

A Fragmented Collective Memory: The Case of Filipino Diaspora and Fake News

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Abstract: This paper argues that the fragmentation of Filipino collective memory is profoundly shaped by the country's long-standing labor export policy, first institutionalized under the Marcos dictatorship (1965–1986). Nearly forty years after the ouster of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. through the 1986 People Power Revolution, his son, Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr., won the presidency in 2022—an outcome made possible in part by the strategic deployment of digital disinformation. Central to this campaign is the targeting of Filipinos abroad, particularly Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), whose transnational lives often rely on social media for connection, information, and a sense of belonging. Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok have become key sites for the circulation of emotionally charged, algorithmically amplified content that reimagines the Marcos regime through a nostalgic and sanitized lens. While appearing grassroots or community-driven, these digital narratives often mask coordinated disinformation efforts designed to reframe historical memory and legitimize authoritarian rule. The paper unfolds in three parts. First, it revisits the roots of Filipino labor migration and how the condition of diaspora, marked by

displacement, economic precarity, and longing, renders OFWs particularly vulnerable to affective political messaging. Second, it maps the infrastructure of digital disinformation, including the role of paid content creators, trolls, and platform algorithms in shaping civic discourse abroad. Third, it explores how memory becomes contested terrain in the digital sphere, where collective remembrance is refracted through vernacular and visual forms, and where histories are recalled and rewritten. Drawing on memory studies, the paper contends that the digital reconfiguration of memory among overseas Filipinos contributes to a fractured political imaginary that undermines democratic consensus and enables the return of authoritarian figures. In recognizing diaspora communities as agents and subjects of memory-making, the study underscores the urgent need for memory work that resists historical distortion and reclaims narrative agency.

Keywords: collective memory, disinformation, diaspora, overseas Filipinos

INTRODUCTION

The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) estimates that over 10.2 million Filipinos now live and work abroad, dispersed across over a hundred countries, with significant populations in the United States, Saudi Arabia, Canada, the United Arab Emirates, Australia, and Japan.¹ This vast and diverse diaspora, mainly composed of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), has come to symbolize the resilience and tenacity of the Filipino people. Whether as domestic workers, construction laborers, healthcare providers, or seafarers, OFWs play a vital role in sustaining the global economies in which they labor and stabilizing the Philippine economy. Their remittances have long been a lifeline for their families and the broader national economy, rendering them indispensable to the country's socioeconomic survival.

Yet, behind this narrative of resilience lies a more complex structural history. The large-scale labor export program was not merely a response to economic exigency, but a political project rooted in the kleptocratic rule of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. (1965–1986). Under his dictatorship, economic mismanagement, widespread corruption, and crony capitalism entrenched chronic unemployment and underemployment. Under this regime, the labor export policy was institutionalized not as a temporary fix but as a mechanism to externalize labor precarity and defer structural reform. Decades later, the long shadow of this policy persists in the continued reliance on overseas remittances and in the political afterlives of the regime itself.

This afterlife was made visible in the 2022 presidential election, when Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr., the dictator's son, secured a landslide victory. His return to power was not simply a domestic affair: the overseas Filipino vote proved decisive, with substantial majorities supporting his candidacy in key foreign posts. This outcome poses a

¹ Commission on Filipinos Overseas, “Philippine Migration Data at a Glance” (2023), <<https://cfo.gov.ph/statistics-2/>>.

disconcerting question: how did a population shaped by the displacements and dispossessions of Marcos Sr.'s rule become instrumental in legitimizing the return of his legacy?

This paper argues that the answer lies in the fractured terrain of diasporic collective memory—an arena shaped not only by distance and displacement but by the evolving architecture of digital life. In this space, platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok mediate how Filipinos abroad remember the past and imagine the future. Disinformation, in this context, operates not merely as a political tool but as a force of mnemonic disruption. It exploits the vulnerabilities of diaspora communities whose memories are refracted through personal stories, familial loyalties, nostalgia, and longing. This paper understands OFWs not as passive recipients of digital content but as active agents in the circulation and contestation of memory, both vernacular and collective.

