

comparison of German/Indonesian online public spheres' (pp. 199–221) and Jeffrey Wimmer's 'Digital transformation of counterpublic spheres' (pp. 227–44). Traditional forms of media that have been racing against, but also fuelled by the rapid progress of digital technology, at least in the last decade, seems to have positioned the Internet as the saviour: a medium which enables citizens to interact more intensively either with each other or with institutions such as the state, and hence to facilitate the functioning of the public sphere. Priyadharma reminds us that the Internet does not necessarily herald an improvement of the quality of the public sphere and the number of participants (p. 202). He revisits Papacharissi's arguments (2009) and rightly underlines the relevance of arguments as to why the Internet is not necessarily increasing the quality of the public sphere, by taking into consideration the importance of factors such as access to information (p. 202), reciprocity of communication (p. 204), and the commercialisation of online space (p. 207). These concerns about the Internet as a public sphere remind me of its underlying capitalist structures — thus, regardless of how promising this media is, capitalism will find a way to take advantage of it.

Jeffrey Wimmer explores the under-researched and, similarly, under-criticised study of counterpublic spheres. Wimmer systematically disentangles the complexity of counterpublic spheres, including by offering several concepts such as 'alternative media' (p. 230) and 'citizen media' (p. 232), leading me to conclude that perhaps counterpublic spheres should not be categorised as anything other than the antithesis of the dominant discourse and that this antithesis might not be singular — they can exist sporadically, although they can also be well orchestrated if they intersect. His writing on counterpublic spheres opened my mind to this phenomenon in the Indonesian context, especially during the 2014 and 2019 elections.

Media and transformation in Germany and Indonesia is a thought-provoking and analytically helpful book. It corrects some established assumptions and proposes directions of asymmetrical comparison for further research. Its comparisons, made through a collection of writings with the aim of bridging a gap between theory and practice, successfully remind us that we live in asymmetrical constructions in multiple dimensions, and that nothing is really an apple or an orange — or a durian.

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The Philippines

Liberalism and the postcolony: Thinking the state in 20th-century Philippines

By LISANDRO E. CLAUDIO

Singapore: NUS Press; Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2017. Pp. 227. Notes, Bibliography, Index.

doi:10.1017/S0022463421000497

Lisandro E. Claudio's *Liberalism and the postcolony* has one foot in the twentieth century and one in the twenty-first. It is a thoughtful and concise volume that

channels the ideas of well-known but understudied Filipino liberal intellectuals from the past to enlighten us in our current epoch of creeping authoritarianism and growing insular nationalism. Claudio strives to accomplish two goals: restore liberalism to its high status in Philippine history, and use the liberalism he uncovers and reconstructs, what he calls 'postcolonial liberalism', to apply as a salve for countries in the Third World or Global South today. To accomplish this task, Claudio follows the lives of four famous Filipino intellectuals.

One of Claudio's major contributions is his re-articulation of liberalism, which he describes as a creed that has no 'ideological certainty' (p. 128). According to the author, it is this ideological humbleness and flexibility, which those who associate the concept with Enlightenment-style determinism might challenge, that makes liberalism such a powerful and relevant ideology not just for the twentieth century, but for the twenty-first. Claudio defines postcolonial liberalism as an ideology that embraces open-ended nationalism, patient deliberation, limits on the concentration of power, public accountability, equality and equity, and gradual change (pp. 150–54).

It will not be lost on readers that Claudio is doing with his book exactly what his subjects did with their books and advocacy in the past. After all, in the conclusion, Claudio states frankly that he believes 'in this vision of liberalism' (p. 154). In weaving together an Asianism and internationalism that encompasses a strong but open nationalism, the author challenges what he calls the 'Diliman Consensus'. According to the author, this Consensus has led scholars to 'purge the [Philippine] national narrative of its Western heritage, including the Enlightenment project of liberalism' in favour of a narrower cultural or racial nationalism (pp. 14, 150). Key to the logic of this discursive purge is the division of the 'elite' and the 'masses' (p. 15). Claudio seeks to reset the 'demonology' of the Diliman Consensus by redefining and reclaiming liberalism.

