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Lee Morgenbesser is a lecturer with the School of Government and International Relations at Griffith University and recipient of a Discovery Early Career Research Award from the Australian Research Council (2018-2020). His most recent book is *Behind the Façade: Elections under Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia* (New York: SUNY Press, 2016) and his forthcoming book is *The Rise of Sophisticated Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019). In addition, he has published articles in *Asian Studies Review*, *Contemporary Politics*, *Democratization*, *European Journal of East Asia Studies*, *Political Studies* and *The Pacific Review*. His research areas are authoritarianism, dictators, democratization, flawed elections and Southeast Asian politics.

Retrograde and Sophisticated Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia

Abstract

To account for a perceived change in the quality of modern authoritarian rule, this paper introduces the theory of “retrograde” and “sophisticated” authoritarianism. The overarching goal of certain dictators and dominant parties is to continuously exemplify the virtues of democracy, be it accountability, contestation, participation and representation, without actually succumbing to democratization. This occurs across five newly conceived features: institutional configuration, control mechanism, governing model, information management and international engagement. Using this theoretical framework, which currently encapsulates 116 behavioral choices, this paper indexes all continuous regimes in Southeast Asia on a scale from retrograde dictatorship to sophisticated authoritarianism. The findings are pertinent to ongoing debates within the fields of comparative democratization and Southeast Asia politics.

15 January 2018
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Y5-304, AC1

Yeung Kin Man Academic Building

All are welcome

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