Grounded in the theoretical insights of Maurice Halbwachs and Jan Assmann on collective memory, and John Bodnar and Marita Sturken's work on vernacular memory, this article also engages with recent literature on networked disinformation to trace how the digital public sphere has reshaped memory-making in the Filipino diaspora. It contends that diasporic memory has become increasingly susceptible to politicization through emotionally resonant and digitally mediated narratives. OFWs, as everyday users of social media, play dual roles: they are both targets and amplifiers of politicized memory, caught between personal affect and historical accountability.

The paper is organized into four parts. The first part revisits the labor export program's structural origins and the OFW's emergence as a central figure in Philippine society. Meanwhile, the second part investigates the rise of digital disinformation, particularly the emergence of edutainment (educational entertainment)-style political content, and its deployment among overseas Filipinos. The fourth part explores how this disinformation fractures collective memory by reshaping diasporic vernacular remembrance. Finally, the fifth part examines how these

transformations in memory contribute to political authoritarianism and historical revisionism.

THE OFW PHENOMENON: LABOR EXPORT, DISPLACEMENT, AND DIASPORIC FOUNDATIONS

The Marcos Sr. dictatorship not only ushered in an era of authoritarian violence, but it also plunged the Philippines into long-term economic decline. Far from the mythologized “golden age,” the regime’s economic model heavily depended on foreign loans to bankroll infrastructure and patronage networks controlled by Marcos’s cronies. By the time of his ouster in 1986, government debt had ballooned to ₱395.51 billion, 58.63% of the nation’s GDP. After modest growth in the early 1970s, the economy unraveled: GDP contracted by nearly 14% in 1984 and 1985, and average incomes dropped by 9%, requiring two decades to recover. Filipinos would not regain their 1982 income levels until 2003, a period economists call the “lost decades of Philippine development.”²

While Southeast Asian neighbors advanced economically, the Philippines stagnated. The unemployment and underemployment crisis deepened, triggering a wave of labor migration that would evolve into the modern OFW phenomenon. Between 1974 and 1983, overseas deployment grew by 23.7%.³ What began as a stopgap for jobless Filipinos soon hardened into a cornerstone of state policy. In 1980, Marcos codified labor export through Batas Pambansa 79, creating the CFO to oversee Filipino emigration and ensure it served state interests. Executive Order 857 was issued in 1982 to stabilize dwindling reserves, requiring OFWs to remit 50–70% of their earnings through official channels without threat of passport cancellation or forced return. Though the order was revoked in 1985, it

² JC Punongbayan, *False Nostalgia: The Marcos “Golden Age” Myths and How to Debunk Them* (Quezon City: Bughaw, 2023).

³ *Ibid.*

exemplified how OFWs were reduced to economic lifelines for a regime in collapse.

Over four decades later, labor migration has become embedded in the Philippine economy. As of 2023, 10.2 million overseas Filipinos live in over 200 countries and territories, comprising roughly 10.6% of the national population.⁴ The largest diasporic communities are found in the U.S. (1.52 million), Canada (517,108), Japan (157,708), Australia (147,854), and Italy (42,201). These populations are far from uniform. Many were formerly sales or technical workers, others were students, homemakers, or unemployed. Women comprise the majority (57.8%), and the dominant age group is 30–34.⁵ Economically, the contributions were staggering. In 2022 alone, OFWs remitted \$36.1 billion, nearly 10% of the GDP.⁶ While these funds support families and national programs, they have created structural dependencies. The Philippine economy remains acutely vulnerable to global market shocks, policy shifts in host countries, and geopolitical instability.

The personal costs of this model are equally significant. Family separation has long-term psychosocial effects. Francisco notes that parental absence affects children's education, emotional attachment, and sexual behavior.⁷ Women left behind often take on expanded caregiving roles, while OFW fathers report relational distance from their children, especially daughters.⁸ Marital strain, loneliness, and isolation are also

⁴ Commission on Filipinos Overseas, "Philippine Migration Data at a Glance."

⁵ Philippine Statistics Authority, "2022 Survey on Overseas Filipinos (Final Result) (11 October 2023), <<https://www.psa.gov.ph/statistics/survey/labor-and-employment/survey-overseas-filipinos/node/1684061314>>.