In the first chapter, Claudio follows the life of Filipino educator, politician, and philosopher, Camilo Osias. Osias, who was born into the world of revolutionary *Ilustrados* of the late-Spanish colonial era, became a key intellectual and politician under the American occupation, and served as an elder statesman during the early independence era, is an ideal bridge character. The author highlights Osias' Deweyan liberalism through an examination of his *Philippine Readers*, which were a staple for schoolchildren in the Philippines for generations. In so doing, Claudio challenges the famous 'mis-education' critique of Renato Constantino, who casts education as a means of conquest (p. 24).

Moving to economics, Claudio examines the life and legacy of Keynesian economist Salvador Araneta in the second chapter. Claudio presents Araneta as a trenchant visionary whose policies, had they been followed, may have put the Philippines on the path to economic prosperity (p. 51). In focusing on the tangible 'Great Debate' about austerity or spending between Araneta and Miguel Cuaderno, Claudio largely avoids diving too deep into counter-factuals, but it is clear from his analysis that he is nostalgic and perhaps also still yearning for sound economic planning.

In chapter 3, Lisandro E. Claudio visits a better-known figure with his examination of United Nations General Assembly and University of the Philippines president, Carlos P. Romulo. Claudio argues that Romulo's liberal anti-communism represents an understudied but important branch of Third-Worldism (p. 83). While not presenting Romulo as a hero and not trying to separate the idea of

anti-communism from its darker moments, the author goes to lengths to defend Romulo and his ideology from the critics who attempted to paint him as an American puppet. Even Claudio admits, however, that it is impossible to expunge Romulo's service under Marcos from his legacy.

In the final full-length chapter, Claudio examines the principled liberalism of Salvador P. Lopez, also affectionately known as 'SP'. This chapter, which focuses on Lopez's day to day decision-making during his presidency at the University of the Philippines, has a different feel than the previous chapters. It is more intimate and gripping, and it ties in well with the Afterword about a fifth liberal, who happens to be the author's grandmother. In the Lopez chapter and the Afterword, Claudio moves the conversation from the chandeliered opulence of Malacañang to the modest ivory towers of Diliman.

Although many criticisms will likely arise from the left-leaning or nationalist historians whom Claudio challenges, one could also argue that Claudio could have gone further in his reimagining of liberalism. When Claudio writes in his conclusion that the canon of liberalism 'was defined by privileged white males', one feels a sense of frustration (p. 150). After four engaging chapters in which he highlights the key roles of Osias, Araneta, Romulo, and Lopez in crafting liberalism, in the end, Claudio pulls back from the mission of reclaiming liberalism. This hesitancy, however, demonstrates the inherent difficulty of engaging with concepts that carry so much historical baggage. One must recognise the European origins of the concept — to fail to do so would be irresponsible — but this recognition invariably turns into a burden.

This book was delightful to read. Claudio has contributed to what might be considered a trend of revisiting the legacy of liberalism in Southeast Asia. Christopher Goscha, in *Vietnam: A new history* (2016), similarly traces liberalism as one of the key strands of Vietnamese history. Perhaps Goscha, Claudio, and others will inspire more scholars to reconsider the legacy and promise of liberalism. While many will find the book to be engaging and informative, two audiences in particular should read this book. The first audience consists of scholars of political philosophy who seek to expand their geographical and theoretical horizons. The second audience would be Philippinists and Southeast Asianists who are critics or supporters of liberalism.

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The Philippines

Migrant returns: Manila, development, and transnational connectivity

By ERIC J. PIDO

Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Pp. 211. Notes, Bibliography, Index.
doi:10.1017/S0022463421000345

In the Filipino imagination, return used to be largely an individual or personal experience. Since the 2000s however, return has increasingly become a core industry that the Philippine state relies on for foreign direct investment. Eric J. Pido's *Migrant*