



ONE HEALTH

Social and Public Policy

Seminar

22 January 2021 Friday | 4 - 5:30 pm

Conducted
via
Zoom

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Dr Nick OR

A tale of two city-states: A comparison of the state-led vs civil society-led responses to COVID-19 in Singapore and Hong Kong



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Abstract: This paper compares the early pandemic response in Singapore and Hong Kong, two Asian city-states of similar sizes with a shared history of SARS, and advanced medical systems. Although both were able to contain the disease, they did so using two very different approaches. Using data from cross-national surveys, news, and mobility data, we demonstrate that, in protest-ridden Hong Kong, low governmental trust bolstered civil society, which focused on self-mobilization and community mutual-help. In Singapore, a state-led response model that marginalized civil society brought early success but failed to stem an outbreak among its segregated migrant population. The study sheds light on the roles of state and non-state actors in a crisis.

Bio: Nick Or is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Policy. Nick's research interests lie in the field of public policy, comparative politics, and authoritarian regimes by drawing insights from behavioural and complexity sciences, using quantitative techniques and experimental methods. His research examines how individuals and organisations filter and process policy-related information for decision-making. His works can be seen in Public Administration and Policy Studies Journal.

Prof Mark R. THOMPSON

Popularity without Performance: The Philippine Government Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic



Abstract: Philippine President Rodrigo R. Duterte's response to the COVID-19 virus has been in line with his 'macho populism' similar to Donald Trump's in the US and Jair Bolsonaro's in Brazil. Like these illiberal leaders, a lockdown of Metro Manila and most of the rest of the Philippines since mid-March was implemented only after Duterte's initial denialism, in the face of the growing threat from the rapidly spreading virus. Once Duterte did finally act, it was in a haphazard (particularly in terms of the lack of adequate testing and contact tracing) and highly militarised fashion. Yet recent opinion polls show Duterte's popularity has actually increased despite the country's poor performance during the pandemic (the highest caseload in Southeast Asia as of this writing). This paper analyzes Duterte's political 'success' despite governance failures during the pandemic in ideational (populist appeals), institutional (the lack of accountability in the country's 'hyperpresidentialist' system), and structural terms (the weakness of a socially oriented political alternative despite the country's extreme levels of inequality).

Bio: Mark R. Thompson is head and professor of politics, Department of Asian and International Studies as well as director, Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong. An expert on Southeast Asia politics and the author or editor of 10 books and over 100 journal articles, he is currently completing a GRF research project on illiberal populism in the Philippines.

Dr Nicholas THOMAS

Anti-Microbial Resistance in China



Authors: Catherine Lo Yuk-ping | Nicholas Thomas

Abstract: Since the turn of the century, China has been a major source of infectious disease outbreaks (SARS, H5N1, H7N9, COVID-19). It is also the source of the MCR-1 gene that confers resistance to colistin, a 'last line' antibiotic that can be deployed against multidrug resistant infections. With the largest population of any country combined with its status as a major supplier of produce, evaluating the emergence of AMR in China and Chinese responses to the threat is critical to understanding the global response. This paper starts by reviewing how Chinese authorities have framed the issue. The analysis focuses on antibiotic usage in both humans and the agricultural sector. Finally, the domestic and international implications of China's responses are considered. Based on interviews with key Chinese and international officials, scientists, and public health specialists as well as farmers and consumers, we present data that argues the securitization of AMR in China is currently more concerned with policy and resource competition than with addressing an existential threat.

Bio: Dr Nicholas Thomas is the One Health cluster coordinator for the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. His research lies at the intersection of regional politics and security studies, with a particular emphasis on health.

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