to Indonesia's 222 million. The first two countries also have the smallest land areas but boast the highest per capita GDP. The middle-income countries are Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines, which, with Singapore, were the original ASEAN members. Except for Brunei, all the later entrants, collectively known as CMLV, have lower per capita incomes (ASEAN 2006).

The ASEAN array in the 2006 human development index (HDI) follows the same ranking, except for Indonesia. Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia weigh in at high human development, in that order. Thailand and the Philippines follow at high medium (i.e., higher than the median of all countries), and the rest are at low medium. The wide variation within ASEAN should not obscure the fact that no one has a low human development rating, even applicant Timor-Leste, with the rank of 142, five steps above the highest low HDI rating (United Nations 2006). Their average rating of .728 is higher than the indices for all developing countries, and for South Asia, the Arab States, and Sub-Saharan Africa.[6]

Table 1. Selected Features of Southeast Asian Nations

	Land Area (000sq.km) 2006	Population (thousand) 2006	Per capita GDP (US $) 2006	HDI 2004		Income Inequality		
				Value	Global Rank	Richest % to Poorest 10% 2004	Gini Index	
							%	Year
Brunei Darussalam	5.8	383	30,929	.871	34	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Cambodia	181.0	13,996	436	.583	129	11.6	40.4	1997
Indonesia	1891.0	222,051	1,641	.711	108	7.8	34.3	2002
Lao PDR	237.0	6,135	575	.553	133	8.3	34.6	2002
Malaysia	330.0	26,686	5,611	.805	61	22.1	49.2	1997
Myanmar	677.0	57,289	209	.581	130	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Philippines	300.0	86,910	1,348	.763	84	16.5	46.1	2000

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[6] That statement would not change even if ASEAN 10 becomes ASEAN 11. With the inclusion of Timor-Leste, the new HDI would be .708.

Singapore	0.7	4,484	29,500	.916	25	17.7	42.5	1998
Thailand	513.0	65,233	3,166	.784	74	12.6	42.0	2002
Vietnam	330.0	84,222	724	.709	109	9.4	37.0	2002
Region	4465.5	567,390	1,876	.728				

Source: For land area, population and per capita GDP, ASEAN 2006; For Human Development Index and Income Inequality measures, UN 2006.

The arrays of GDP per capita and HDI show a close correlation, and indeed time series data may suggest that economic growth is the key to poverty reduction. However, using Philippine sub-national data, Arsenio Balisacan and Ernesto Pernia (2002) caution against simple acceptance of that relationship and suggest that the balance of the explanation may lie in, among others, the pro-poor reform of institutions and policies. They assert that this is consistent with findings in Viet Nam, and Thailand, among others.

Inequality is a problem in many countries where the benefits of development accrue to those who already have a lot. The ranking changes when income inequality is taken into consideration. In the table are two measures of inequality – the proportion of incomes of the richest ten percent to the poorest ten percent and the Gini index. The first measure is an estimate of how much more the richest people earn over the poorest. Indonesia, Laos and Vietnam tend to be the most equal, while Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines are the most unequal. In the Gini index, the most equal among all countries of the world is Denmark (24), followed closely by Sweden and Norway (25) and the most unequal is Botswana (63). Southeast Asian countries bunch up in the middle levels with the ranks closely following the first inequality indicator except for the change of places of the Philippines and Singapore.

Buddhism is dominant in the Greater Mekong Area comprising Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. The Confucian ethic is evident in Singapore. Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei have Muslim majorities while Thailand and the Philippines have Buddhist and Christian majorities, respectively, with restive Islamic communities. Public policy tends towards religious tolerance and moderation but the region has been caught up in some extremist politics and terrorism which can affect both peace and trust.

On the economic front, Southeast Asia along with East Asia was the site of the economic tigers of the late twentieth century. Among them, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand became models of where the developing world is headed. High standards of living, low birth rates, and steady improvements in health and education accompanied booming economies. Their performance inspired even the Communist states of Viet Nam, Cambodia and Lao PDR to open up their economies and embrace globalization. Then the financial crisis of 1997 exposed the economic weaknesses and the social costs – among them growing inequality and jobless growth despite prosperity. They have since bounced back, but the crisis raised questions about the state of their governance. Barbara Nunberg (2002), for instance, raises the irony of governments in the economic miracle countries being applauded when their economies were on the rise, and being blamed when the crisis occurred. (Cf. Evans 1998 and Takashi and Abinales 2005.)

At the start of the century it would have been acceptable to describe Southeast Asia as home to fledgling democracies. The democratically elected strongmen of Singapore and Malaysia have passed on the torch to new leaders, confident of their economic and political legacies. The Philippines and Indonesia had shaken off their dictators, promulgated new constitutions, and continued their bumpy ride through democratic processes. The communist states of Viet Nam and Lao PDR had embarked on economic reforms which also opened up their political systems; Cambodia had just completed a type of UN trusteeship. Only Myanmar seemed impervious to a democratic transition. Then along came Thailand's coup in 2006, ending more than a decade of regular, elective successions of leadership. That event laid bare not only the political weaknesses of the country which has been called as "the region's most advanced democracy" (Crossette 2006). It also provided a capsule look at the state of governance in much of Southeast Asia – personalistic leadership, populism, corruption, politicized militaries, and poorly functioning institutions.

Trust in Southeast Asia

The discussion above suggests some governance deficits. Against that backdrop, the data on trust to be presented below are reassuring, even if surprising. One would have expected a frustrated people unwilling to accord trust on their governments. However, this does not appear to be the case. Surveys are not available on all the countries so I may have an unrepresentative group. Thus, appraisals at the regional level will be more enlightening if their component-countries are identified. I shall first present the regional data and then report the perceptions of the citizens of the individual countries represented in the Global Barometer (GBS) and the World Values Survey (WVS). [7]

The trust expressed by East Asia in the Global Barometer Survey is the highest among the regions of the world (Bratton, Chu, Lagos and Rose 2005). It also has the lowest percentage who expressed little or no trust. (If all who answered "don't know" chose little or no trust, the region's level would have approximated Africa and Northern Europe.) (See Table 2.) Note that the East Asian data used for the global comparison are from only five countries - three East Asians (China, Japan and Korea) and two Southeast Asians (Philippines and Thailand). It was not specified which of the institutions accorded trust are in these regional summary figures.

Table 2. Trust Expressed by Regions in 2001 Global Barometer Survey

% expressing	Little or no trust	Neutral	A lot of trust	Don't know
East Asia	42	-	49	9

[7] The Global Barometer Survey grew out of the Euro Barometer in the 1970s and has since become a network of several regions. Its Asian member is the Asian Barometer Survey based in National Taiwan University. Since I use the data it provided, I shall refer to the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) rather than the Global Barometer Survey unless I am discussing results beyond Asia. ABS has been formerly called the East Asian Barometer Survey. The World Values Survey meanwhile is based in the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan and has been investigating socio-cultural and political change in a global scale in annual surveys since 1901 (UNDP 2004).

Latin America	75	-	20	5
Africa	51	-	43	6
Northern Europe	Distrust: 53	21	Trust: 26	-

Source: Bratton, Chu, Lagos and Rose 2005: 64.

Robert B. Albritton and Thawilwadee Bureekul (2005) do provide the list of specific institutions accorded trust, this time from eight nations in the Asian Barometer Survey, the Asian source of the Global Barometer Survey. To the five in Bratton, Chu, Lagos and Rose (2005), they add Hong Kong, Mongolia and Taiwan[8]. Their data are shown in Column 2 of Table 3. Data in column 3 are the average of the two Southeast Asian nations included in the Asian Barometer Survey.

Table 3. Levels of Trust in Governmental Institutions,
East Asia and Southeast Asia

(1) % trusting:	(2) East Asia	(3) Southeast Asia
Military	74	65
Police	59	51
Courts	64	54
Order institutions	**66**	**58**
Parties	47	40
Parliament	52	50
Representational institutions	**50**	**45**
All institutions	**59**	**52**

Source for East Asia: Albritton and Bureekul 2005: 4.
Source of raw data for Southeast Asia: Asian Barometer Survey 2001.

Table 3 shows a bigger majority expressing trust in government in East Asia with the inclusion of three more countries and perhaps a different set of institutions accorded trust. It thus maintains the standing of the region as the most trustful in the world. It may be observed that Southeast Asia has lower trust levels than East Asia as a whole. However, it still has higher trust levels than any of the regions in Table 2.

Following Rothstein and Stolle (2007), I have categorized trust in terms of order and representational institutions. As can be seen, order institutions enjoy more trust than representational institutions. Table 3 shows that except for political parties, a majority of people trust governmental institutions in East Asia. However, the Southeast Asians tend to accord less trust on (or actually distrust?) both parliaments and political parties.

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[8] Bratton, Chu, Lagos and Rose (2005), the source of Table 1, include only five countries – Japan, China, Taiwan, the Philippines and Thailand while Albritton and Bureekul (2005) include Korea, Mongolia and Hong Kong also. I was graciously given the Asian Barometer Survey data for the Philippines and Thailand by Kai-Ping Huang, Assistant Manager, Asian Barometer Survey, National Taiwan University. I am relying on what the two earlier papers include for information beyond the two Southeast Asian countries. There were 1,200 respondents in each country.

Table 4 shows the percentage of persons expressing trust in various order and representational institutions for the only two Southeast Asian countries represented in the Global Barometer Survey. Thais uniformly accord higher trust on all institutions than Filipinos. The Thais' trust on the military is particularly noteworthy. On the other side, the low level of Filipino trust on their representational institutions may suggest their disappointment on the way the parties and the Congress have worked in their country. 2001 was the year of the second People Power Revolution which, among others, showed the poor state of Philippine political institutions.

Meanwhile, the 2001 World Values Survey included Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam [9] (among 65 countries). Table 5 shows the expressed confidence of respondents on selected government institutions.

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[9] Singapore was included in the 2001 World Values Survey but did not have this set of questions.

Table 4. Trust in Selected Institutions in the Philippines
and Thailand 2001

% persons expressing trust in:	Philippines	Thailand
The military	54	76
The police	46	56
The courts	50	58
The civil service	58	63
National government	--	65
Local government	56	64
Election commission	47	61
Order institutions	**52**	**63**
Parliament	44	55
Political parties	34	47
Representational institutions	**39**	**51**
Trust in government (mean)*	**49**	**61**
Trust in government (question)**	47	83

Source of raw data: Asian Barometer Survey 2001
*Based on mean of answers on individual institutions listed above.
**Answer to: "You can generally trust the people who run our government to do what is right."
***Percent of people agreeing with the statement: "Most people can be trusted."

Table 5. Confidence of Southeast Asians on Selected Governmental Institutions,

% expressing "a great deal" and "quite a lot" of confidence in:	Indonesia	Philippines	Vietnam	Southeast Asia
Armed Forces	73	74	95	81
Police	51	61	91	62
Civil service	57	70	74	67
Government	50	48	97	65
Order institutions	**58**	**63**	**89**	**70**
Parliament	40	60	94	65
Political parties	31	45	87	54
Representational institutions	**36**	**53**	**91**	**60**
Country mean	**50**	**60**	**90**	**67**

Source of original data: World Values Survey 2001.

WVS continues the findings of high levels of trust in governmental institutions in Southeast Asia. The Philippines is the only country of overlap of GBS and WVS and it is worth comparing their results. WVS has higher levels on all the institutions in both surveys. Nevertheless, the ranking of the trust in institutions found in both is the same: trust in the civil service is first, followed by trust in the military, the police, parliament and political parties. Given this, it might be reasonable to assume that the two surveys are comparable, even though WVS respondents tend to be more positive.

The trust of a large number of citizens in these four countries in government as a whole is worthy of note. A large majority of Thai respondents express this trust whether

in the direct question ("You can generally trust the people in government to do what is right") or as the mean response for all the institutions covered. This is also the case for Vietnam and the Philippines (WVS). The Philippines (ABS) and Indonesia (WVS) also lean in that direction. To the question: Do Southeast Asians trust their governments?, it would be reasonable to answer in the affirmative.