⁶ Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, "Personal Remittances Reach a New Record High in December 2022; Full-Year Level of US\$36.1 Billion Highest to Date" (5 February 2023), <<https://www.bsp.gov.ph/SitePages/MediaAndResearch/MediaDisp.aspx?ItemId=6617>>.

⁷ Ruth Francisco, "Essays on the Socioeconomic Consequences of Parental Migration for Children Left Behind" (Unpublished dissertation, University of the Philippines, 2016).

⁸ Jose Ramon G. Albert et al., "Long-Term Effects of Labor Migration in the Philippines: 'Napakasakit, Kuya Eddie!,'" in *PIDS* (14 December 2023),

widespread among migrants. These affective tolls reveal that labor export, while profitable, is sustained by emotional sacrifices rendered invisible by economic metrics.

The program that enabled mass labor migration was no accident. It was a calculated response to a structural crisis. Faced with a surplus of educated workers and a stagnant economy, the Marcos administration reconfigured state dependency in a way that, instead of foreign capital, labor would circulate. According to James Zarsadiaz, this was a “perfect storm” of global demand and local desperation, enabled by liberalizing U.S. immigration laws and a booming Middle East in need of migrant labor.⁹ Indeed, U.S. legislation, like the 1965 Hart-Celler Immigration Act, enabled over 300,000 Filipinos to enter the country during the Marcos years.¹⁰ Simultaneously, new migration corridors opened in the Middle East, where Filipino nurses, engineers, seafarers, and domestic workers found work. These movements generated economic mobility and gave rise to politically aware diasporic communities. In the United States, Filipino migrants helped build the anti-martial law movement. Organizations like the National Coalition for the Restoration of Civil Liberties in the Philippines campaigned against Marcos’s dictatorship and U.S. complicity.¹¹

Simply put, the Marcos regime responded by expanding state control over migrants. The Commission on Filipinos Overseas was framed as a support mechanism, but also served to monitor dissent abroad. This dual function reveals a larger strategy: the diaspora was both an economic resource to be exploited and a political threat to be contained.

Even after the fall of the dictatorship in 1986, labor exports not only persisted but were institutionalized into national economic planning. The

<<https://pids.gov.ph/publication/discussion-papers/long-term-effects-of-labor-migration-in-the-philippines-napakasakit-kuya-eddie>>.

⁹ Michelle Abad, “Why Marcos Jr. Gets Massive OFW Backing despite Father’s Labor Export Policy,” in *Rappler* (6 June 2022), <<https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/marcos-jr-massive-overseas-filipinos-backing-2022/>>.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

proliferation of private recruitment agencies, the official valorization of remittances, and the establishment of OFW-specific state bodies shifted the burden of economic reproduction onto migrants themselves. Yet in a striking reversal, the 2022 presidential election saw massive support for Marcos Jr. among overseas Filipinos.¹² Of 1.69 million registered overseas voters, 475,982 voted for Marcos Jr., compared to just 139,798 for Leni Robredo. In the vice-presidential race, Sara Duterte won 491,427 votes, dwarfing Kiko Pangilinan's 111,595.¹³

This support can be explained through several overlapping dynamics. First, Marcos Jr. and Duterte positioned themselves as champions of OFWs, offering continuity and pragmatism, along with a rhetoric that resonated with migrants seeking responsive governance. Second, the creation of the Department of Migrant Workers in 2021, led by labor advocate Susan Ople, centralized services and projected a renewed state commitment to migrant welfare. Third, and perhaps most crucial, is the shifting terrain of memory.

For many younger OFWs and second-generation diaspora members, the memory of the Marcos dictatorship is not lived, but rather algorithmic. In an online ecosystem saturated with misinformation and nostalgic revisionism, the brutalities of martial law fade into abstraction. Once seen as a desperate move by a collapsing regime, the labor export policy is reframed as visionary. The migration that fractured families and restructured entire communities is now portrayed as the legacy of a benevolent strongman. In this retelling, the diaspora becomes a testament to Marcos-era foresight rather than its most damning indictment.

