

Opposing Power

Building Opposition Alliances in Electoral Autocracies

Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies

When do opposition party leaders build pre-electoral alliances to compete against electoral autocrats? Through two pairs of case study comparisons in East and Southeast Asia—between the Philippines and South Korea in the late 1980s, and between Malaysia and Singapore from 1965 to 2020—*Opposing Power* argues that opposition elites' perceptions of regime vulnerability and mutual dependency shape their efforts to construct alliances. Multiple regime-debilitating events striking the incumbent within a short period of time can raise opposition expectations of impending victory, galvanizing efforts for inter-party coordination. Clear information about the relative strengths and weaknesses of opposition parties fosters recognition of their mutual dependency, inducing party leaders to coordinate towards joint victory. Drawing on a broad range of archival material and a wealth of fieldwork, *Opposing Power* illustrates how dueling opposition parties can sometimes become strange bedfellows.

Elvin Ong is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the National University of Singapore.

“Many scholars study authoritarianism. A growing number look at electoral coordination. Elvin Ong’s important and meticulously researched book smartly combines and contributes to both areas of scholarly research. His richly detailed analysis of understudied cases in Asia shows us when opposition parties successfully coordinate to undermine electoral autocrats.”

—Adam Ziegfeld, Temple University

“Opposition parties in authoritarian regimes remain poorly understood, yet they are key players in the process of democratization. Focusing on the strategic calculation of opposition party coordination, Ong provides an extraordinary contribution to the comparative democratization literature. Anyone interested in authoritarian elections anywhere will find this book hugely relevant.”

—Michael Wahman, Michigan State University

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