This finding differentiates the region from the rest of the developing world although it is shared by Asia as a whole. This level of trust in government is expressed only by the European Union, where, however, it has declined from previous years. G. Shabbir Cheema (2006) cites the Global Economic Forum and the Edelman Barometer Surveys, among others, that find either low trust or a declining trust in government as a worldwide phenomenon.

The high trust in public institutions from the Southeast Asian countries is significant, considering that their level of generalized trust is not high. To the query, used in both GBS and WVS: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?," most respondents in all Southeast Asian sample-countries except Thailand line up on the distrust side. This is reinforced in the answer to the question: "Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair?" Table 6 shows the responses.

Table 6. Generalized Trust in Five Southeast Asian Countries

% answering	Most people can be trusted	Most people would try to take advantage of you
Global Barometer		
Thailand	81	Not asked
Philippines	9	- do -
World Values Survey		
Philippines	8	27
Indonesia	46	27
Singapore	17	48
Vietnam	39	23

Source: Asian Barometer Survey, 2001; World Values Survey, 2001 except for Singapore (2002)

Most Asian cultures still have strong insider-outsider divides when dealing with other people. Francis Fukuyama has described those cultures as not inclined to spontaneous sociability beyond the family or a small circle which is like family. Thus, when creating or dealing with large institutions, they tend to deal with people they know. He has found, for instance, that firms in China (as in France, Italy and South Korea) tend to emerge from family corporations, and as such center on industries where human relationships are not trumped by hierarchy and companies tend to be small. He contrasts them not only with Germany and the United States but also with Japan which with its Buddhist tradition bases its large network organizations on generalized social trust rather than family and kinship. Japanese Buddhism sanctifies economic activity and pushes towards perfectionism in everyday activities, much like an Asian variant of the Protestant

Ethic (Fukuyama 1995). This may be the same reason Thailand stands out in the table as the only Southeast Asian country high on generalized social trust.

Ironically, when low-social-trust Asians do deal with outsiders, they do not trust them to deal with them fairly, so that they seek patrons and/or surround the outside relationship with rules and contracts. Again, Fukuyama shows Korean large corporations getting much government support for their ventures unlike (he says) Japanese and American firms. The governments in those countries imbibe the culture with this narrow compass of trust, and become centralized and hierarchical, with watchers at every turn supervising other watchers ad infinitum.

This lack of generalized trust may not be contradictory to findings of trust in public institutions. Three different explanations may be offered. First, the people may have found culturally sanctioned ways of dealing with government. Whereas Westerners may regard these entities as objective institutions apart from themselves, the region deals with bureaucracies by personalizing them, either by identifying them with staff and officials they actually know, or by seeking persons in those offices who humanize the contacts. The example of the latter that comes first to mind would usually be fixers. To the rest of the world, fixers are symbols of corruption, but they may not be so regarded by a Southeast Asian entering the strange world of the bureaucracy. In fact, Ronnie Amorado (forthcoming), who has written a fascinating study on these go-betweens in the Philippines, has found out that they regard their work as legitimate and significant; they have even gone to the extent of having a government-registered organization called the National Organization of Facilitators.

Mediation does not have to be corruptive and would not necessarily be done only by fixers. NGOs may also provide that service, either by being the people's advocates to government, by providing the service themselves, or by organizing the community so that trust is engendered outside the family bond. Civil servants, too, may serve as mediators as they make the bureaucracy seem less forbidding with greater service orientation and participatory methods. In addition, as Gene Brewer has found, based on research in the United States, government employees tend to be more active than other citizens in civic affairs. As such they can serve "as catalysts for building social capital in society at large" (2003: 5). In other words, humane mediators can provide the bridging social capital. That bridge could open up the bonding social capital that the lack of generalized trust alerts us to.

Second, people may place trust in government on a relative scale, accepting a lesser evil when perfection, or at least a better situation, is not available. This point is inspired by what Chong-Min Park and Doh Chull Shin (2005) call the Churchillian question[10]. Most Southeast Asians have lived under very oppressive regimes such that

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[10] They allude to Winston Churchill's famous remark that "democracy is the worst form of government, except those other governments that have been tried from time to time." However, their finding is that support for democracy is genuine, rather than an acceptance of it as a lesser evil, which is the argument I am trying to make here.

the current one, although with many problems, becomes worthy enough of trust, although it can be better.

The third explanation is connected to the second and draws, this time, from positive psychology. It is possible that trust has been expressed because people **hope** that the legitimacy so proffered can then make the object feel accountable to the truster. That hope can be ill-founded of course, but both sides can make it work. On the part of the citizens who hope, Valerie Braithwaite (2004) suggests a kind of collective hope that is empowering, action-oriented, subject to cold analysis, and authentic. This can be manifested in their engagement of the state. On the part of the government that is the object of trust and hope, the answer is to prove worthy. In many ways, the quest for trustworthiness is the reason for reinventing government.

Trust in Order Institutions: The Executive Branch and the Civil Service

Aiming towards economic growth and global competitiveness, Southeast Asian nations have undertaken various kinds of public sector reform. The change is towards corporate governance and a more market-oriented approach along with shedding some government load through privatization and deregulation. These reforms have been undertaken in varying degrees in all of ASEAN, from the "Asian miracles" of Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, to the Communist states of Lao PDR, Vietnam and Cambodia and even Myanmar. These reforms can have mixed implications on trust in government. On one hand, these have enabled governments to be more efficient, innovative and better able to deal with globalization. These should have positive implications for trust as they counter waste, lack of responsiveness and corruption. On the other hand, a pro-business orientation could also diminish the "sense of connectedness" between government and citizens and exacerbate inequality, undermining trust (Higgott and Nesadurai 2002; Haque 1998).

These neo-liberal reforms suffered a loss in reputation when the 1997 financial crisis hit. Even before that, however, growing inequality and unemployment called to question the model being pursued. These considerations should have reduced the legitimacy and support for the civil service and the government as a whole in Southeast Asia. (Higgott and Nesadurai 2002; Beeson 1998; Haque 1998; Yu 2002). This is not apparent in the Southeast Asian ABS and WVS samples, where a majority or near majority (in the case of one item in the Philippines) reposed trust in the civil service and the government. This finding suggests the operation of the reverse arrow – that functioning constitutions, governments and bureaucracies have generated trust, despite not-so-favorable material conditions. Recall the lesser-evil and hope hypotheses I mentioned earlier.

In Table 7, I have reproduced the relevant trust data from Tables 3 and 4 and present as well findings from the Integrity Scorecard. The IS consists of peer-reviewed scores, commentary and references on 292 integrity indicators. It is produced by Global Integrity and covers 43 countries. Using local teams of researchers and journalists, Global Integrity considers the existence of anti-corruption mechanisms and practices, their level of effectiveness, and the extent to which citizens can access and make use of these

mechanisms. The Philippines and Indonesia were included in 2004 Vietnam was added in 2006 (Global Integrity 2007).[11]

Table 7. Trust in the Government and the Civil Service
and Related Indicators in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam,
stated years

Trust in the	Indonesia	Philippines	Vietnam
Civil service (GBS)	n.d.	58	n.d.
Civil service (WVS)	57	70	74
Government	50	48	97
Integrity Scores			
Executive	63 weak	89 strong	n.d.
Privatization (2004)	50 v weak	92 v strong	n.d.
Privatization (2006)		96 v strong	60 v weak
Executive accountability	72 moderate	77 moderate	15 v weak
Budget process	33 v weak	69 weak	56 v weak

Sources: Trust from Asian Barometer and World Values Surveys 2001; Integrity Scores of Executive Branch and Executive Actions, Global Integrity Scorecard.

The reported trust could also have been helped along by the general belief of citizens that globalization, which the reforms support, is good. In a survey that covered 18 countries worldwide, most respondents positively responded to the idea of increasing economic connections with others around the world. They were aware of the social implications of globalization, and also wanted to include minimum working standards and protection for the environment in trade agreements (Flores 2007).

Table 8. View of Globalization, Southeast Asia, Asia-Pacific and the World

Percent answering	Mostly good	Mostly bad
Thailand	75	8
Indonesia	61	31
Philippines	49	32
Southeast Asia (3 countries)	62	24
Asia (7 countries)	68	21
The World (18 countries)	58	23

The question was: Do you believe that globalization, especially the increasing connections of our economy with others around the world, is mostly good or mostly bad for (survey country)?
Source: Chicago Council on Global Affairs and World Public Opinion.org, 2006.

Such situations may be exemplified by Vietnam. An overwhelming majority of Vietnamese respondents accords their government trust despite very low scores in executive performance. Leaving aside the issue of corruption (to be discussed below), independent appraisals of the civil service and the executive in this country are more hopeful than the GI scores suggest. This may be because the doi moi economic reforms and the Communist Party allow for more openness and consultations than before.

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[11] Global Integrity is funded by the investment firm Legatum Global Development, Sunrise Foundation, the Wallace Global Fund and the World Bank (GI 2007).
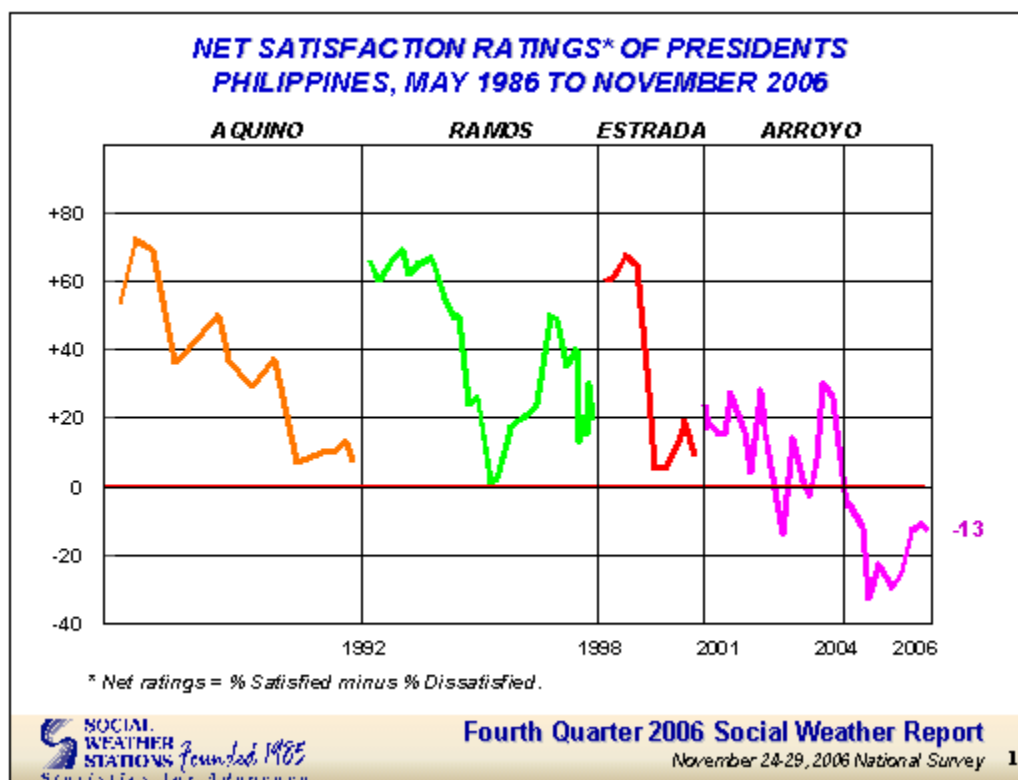
The 1996 State Budget Law and civil service reforms have developed a coherent financial and personnel management system. Still, public administration in Vietnam leaves much to be desired. Thus, the weak rating may be due to insufficient and inconsistent finance and budgeting policies and very low salaries. Expenditure norms including setting budgets according to the number of staff peg allocations to the size of an agency instead of its performance. Staffing and staff development planning are not yet rationalized (ADB 2001; GI 2006).

Most Indonesians report trust in a government which remains weak in its structure and performance. Suharto paid the highest price for the Asian crisis as it directly brought about his downfall. However, the patrimonial politics he exemplified along with shortcomings of the bureaucracy are not entirely removed from present-day Indonesia despite attempts at bureaucratic modernization toward efficiency, productivity and effectiveness. The budget process has been singled out for its weakness for very large discretionary accounts and insufficient allocations for programs, providing pressure for corruption, non-performance and patronage. Privatization may have led not to a freer market as it was supposed to do. Rather it may have resulted in consolidation of ownership by a few families, with suggestions that they were sold at manipulated prices or serve as hidden sources of funds for the government (Beeson 1998; Holloway 2004).