¹² Michelle Abad, "Marcos, Sara Duterte Win Overseas Filipino Vote," in *Rappler* (25 May 2022), <<https://www.rappler.com/philippines/elections/results-presidential-vp-race-overseas-absentee-voting-2022-2/>>.

¹³ "List: Here's How Overseas Filipinos Voted in Halalan 2022," in *ABS-CBN News* (10 May 2022), <<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/05/10/22/how-overseas-filipinos-voted-in-halalan-2022>>.

DIGITAL DISINFORMATION AND THE RISE OF EDUTAINMENT

Migration does not just move bodies, it transforms culture and memory. Overseas Filipino communities have long cultivated intricate networks of mutual support, cultural continuity, and shared identity. These are not held together by geography but by memory through narratives, rituals, and symbols carried across borders. In Benedict Anderson's terms, they are "imagined communities,"¹⁴ but in place of print capitalism, today's diasporic consciousness is shaped through digital platforms: Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, TikTok.

These platforms have become more than communication tools; they are remembrance infrastructures. They enable OFWs to stay tethered to home while building alternative archives of experience. Personal vlogs, memes, livestreamed fiestas, recipe tutorials, and family group chats all function as forms of *vernacular memory*, which Bodnar¹⁵ and Sturken¹⁶ define as grassroots, affective, and often contradictory ways of remembering. These everyday practices—cooking adobo in a foreign kitchen, watching old teleseryes on YouTube, recounting childhood in Marcos-era provinces—are saturated with emotion: nostalgia, pride, longing, displacement. Memory, in this context, is not abstract but embodied.

But this emotional texture of diasporic life has also become fertile ground for political manipulation. In recent years, coordinated disinformation campaigns have actively exploited the digital habits and affective vulnerabilities of OFWs. The martial law period is repackaged as

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

¹⁵ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹⁶ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1997).

an era of “disciplined governance,” and Marcos Sr. becomes a misunderstood visionary. These narratives gain traction in online spaces where historical trauma is distant and the desire for national pride often outweighs critical engagement with the past.

As E. San Juan Jr. argues, the OFW is not just a labor export commodity but a biopolitical subject that is mobilized, displaced, and regulated by state policy and transnational structures.¹⁷ While they are publicly celebrated as “modern-day heroes,” OFWs remain politically peripheral and symbolically instrumentalized. Their diaspora is not simply a space of cultural flourishing but also a space of soft power, susceptible to ideological capture. The Marcos regime’s labor export policy thus seeded more than migration patterns. It created a dispersed, emotionally charged memory field stretching across time zones and platforms. This field is not neutral. It is shaped by algorithmic infrastructures prioritizing engagement over accuracy, emotion over evidence. Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok aren’t just vessels of memory as they actively configure how that memory is produced, circulated, and consumed.

As sites of vernacular remembrance, these platforms foster a casual, ambient mode of memory. They reward emotionally resonant content, such as dramatic visuals, sentimental soundtracks, and simplified narratives. For many overseas Filipinos, particularly those separated from Philippine news media or educational institutions, these become the primary channels through which history is encountered. That makes them especially powerful and especially dangerous.

This is where edutainment enters the picture: a hybrid genre that merges pedagogical claims with entertainment aesthetics to reframe political memory. Political actors, most notably the Marcos network, have leveraged this form to remarkable effect. YouTube vloggers style themselves as everyday truth-tellers “correcting” the mainstream narrative. Their videos, framed with nostalgic music, sepia-toned photos,

¹⁷ Epifanio San Juan, “Overseas Filipino Workers: The Making of an Asian-Pacific Diaspora,” in *The Global South*, 3:2 (2009), 99–129.

and anecdotes, depict Marcos-era discipline and development while ignoring or outright denying the regime's violence and plunder.¹⁸ Their affective tone—warm, casual, funny—mimics everyday diasporic talk, making it easier for OFWs to relate, trust, and share. Repetition through autoplay and algorithmic suggestion reinforces familiarity until the revisionist version feels like common sense.¹⁹

TikTok operates on a similar logic but in shorter, more stylized bursts. Here, martial law gets rebranded not through argument, but through affect. Dramatic edits, patriotic anthems, and filtered images of infrastructure projects glamorize the Marcos legacy while stripping it of political context. These 30-second videos are not just catchy, they are mnemonic. They rely on what Wendy Hui Kyong Chun describes as the logic of “habituation”²⁰—memory formed not through deliberate reflection, but through repetition. Users do not analyze, they scroll. And as they do, emotional resonance begins to replace historical evidence.

