

"When Dynasties Collide: The Marcos–Duterte Dispute and the Politics of Elite Continuity"
(「王朝が衝突するとき：マルコスと Duterte 論争とエリートの継続性に関する政治」)

Professor Dr. Holmes Ronald
Department of Political Science and Development Studies,
De La Salle University, the Philippines

Since the establishment of representative government in the early 20th century, Philippine politics has been dominated by local elites. Even with the expansion of the franchise in the late 1930s, representation largely remained concentrated in a few families, sustained through succession. Following the 1986 transition, electoral politics increasingly became contests among entrenched clans. Scholars have observed a shift from “thin” dynasties to “obese dynasties,” with families consolidating control across multiple levels of elective office. Several institutional and structural factors account for this persistence: the first past-the-post electoral system, which favors established elites; the absence of programmatic political parties, leaving clans as the principal machinery for electoral competition; and persistent socioeconomic inequality, which entrenches dependence on patronage and reinforces dynastic dominance through alliances with powerful families at the national level.

In the contemporary period, these dynamics are further illustrated by the political conflict between President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.—heir to the ousted authoritarian leader—and Vice President Sara Duterte, daughter of the immediate past president, Rodrigo Roa Duterte, accused of human rights violations. Dynastic rivalries have not only intensified elite competition but also eroded institutional checks and balances. The legislature has often acted along factional lines, with its chambers favoring one camp over the other, while the Supreme Court—composed largely of appointees of Rodrigo Duterte—has dismissed an impeachment complaint against the Vice President on grounds not provided for in the Constitution, raising concerns of judicial overreach and institutional partisanship.

Crucially, the persistence and expansion of dynastic politics have not produced improvements in the material conditions of the majority. Instead, widespread poverty and underdevelopment continue to sustain voter reliance on patronage, reinforcing the very structures that entrench dynastic rule. In this sense, dynastic politics not only undermines democratic accountability but also perpetuates structural inequality, constraining the prospects for more substantive democratization.