The Philippines has made a strong showing in privatization, selling even "crown jewels" like its oil company and its premier bank. The high score of the executive branch may be partly accounted for by a highly qualified staff and a bureaucracy in step with all modernization trends. It has a rationalization program to reform the bureaucracy which can be a textbook case of the consultation and agency-level decentralization. However, it has followed the fate of other Philippine reorganizations in the past and remains unfinished after many years.

The trust in the executive branch and its score in the integrity index, by the way, do not correspond to the twenty-year SWS polls which show a downtrend in net satisfaction for all presidents (except Fidel V. Ramos) and a negative rating for the incumbent since 2004. See Table .

Table . Net Satisfaction Ratings of Philippine Presidents, 1986 to 2006

Source: Social Weather Stations 2006.

Service Delivery and Access

The traditional measures of government performance are economy and efficiency. I use three questions from the Global Competitiveness Index[12] to get at these values: the extent of red tape, the waste in government spending, and the quality of its personnel. The last two are seven-point scales; the indicator on red tape ranges from 1 to 10, but realistically can probably go only as high as 7 or 8, considering how unlikely it is for senior management to spend 70 percent of their time just cutting red tape (it would be an inefficient firm that would employ a senior staff only to do that). Hence it may be reasonable to give this indicator equal weight with the others to make an economy and efficiency scale.

Table Economy and Efficiency of Governments in Southeast Asia

	1.Extent of red tape	2.Waste in public spending	3. Competence of officials	Mean
Indonesia	2.9	3.9	4.4	3.7
Malaysia	1.6	2.8	4.9	3.1
Philippines	2.3	2.3	4.8	3.8

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[12] The Global Competitiveness Index has been drawn from publicly available data, plus the results of an expert opinion survey of 11,000 business leaders in 125 economies worldwide. GCI is a product of the World Economic Forum which describes itself as "an independent international organization committed to improving the state of the world by engaging leaders in partnerships to shape global, regional and industry agendas." Founded in 1971, it is supervised by the Swiss government (WEF 2007).

Singapore	1.8	1.1	2.3	1.7
Thailand	3.4	2.7	4.4	3.5
Vietnam	2.2	3.9	3.9	3.3
Mean	2.4	3.1	4.1	3.2

Answers to: 1. How much time does your company's senior management spend working with government agencies/regulations? (1=less than 10% of its time, 2=10-20%, 3=21-30%, …, 8=71-80%); 2. The composition of government spending in your country is (7= wasteful, 1 = provides necessary goods and services not provided by the market). 3. The competence of personnel in the public sector is (7=lower than the private sector, 1=higher than the private sector). I reversed the original GCI rating for #2 and #3 so that 1=most efficient and 7 =least efficient so they have the same meaning as the red tape indicator.
Source: GCI 2001-2002

Singapore and Malaysia stand out in being least wasteful of their clients' time, while Thailand is most burdened by red tape. In terms of economy of public funds, it is Singapore again which is first, followed by Thailand and Malaysia. Vietnam and Indonesia are adjudged the most wasteful here. Singapore has public officials comparable in competence with the private sector with Vietnam as a far second, and everyone else is deemed at low competence levels. This validates the lament in the workshop report of the UN Regional Forum (Southeast Asia 2006) that huge sums have been invested for capacity building with very little results. On the whole, Singapore is rated as the most efficient, followed by Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

The ratings show that Southeast Asia as a whole has streamlined rules and regulations, is close to the theoretical middle (3.5) in reining in waste, but leaves a lot to be desired in the capacity and performance of its human resources. The short time needed to get over government red tape probably results from the bureaucratic modernization and deregulation that all the countries have instituted. Procurement reform and more judicious spending can decrease waste. Human resources training, not only in competence but also in service orientation, seems to be indicated in the third result since it gets at not just mere ability to do the job, but compares it with the private sector, where the customer is always right. There are limits to the view that government should regard the people it serves as customers; such customer-orientation may push civil servants to deal only with those who can pay for services rendered. Nevertheless, the perspective of trying to please the client, engendered by competition in the market, can be developed by government even in areas where it has a monopoly.

Efficiency and economy get at the rules, funds and personnel which are inputs to government services. Quality or effectiveness captures the performance of government. Using Blind's strategies, the first when achieved would make government worthy of economic trust, but quality goes beyond economic variables and may get at legitimacy, which would focus on political trust.

GCI provided respondents' opinion on the quality of such basic services as education, health, labor protection and infrastructure. Bear in mind that the GCI respondents are business executives and not those who have no choice but to use government services. On the one hand, this may mean that since they hardly use these

services, they are not in a position to judge their quality. On the other hand, they may avoid them precisely because of their poor quality, and may have a better perspective for comparison than those who have no access to and cannot pay for privately provided services. I tend to lean on the latter view.

Table Quality of Government Services in Southeast Asia

	1.Public schools	2.Pub Health Agencies	3.Infrastructure Quality	4.Minimum wage enforcement	Mean
Indonesia	2.7	4.2	3.0	5.2	3.8
Malaysia	4.2	4.9	5.4	3.9	4.6
Philippines	2.3	4.0	2.4	5.0	3.4
Singapore	6.4	6.5	6.8	4.9	6.1
Thailand	3.9	5.4	4.6	5.2	4.8
Vietnam	3.3	3.8	2.2	4.3	3.4
SEA Mean	3.8	4.8	4.1	4.8	4.4

Answers to: 1. Public (free) schools in your country are (1=of poor quality, 7=equal to the best in the world); 2. Public health agencies in your country are able to deal with public outbreaks of disease (1=barely at all, 7=very effectively); 3. General infrastructure in your country is (1=poorly developed and inefficient, 7=among the best in the world); 4. The minimum wage set by law in your country is (1=never enforced, 7=strongly enforced). (Unlike the economy and efficiency measure, the higher the rating here, the better the quality of government services.)
Source: GCI 2001-2002

Singapore stands out in public education, followed by Malaysia and Thailand, with the Philippines at the bottom. Public health services in Singapore are also first, with Thailand this time as second, followed closely by Malaysia, with this time Vietnam in last place. Infrastructure is best in Singapore, with Malaysia and Thailand reversing positions, and with Vietnam again at last place. Protection of labor finds Thailand and Indonesia tied for first place, with Malaysia perceived to have the poorest record of enforcing the minimum wage law. On the whole, quality government service is exemplified by Singapore, followed by Thailand and Malaysia, then Indonesia, with the Philippines and Vietnam at the tail.

In general, Southeast Asian countries are above the theoretical middle in the services rated here, with Singapore leading the way. Still, there is much room for improvement.

Equality of access. The popular slogan in the Philippines is: Those who have less in life should have more in law. In other words, the state is not like a market propelled only by ability to pay. Rather if it is to serve everyone, particularly those marginalized by wealth, low education, rural residence and ethnic origin. Such policies would not only be social justice, but would also affect the stability of the nation and therefore of security of investments. The Global Competitiveness Index thus asked the business executives to gauge the extent of equality of benefits.

Table Equality of Access to Southeast Asian Public Institutions

	1. Social	2.	3.	4.	Country

	Transfer Recipients	Difference in Quality of Schools	Difference in Quality of Healthcare	Favoritism in government decisions	Mean
Indonesia	3.5	2.1	1.8	2.6	2.5
Malaysia	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.0	3.4
Philippines	3.5	1.8	1.8	2.7	2.4
Singapore	4.1	5.6	5.6	5.1	5.1
Thailand	3.5	2.5	2.5	3.5	3.0
Vietnam	3.5	2.9	2.2	3.0	2.9
SEA Mean	3.6	3.1	2.9	3.3	3.2

Answers to: 1. Government social transfers go primarily to (7=poor people, 1=rich people); 2.The difference in the quality of schools available to rich and poor children in your country is (1=large, 7=small); 3. The difference in the quality of healthcare available to rich and poor people in your country is (1=large, 7=small); 4. When deciding upon policies and contracts, government officials (1=usually favor well-connected firms and individuals, 7=are neutral among firms and individuals). Original scores for # 1 were reversed so that the most equal is the highest in all indicators.
Source: GCI, 2001-2002

Social transfers are generally adjudged to equally benefit the rich and the poor, except in Singapore where the perception is greater benefit for the disadvantaged. There is more spread in looking at the equality of education and healthcare. Private schools and health facilities can be accessed by the rich, while their public counterparts are the only options for the poor. Again, Singapore stands out for having equal institutions, followed by Malaysia. For all the other countries, a large gap is perceived regarding the educational and health facilities accessible to the rich and the poor.

The fourth indicator is different from the other indicators because it describes the performance of individuals, not institutions, within the bureaucracy. It is somewhat surprising that it is arrayed like the others, with Singapore leading the pack and the Philippines and Indonesia, whose educational and health care institutions are at the bottom, also having government officials who play favorites. It may be that the organizational ethos of favoring the well-connected are infused also into the officials implementing policies. These data are significant because it shows the perception of those who probably benefit from the inequality. They certainly point the way to reform.

The Asian Barometer attempts to get at change in government's treatment of citizens. Happily, Thailand perceives much better treatment, while for the Philippines, the people are almost evenly divided between "unchanged" and "better treatment." Those reporting worse treatment are definitely in the minority. These perceptions may propel the high trust levels I have reported earlier.

Table Perception of Equal Treatment by Government in the Philippines and Thailand

Everyone is treated equally by the government.	Philippines	Thailand
Much worse/somewhat worse than before	18	3
Much the same	42	18
Somewhat better/much better than before	40	76

Related to equal treatment is the perception of gap between the rich and the poor, which may be one of its results. The responses are less positive, but still show the same trend – more Thais perceive the gap is decreasing while more Filipinos think it has not changed. In both cases, though, the fewest respondents perceive worsening conditions.

Table Perception of Gap between Rich and Poor in the Philippines and Thailand

The gap between the rich and the poor has narrowed.	Philippines	Thailand
Much worse/somewhat worse than before	26	9
Much the same	47	40
Somewhat better/much better than before	28	48

With their current inequality levels, however, more attention to the needs of the disadvantaged is still called for. Globalization has indeed promoted growth but has proven less able to deal with inequality, as Balisacan and Pernia (2002) have warned. Haque (1998) has traced this even to the change in the guiding principles of current bureaucratic modernization. He cites public sector reform in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore where principles of political neutrality, responsiveness and equal opportunity have been de-prioritized in favor of competition, efficiency, public-private partnership and profitability. This is an area where the evocation of moral trust seems most appropriate. As Peri Blind stated in the UN Regional Forum in Korea last year, "a competent state can increase political and social trust as well as economic efficiency only by implementing safety nets and social programs which target the poorest and the unskilled."

Increasing Access through ICT. Information and communications technology has theoretically solved the problem of access, since anyone can communicate with any other practically at will. The availability of the technology however does not automatically mean its use, or even access to its use. The digital divide is suspiciously like other divides, and is related to the past disadvantages of lack of wealth and education, or wrong ethnicity and gender. Thus to take advantage of ICT and to ensure it provides better access, government has to enable its use and propagate its benefits whenever possible.

In that connection, GCI has tried to assess if government has played that enabling role for ICT in terms of both the promulgation of policy and the establishment of programs for ICT. To gauge ICT policy, two indicators have been used: whether or not ICT is a government priority, and whether laws have been enacted to regulate electronic commerce and consumer protection.

Table ICT Policy and Laws

	1. ICT Policy	3. Presence of ICT Laws	Mean
Indonesia	3.8	2.7	3.3
Malaysia	5.4	4.8	5.1
Philippines	4.3	4.1	4.2

Singapore	6.4	5.8	6.1
Thailand	4.6	3.3	4.0
Vietnam	3.9	2.6	3.3
SEA Mean	4.7	3.9	4.3

Answers to: 1. Information and communications technologies are an overall government priority (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree); 3. Laws relating to electronic commerce, digital signatures, and consumer protection are (1=non-existent, 7=well-developed and enforced)
Source: GCI 2001-2002.