This shift marks the rise of disinformation-as-edutainment: history remixed into consumable, emotionally satisfying content. Marcos Jr.'s campaign understood this deeply. Instead of relying on institutional media or academic discourse, it turned to micro-influencers, vloggers, and content creators to produce populist reinterpretations of the past.²¹ For many OFWs who are long-distance from local politics, these videos offered

¹⁸ Alfred W. McCoy, “An Anarchy of Families,” in *The Historography of State and Family in the Philippines*, ed. by Alfred W. McCoy (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009), 1-32.

¹⁹ Jonathan Corpus Ong and Jason Vincent A. Cabañes, *Architects of Networked Disinformation: Behind the Scenes of Troll Accounts and Fake News Production in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2018).

²⁰ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2017), 6.

²¹ See Nicole Curato, “Philippine Elections 2022: The New Normative Order,” in *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, 44:3 (2022), 375-381; Jonathan Corpus Ong and Ross Tapsell, “Demystifying Disinformation Shadow Economies: Fake News Work Models in Indonesia and the Philippines,” in *Asian Journal of Communication*, 32:3 (March 2022), 251-67.

not just information but affirmation. They told stories of pride, strength, and order. They suggested that things were better then, and could be again. Crucially, these narratives do not claim the authority of official history. They draw their credibility from emotional authenticity and familiarity. They function as *vernacular memory*, rooted in lived experience, shared feeling, and communal sense-making. In bypassing academic and journalistic filters, they create a parallel historical imaginary that feels more intimate and therefore more persuasive.

In this context, disinformation is not just the spread of lies. It is the re-authoring of memory itself, filtered through vernacular, affective, and algorithmic logics. It resonates because it is personal, coming from the emotional infrastructure of diaspora. Edutainment becomes a vehicle for articulating identity and asserting belonging. It allows users to participate in history-making in immediate and meaningful ways, even if factually false. The result is a fragmented collective memory, where truth is plural, history is malleable, and the past becomes a battlefield of feelings. In these digital spaces, remembering is no longer an act of retrieval, but an act of construction. Memory is content. And in the hands of political actors, it becomes weaponized, monetized, and endlessly remixed.

FRAGMENTED COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND VERNACULAR REMEMBRANCE IN THE DIGITAL SPHERE

Pierre Nora's notion of *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory, refers to symbolic spaces, whether material, discursive, or virtual, where collective memory is crystallized and preserved.²² In the digital age, platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and YouTube function as contemporary *lieux de mémoire*, not as static monuments but as dynamic, participatory spaces where memory is continuously constructed, circulated, and reframed. Commemorative hashtags such as

²² Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," in *Representations*, 26 (Spring 1989), 7-24.

#NeverAgainNeverForget or #IndependenceDay activate digital publics, generating searchable and emotionally charged archives of remembrance.

This apparent democratization of memory-making has expanded the range of memory agents. Diasporic users, youth, and subcultural groups now participate in shaping collective memory outside state-centered frameworks. Following Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory, memory is not merely inherited but continuously reproduced through social and symbolic practices.²³ Yet these practices are not neutral. Institutional narratives articulated through state curricula, media, and historiography often dominate the field. Vernacular memory, by contrast, emerges from everyday life. It is affective, situated, and socially textured, shaped by personal experiences and the cultural intimacies that resist official scripts.

Vernacular memory builds on Maurice Halbwachs' foundational idea that all memory is social, by showing how informal acts (e.g., storytelling, nostalgic images, humor) mediate what communities choose to remember.²⁴ Among OFWs, such practices are distinctively diasporic. Dislocated yet deeply connected to the homeland through digital platforms, OFWs craft memory in ways that are simultaneously collective, intimate, and improvisational.

