Technocracy and Economic Decision-Making in Southeast Asia: An Overview

The Editors
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This article provides an overview of issues important to studying technocracy and economic decision-making in Southeast Asia. Historically the subject extends from the incorporation of non-communist states of the region into the US-molded post-World War II international order to the East Asian financial crisis of 1997. To Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, advisory and expert missions of the United States, World Bank, and other international agencies bore "state-of-the-art" economic policy-making and development planning that reserved a special, politically immunized role for technocrats. Yet, technocrats occupied a contentious position because of conflicting interests in changing conditions of underdevelopment, late industrialization, trade and investment liberalization, and financial globalization. As such, the assessment of the relationship between technocracy and economic decision-making in Southeast Asia should consider such opposed expectations as: the claims of technocratic efficacy against claims on social equity; demands of professional efficiency against demands of public accountability; appeals to state priorities against appeals to democracy; advances of national interests against defense of vested interests; promotion of economic targets against the attainment of social objectives; and the autonomy of technocrats against their captivity to patronage.

Keywords: technocracy, economic decision-making, Southeast Asia, technocratic efficacy, social equity, public accountability, democracy, patronage

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There has been a sustained academic interest in technocracy in Southeast Asia even if the volume of academic work directed specifically at technocracies and technocrats has not been immense. Compared with the enormous and still growing academic literature on technocracy in Latin America, say, the academic literature on Southeast Asian technocracy may seem to be slight, if not inadequate. Even so, various studies in political economy and politics assessed the contributions of technocracy to economic development and growth of the Southeast Asian region (Milne 1982; Shiraishi and Abinales 2005), or in specific countries. Although, arguably, the region's best publicized technocrats were the so-called "Berkeley Mafia" of Indonesia while its most admired was the technocratic elite of Singapore, studies have covered different aspects of the roles and impacts of technocrats in Indonesia (MacDougall 1976; Robison 1986; 1990); Malaysia (Montgomery and Esman 1966; Hamilton-Hart 2008); the Philippines (Bello *et al.* 1982); Singapore (Rodan 2004; Barr 2006); and Thailand (Stifel 1976; Anek 1992; Pasuk 1992).

Much of the early academic work on technocracy in Southeast Asia which went beyond making scattered comments on technocrats focused on their deployment by particular regimes for the task of leading economic and development planning. For studies typically conducted from the perspective of modernization theory, the technocrats' roles and contributions were largely conceived as an important factor or "input" in development. Such studies assumed that the technocrat's role was politically neutral and the technocratic input was economically positive (MacDougall 1976; Stifel 1976). To that extent, a benign technocracy served as a professional counterpart to an entrepreneurial vanguard. Later studies in political economy were more critical of the technocratic record in economic policy-making. They rejected any assumed neutrality on the part of technocrats, and instead targeted technocratic "complicity" in the construction of authoritarian regimes, the imposition of socially inequitable programs, and the eventual consolidation of neoliberal governance (Bello *et al.* 1982; Robison 1986; 1990).

Behind those two opposed perspectives stand several issues which have not been systematically discussed with reference to Southeast Asian technocracy, economic decision-making, and politics. Some of those issues might usefully be explored here as a general guide to the concerns of the research project that has culminated in the present volume of articles.

Technocracy and Politics

Technical decision-making, applied to industrial production and management in the west, notably the United States, prompted some early twentieth-century visions of organizing government according to the merits of technocracy, the latter understood as "a system of governance in which technically trained experts rule by virtue of their specialized knowledge and position in dominant political and economic institutions" (Glassman *et al.* 1993). Partly due to the growing importance of technocracy and bureaucracy in capitalism after World War II, and partly due to a "general waning of authority of all large institutions and effectiveness of governments" burdened with fiscal problems and "overcomplexity" (Peters 1979, 342), technocracy held an attractive promise of de-politicized rational alternatives to the problems of society. To that degree, a major point of contention in discussions of technocracy in Western countries was the loss of accountability in decision-making that diluted public debate in favor of technocratic inputs and procedures.

