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# Regime Legitimacy in Troubled Waters: To What Extent does Inequality Influence Trust in Political Institutions in Thailand (2002-2016)?

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## **Abstract**

Thailand ranks not only among the world's most unequal societies but is also a unique case regarding political instability. Along many recent legitimacy crises, contributing to the country's instability, it turned out that Thailand mostly lacks specific support for regime institutions, as diffuse support for the national community is rather stable. This study intends to bridge a gap in the literature by connecting inequality and institutional trust, to find out if high socio-economic disparities contribute to the lack of regime legitimacy. Using ordered logistic regression models, data from the Asian Barometer surveys on trust in political institutions is related to explanatory variables such as income, evaluations of the national and household economy, regional origin and political values. The results show that inequality increasingly affects institutional trust. However, these effects are strongly connected to regional differences and additionally shaped by political values. This study conclusively provides an option for increasing regime legitimacy and mitigating Thailand's political conflict: Reduction of socio-economic inequality.

## **Keywords:**

Regime Legitimacy, Institutional Trust, Socio-Economic Inequality, Political Conflict, Thailand