

WHICH LINEAGES?

History and Interpretations of Philippine Politics

February 22 (Thu) 13:30-15:00

1st Floor, Research Commons, East Building, CSEAS

No
Reservation
required

Political scientists studying Philippine politics have generally been less averse to invoking the past in analyses of contemporary politics than many of their counterparts focused on the U.S. or Europe who have often favored ahistorical, behaviorist accounts. One approach has looked to history to identify culturalist continuity. Agpalo's historically-derived *pangulo* strongman paradigm is perhaps the most famous example, with several recent explanations of widespread attitudinal illiberalism in the Philippines attesting to its continuing influence. Another group of scholars have taken what could be termed a kind of reverse Whiggish interpretation of history by tracing current pathologies of Philippine politics (e.g., "caciquism" or "bossism") back to the US and Spanish colonial periods, with a study of the autocratic legacy of "colonial constitutionalism" a recent example. A third possibility - based on skepticism of culturalism as potentially essentialist and path dependence as overly determinist - is to emphasize the cyclical nature of the country's politics. The remainder of the presentation will explore what such an interpretation might look like. It will point to how over nearly a century aggrandizing presidents have alternated with elite-led "democratic crusades". Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.'s landslide victory in the 2022 presidential election with a campaign invoking nostalgia for his father's authoritarian rule can be viewed as part of this cycling as a counter-narrative of a developmental "golden age" after Marcos, Sr. declared martial law in 1972 rule eclipsed the tale of how EDSA "people power" uprising in 1986 "miraculously" freed Filipinos from dictatorship.

Mark R. Thompson

Visiting Research Scholar



Mark R. Thompson is currently a CSEAS visiting research fellow and chair professor of political science in the Department of Public and International Affairs as well as director of the Southeast Asia Research Centre at the City University of Hong Kong. His books include *The Philippines: From "People Power" to Democratic Backsliding* (Cambridge, 2023), *Presidentialism and Democracy in Southeast and East Asia* (co-editor, Routledge, 2023), *China's "Singapore Model" and Authoritarian Learning* (co-editor, Routledge, 2020), *Authoritarian Modernism in East Asia* (Palgrave, 2019), *Routledge Handbook of the Contemporary Philippines* (co-editor, 2018), *Democratic Revolutions: Asia and Eastern Europe* (Routledge, 2004) and *The Anti-Marcos Struggle: Personalist Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines* (Yale, 1995). A past president of the Hong Kong Political Science Association and the Asian Political and International Studies Association, he was Lee Kong Chian Distinguished Fellow for Southeast Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore (2008) and Stanford University (2009). He received a BA in religious studies from Brown University, a MA in social and political sciences from Cambridge University, and a PhD in political science with distinction from Yale University where he was mentored by Juan J. Linz and James C. Scott.