One striking example of that trend towards a greater reliance on technocracy was the highly visible entry, among others, of corporate lawyers, bankers, and professors—America's "best and brightest"—into the United States' high-level policy-making, not least in the conduct of war.[1] What was preferred at home was soon exported, and American technocratic thought and practice entered the newly-independent non-communist countries of Southeast Asia, an important region that was being integrated into the United States' sphere of influence in the United States' strategic remaking of the post-World War II international order. To these countries, what seemed like international "state-of-the-art" ideas and practices of technocratic decision-making were conveyed by official or advisory missions of the World Bank and other international agencies, and by a range of American experts—from political advisers to technical consultants, and from academics to Peace Corps volunteers. Indeed, US influence over if not intervention in Southeast Asian affairs was accompanied by an important assumption that "modern development administration" (a forerunner of technocracy in changing "traditional" societies technically and behaviorally) included "innovation, experimentation, active intervention in the economy, major involvement with clients, building new capacities, and conflict-management activities," that is, functions that were supposedly beyond "the norms of classical Western models of administration" (Esman 1974, 16). Not coincidentally, then, there was a steady replacement in high-level bureaucratic positions of the old-style colonial civil servants by social scientists (and especially economists) who were increasingly trained in American universities or influenced by their current theories and

1) For the original "best and brightest," see Halberstam (1972). Gabler (2010) argues that the Obama administration is packed with "The Best and Brightest 2.0"—"cool, unflappable customers . . . Ivy-educated, confident and implacable realists and rationalists. Like their forebears, they have all the answers, which is why they have been so unaccommodating of other suggestions on the economy, where economists have been pressing them for more stimulus, or on Afghanistan, where the President keeps doubling his bets."

models of modernization and development.

In newly independent underdeveloped countries generally, technocracy's potential was differently valued. Usually equipped with "applied modernization theory," technocracy appealed to postcolonial regimes striving to shed a "techno-economic backwardness" that produced an "unholy trinity of ignorance, poverty and disease" (Mkandawire 2005, 13). Not only were technocrats a scarce "sub-group of bureaucrats that possesse[d] specialized knowledge" (Centeno 1993, 310), they were presumed by training, expertise and professionalism to bear the progressive values, rational attitudes, and specialist methods needed to modernize their societies. In Southeast Asia, for example, amidst debates over which developmental paths were economically ideal, politically feasible, or socially desirable, many regimes reserved, or were advised to reserve, in economic policy-making and development planning a special role for "professional and sub-professional classes," or technocrats, as an international consultancy report on improving development administration reasoned:

> Modern government depends increasingly upon modern technology for national security, for the conduct of its own developmental and recurrent operations, and for the performance of its regulatory and control functions. The proficiency and knowledge of its professional and sub-professional classes therefore define the ultimate limits of its technical capabilities. . . . Because of the rapid obsolescence of professional and technical knowledge in certain fields, in fact, it may be necessary to devote disproportionate emphasis to those services where the rate of change is greatest. (Montgomery and Esman 1966, 14)

It was not just hopes of development that made technocracy appealing. Where development had failed, "the permanence, the technical skills, and the anonymity of [technocrats] ma[d]e them appear the possible receivers for otherwise bankrupt regimes" (Peters 1979, 342).[2] As often happened under economic crisis, regimes would be urged by international institutions to induct technocrats into high-level policy-making. Rulers and technocrats hoped, thereby, that "technocracy's apparent emphasis on order, rationality and apolitical criteria" would be reassuring in a moment of "general societal crisis" (Centeno 1993, 324).

Whatever the circumstances that occasion it, the deployment of technocrats as a force in policy-making basically signals a shift in power to "a set of actors and institutions [that would] make decisions . . . implement those decisions in the society and economy, and . . . do so with a minimum of opposition" (Peters 1979, 340–342). Hence, although non-partisanship is held to be a technocratic virtue, an apolitical technocracy does not obtain. In practice, politics and technocracy are interlocked. Politics in the shape of

2) Here, "technocrats" has been substituted for "bureaucrats" in the original text.

regimes and leaders needs technocracy's expert knowledge, methodical applications, and reasoned expectations for complex and credible decision-making. Conversely, technocracy, signifying the use of technocrats rather than the more precise but rarely encountered *rule by technocrats*, needs politics, that is, the sanction of power, if it is to be heeded, let alone used productively. Politics would ideally harness technocracy to clear objectives while insulating technocrats from interference so that they can function "without fear or favor," as the cliché goes. The reality is more complex: there is latent conflict between politics and technocracy. The conflict is apparent enough in certain forms. For example, seemingly technical recommendations may be rejected and the technocrats associated with them ejected from their positions for running afoul of the powers that are supposed to insulate them from political interference. Or else popular resentment against "rational" policies which result in differential socio-economic impacts may erupt into anti-regime protests or must be put down by repressive measures. For that matter, particular (teams of) technocrats may find themselves opposed by institutional rivals with different ideas of planning and development. Or private non-state quarters may defend their vested interests by circumventing or sabotaging technocratic forms of governance. In each instance, the technocrat may be as much a scapegoat as a disinterested expert.

