Global value chain upgrading in the Philippines and Vietnam: development for whom?

by Mr Paul Quintos (Presenter 1, 3:30 - 4:15 pm)
PhD Candidate, Department of Asian International Studies

ABSTRACT: There appears to be a consensus among international development organisations that participation in global value chains or global production networks is critical to development in the 21st century. However, the preponderant literature on GVCs often overlook the political and economic processes and institutions that shape the context in which GVCs operate as well as the unintended consequences of GVC participation that extend far beyond the production network. This research takes a critical look at GVC participation as a development strategy for developing countries seeking ways out of the middle-income trap. It employs a qualitative case study approach to investigate the link between GVC participation and development, comparing the experience of the Philippines and Vietnam. These two countries are selected because both have high participation rates in GVCs but Vietnam’s experience seems to offer proof in support of the Development Establishment’s good news narrative about GVCs while the Philippine experience raises doubts about it. Adopting the framework of critical political economy, this dissertation seeks to explain the differences in development outcomes in terms of how conflicting social forces shape the institutional environment in which GVCs operate at the national, sub-national and transnational levels.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER: Paul L. Quintos is a PhD candidate at the Department of Asian and International Studies of the City University of Hong Kong. His current research interests include development and inequality in late capitalism, the fourth industrial revolution and sustainable development.

“Local going national”: The political trajectory of Duterte and Widodo from mayoralty to presidency

by Ms Lermie Shayne Santos Garcia (Presenter 2, 4:15 - 5:00 pm)
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ABSTRACT: This study examines the political trajectory of Rodrigo Duterte (Philippines) and Joko Widodo (Indonesia) from being mayors (local) to being presidents (national). Unlike other top political leaders who were national figures prior to becoming president, Duterte and Widodo relied mainly on their track records and popular leadership styles developed as local mayors. Given the importance of national political experience and the invidious distinctions usually drawn between local and national politics in these two Southeast Asian countries, it appears puzzling that the local political careers of both politicians became their campaign “calling cards” for winning the presidency. This phenomenon, termed “local going national,” examines why and how local credentials became an attractive alternative to national political experience in Philippine and Indonesian politics.

The general objective of this study is to understand why the local is increasingly becoming important in national electoral competitions, particularly in the cases of Duterte and Widodo. I argue that this can be attributed to the intersection of three main factors: (1) local (decentralization and democratization), national (systemic disjunction), and global (rise of social media and populism) political contexts; (2) combined use of traditional sources of power (political parties and political clans/families) and new mobilization strategies such as social media and social capital (political parties and volunteer groups); and (3) political branding and narrativization. As I examine the political careers of Duterte and Widodo, I also found that “political will,” “political authenticity,” and “political empathy,” which they all developed at the local level, became essential factors that helped establish their credibility as competent candidates, despite mainly local experiences. However, this study also found that success at the local does not necessarily predict success at the national level, as exemplified by their faulty COVID-19 pandemic responses.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER: Lermie Shayne Garcia is a PhD candidate at the Department of Asian and International Studies, City University of Hong Kong. Her research interests include comparative politics in Southeast Asia and leadership studies.