The regional mean is high, and even the lowest ratings, garnered by Indonesia and Vietnam, are higher than the theoretical middle. These indicate that all countries have recognized the importance of ICT for their economy and society.

To find out how well ICT programs are faring, GCI has four indicators. Public access to the Internet and the quality of ICT due to competition gets at general ICT availability. The other two indicators – the availability of government on-line services and the success of government ICT programs measure government use of ICT. Results are as shown in Table .

Table ICT Programs in Southeast Asian Countries

	1. Public Access to Internet	2. ISP Competition	3.Government On-line Services	4. Success of Government ICT Programs	Mean
Indonesia	3.4	4.6	2.0	3.2	3.3
Malaysia	3.4	4.4	3.3	4.2	3.8
Philippines	2.8	4.8	2.3	3.7	3.4
Singapore	5.7	5.9	6.4	6.0	6.0
Thailand	3.4	4.6	3.2	3.9	3.8
Vietnam	2.6	3.1	2.2	3.8	2.9
SEA Mean	3.6	4.6	3.2	4.1	3.9

Answers to: 1. Public access to the Internet through libraries, post offices etc is (1=very limited, 7=pervasive -- most people have frequent access); 2. Is competition among your country's Internet Service Providers sufficient to ensure high quality, infrequent interruptions and low prices? (1=no, 7=yes, equal to world's best); 3. On-line government services -- e.g. downloadable permit applications, tax payments -- in your country are (1=not available, 7=commonly available); and 4. Government programs promoting the use of ICT are (1=not very successful, 7=highly successful)
Source: GCI 2001-2002

Again, the regional mean is above the middle, except for government on-line services. The state enabling of competition and ICT service has the best rating; government ICT programs are deemed successful also. Singapore's approach is probably the model to study. It has promulgated Public Service 21, which it dubs "being in time for the future" (Singapore Public Service Division 2006). PS 21 supports its vision of an Intelligent Island where ICT facilitates communication and service not only by government but also by business and the citizenry

In the survey, Vietnamese and Philippine access and government on-line services are judged below par. This is where a technological trust strategy can come in.

The strides taken by SEA governments in embracing ICT are varied. I will discuss here just two countries not in the GCI list. Brunei introduced e-government in 2001 with the tagline "e-smart government in line with 21st century civil service vision." This accompanies the Client Charter, introduced in 1995 where government makes a written promise of what it will provide citizens (Yassin 2006). Meanwhile, Cambodia's method towards ICT development is a "progressive, staged approach" to developing information technology as "a powerful instrument of reform both in enhancing efficiency (doing more with less) and changing the way government delivers services and even redefining what it does." Aided by the Republic of Korea, it has networked all 27 government ministries and the city of Phnom Penh. Revenue collection and land management are being computerized. A Cambodia-Korea Internet Plaza has been established for broadband access to the public and training of government personnel while internet kiosks will increase access of the public to the internet. The Human Resources Management Information System is fully operational while the Government Administration Information System (GAIS) for e-government services is under piloting. A distance learning center will link Cambodia's provinces to world training centers. (Cambodia 2006).

The Military and the Police

The military is supposed to defend the country against external threats and the police are supposed to be a civilian force to maintain internal peace and order. That differentiation in roles is not clear in countries with politicized militaries that presume they can govern better than elected civilian authorities. No Southeast Asian nation has escaped being under military rule, albeit with varying levels of repression and participation of civil authorities. The military remains a constant presence even under civilian government in areas with separatist movements or rebel strongholds and with the heightened need for security amidst threats and acts of terrorism. Their role in governance, for better or for worse, is not what the textbooks of political science say. Thus it is important to know the level of trust received by the military and the police.

Except for the Philippines relative to the police, a majority of respondents in all the surveys express trust in both institutions. However, the military is more trusted than the police in all countries. There is also a perception that the state of law and order is at least the same or even improving. See Tables and .

Table Trust in the Military and the Police in Southeast Asia

% expressing confidence in:	Armed Forces	Police
Indonesia (WVS)	73	51
Vietnam (WVS)	95	91
Philippines (WVS)	74	61
Philippines (GBS)	54	46
Thailand (GBS)	76	56

Source: World Values Survey 2001 and Asian Barometer Survey 2001.

Table Perception of State of Law and Order in the Philippines and Thailand

Preventing crime and maintaining order	Philippines	Thailand
Much worse/somewhat worse than before	27	6
Much the same	36	20
Somewhat better/much better than before	37	71

Source: Asian Barometer Survey 2001.

Not only that, but majority of respondents in Indonesia and Vietnam state that having the army rule is very or fairly good. In the Philippines, large minorities in two surveys acquiesce to a military government. Only Singapore and Thailand give a ringing refusal of such an eventuality. With the military finding various reasons not to stay in the barracks in most countries, these results can be a problem for democrats.

Table Assessment of Army Rule and Democratic Political System in Southeast Asia

% answering very good/fairly good	Having the army rule	Having a democratic political system
Indonesia	92	89
Singapore	13	91
Vietnam	96	87
Philippines	49	82
% answering strongly/ somewhat agree	Military should govern the country	Our government is still the best for us
Philippines	36	53
Thailand	19	n.d.

Source: First set of questions - World Values Survey 2001, except for Singapore 2002; Second set of questions - Asian Barometer Survey 2001.

There is ambivalence in the responses, however, with Indonesians, Vietnamese and Filipinos joining Singaporeans in assessing a democratic political system as good. Note, however, that support for democracy is lower for the two countries that would be happy with military governments.

Accountability, Transparency and Anti-Corruption

Corruption is a serious problem in Southeast Asia. Several studies detail the process of corruption in individual countries (Kristiansen and Ramli 2006; Quah 2003; Weggel 2006[13]). A commonly used indicator is the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International. (The highest score means the least perceived corruption.) For 2006, Singapore ranks among the least corrupt countries in the world, and Malaysia and Thailand are above the median. The rest of the region score below 3, "indicating that corruption in these countries is perceived as endemic," in the words of TI itself (TI 2006). This includes Timor-Leste, in its first inclusion in the CPI. The 2006 regional results are in Table .

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[13] This is a general discussion of the state of Cambodia in 2005; Weggel (2006) nonetheless quotes the World Bank as having said that the three tasks to rehabilitate the economy is "fighting corruption, fighting corruption, fighting corruption."

Table . Corruption Perception Index
of Southeast Asian Countries, 2006

Rank			
Overall	SEA	Country	Score
5	1	Singapore	9.4
44	2	Malaysia	5.0
63	3	Thailand	3.6
111	5	Laos	2.6
	5	Timor-Leste	2.6
	5	Vietnam	2.6
121	7	Philippines	2.5
130	8	Indonesia	2.4
151	9	Cambodia	2.1
160	10	Myanmar	1.9

Source: Transparency International 2006.

A similar judgment is rendered by the Global Competitiveness Report. I constructed a bribery index based on answers to four questions GCR posed: "How commonly do firms in your industry give irregular extra payments or bribes: (a) connected with import and export permits; (b) when getting connected to public utilities; (c) connected with annual tax payments; and (d) connected with public contracts/investment projects?" With 1 as common and 7 as never, the country ratings are in Table . Although taken five years before, the GCI bribery index shows the countries similarly ranked as in the corruption perception index.

Table Perception of Commonness of Irregular Payments, Southeast Asian Countries, 2001-2002

	Irregular Payments in:				
	Exports/imports	Government procurement	Tax Payments	Public Contracts	Bribery (Mean)
Singapore	6.5	6.6	6.5	6.4	6.5
Malaysia	4.3	5.0	5.6	3.5	4.6
Thailand	3.7	4.7	4.2	3.7	4.1
Vietnam	2.9	4.0	3.3	3.5	3.4
Philippines	3.4	4.5	2.7	3.0	3.4
Indonesia	3.0	3.9	3.1	3.0	3.3
SEA Mean	4.0	4.8	4.2	3.9	3.9

Source of raw data: Global Competitiveness Report 2001-2002.

Global Integrity has studied the three SEA countries at the bottom of the GCI and come up with their own Public Integrity Scorecard. Three of their categories – Civil Society, Public Information and Media, Elections, and Government Accountability[14] –

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[14]For 2004, Administration and Civil Service covers civil service regulations, whistle-blowing measures, procurement and privatization; Oversight and Regulatory Mechanisms include the National Ombudsman,

are presented elsewhere in this paper. Their three remaining categories are closer to the situations captured in the TI and GCI reports and are discussed below. See Table .

Table Public Integrity Scorecard for Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam, 2004 and 2006

	Indonesia	Philippines	Vietnam
2004	63 weak	82 strong	Not included
Administration and civil service	49 v weak	81 strong	
Oversight and regulatory mechanisms	85 strong	89 strong	
Anti-corruption mechanisms and rule of law	55 v weak	75 moderate	
2006	72 moderate	79 moderate	60 very weak
Administration and civil service	72 moderate	73 moderate	54 very weak
Oversight and regulation	70 weak	85 strong	57 very weak
Anti-corruption and the rule of law	74 moderate	78 moderate	70 weak

Source: Global Integrity Reports 2004 and 2006.

The Integrity Scorecard gives a different picture from the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International and the answers to the Global Competitiveness Report. Big changes in just two years for Indonesia are particularly surprising. However, GI explains its ratings in great detail, accompanying them with an integrity assessment, a timeline, and a corruption notebook per country, all of these blind- and peer-reviewed. Aside from breaches of rules which the two other indices provide, GI takes into account relevant laws and institutions, thus providing a governance perspective to the issue. The trust in government data would also tend to be more aligned with the generally more positive GI ratings.

Vietnamese GI data align with the CPI and GCI but not with the trust surveys. The case involving a police general and a minister in July 2006 shows that corruption reaches the highest levels and could be sanctioned. However, many others have not been. Bribes for everyday services like teaching and health care are commonplace. In a Swedish-sponsored study of corruption done by the Communist Party, two-thirds of respondents in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City admit to committing bribery to get things done and a third of the civil service admitted to receiving them (Global Integrity Reporter's Notebook 2006).

Nevertheless, some anti-corruption measures have started. The Party launched an anti-corruption self-criticism campaign in 1999. The National Assembly introduced a bill requiring the disclosure of assets of officials and their families in 2006 (GI Timeline, 2006). The Anti-Corruption Law was enacted in 2005, which among other provisions, have preventive measures such as procurement standards (ADB/OECD 2006). Trust, moreover may have been given due to the successful economic reforms of *doi moi.* ADB

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supreme audit institution, taxes and customs, and financial sector regulation; Anti-Corruption Mechanisms and Rule of Law include the anti-corruption law, anti-corruption agency, rule of law and access to justice and law enforcement. 2006 has the same items, but with the addition of business licensing and regulation under Oversight and Regulation.

implies that trust may have been engendered because the citizens perceive the reforms as being domestic in origin and not foreign-instigated (ADB 2001).

The Philippines shows trust in the civil service and government in both GBS and WVS as well as the moderate to strong rating in the Integrity Scorecard. This does not jibe with high corruption in the GCI and CPI reports. The strong showing in the Integrity Scorecard recognizes the legal and institutional apparatuses it has set up to tackle anti-corruption and accountability. Adding to the laws passed before the 1990s is the public procurement law which provides a comprehensive mechanism for curbing corruption in this vulnerable process (ADB/OECD 2006). However, conviction of high political and civil service officials is rare and public perception of the extent of corruption corresponds with the TI information. Quah (2003) finds this multiplicity of agencies – found also in Indonesia - a problem. He compares the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand and underscores the importance of political will and independent institutions in the relative progress of Thailand on this score vis-à-vis its two neighbors. However, the alleged corruption that brought down Prime Minister Thaksin of Thailand has shown the ineffectiveness of some 1997 constitutional reforms to check political behavior. New reforms should insure that the anti-corruption bodies function with integrity, through guaranteeing them of fiscal autonomy and political patronage (IFES 2007). Meanwhile, political will can be manifested by going after the big fish, as Indonesia's President Yudhoyono and Malaysia's PM Abdullah Badawi have done recently (Vatikiotis 2005).