Yet the politics-technocracy conflict lies deeper. Politics looks to technocracy for expert inputs and calculated outcomes but does so to embed the exercise of state power in diverse economic and developmental agendas, policies, decisions, and programs. An actually functioning technocracy, therefore, operates as an appendage of politically shaped structures, institutions, and configurations of power. At certain levels of work in circumscribed situations, some socio-economic problems may require no less, but no more, than technical solutions.[3] Beyond that, it is illusory to conceive of highly placed technocrats as backroom experts whose task is to prepare disinterested rational-technical solutions to the problems of economic planning, resource allocation, and social distribution, each of which is inherently a political matter.

Understanding Technocracy in Southeast Asia

The potential for politics-technocracy conflict in economic decision-making is especially large in times of rapid transformation, severe restructuring, or actual collapse when policies and outcomes, no matter how technocratic they are made out to be, are unavoid-

3) "Clearly, some expertise is necessary to operate a statistical office or build a bridge. It is not so obvious, however, that one need be familiar with econometrics to be able to discuss economic policy or be an engineer in order to judge the merits of a new airport site" (Centeno 1993, 318).

ably political. Under contentious conditions, readily pitted against one another will be different sets of expectations and interests, including the following:

- claims of technocratic efficacy against claims on social equity
- demands of professional efficiency against demands of public accountability
- appeals to state priorities against appeals to democracy
- advances of national interests against defense of vested interests
- promotion of economic targets against the attainment of social objectives
- the autonomy of technocrats against their captivity to patronage

Technocrats are bound to be assessed in partisan ways in such times. In judging their performances, their supporters and detractors alike will make much of supposed technocratic ideals and disposition—faith in techniques and models, professional aloofness, ideological conservatism, and pro-establishment proclivities, as well as affinities with non-democratic institutions, centralized decision-making, and statist priorities. But these are not the only important aspects of technocracy. In fact, how far technocrats perform to expectations crucially depends on other matters, including their assigned roles, their scope of authority, and their institutional milieu.

It was a concern with these kinds of issues, pertaining to the separate and comparative records of Southeast Asian technocracies that inspired the research conducted for this volume of articles. The focus of the volume is the relationship between technocracy and economic decision-making in Southeast Asia. Its principal approach is to explain and assess the roles and performances of technocracies in Southeast Asian countries whose economies had had significant moments of economic and political crises while showing comparable experiences of underdevelopment, late industrialization, trade and investment liberalization, and financial globalization. Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand were selected for this study because their experiences more fully extend from the post-World War II period when technocracy emerged to the present when technocracy's positive or negative impacts on the management of the 1997 financial crisis in East Asia generated economic and political effects which continue to reverberate.

Each of the case studies of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand grapples with the record of technocracy in its selected country, weaving together economic and technical issues with social concerns and political pressures. Neither elevating nor maligning a technocratic role in economic decision-making, particularly in times of economic stress, the volume seeks collectively to provide detailed investigations and assessments of the relationship between technocrats and economic decision-making as experienced within Southeast Asia's socio-economic development in the postcolonial era.

The relationship has been a relatively long, complex, and fascinating one given the pathways of Southeast Asian development, the roles of technocrats in charting them, and the conditions under which development occurred. Over half a century, as is too well known to be rehearsed at length here, Southeast Asia's economic development has covered modernization, structural transformation, late industrialization, debt and crisis management, economic stabilization and structural adjustment, trade and investment liberalization, and closer integration with a global economy. Compelled to respond to these multidimensioned twists and turns in development, Southeast Asian technocrats have performed a multiplicity of roles and borne a wide range of responsibilities as economic planners, program implementers, fiscal managers, power brokers, and institutional intermediaries. At the same time, many high-level technocrats have had to tread fine lines between domestic and foreign parties, especially in times of economic distress when the intervention of international financial institutions crucially shaped post-crisis policy options.

