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**Public Policy and Global Affairs (PPGA)**  
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## **Is It Worth It? Building Opposition Alliances in Electoral Autocracies**

by  
**Elvin Ong**

**Date: Thursday, 23 January 2020**

**Time: 14:00 – 16:00**

**Venue: HSS Conference Room (HSS-05-57)**

### **Biography**

**Elvin Ong** is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute of Asian Research in the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, University of British Columbia. He is also affiliated with the Department of Political Science at the National University of Singapore as an Overseas Postdoctoral Fellow, and is a Dan David Prize 2019 Scholar in the field of “Defending Democracy”.

His primary research interests are in the politics and policies of authoritarian regimes, with specific focus on the dynamic formation of opposition coalitions. His solo and co-authored research is forthcoming or has been published in the *American Journal of Political Science*, *Government and Opposition*, *Electoral Politics*, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, the *Journal of East Asian Studies*, and *Asian Survey*.

He received his PhD in Political Science at Emory University in 2018, and the MPhil in Politics (Comparative Government) from St. Antony's College, University of Oxford in 2012. He graduated from Singapore Management University in 2010 with a Double Degree in Business Management (BBM) and Social Science (BSocSc).

### **Abstract**

Forming opposition pre-electoral alliances significantly enhances the chances of opposition victory against incumbent autocrats. But opposition parties frequently find it difficult to make the costly compromises necessary for inter-party coordination. When and how do opposition parties build pre-electoral alliances? My book project argues that perceptions of incumbent regime vulnerability combined with perceptions of inter-party complementarity shape opposition elites' incentives to build pre-electoral alliances. I illustrate my arguments through a comparative historical analysis of 1980s autocratic Philippines and South Korea, triangulating empirical evidence from newspaper reports, Congressional hearing transcripts, and declassified foreign policy documents from the CIA, Department of State, and the National Security Council in the Reagan era. I also discuss the theory's implications for analyzing opposition party conflict and cooperation in Singapore from 1965 till the next general elections due by April 2021.

*All are welcome!*