Indonesia moved from weak to moderate in the Public Integrity Scorecard in two years, with the improvement of administration and civil service and anti-corruption. A single Anti-Corruption Commission was set in place by 2004. The framework for public procurement was laid out in laws in year 2000 although contradictory provisions may open the way for interpretations in support of corruption. E-procurement was launched in 2006 that can prevent and safeguard against purchasing frauds (ADB/OECD 2006). However, many impressive attacks against corruption were made at the turn of the century, laying to question the low appraisal given Indonesia in 2004. For instance, Buloggate[15] was exposed, leading to the impeachment of President Wahid. Other big fish were caught, such as the Central Bank Governor, the House of Representatives and the Attorney General. These fearless attacks on sitting corrupt officials continued through 2006. Investigations of corruption of Suharto's son, and the imprisonment of a governor, a public enterprise executive and several Communist Party officials set a tone of cleaning up between 2004 and 2006. Still, reports of diversion of aid to tsunami victims mar the record. Also, there was a reported backsliding in regulatory mechanisms. Conflict of interest and lack of independence mar the relationship of regulatory agencies with the private sector and other clients (GI 2006).

Trust in Order Institutions: The Judiciary

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[15] Bulog, a partially privatized government agency was the center of the scandal where Wahid's masseur and business partner allegedly tricked the agency to transfer funds from it to secret relief operations in war-torn Aceh province. A special parliamentary commission found the president acting improperly on this and other issues. Parliament censured him twice before he was finally impeached and dismissed (Global Integrity 2006).

A key problem of governance is providing justice to all citizens. It is said that the perception of unfair treatment has instigated more wars than hunger and poverty. Public administration for a long time has focused only on the performance of the executive branch. It is a welcome development therefore that there is growing interest in the performance of the courts in dispensing justice. There are several surveys that touch upon the court's performance and judicial accountability. A new source is the World Bank Enterprise Survey which covers 94 countries and 60,000 firms worldwide. Data are from a stratified sample of entrepreneurs who describe the impact of their country's investment climate on their firm. They report on their actual experiences, not just their perception of the general situation in their country.

Under the WBES, the Southeast Asian mean confidence level in the judiciary is 63. This is slightly lower than the mean for all of East Asia and Pacific (66), for the Middle East and North Africa (67) and the OECD countries (74), but is higher than the means for Sub-Saharan Africa (60), the Eastern Europe/Central Asian region and Latin America and the Caribbean (both 55) and South Asia (54) (WB 2003).

Data from WBES, the Global Competitiveness Index and the Global Integrity Scorecard are in Table , along with data on trust in courts reproduced from Tables 3 and 4 above.

Table Trust in the Courts and Judicial Accountability, Selected SEA Nations

	Trust in Courts		GCI on Judicial Independence	Global Integrity Surveys	
	ABS	WB		Judiciary	Judicial Accountability
Cambodia	n.d.	39	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Indonesia	n.d.	59	2.8	58 very weak	81 strong
Malaysia	n.d.	n.d.	3.6	n.d.	n.d.
Philippines	50	66	3.7	88 strong	69 weak
Singapore	n.d.	n.d.	5.7	n.d.	n.d.
Thailand	58	74	4.7	n.d.	n.d.
Vietnam	n.d.	77	3.7	n.d.	23 very weak

Sources: Trust in courts from Asian Barometer Survey 2001 and World Bank Enterprise Surveys 2003 for Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines, 2004 for Thailand and 2005 for Vietnam; Judicial independence [answer to: "The judiciary in your country is independent and not subject to interference by the government and/or parties to disputes" (1=not true, 7=true)] from GCI 2001-2002; Judiciary and Judicial accountability scores from Global Integrity Scorecard, 2004 and 2006.

Trust in the judiciary is reported by a majority of respondents in both the Asian Barometer Survey and the World Bank Enterprise Surveys except in Cambodia. The rank of the trust reported in WBES corresponds with ABS in the two countries where they overlap. The trust data correspond well with the GCI judicial independence measure, the latter just reversing the place of Vietnam and Thailand in the trust scores. It thus appears that trust in courts is related to how independently the judiciary makes its decisions one instance in this paper where trust is merited by government performance.

The Global Integrity scores convey a different information from the others; they themselves vary considerably within the two-year period for Indonesia and the Philippines. For Indonesia, the very weak rating may be attributed to the "astonishing corruption in the judiciary,"all the way to the Supreme Court. Worse, corrupt judges cannot be removed (Holloway 2004; Ghoshal 2004). The strong showing in 2006 may be traced to the start of judicial reform, through the transfer of powers over judicial administrative and financial affairs from the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights to the Supreme Court (Ghoshal 2004). Add to this the conviction of several high-profile officials on corruption charges in 2005 and 2006. This contrasts with the lack of prosecution of similar individuals and the overturning of convictions for those who were arrested before 2004 (Global Integrity 2006).

For the Philippines, the higher rating in 2005 may be due to reforms instituted by the Supreme Court under Hilario Davide, Jr., whose handling of the impeachment case against former President Joseph Ejercito Estrada won him wide praise. Its televised proceedings made the court more understandable and accessible even to the masses, who made the court's language part of street lingo in 2001. Judicial reform extended to the removal of corrupt judges, streamlining the court system, and resolution of some high-profile cases. The fall in 2006 may be due to the still pending case against Estrada, the attempt of the opposition to taint Davide through a failed impeachment, and the still unfinished judicial reforms. The mean of the two ratings may be more credible as the judiciary is indeed trying to reform itself, but insinuations of continued tenure of "hoodlums in robes" (in the colorful words of President Estrada) and the very slow resolution of cases push the court performance down. SWS surveys say citizens are not holding their breath on the successful prosecution of corrupt officials, but have greater trust in the court's ability to protect property rights (Mangahas 2004).

Vietnam's very low GI rating may be traced to lack of judicial independence and the arrest and detention of government critics. Nevertheless, there have been several fraud and corruption charges against high ranking officials since 1999 (GI 2006).

Cambodia is the only country where only a small minority trusts the judiciary. The TI National Integrity System study (2006b) explains why by inference:

> The Supreme Council of Magistracy (SCM) must be reformed and its independence guaranteed. Members should be non-partisan and properly qualified, with extensive legal experience and training. The SCM's secretariat must be restored and equipped with an autonomous budget. Likewise, all judges, prosecutors and law enforcement agents should be free of political affiliation to ensure their impartiality. Judges should be assured of their independence and protected from politically motivated individuals.

Based on data from two countries, there may be hope for better justice. Asked whether judicial independence has improved over time, a majority of Thai respondents and a substantial minority of Filipinos assert agreement. Very small minorities perceive a

worsening of the situation. This corresponds more with the 2004 Global Integrity score for the Philippines than its weakened situation according to the 2006 scorecard.

Table Perception of Judicial Independence in the Philippines and Thailand

Judges and courts are free from political interference	Philippines	Thailand
Much worse/somewhat worse than before	23	8
Much the same	40	36
Somewhat better/much better than before	37	52

Source: Asian Barometer Survey 2001.

Trust in Representational Institutions

If people would feel empowered, they would need to have a say in the way they are governed directly or through their representatives. In large systems, even in a small state like Singapore, representation may be the only feasible alternative. This is why representational institutions are significant for enhancing trust in government.

Four Southeast Asian countries have trust in government data from the Asian Barometer and the World Values Surveys. Except for Vietnam, political parties are the institutions accorded the lowest trust, followed by parliament. It may be recalled that trust in these representational institutions is lower than trust in order institutions. This is the same finding globally (Cheema 2006). Let us understand these findings through a discussion of the electoral and parliamentary processes in these countries.

Electoral Processes

Representation is supposed to be ensured by citizens' participation in the choice of those who will sit in their place in the halls of parliament. Electoral processes therefore need to be transparent, honest and efficient to garner the people's trust. While there are a few areas of strength, on the whole, electoral processes in Southeast Asia need to be more worthy of the citizens' trust.

Three Southeast Asian countries have been included in GCI Among others, the Integrity Scorecard rate countries them on electoral and political processes in 2004, and on elections in 2006. (The categories have changed between periods.) Data are available for Indonesia and the Philippines for 2004 and 2006 and for Vietnam for 2006 only. For ease in recall I have reproduced pertinent information on trust from Tables 4 and 5 along with the GI ratings presented here for the first time.

Table   Ratings Related to Electoral Processes in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam and Related Trust Indicators, stated years

	Indonesia	Philippines		Thailand	Vietnam
Trust (2001)	**WVS**	**GBS**	**WVS**	**GBS**	**WVS**
Political parties	35	34	47	47	87
Election commission	n.d.	47	45	61	n.d.
Electoral processes (2004)	**73 moderate**	**64 weak**		n.d.	n.d.

National elections	90 v strong	89 strong		
Election monitoring agency	90 v strong	88 strong		
Political party finances	39 v weak	17 v weak		
Elections (2006)	**69 weak**	**60 v weak**	n.d.	**39 v weak**
Voting and citizen participation	87 strong	94 v strong		67 weak
Election integrity	78 moderate	74 moderate		51 v weak
Political financing	43 v weak	11 v weak		0 v weak

Sources: Trust data from Asian Barometer and World Values Surveys, as stated; Electoral and Political Processes/Elections from Global Integrity, 2004 and 2006 country reports.

The showing of the Philippines in all the indicators seems credible. It has had the longest experience in electoral democracy in the region. However, it is still burdened by the poor quality of its electoral system, control of politics lodged in a few families, lack of party loyalty, and personalities instead of issues being the option of the electorate. The low level of trust in political parties is understandable given that one does not even know which political party exists at any given time, as each election coughs up new "parties" created primarily for a particular candidate or group of candidates. They would have new names or new candidates the next time around. The poor quality of political parties has even strengthened political dynasties since, in the absence of policy agreements within one's so-called party, many politicians have decided that the only persons they can trust to pursue their policies are their kin. As I write this, Filipinos have just chosen twelve senators from 37 candidates and 14 parties, and one sectoral representative from 93 party lists, not to mention the hundreds running at the Lower House and local levels (COMELEC 2007). In this confusing array, respondents would have been hard put to say they trust political parties.

It would have been enlightening if the surveys also asked about the people's trust in the electoral process. I would assume that that would be a high figure, because 75 percent of the Filipino electorate did vote. This is so even though the legitimacy of the immediately preceding elections is in doubt. Besides, the SWS (Social Weather Stations), a reputable local survey group, has reported that most people assume that cheating and vote-buying would occur and that elections will make little or no difference at all in solving the most important problems of the country[16] (SWS May 3 and 11, 2007). The very low rating of the Philippines in political financing for both 2004 and 2006 gets at the vote-buying and political corruption nexus; its scores in the other GI indicators acknowledge that electoral institutions are in place, and elections do take place with regularity. However, if the quality of both had been taken into greater account, the ratings would have been lower, corresponding more to the level of the trust indicators.

Indonesia threw off its dictator twelve years after the Philippines did, and has had elections since, their regularity broken only by the impeachment of President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur). Its 2004 elections have been called "the most complex and challenging elections to have faced any democracy, let alone a new democracy like

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[16] The numbers are high: 69% expect vote-buying, 53% miscounting, 46% flying voters and 39% voter harassment (SWS May 3, 2007); 54% think the 2007 elections will make little or no difference in solving the country's most important problems (SWS May 11, 2007).

Indonesia's." They were held in three phases[17] - April, July and September, and had 448,705 candidates in 24 political parties for 15,276 positions (Kuppuswamy 2004). From an estimated voting population of 147 million, 75 percent voted, some for all three times, indicating wide interest in the elections (KPU 2004). The presence of electoral institutions and the regularity of the electoral process are reflected in the GI indicators, as in the Philippines.