In all this, different technocrats operated under the patronage or the protection of leaders and regimes that differed as well in their personal capabilities and influence over economic decision-making. Domestic and global conditions often changed rapidly and sharply, too, creating a need for technocratic deployment but also imposing constraints on its courses and outcomes. Domestic political conditions were critical: in three out of the four countries studied, authoritarian regimes or military dictatorships ruled for long periods, defining the political and institutional frameworks within which technocrats worked. Transitions to democratic regimes—reversed more than once in Thailand—brought their own conditions, not always favorable to technocrats. Between the 1970s and 1990s, technocrats had to manage the ramifications of global economic changes or instabilities which included: the dismantlement of the Bretton Woods fixed foreign exchange mechanisms; oil shocks; the collapse of commodity prices; trade and investment liberalization; the integration of the global capitalist economy after the implosion of the Soviet bloc; the huge expansion of the "paper economy"; and the wild gyrations of the money markets.

Indeed, one way to understand the differences between Southeast Asian technocracies "then and now" is to note the considerably altered circumstances of their deployment. "Then," as in the era of decolonization and the Cold War, the circumstances of economic planning were dominated by a need to resolve pressing domestic problems. "Now," as in the post-Cold War age of "globalization," the conditions of economic management demand stable interfaces with volatile external markets. In this context, probably the most far-reaching moment of change came with the financial crisis of 1997. If the so-called "East Asian miracle" marked the height of Southeast Asian economic advance, the so-called "East Asian financial crisis" signaled its reversal. To approach technocracy in Southeast Asia, therefore, is to understand why, how, and to what consequence technocrats were used to build up a "miracle" and subsequently to manage its "meltdown." Only then, as envisaged by the research project, can the technocrats' roles, influences, and impacts—positive and negative—be properly assessed. Hence, the research project set out to establish how technocracy, utilizing different teams of technocrats, helped to lay the foundations of policy- and decision-making, chart the directions of transformation, manage crises, and make or unmake selected Southeast Asian economies at different times.

Structure of the Special Issue

Many of the issues bound up with technocracy in Southeast Asia are closely examined in Takashi Shiraishi's study of technocracy in Indonesia from its origins in the 1960s to its present post-New Order transitional state. The original corps of Indonesian technocrats had an uninterrupted involvement in economic policy-making over four decades of growth, crises, and reforms. In Shiraishi's assessment, the pioneer technocrats performed well in macro-economic policy-making, namely, in maintaining a balanced budget, an open capital account, and a pegged exchange rate system. As the details of their qualifications and appointments show, they were a small and tightly-knit elite believing in free trade, comparative advantage, limited state intervention, and reliance on the private sector. The natural allies of the international financial institutions, the technocrats—virtually pre-Washington Consensus neoliberals—had serious rivals in a domestic group of "engineers" committed to industrial policy and state intervention. Moreover, the technocrats' macro-economic reforms were constrained by resource and revenue fluctuations. In difficult times, Soeharto relied on the technocrats, partly to still international concern. In good times, Soeharto gave the "engineers" ambitious state projects. But the technocrats' influence could not extend beyond fixing macro-economic policies: they were unable to check cronyism and corruption in implementation. When push came to shove in 1997–98, and their proposed financial reforms made them side with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) against Soeharto's family and cronies, the technocrats' utility to Soeharto ended. The technocrats saw their work, mission, and influence in technical terms. Still, Shiraishi concludes, their operational milieu was highly politicized and they were only effective within certain political parameters: the New Order's centralized decision-making process, their immunization against dissent by the political demobilization of society, and Soeharto's personal trust. When Soeharto fell, and his repressive "politics of stability" yielded to democratization, decentralization, and electoral demands for a "politics of economic growth," the technocrats' scope was truncated by new political conditions. Now, their influence was challenged by emerging parties and politicians operating at national, provincial, and local levels. In this likewise politicized but multipolar order, not even a President who wants to entrust policy-making to proven technocrats can shield some of the latter from powerful figures who are not less predatory for being allies and partners.

