

A must-read for scholars, journalists and students that untangles the politics of the first half of Marcos Jr.'s administration and his very public feud with Vice President (and daughter of his predecessor) Sara Duterte by two top scholars, Calimbahin and Dressel, along with distinguished co-contributors. The book offers a comprehensive analysis of dynastic infighting, structural problems (e.g., weak institutions, poverty, inequality, climate change), Muslim regional autonomy, a huge flood-control scandal and fraught foreign policy.

Professor Mark R. Thompson

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This critical assessment of the first three years of the Ferdinand Marcos Jr. presidency cuts to the heart of the contemporary Philippine predicament: the aggressive consolidation of dynastic power within a framework of weakened political institutions. Editors Cleo Anne A. Calimbahin and Björn Dressel assemble a premier group of scholars to examine the internal mechanics of a “patronage democracy”. It reveals a landscape where the durability of democratic institutions is constantly tested by systemic corruption, historical distortion and the deep-seated influence of political dynasties. For anyone following the trajectory of Philippine politics, economics and society, this book is an essential guide to the enduring patterns and evolving tensions of a nation in transition.

Professor Yuko Kasuya

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Beyond Geopolitics

The **ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute** (formerly Institute of Southeast Asian Studies) is an autonomous organization established in 1968. It is a research centre dedicated to the study of sociopolitical, security and economic developments in Southeast Asia and its wider geostrategic environment. The Institute’s research programmes are grouped under Regional Economic Studies (RES), Regional Strategic and Political Studies (RSPS), and Regional Social and Cultural Studies (RSCS), as well as six country programmes—namely, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, and the Philippines. The Institute is also home to the ASEAN Studies Centre (ASC) and the Singapore APEC Study Centre.

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Philippines Update Series

Beyond Geopolitics

The Philippines in the New Marcos Era

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First published in Singapore in 2026 by
ISEAS Publishing
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Singapore 119614
E-mail: publish@iseas.edu.sg
Website: <http://bookshop.iseas.edu.sg>

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ISEAS Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Name(s): Calimbahin, Cleo Anne A., editor. | Dressel, Björn, editor.
Title: Beyond geopolitics : the Philippines in the new Marcos era / edited by Cleo Anne A. Calimbahin and Björn Dressel.
Description: Singapore : ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2026. | Series: Lectures, Workshops, and Proceedings of International Conferences. | Includes index.
Identifiers: ISBN 978-981-5361-03-2 (soft cover) | ISBN 978-981-5361-04-9 (PDF) | ISBN 978-981-5361-06-3 (epub)
Subjects: LCSH: Marcos, Ferdinand R., Jr., 1957- | Philippines—Economic conditions. | Philippines—Politics and government. | Philippines—Social conditions. | Philippines—Foreign relations.
Classification: LCC DS686.614 B57

Cover image: A man wades floodwaters past an election poster of Philippine President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. and Vice President Sara Duterte after Super Typhoon Noru hit on 26 September 2022 in San Ildefonso, Bulacan province, Philippines. Super Typhoon Noru made landfall in the Philippines overnight, causing widespread flooding and leaving at least five dead. High winds and heavy rains have flattened villages and have increased the threat of landslides.
Photo by Ezra Acayan via Getty Images.

Cover design by Lee Meng Hui
Index compiled by Raffaie Bin Nahar
Typesetting by International Typesetters Pte Ltd
Printed in Singapore by Markono Print Media Pte Ltd

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Acknowledgements

The Marcos Jr. administration has spearheaded significant policy shifts, particularly in foreign policy, with a renewed focus on alliances with Western partners, a more assertive stance on territorial disputes in the West Philippine/South China Sea, and efforts to attract international investment in sectors such as mining, green energy and infrastructure. Domestic affairs, however, have received less attention, even in areas like agriculture, which was initially a priority for the administration. While policy reforms, including constitutional revisions, are regularly discussed, they are often overshadowed by political jockeying. Most notably, the crucial inter-clan alliance that propelled President Marcos and Vice President Sara Duterte to victory in the 2022 presidential election has unravelled well ahead of the 2025 midterm elections.

It is in this context, at the halfway point of the presidential term, that this volume seeks to answer several key questions: What are the major political, economic and social developments under the current administration? Why has there been policy progress in some areas but not others, and how successful have these policies been? To what extent have policy initiatives been hindered by the lack of fundamental governance reforms?

This volume focuses on five critical areas: political, economic and social updates; memory, community and activism; the changing nature of oligarchic politics; economic resilience; and new issues and critical challenges ahead. Moving beyond the widely publicized emphasis on foreign policy, the chapters in this collection examine the internal dynamics of Philippine politics—tracking developments across

political, social and economic arenas to illustrate both continuities and discontinuities in policies and governance under the Marcos Jr. administration. By highlighting the broader context of dynastic entrenchment and intensifying intra-elite competition—exemplified by the escalating tensions and eventual public rupture between President Marcos Jr. and Vice President Sara Duterte—this volume seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of domestic governance under Marcos Jr. and of the enduring patterns and evolving tensions within the country’s patronage democracy.

This intellectual endeavour is the result of a collective effort from experts in the academic, practitioner and policy communities. The seed for this volume was planted at the Philippines Update Conference held on 30–31 October 2024 at the College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University (ANU), with the theme “Beyond Geo-Politics: The Philippines in the New Marcos Era”. Special thanks are due to the conference organizing committee: Cleo Calimbahin, Björn Dressel, Paul Hutchcroft, Maria Tanyag and Ross Tapsell.

We also wish to express our deepest gratitude to the various organizations at ANU—the ANU Filipino Association (ANUFA), the Philippines Studies Group (PSG) and the Filipino-Australian community in Canberra—as well as to the presenters and audience members who travelled from across Australia and the Philippines to attend the Philippines Update 2024.

Our sincere appreciation goes to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia, whose generous funding through the Philippines Project made this conference—and this volume—possible. We also extend special thanks to the Embassy of the Philippines and the Honourable Ambassador Hellen de la Vega for her enthusiastic support of the Philippines Update Conference in 2024.

We are grateful to the ANU Philippines Institute and its staff—Vanessa Geidel and Shanice Espiritu-Amador—as well as to our dedicated volunteers: Mary Joyce Bulao, Allyn Gargaceran-Cabuyao, Eunice Guzon, Jewel Joanna Cabardo and Epifanio Gregorio Terbio, all of whom played an essential role in the success of the conference and the completion of this publication. We also thank the CAP Engagement and Partnerships

team for the support during the conference and Diana Tung for her excellent copyediting work. We gratefully acknowledge the continued support of Dean Helen Sullivan and Professors Nicole Curato, Janine O’Flynn, Ronald Holmes and Hal Hill. Finally, we extend our sincere appreciation to ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Sheryl Sin Bing Peng for her excellent copyediting and Ng Kok Kiong for his trust in this collection and for making this publication possible.

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