



Land and Loyalty: Security and the Development of Property Rights in Thailand (Cornell Studies in Political Economy)

Tomas Larsson

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Domestic and international development strategies often focus on private ownership as a crucial anchor for long-term investment; the security of property rights provides a foundation for capitalist expansion. In recent years, Thailand's policies have been hailed as a prime example of how granting formal land rights to poor farmers in low-income countries can result in economic benefits. But the country provides a puzzle: Thailand faced major security threats from colonial powers in the nineteenth century and from communism in the twentieth century, yet only in the latter case did the government respond with pro-development tactics.

In *Land and Loyalty*, Tomas Larsson argues that institutional underdevelopment may prove, under certain circumstances, a strategic advantage rather than a weakness and that external threats play an important role in shaping the development of property regimes. Security concerns, he finds, often guide economic policy. The domestic legacies, legal and socioeconomic, resulting from state responses to the outside world shape and limit the strategies available to politicians. While Larsson's extensive archival research findings are drawn from Thai sources, he situates the experiences of Thailand in comparative perspective by contrasting them with the trajectory of property rights in Japan, Burma, and the Philippines.

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