Compared to its Indonesian counterpart, Thai technocracy, examined by Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, and Akira Suehiro, experienced more swings in status and influence from its post-World War II genesis to the administrations of Thaksin Shinawatra before he was deposed in the September 2006 military coup d'etat. Pasuk and Baker chart the Thai technocracy's "rise and fall" through three generations of technocrats. Their considerably different perspectives, duties, and conditions of work reflected domestic and global changes that had transformed the Thai economy from an agricultural into a newly industrializing economy by the mid-1990s before plunging it into its direst condition in 1997. The few and cohesive pioneering technocrats laid the foundation for macro-economic management. Much valued for their skills, they could even wring some scope of autonomous planning from the generals. The political upheavals of 1973–76, though, cast uncertainty over the position of the technocracy as they did everything else in Thai society. (Shockingly, threats against his personal safety drove Puey Ungphakorn, the dean of the pioneer technocrats, into exile, never to return to Thailand.) The second technocrat generation was divided between those who eschewed long-term planning for pro-market quantitative modeling and short-term management of market instabilities, and others who wanted to follow the East Asian developmental state's path to industrialization. In short, the technocrats were apt to serve as advocates of competing ideological positions within a context of mounting trade and investment liberalization. The third generation, active after the Plaza Accord-induced, foreign investment-led growth, was tasked with carrying out full-scale financial liberalization as Thailand emerged as a foreign investment-led newly industrializing economy. By this stage, however, the technocrats' scope of action had been reduced by new politicians, big businesses, and party-sponsored think-tanks. From these turns, Pasuk and Baker show that the pervasive influence of neoliberal ideology undermined the efficacy of technocratic management while competing agendas and cross-cutting political pressures damaged the technocrats' cohesion. Consequently, a technocratic record commended for competence, autonomy, and insulation in its heyday was discredited for a lack of understanding of the global economy, lack of anticipation of risks, and lack of independence from political intimidation when the Thai currency collapsed in 1997!

After his Thai Rak Thai party won its first general election in 2001, Thaksin attempted ambitious reforms of the Thai economic and financial systems, as Suehiro's detailed analysis of the Thai civil service shows. Thaksin reduced the status and effectiveness of the technocrats associated with three core planning, budgeting, and fiscal management agencies, and the central bank. He accomplished this partly by substituting formerly fragmented decision-making, which favored ministry-based technocrats, with centralized decision-making (over economic strategies, budgetary allocations, and transmission of funds) that was more closely controlled by the Prime Minister, his political deputies, and his special advisers. In fact, Thaksin reorganized the bureaucracy to prioritize his agendas, reformed personnel management to place meritocracy ahead of seniority, and compelled state agencies to improve public service delivery. Whatever their actual impact on post-crisis recovery, Thaksin's public service reforms undermined an established and stable if conservative bureaucracy. The power shifts that necessarily accompanied the reforms threatened to emasculate technocrats and bureaucrats alike. Yet, reducing technocratic control over budgetary allocations and procedures of expenditure simultaneously left some sectors with lowered funding. Critically, these sectors included the military when Thaksin decided that the post-Cold War security position required less not more defense spending. In a sense, Thaksin's downgrading of technocracy which was a pillar of the political system indirectly destabilized the system. If the reforms left the technocrats helpless against the most popular Prime Minister and political party ever elected, Thaksin's other moves—which are beyond the scope of this volume—led to his overthrow in September 2006. And, then, ironically, the post-coup Cabinet had 18 retired and serving public officials, and only one politician. Whether such a Cabinet composition reflected the military's disdain for the other political parties that could not compete with Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai, Suehiro wonders if Thai politics was perhaps returning to its mold of a "bureaucratic polity."

Teresa S. Encarnacion Tadem assesses and contrasts the scope of technocratic influence in pre- and post-martial law Philippines. She notes that the elite Filipino technocrats had first become prominent under the Macapagal Administration (1961–64) for their role in opening the economy to foreign investments and loans, the latter mainly from the IMF. Under martial law (1972–86), insulated from opposition to their economic schemes, the technocrats became one of the Marcos regime's "three pillars." They supplied him with a credible development program endorsed by the international financial institutions while the latter's support conferred credibility on the technocrats themselves. Under technocratic oversight, trade barriers were removed and the economy made export-oriented and dependent on an influx foreign capital. Yet, the martial law technocrats' failure to alleviate poverty contributed to Marcos's ouster and their own decline. Their technocratic successors retained an economic strategy of liberalization now implemented via globalization, privatization, and deregulation. To some degree, the post-martial law technocracy has been shielded from public criticism because of the prevalence of neoliberal ideology among influential policy-makers and the prevailing transnational character of economic policy-making. Even so technocracy under democracy is vulnerable to criticisms by political interest groups, non-governmental organizations, and the business community. The technocratic scope of decision-making is now constrained, partly due to strong rivalry within the ranks of technocracy and bureaucracy. Above all, the democratic system has left an ironic impact on technocracy that underscores the latter's loss of insulation: the expediency of electoral politics and the calculations of patronage politics are liable to cause the political leadership to sacrifice unpopular economic policies and, sometimes, their technocratic proponents.

