

# Embrace or Erase: Explaining Variation of Colonial Narratives in Postcolonial States

**Dr. Dean Dulay**

Assistant Professor, Singapore Management University

**Abstract:** Nations worldwide have toppled their colonial edifices, attempting to distance themselves from the past. Yet other countries appreciate their former colonizers, the symbols of which still stand proudly in state capitals. What explains variation in how postcolonial states frame their colonial past? The argument is grounded in colonial history: local elites in colonized countries mobilize for greater political rights, a consequence of national consciousness and foreign exposure. Colonial elites respond to local elite mobilization by marginalizing them or accommodating their demands. Greater marginalization increases the likelihood of violent anticolonial movements and a negative framing of colonial rejection; the native anticolonial government distances itself from the past. Greater accommodation increases the probability of a colonizer-led transition into independence and a positive frame of colonial appreciation, emphasizing continuity with the colonial past. Comparative historical analysis of three Southeast Asian countries—the Philippines, Singapore, and Indonesia—support the argument’s causal logic.

**Dr. Dean Dulay** is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Lee Kong Chian Fellow at Singapore Management University. He received a Ph.D. from Duke University in 2020. His areas of interest are in Historical Political Economy and the Political Economy of Development, with a regional interest in Southeast Asia. His research is published in journals such as *The Journal of Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, and *The Journal of East Asian Studies*.



**15 April 2024 (Monday)**  
**3:00-4:30 PM (HKT)**

**Room B5-311**  
**5/F, Yeung Kin Man Academic Building**  
**City University of Hong Kong**

How to attend this seminar:

Via Zoom  
<http://surl.li/sgccr>  
Passcode: 651083

or in-person (pre-registration and visitor QR code are needed):  
<http://surl.li/sgcgn>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about the seminar.