No party gets the majority support in elections, necessitating nationalist groups or Islamist parties to form coalitions. Voters tend to be secular in outlook, preferring nationalist to Muslim-oriented parties. Parties also seem to rise and fall according to the popularity of their standard bearers (Kuppuswamy 2004). Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the current president, was the candidate of three parties [the Democratic Party (PD), the Indonesian Unity Union Party (PKPI) and the oddly named Moon and Star Party (PBB)] (Wikipedia 2007a). However, the April elections produced a parliament with no major party receiving a mandate to rule. Parties are known locally as "*portai tokoh,*" (parties of prominent individuals), bound by the charisma of their leaders and not by any disciplined party machinery or policy (Ghoshal 2004). Low trust in political parties may be due to their sheer number, their lack of clear differentiation, and the inability of incumbents to deliver promised economic and social benefits. Political financing is appropriately rated low. Despite regulations to that effect, the disclosure of party finance is generally believed not to be credible, and vote buying, like in the Philippines, is assumed to be rampant (Global Integrity 2004). Such low trust in parties may well continue through 2007. Susilo Bambang was elected in the run-off with 61 percent of the votes in 2004. That support may now have eroded, with only 50 percent of Indonesian adults declaring satisfaction with the performance of his administration as of March 2007 (Angus Reid 2007).

Thailand's April 2006 elections were invalidated as the people protested against the government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The crisis took a different turn when the military staged a coup d'etat that put in place a Council for National Security and an interim civilian government. A ban against political parties is in place but could be lifted before the announced 2007 elections. However, the country's two major political parties may be disbanded by then if found guilty of vote fraud; the decision is expected on May 30 (IFES 2007). Had the survey been held at this time, there would have been no political parties to speak about.

However, the Asian Barometer Survey was taken in 2001 when the Thais had just completed the general elections that put Thaksin and his *Thai Rak Thai* (Thais Love Thais) Party in power. Two-thirds of the country's 43 million eligible voters participated. TRT competed with seven other parties and coalesced with the *Pak Chart Thai* (CTP, Thai Nation Party) and the *Pak Khwam Wang Mai* (NAP, New Aspiration Party) to control 68 percent of the 500 seats in the House of Representatives (Wikipedia 2007b). It seemed enough to stave off any vote of no confidence. It was not to be, as 2006 bore out.

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[17] The first was to elect the parliament and local officials, the second to elect the president and the third as a run-off of the two leading contenders for the presidency.

The Thais in the survey put low trust in political parties despite the 2001 election results. Probably they had in mind the parties' characteristics as "shifting coalitions of interest groups, bound together by some perceived affinity and mutual advantage, but prone to defections and shifting alliances" (ADB 2001: 43)

Vietnam is a one-party state, where the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) follows the strategy of "economic modernization without political liberalization." Very few nonparty candidates have been allowed to compete for elections, even at the village level, and all senior government civilian and military positions may be filled only by party members. (Grinter 2006: quote on p. 151). This explains the low GI ratings on elections. Nevertheless, the zero rating on political financing may be misplaced since with no competition, electoral financing is hardly an issue. Thus, the Vietnamese statement of trust in political parties is unproblematic because for the respondents, the referent is clearly the one party they know. It may convey approval of the government, or reflect fear of expressing dissent.

Except for Vietnam, the party systems in the sample Southeast Asian countries lack stability, and tend to be dominated by personalities rather than policies. Their low trust ratings may reflect the people's dissatisfaction with them. Party and electoral reform would be a means to enhance political trust.

Parliamentary Processes

Parliaments are the principal representative institution in a state; this is why most constitutions create the legislative branch ahead of the executive and the judiciary. Parliamentarians are supposed to make them present in spirit ("re-present") in their deliberations and decisions. In practice, of course, few citizens think of themselves as the principals of those in parliament nor do they demand that their representatives make decisions for the public good. Instead, they may require them to act on their behalf for personal rather than public-interested causes. Thus, rather than seeking good laws, they may be content with personal favors or local infrastructure (pork barrel) for their hometowns. It is in their enjoyment of (or their disappointment in not)   receiving these that get into the trust they express for the legislative institution. As may be recalled, this is why Rothstein and Stolle (2007) posited that trust in representational institutions may find enhancement in partisan/personal accomplishments instead of fairness.

Majority of the respondents from the Philippines (WVS), Thailand and Vietnam say they trust their respective parliaments; only in Indonesia and the Philippines (ABS) is there a lack of trust. Again, I shall put these perceptions along with indicators from Global Integrity.

Table Trust in Parliament and Ratings on the Legislature in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, stated years

	Indonesia	Philippines	Thailand	Vietnam
Trust in parliament (WVS 2001)	40	60	n.d.	94

Trust in parliament (ABS 2001)	n.d.	44	55	n.d.
Legislature (2004)	69 weak	88 strong	n.d.	n.d.
Legislative accountability (2006)	62 weak	70 weak	n.d.	15 very weak

Sources: Trust data from Asian Barometer and World Values Survey, as stated; Legislature and Legislative Accountability from Global Integrity, 2004 and 2006 country reports.

Filipinos have been electing their representatives to a law-making body since the beginning of the twentieth century, under American colonial rule. This was interrupted only by the Martial Law Regime declared in 1972 when then President Ferdinand E. Marcos arrogated all powers to himself. Although he allowed elections in the middle of his regime, the country was for all intents and purposes a one-party state until his overthrow in 1986. The Congress of the Philippines resumed in 1987. Despite an upsurge of political dynasties and continued elite domination, Congress has managed to enact social reform, economic liberalization and other landmark laws. It is sometimes seen as too yielding to the president, but it has also been very much preoccupied with impeachments and investigations of the executive and the bureaucracy. However, many investigations seem to be related to the sensational news of the moment since findings are not turned over to the courts, nor do they find their way into new legislation. This may explain the difference of the two GI indices. The Philippine Congress is a functioning institution, thus the GI index of 2004. However, the quality of its performance and questions of how members get to Congress and how they will retain their seats are issues of legislative accountability which GI rates as weak in 2006.

Thailand has been a constitutional monarchy since 1932 and has had 50 different governments until 1992, an alternation of products of military coups and elections. From 1992 to 2006, it had a functioning parliament until the elected Thaksin government, burdened by corruption charges, was overthrown by another coup. At that time, it was working under a 1997 Constitution, which had sections submitted by ordinary people and NGOs and was widely known as the "People's Charter." However, the Thai Parliament, though accursed like the Philippines with money politics and elite domination, was able to enact reform legislation and guided the country through the 1997 Asian financial crisis that erupted in Thailand itself. Made in 2001 after the first test of the 1997 constitutional reforms, the Asian Barometer Survey probably reflect not only the trust of the Thais in their parliamentary processes but also embodies the hopes they have reposed on it. After all, it was only in March 2000 when they first elected the Senate, ending almost seven decades when its seats were a form of political patronage for appointed military and civil service officials (ADB 2001; IFES 2007; Pathmanand 2001).

Since the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) is the dominant political force, the Vietnamese's high trust of their parliament may seem misplaced. However, under the 1992 constitution, a National Assembly was instituted as the leading representative institution. It performs an oversight role over, and is supposed to appoint officials for, all state bodies. Moreover, the VCP is committed to enhance its legislative role to the extent that draft legislation from the Party is publicly debated, and at times, actually rejected. The Assembly thus allows debates, and decision making in government shows collective leadership and consensus (ADB 2001). The high trust accorded this fledgling institution may be a way of encouraging it to stay the course.

Alone among the countries in the survey, Indonesia's rating on trust in parliament is low in both the trust surveys and the Global Integrity Indices. Parliament has been in place since the collapse of Suharto's New Order in 1998; there have been national and provincial elections, an amended constitution and basic freedoms of the press, assembly and association. However, the multi-party system has produced a fragmented parliament that allows neither the president nor the parliament a base to make hard decisions for the country. These combine frequent government changes with the economic problems symbolized by the 1997 crisis. They increase the people's anxieties about employment, prices and access to health and education (Ghoshal 2004). Aside from the quality of their performance, legislators are also under fire for selling their votes to those to those who need legislative endorsement. While some members have exposed the envelope distribution, no one has been charged (Holloway 2004).

Parliaments are the principal representative institutions in a democracy. The trust accorded them in the countries in our sample seems to come primarily from their ability to give ear to the interests raised by the people. Thus, despite clear limitations, they are encouraged by the people to proceed, turning out in large numbers to elect their members, and finding avenues to get them to listen to their demands.

This suggests a strategy for garnering both political and moral trust. For many years, legislative reform has not been part of governance packages, but the UN, among other agencies, has put it in its agenda. It has commissioned academics from Cambodia, the Philippines and other countries in Asia-Pacific to determine how disadvantaged groups have been able to penetrate parliaments and how to improve their workings. (For Philippine studies, see, for instance, Carino 2006; CBPO-HO, 2006.) It is hoped that lessons learned from these case studies can be used to decrease elite capture of parliaments and more social reform legislation, and thus increase the people's trust in their parliaments.

Local Governments

Local governments are usually discussed with the executive branch. However, sub-national units are increasingly being tasked with legislative (and sometimes judicial) functions also, and therefore do not merely implement orders from above. Moreover, the philosophy behind decentralization is to make government closer to the people, implying a strong representational function. This explains my placement of the discussion on local governments within representational institutions.

Decentralization is the transfer of responsibility and decision making authority from higher to lower levels. That policy may be justified on grounds of increasing both efficiency and democracy (Rondinelli 1981). Decentralization may build trust in several ways. Siripurapu K. Rao (2006) has summarized this important relationship. First, decentralization allows decisions to be made where the problems occur, making for speedier decision making and for greater responsiveness. It is also supposed to produce greater accountability of officials, since the citizens can more easily monitor performance

and attribute praise or blame to officials based in their localities, not to unseen higher-ups who are not aware of the local situation. If the variant chosen is devolution, accountability can be directly exacted through the electoral process.

Second, with globalization, helplessness may be developed because decisions seem to be made so far away from the local situation. The awakening and involvement of people at the local areas may help reverse that sense of helplessness and build instead the citizens' sense of efficacy.

Third, decentralization can build local assets and encourage enterprises at the local level. This will spread benefits and ultimately build trust. Finally, decentralization can also help improve programs by involving people in their design, and thus in their sense of ownership of the programs.

George Guess (2005: 218) adds that "decentralization widens political support for and increases the level of trust in the central regime."

Decentralization is a growing phenomenon. As early as 1999, Robertson Work (2003) reported that 76 percent of all countries (96 of 126) have at least one elected sub-national government. Several Southeast Asian countries are on this list.[18] Malaysia has a federal structure while the unitary governments of Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Cambodia have locally elected officials. The decentralization regimes of the first three all arose out of their peaceful revolutions in the late twentieth century.

The Indonesian Constitution under *Reformasi* provides for wide-ranging autonomy to regional governments and democratically elected local legislatures at provincial, town and city levels. Decentralization is operationalized in Law 22/1999 and 25/1999 which provide for devolution and its concomitant, fiscal decentralization, respectively (Esden 2002). Indonesian decentralization is a massive effort. By 2001, it has effected the redeployment of 2.1 million out of the more than three million civil servants. Thousands of rules and regulations have been promulgated to implement the reorganization laws. New institutions have been created to support the implementation of administrative and fiscal decentralization. Decentralization has also increased avenues for participation and consensus building in the countryside (Nurbaya and Fletcher 2003).

The peaceful revolution of 1992 gave rise to the Thai Constitution of 1997. It seeks to enhance public participation in governance and to promote new channels for democracy, including a National Decentralization Committee that includes private citizens. Nine articles on local self-rule and decentralization serve as the bases for a series of decentralization laws and policies passed since 1999. The most important of these is the Decentralization Act 2000 which specifies devolution in four years and the change in the ratio of expenditure between central and local government from 91:9 in 1999 to 65:35 in 2006. The Municipality Act of 2000 mandates the direct election of mayors of metropolitan municipalities and cities (Cuachon 2002). To ensure the effective

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[18] Some of the discussion in this and the next six paragraphs are drawn verbatim from or revise Cariño 2004.

implementation of the laws, a decentralization plan was promulgated covering restructuring, intra-organization management improvement, leadership and personnel improvement, people participation, amendment of laws and a guarantee system for social services. This will ensure that national standards are maintained with the devolution of these services (Tanchai 2003).