Khadijah Khalid and Mahani Zainal Abidin relate the changing influence of Malaysian technocracy to several factors that framed the technocrats' position in economic management, namely, the fundamental orientations of the economy; national socio-economic objectives; the relationship of the political leadership to the technocrats; and pressures from the global economy. From 1957 to 1981, the technocrats enjoyed a close relationship with the first three Prime Ministers, each a former member of the civil service elite. Whether the orientation of the national economy was roughly laissez-faire (1957–69) or state interventionist with social objectives (1970–81), senior technocrats in development planning, financial management, and state enterprises were well insulated from political pressure. Policies devised by them were rarely debated even in Parliament. For a quarter century, then, the technocrats directed export-oriented industrialization, high-growth strategies, petroleum development policies, and socio-economic restructuring. However, when Mahathir Mohamad was Prime Minister, from July 1981 to October 2003, he emulated the East Asian developmental state, dominated economic decision-making, and favored private-sector initiatives. The technocrats were still insulated from public pressures but technocracy was no longer a privileged source of ideas and policies. For those, Mahathir relied on himself and a circle of political and business advisers. Faced with the volatility of 1997–98, the central bank and the Ministry of Finance offered the counsel of caution and accord with market sentiment and the IMF. Mahathir instead confronted the money markets with limited capital controls and a fixed foreign exchange rate. Thus a tradition of technocratic autonomy ended: now the technocrats would only implement the policies determined by Mahathir and his crisis-management council. Khadijah and Mahani argue that sidelining the technocracy had created major problems of macro- and micro-economic and financial management before the 1997 crisis. When he became Prime Minister in November 2003, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, an ex-bureaucrat, restored some of the technocracy's lost prestige. But socio-political conditions have changed, and economic policy-making has become the shared but contested terrain of bureaucrats, young professionals, and politicians with technocratic backgrounds.

Finally, Khoo Boo Teik locates Southeast Asian technocracies within a depiction of an international trajectory of technocracy that covers the issues raised by this volume. Khoo suggests that the technocratic trajectory has been long but troubled. Developing countries embarked on many projects of economic advance and transformation only to lurch from development to debt and crisis management to structural adjustment, and the neoliberal reconfiguration of the global economy. In each project, technocrats emerged as an identifiable decision-making force under unavoidably politicized circumstances. Technocrats assumed different roles as planners, implementers, managers, brokers, and intermediaries. Yet, with few exceptions in the developing world, despite technocratic inputs, visions of postcolonial progress collapsed under structural adjustment while state intervention was reduced to neoliberal good governance. What began as a basic need to deploy technocracy for its skills and to insulate its workings from political pressures and interference led to a complex trend of "technocratization"—or a fusion of technocracy and politics—to overcome the latent conflicts between technocracy and politics. Politics could no longer depend on technocratic solutions while technocracy could not resolve its political problems. Thus, technocrats played a central role in modernization, economic transformation, or crisis management, all extraordinarily politicized situations, but they could scarcely live down their reputations as the expert collaborators of authoritarian regimes, the designers and implementers of harsh economic programs, or the allies of international institutions bent on reducing social spending via deflationary policies. Moreover, neoliberal globalization has whittled the path of relatively autonomous state-led, technocracy-implemented national economic strategies. As Southeast Asia after 1997 has demonstrated, technocracy's old role has been truncated. Technocrats found themselves being squeezed between popular demands for equitable social policies and oligarchic resistance to reform agendas, between satisfying the calculations of politicians and meeting the claims of civil society. To that extent, technocracy's trajectory, which included its course in Southeast Asia, has shown how relatively ineffectual was the impact of technocracy on political economy in crises, precisely when, it was thought, technocracy would best fulfill its role.

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