

Panel proposal for the EUROSEAS Conference 2019 at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Title: Politics in the Age of Duterte

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Description:

Rodrigo Duterte's presidency has brought a sea change to Philippine politics. Scholars have also had to take a notably different tack in their analyses, leaving in their wake traditional paradigms of clientelism, bossism, and imperialism. Duterte won the presidency with limited political machinery with a campaign narrative that targeted not only drug dealers and users but also elite politics more generally. His pro-China, anti-U.S. stance makes it rather implausible to categorize him as a typical U.S. "lapdog". Even his bossist style is different from old-style strongman rule as his primary focus has been on the criminal "other" rather than his political rivals. This has led the emergence of what can be termed "Duterte studies" with new research foci: the nature and appeal of his violent, illiberal "penal populism" and his "social banditry morality"; the precise nature of the drug war, police vigilantism and "murder as enterprise"; the "weaponization of social media" and trolling; Duterte's misygonist and violent humor which has a deadly seriousness to it and more generally Duterte's style of discourse with its "backstage" authenticity; continuity in neo-liberal economic and social policy despite Duterte's claim to be a socialist; the shift of the communist left from "frenemies" to Duterte's most militant opponents, the apparent breakthrough in Bangsamoro autonomy, a move toward "dynastic federalism", Duterte's "resurgent" anti-imperialist nationalism but also the claim he is "collaborating" with the China. The aim of this panel is to discuss these new trends in Philippine politics in terms of political discourse, the drug war, economic and social policy, militarization, and foreign policy under the Duterte presidency as well as examining how it differs from the pre-Duterte era and what the longer term implications of this new political era may prove to be.