The Philippine counterpart of *Reformasi* is the People Power Revolution of 1986. The Constitution of 1987 enshrined principles of local autonomy and people's participation in governance. Although the Philippine decentralization movement has its roots in the 1960s with the creation of elected councils at village level, the landmark Local Government Code was enacted only in 1991 with people power euphoria still in the air. The Code devolved major powers to local government units and increased their revenues as well as their taxing powers. It also provided for citizen participation in local governance through the inclusion of civil society representatives in five local special bodies.

Cambodia, meanwhile, emerged from a bloody civil war and has undergone a rehabilitation program with UN support. Decentralization, written into the 2001 Law of Administration of Communes, has been at the heart of this rehabilitation. In 2002, elected commune officials replaced state officials and started to wield powers in order and security, health, economic and social development planning, cultural and environmental property, and general welfare (Tumanut 2002). The decentralization effort is both a political and an administrative exercise. It entails giving administrative autonomy to communes, participatory planning, national level policy coordination, assured financial support to local units, and space and roles for political parties (Bautista, Setha and Sokha 2003).

The size of the city-state of Singapore gives it little option except deconcentration, but it is nevertheless moving away from classic central control towards more autonomy for administrative units like schools and health centers. In Vietnam, although People's Councils are elected at provincial, district and commune levels, they are supervised and guided by the Standing Committee of the National Assembly and the Government and are thus not autonomous local bodies. Nevertheless, as *doi moi* is moving the country from a centrally planned to a more market-oriented economy, Vietnam's Public Administration Reform (PAR) program embodies a complex decentralization agenda. Launched in 1995, PAR specifies the centralization of all regulation-making tasks and the decentralization of economic and social decision making. Thus, the Grassroots Democracy Decree (No. 29, passed in 1998) gave elected commune governments the task of ensuring that the citizens exercise their rights, and that government be accountable to households for information about local activities and finances (Quan 2003; Thang 2006).

The discussion above shows that massive changes have occurred with the recent decentralization reforms. However, information on how these have affected trust is available only for the Philippines and Thailand. In both countries, majority of the respondents accord trust on this level of government; this is to the same extent as the national government in the case of Thailand. However, their answers to related queries

are not a resounding approval of decentralization. For instance, Filipinos perceive a lot of corruption in local levels (though by a smaller group than those complaining of national-level corruption), and also suggest more national oversight over local governments, although perhaps not re-centralization. Thais, on the other hand, does not see much corruption in local government, but more of them recommend national oversight over local decisions.

Table Views about Local Government in the Philippines and Thailand

Percent expressing:	Philippines	Thailand
Trust in local government	56	64
Trust in national government	n.d.	65
Widespread corruption in:		
Local government	54	19
National government	66	n.d.
National government should have more authority over local decisions.	61	81

Source: Asian Barometer Survey 2001.

It could be that the citizens have seen the underside of decentralization which Keith Griffin (1981) warned against:

> It is conceivable, even likely in many countries, that power at the local level is more concentrated, more elitist and applied more ruthlessly against the poor than at the center. Thus, greater decentralization does not necessarily imply greater democracy, let alone, "power to the people."

It suggests a need to focus on means to make local governments more politically and morally trustworthy as they take up more responsibilities in directly serving the citizens.

Civil Society Engagement

The relationship between trust and governance when dealing with civil society moves our focus from state institutions to organizations of the people external to the state. Civil society organizations (CSOs) play three major roles in society: (1) to fill the need of people for belonging and fulfillment; (2) to provide goods and services; and (3) to engage the state.   When putting like people together, civil society organizations help create bonding social capital where relationships are like family. This may be illustrated in Adger's qualitative study (2003) of social capital, collective action and adaptation to climate change. I use only his example from Vietnam here. As the state has withdrawn with *doi moi* in Vietnam, communities have reestablished street and other informal associations, substituting for the cooperatives required during the collectivization period. To cope with crisis, in the case under study, of adaptation to climate change, the people went back to their informal modes of collective decision making to substitute for the loss of state planning. As the state has withdrawn, trust engendered among local residents became a means for coping and communal resilience. From this, Adger concludes that trust and cooperation between actors in the state and civil society provides two kinds of

benefits. First, what he called "synergistic social capital and inclusive decision making institutions promote the sustainability and legitimacy of any adaptation strategy." Second, adaptation built from the ground up and fueled by trust transforms climate change problems from global to local, producing not only effectiveness but also empowerment at the local level.

In the second and third roles, CSOs serve as a bridge between the masses and the outside world, which the people can then enter and confront in the company of someone they trust. In the second role, they may act as delivery mechanisms for health, education, welfare and other services alternative or complementary to government. As such they increase access to basic services which the government may not be able to provide for financial, geographic or political reasons. They may also provide these services in a different way, to show a model of better access, responsiveness or equity. In this function, if they are complementary to state services, they may serve to extend its reach and encourage trust in government in the process. However, they may also compete with it or show up its failures, which could engender distrust in government.

It is in the third role that CSOs directly engage the state. They may expand the public agenda by putting forward for consideration of the executive or legislature issues that used to be dealt with privately, if at all. Some of these start out as movements espousing causes that eventually become public policy; women's suffrage, the environment, family planning and urban land reform are examples of such issues in Southeast Asia.

CSOs may also critique existing public policy and performance. This may occur in government-accepted ways like consultations and seminars, or in confrontational situations like demonstrations and strikes. Both of these roles may enhance trust or distrust, depending on their outcome or in the process the protagonists used. For instance, the state may orchestrate dialogues such that its preordained positions are the only ones allowed to speak and be heard. These may breed distrust in spite of the demonstration of participation.

Table shows reported trust and the ratings of CSO/NGOs in the Integrity Scorecard compare. Unfortunately, only the Philippines has data on both sets of variables.

Table Trust in Civil Society and Related Public Integrity Indicators in Southeast Asian Countries

	Indonesia	Vietnam	Philippines	Thailand
Trust in	n.d.	n.d.		
NGOs			53	40
Integrity Scorecard				
2004				**n.d.**
Civil society organizations	88 strong	n.d.	98 very strong	

2006				n.d.
CSOs	81 strong	44 very weak	78 moderate	

Source: Trust data from Asian Barometer Survey 2001; Integrity Scorecard from Global Integrity, 2004 and 2006.

The trust accorded by a majority of respondents on NGOs is not surprising, considering their prominence in the Philippine scene during the dictatorship and since the enshrinement of a "People Power Constitution" in 1987. There are about half a million organizations, mostly locally based and for bonding purposes, but the best-known are non-governmental organizations and people's organizations that enter the political arena in various ways. NGOs are intermediary associations between the people and the state, often composed of middle-class people who espouse causes on behalf of the marginalized sectors of the population. People's organizations draw their membership from the sectors themselves; the most important are village- or municipality-based POs that then federate at provincial and national levels to be able to represent themselves directly and not through NGOs at political forums. NGO-PO collaborations have been able to put into the books landmark social legislation on, among others, indigenous people's rights, urban housing, anti-child labor, a more gender-sensitive rape law. Not without a struggle, of course, since the legislature is still dominated by the elite who protect their own interests[19]. Civil society is also active in anti-corruption activities. They range from such provincial organizations as the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government (CCAGG 2006) to the coalition of such organizations known as the Transparency and Accountability Network. Civil servants, in their capacity as citizens, have formed similar organizations, such as the Fellowship of Christians in Government (FOCIG) which focuses on preventing corruption in tax collection (FOCIG 2006) and the Procurement Watch which is a partner of government in ensuring the wise implementation of the new procurement law. NGOs also complement or compete with government in delivering basic social services, often in inaccessible areas and/or in innovative ways (Cariño 2002).

The difference between 2004 and 2006, and the lower rating of the Philippines vis-à-vis Indonesia in 2006 are surprising since Philippine civil society remains strong. The 2006 rating may have taken into account recent charges about the misuse of foundations by politicians as a haven for their ill-gotten wealth. These have been revealed by media and Opposition politicians, but no charges have yet been filed. There has also been a growing accusation that NGOs simply mean "next government official," implying that some civil society leaders may espouse civic causes only as avenues for their personal ambitions. However, these tendencies have existed before 2004 and should have tempered the rating then to "strong," a rating it can hold through 2006.

The world first noticed the strength of Indonesian civil society in the events leading to the downfall of Suharto and their continuing role, supporting and sometimes leading political parties in watching over their frequently changed presidents. With lower profile than the Philippines, the ranks of Indonesian CSOs have certainly been rising. PPBI (Center for Working Class Struggles) and the SBSI (Indonesia Prosperous

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[19] Eight of these odysseys – some of ten years' duration – are in Cariño 2006.

Workers' Union) are well-known independent labor unions with links to development NGOs like SISBIKUM and YAKOMA and student organizations (Rodan 1997). Indonesian efforts towards social dialogue on social and economic issues have also been noted. This was sparked by workers' clamor for a solution to the effects of the financial crisis on their employment and wages in theface of restrictive labor laws. Beginning in 1999, consultations by the tripartite task force (government, labor, management) led to the ratification of ILO's core Conventions and labor law reforms (Fashoyin 2004).

Thai civil society organizations have come a long way from the time when they were "all created at the impetus of the bureaucracy and all serve to extend (its) reach" as Prudhisan Jumpala characterized them in 1987 (quoted in Bunbongkarn 2001). Since then, more associations have been created outside the bureaucracy, many expressing their freedom by not undertaking the required government registration. The student movement played a role in the October 1973 uprising but by the 1990s, non-student middle-class groups were already active in many social issues and political reform. Civil society contributed provisions in the 1997 Constitution that broadened civil rights; CSO participation eclipsed the usual dominance of the military and the bureaucracy in political change. Beyond the middle class, the Assembly of the Poor, a coalition of organizations of peasants, has also made their presence felt in agrarian, environmental and urban encroachment issues (Bunbongkarn 2001). The toppling of Thaksin by the military is arguably a support to civil society's disdain of his corruption and misgovernance.

Thai associations – many of them still defying the requirement to register – are a force to reckon with in Thai politics today. The fact that only a minority trusts them may be a reaction to that strength and the confrontational mode they use. Ironically, it may also be their independence: ADB states that a significant obstacle for Thai NGOs is "a legacy of mistrust in which any independent organization not affiliated with the Government is viewed with suspicion" (ADB 201: 43). The ambivalence of the Thais as regards their organizations is further reflected in the fact that 33 percent of the respondents provided no answer to this question while only 27 actually stated that they do not trust them at all (GBS 2001).

The role of civil society in governance in the coming years is likely to increase. It is starting to be a factor even in Cambodia which had suffered decades of authoritarian rule and the bloody Khmer Rouge period. That history led to the destruction of trust even within communities and families, and a reluctance to plan and think of the future. Into this vacuum have emerged NGOs, trade unions, research institutions, and even political parties, increasing from 100 in 1996 to more than 400 in mid-2000. It is undeniable that external financial support from bilateral agencies has fueled this trend, but one cannot also discount the new political atmosphere under the post-UNTAC regime, access to ICT, and a freer market economy that have pushed people to create many organizations. Some dare to openly express ideas not palatable to the regime while others bridge gaps in welfare services left by government. Although the civil society sector is still weak compared to those of its neighbors, it is playing a key role in post-conflict Cambodia, where "a key element … would be the rebuilding of trust" (Downie and Kingsbury 2001). In this case, various kinds of trust are being evoked. The development of civil society is a

means of building social trust among the people scarred by war. Their fledgling attempts at confronting and complementing government constitute a preliminary stab at trusting government. In turn, the government's acceptance of some of these NGOs – which before were not even allowed to exist – is evidence of government starting to become trustworthy in the eyes of these activist citizens.

In Vietnam, many organizations that would be at the forefront of civil society in other countries would still be basically state associations. However, they could be membership associations of large size (e.g., the Vietnam Women's Union has over 11 million members, and the Youth Union about four million), are responsive to their members' needs and demands, and provide significant scope for participation in decision making. Vietnamese organizations are grouped under the Fatherland Front which is still widely seen as a recruitment group for the Communist party. Nevertheless, with doi moi, non-state groups or quasi-NGOs have been organized in urban areas and may be a nucleus for a later more independent civil society sector (Quan 2003; Grinter2006; ADB 2001).

Speaking of Vietnamese state-civil society relations, it is interesting that Tiep (2002: 31) puts the variable of trust at its center. She says that the state "needs to be widely supported, and greatly trusted, but on the other hand needs to be closely and often checked by different parties… The state needs also to create entrusted legal environment for NGOs to operate, so that they can build up good relationships with communities, encourage strong commitment from their staff to ensure quality and equity."

Key Issues, Trends and Challenges

Trust in government in Southeast Asia is a surprising phenomenon. In the first place, it does not jive with the worldwide trend of either low levels of trust, or its decline from some higher point. It therefore does not seem so urgent to analyze this confidence in government, because it is higher than I have been led to expect. What is there to repair when, for instance, 90 per cent of Vietnamese respondents say they trust government? There may be doubts as to whether the respondents were free to answer as they pleased, or if they understood the queries properly, but these have been done by competent and fair survey institutions whom one trusts implicitly. The whole Trust in Government Project would collapse if the surveys are not themselves trustworthy. Besides, the surveys tend to give the same information, which bolsters their reliability and brings us back to the substantial issue: the trust that Southeast Asians give to their governments.

The second source of surprise is that trust in government is expressed by peoples who do not exhibit generalized trust of others. Like much of the developing world, Southeast Asians proceed from a *gemeinschaft* culture, valuing face-to-face interaction, we-feeling and distrust of strangers. Their kind of social capital tends to focus on bonds, not bridges. And yet, they accord trust in government, no matter how the question is phrased. They place quite a lot or a great deal of trust in most institutions when these are presented one by one. They also say they trust government as a whole. Why they do so may be due to many factors:

- The first may be that government becomes less "other" by the presence and use of mediators, ranging from fixers and facilitators, to intermediary organizations like NGOs, or even to service-oriented public officials. The availability of mediators suggests a means to make governance more humane. But they can also pave the way towards greater corruption, as fixers are well-known for.

- The second factor may signal the citizens' acceptance of current situations because they are lesser evils, in comparison to other regimes they have experienced in their lifetimes. Most of the region has undergone authoritarian regimes, civil wars or occupation by an outside army. The current one may seem tame – maybe even much better - in comparison. This factor can encourage a well-meaning government to be less of an evil choice. However, it may also be used by unscrupulous officials to garner undeserved support. They may threaten the return of such regimes, for instance, to make the citizens play blind to their shortcomings.

- The third factor may be an expression of hope, that trust would beget positive outcomes. It could work for citizens when their governments are sincerely trying to serve the public interest, and deserve to receive more encouragement in their endeavors. Citizens' hope may also be translated into action, and lead toward their empowerment. As Braithwaite (2004: 9) reminds us, hope allows us "not only to dream of the extraordinary but also to do the extraordinary."

Time and data limitations did not permit me to determine if any or all of these hypotheses are at work in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, they do suggest approaches to how governments can further engender trust in them by their citizens.

The third reason for surprise is that so much trust seems not to be merited. Current levels of governance leave much to be desired. Throughout this paper, expressions of trust tend not to be matched by independent measures of government performance. Weaknesses are evident in the performance of institutions for order and impartiality, whether it be in the efficiency and quality of service delivery, the equality of citizen access, the use of and access to ICT, the performance of the military and police, the implementation of anti-corruption processes or the provision of justice. There are also shortfalls in the performance of representational institutions, but at least on them, the people accord less trust and so there is less of the analyst's sense of betrayal.

I shall not summarize anymore the shortfalls of individual countries on each issue except to take note that the governance measures on Singapore are uniformly high. (However, trust measures on it are not available so that we cannot see in this instance how trust and governance correlate.) Instead, I will offer the key trends and challenges for trust in government that have been learned from this exploration.

The improvement of service delivery and access is the first concern, as this is the first point of contact between government and the people. It deserves notice that general

Southeast Asian ratings on efficiency, quality and ICT access are above neutral, suggesting that reforms towards bureaucratic rationalization and modernization might be working. In this regard, I want to underscore two challenges, both of which were aptly represented in the Asian Regional Forum in 2006. The first pertains to the continuous encouragement of innovation to improve governance. Singapore's PS 21 includes "The Enterprise Challenge" (TEC) which is a platform to spread information on innovations that can improve public service delivery. But everyone does that. What is unique in the Singaporean thrust is that it shows it really means it, by recognizing that innovation is fraught with uncertainty, and that agencies must be provided a safety net for venturing into the unknown. Thus TEC provides funds for the risk that the agencies will take in trying that innovation (Singapore PSD 2006).

The second challenge is to recognize and keep the human beings that run the civil service content but challenged. A major issue is the seeming lack of competence and service orientation of civil servants, despite almost constant capability building exercises. To have better performing human resources, Malaysia offers its "apex mechanism for reform." Distinguished for comprehensiveness and synergy, the reform package recognizes the following as vital ingredients in the administrative reform loop: awards and recognition, guidelines, promotion and training, advice and consultation, and inspectorate and audit (Hussin 2006).

The third challenge is perhaps the most important. It is made necessary by the fact that equality of access to services does not seem to be as highly prized as efficiency, effectiveness and technological development. This brings to mind the critiques of Haque (1998) and Higgott and Nesadurai (2002) about the imbalance in some public sector reform which ignores principles of justice and responsiveness. Together they underscore the concern of Blind (2006) for moral and political trust building which should not get lost in the race for global competitiveness and stronger economies. In this connection, I commend for your consideration Thailand's Balanced Scorecard of Public Sector for 2007. It includes four categories – effectiveness, quality of service, efficiency of operations and organizational development. Its quality of service dimension emphasizes customer satisfaction, people participation and transparency (Pairuchvet 2006). I would only add here an explicit concern for equality and justice which, as Balisacan and Pernia (2002) say, need to be made so that growth will not redound to simply a bigger gap between the rich and the poor.

Corruption remains a scourge in Southeast Asia, with most of the countries deemed as harboring its endemic variant. However, it is not an intractable problem. Swift and severe retribution especially of big fish has been Singapore's slogan since the 1970s, and its approach has worked excellently (Alfiler 1986). It embodies the political will and institutional focus that Quah (2002) asserts as primary ingredients in fighting corruption. Transparency of operations and judicial independence and accountability would also help to root out corruption. This is not to forget the role of individuals imbued with ethics and accountability on both the private and public side of the transaction.

For its part, Transparency International pushes for each country to ratify the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) as an indicator of commitment at the highest level. Meanwhile, ADB and OECD have focused on procurement which is a major avenue of government corruption. Hopeful signs are shown in self-assessments done by 25 countries in the Asia-Pacific Region. For instance, a third of the countries have substantially overhauled their rules of procurement or passed new comprehensive laws between 2000 and 2006. In addition, internet-based, anonymous procedures, rotation of personnel, panel reviews, and integrity pacts are becoming common (ADB/OECD 2006).

At the same time, TI joins the UN, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank as well as many scholars in pointing out the role of citizens and their organizations in rooting out this scourge. In the Regional Global Forum held in Korea in 2006, the experience of the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government was presented as a best practice in this regard (Sumangil 2006). For the purposes of the present study, I will focus not on CCAGG's style and effectiveness, but the complex relationship of trust and anti-corruption that it exemplifies. It might be said that what pushed for CCAGG's creation was a distrust of government, inflamed by the obvious corruption and inefficiency shown by the poor record of road construction it had witnessed. Yet for poor rural lay-people to take on powerful experts and to plunge into the corruption assessment that it did required a certain level of trust also: perhaps not in that part of the government that it was criticizing, but in the larger governmental system to which it filed its report. It was also bolstered by social trust - received from the CCAGG membership itself, trust in democracy as a system that permits dissent, and a hope fueled by empowerment and cold analysis, as Braithwaite (2004) recommends.

The only other key challenge related to order institutions is to point out the danger of too much trust in the military. The option, of course, is not to sow distrust of an important public institution. Rather, what is called for is better civic education, so that such democratic principles as a loyal opposition, dissent expressed in dialogue and not through guns, civilian supremacy and respect for minority rights and the basic freedoms are learned and appreciated by all citizens.

For representational institutions, avenues for political and moral reform should touch on the integrity of electoral processes, and the performance of legislatures and local governments. One must tackle the improvement of political parties, the electoral process, the parliament itself, and concomitantly, campaign financing. A good example of party reform is the Liberal Party of the Philippines which has embarked on institutionalizing itself through voter and member education year-round rather than only on election periods. Political parties need to show ability to aggregate interests of the people towards effective and responsive public policies so as to increase the people's trust in them. This cannot be legislated but may come about when cause-oriented NGOs go beyond critique and advocacy outside Congress to fielding candidates for elective positions. The theory behind the party-list system, whereby seats are reserved for organizations representing groups marginalized in Congress is worth greater study (Wurfel 1998). This will not only reform elections, but the parliamentary process also. For its part, IFES, formerly the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (2007), recommends improving the

electoral process, through a code of conduct for political actors, intensive voter education, the use of election observers and the effective operation of independent election commissions. UNDP has assisted in direct reforms for political parties in the Philippines through projects incorporating advocacy for improved election laws and a political party summit. As Ghoshal (2004) said, speaking of Indonesia in the 1960s, "parliamentary democracy would not have failed if the political parties took pains to establish their base among the people through party building and interest mobilization." The advice is still relevant today.

Decentralization as a governance process has been accepted by most of the world's nations. However, it is not an unmixed blessing, and civil society as well as national governments should be alert to the possibility that decentralization might nurture local tyrants or produce an imbalance in development. At the same time, the demand expressed in the Asian Barometer Survey for more national oversight over local decisions need not be given due course. A balanced approach is needed. On the one hand, it should be recognized that decentralization is a national policy and is not the responsibility of local units alone. Instead, the central government has the duty of fostering a national vision, maintaining national standards, providing assistance to disadvantaged units, and checking local tyrants so that decentralization does not become an excuse for leaving poorer, more conflict-ridden or more elite-dominated local units behind. On the other hand, decentralization is also about letting go and allowing local units the autonomy, flexibility and accountability to be confronted by their own citizens. Therefore, general supervision rather than controls are called for, and trust must be accorded the newly emancipated local governments. The citizens themselves play an important role in nurturing local levels to be more trustworthy. An example is Indonesia's (2006) program that recognizes the major role that decentralization can play in poverty reduction. But rather than bombarding them with central rules, it provides for participatory assessments at the regional level to accommodate views of the poor while fostering local autonomy.

In many of these challenges, civil society engagement has been mentioned. That is as it should be. Trust in government necessitates the involvement of the citizens in governance, not as onlookers or passive recipients but as full participants and decision makers in the process. I have already discussed the complex process of trust and distrust in government-civil society relations in describing the work of the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance (Sumangil 2006).

Here let me turn the table around and ask government what it has done not to merit the citizens' trust – the main discussion of this long paper – but what reforms it has made to show that it trusts citizens. Yet, despite the trust that Southeast Asians accord to their undeserving governments, the latter have not responded in kind. A few windows have been opened: the reining in of red tape and the welcome to e-governance might suggest an increased trust of citizens by government. The making of the Thai Constitution of 1997 also shows a government willing to trust citizens with no less than the basic law. On the whole, however, government tends to put barriers between itself and its citizens. The multiplicity of agencies to fight corruption is a case in point. It

shows a government not only distrusting its citizens but also not trusting its officials and employees.

If trust in government is to be promoted, the radical idea is for government to also put trust in citizens as a guiding principle. This will mean not trusting money and goons to deliver election results, but believing that citizens will make rational choices. This will mean less favoritism in making decisions but trusting that the unknown citizens who place their credentials before you are as qualified as someone you know. This will mean having less document requirements and fewer guards guarding guardians because integrity holds sway. It will make both citizens and government more responsible for their actions. It will still require spot checks by government, evaluations by citizens and vigilance all around. But the model is promise-keeping exemplified by Brunei's client charter (Yassin 2006) and other citizens' charters around the globe.

Trust begets trust. Southeast Asians have accorded trust to governments which have as yet not shown themselves as trustworthy. But the citizens have begun the experiment to trust first, so that they may pressure the other party to earn that trust. Can governments take the plunge and accord trust on its citizens too? When they do, they shall have entered not just the politics of trust, but also the new politics of hope, to dream of extraordinary things, and thence to do them.