Across social media, OFWs document and share their everyday lives: family reunions, *balikbayan* rituals, holiday remittances, or memories of food and music. These posts are not merely content but fragments of longing and resilience, embedded in what Svetlana Boym might describe as *diasporic nostalgia*, where the past becomes a space of imagined return.²⁵ TikTok clips overlaying Marcos-era love songs with 1970s footage of Manila, or vlogs that juxtapose foreign cityscapes with

²³ Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," in *New German Critique*, 65 (1995), 125-33.

²⁴ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38.

²⁵ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, New York: Basic Books, 2001), xv-xviii.

Tagalog voiceovers, become affective vehicles for memory-making. Channels like “Pinay in Italy” or “OFW Diaries” do more than document domestic routines. They produce and circulate diasporic narratives where personal and collective histories intertwine.

These practices exemplify what Paul Ricoeur calls *narrative identity*, or how individuals and communities shape their sense of self through storytelling.²⁶ Memory here is not passive recollection; it is emotional labor, a way of making sense of dislocation, sacrifice, and belonging. Yet it is precisely this emotional texture that makes vernacular memory vulnerable to manipulation.

The same digital infrastructures that allow for plural memory-making also serve as conduits for disinformation. As Nora observed, *lieux de mémoire* arise when living memory fades, when rituals and embodied practices give way to mediated fragments.²⁷ Social media archives memory as content but often strips it of historical depth and ethical grounding. For OFWs, whose temporal and spatial distance from the homeland can distort the politics of memory, digital fragments become malleable material that is easily recontextualized, repackaged, or exploited.

This vulnerability has not gone unnoticed. Political operators like troll farms, PR strategists, and coordinated keyboard armies target OFWs with emotionally resonant content that taps into diasporic desires for economic stability, moral order, and national pride. As Agence France-Presse has reported, disinformation networks craft narratives that glorify the Marcos dictatorship or frame authoritarian governance as a necessary remedy to democratic “chaos.”²⁸ These narratives do not arise in a vacuum but draw on values that already circulate within diasporic memory, such as

²⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 356.

²⁷ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 7.

²⁸ Agence France-Presse, “Marcos Jr. Winning Philippine Election Misinformation, Say Fact-Checkers,” in *GMA News Online* (23 March 2022), <<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/826034/marcos-jr-winning-philippine-election-misinformation-say-fact-checkers/story/>>.

family, sacrifice, and religiosity, making them harder to critique and easier to absorb.

This strategy reflects a broader trend in global populism, where digital media is used to manufacture imagined communities rooted in grievance and nostalgia. Robles details how disinformation infrastructures in the Philippines manipulate affect through a mix of algorithmic targeting, fake news, and networked harassment.²⁹ Both the Marcos and Duterte regimes have capitalized on these tools, fashioning mythologies of strength, discipline, and benevolence that resonate with Filipinos abroad who long for predictability in an uncertain world.

OFWs do not merely consume this content, but they also amplify it. Isolated from local news ecosystems and embedded in diasporic echo chambers, many become active agents in the circulation of political memory. What they share online is not simply information but memory work. As Sturken argues, technologies of memory do more than preserve the past.³⁰ They shape how it is felt, narrated, and politicized. Memory is not only mediated by digital infrastructures, but it is also configured by them.

The result is a double-edged dynamic. On one hand, OFW memory practices challenge official historiography by highlighting diasporic perspectives and asserting agency in the national story. On the other hand, the porousness of these practices—their emotional immediacy, aestheticized delivery, and algorithmic amplification—makes them particularly susceptible to co-optation. The pace and ephemerality of social media produce memory that is simultaneously hyper-visible and easy to forget. Hashtags may mobilize attention but rarely sustain critique. Forgetting, in this context, is not accidental but political.

²⁹ Alan C Robles, “Fact and Fiction,” in *D and C* (31 December 2020), <<https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/philippines-pro-duterte-activism-social-media-keeps-people-agitated-and-misinformed>>.

³⁰ Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 9.

Vernacular memory, while deeply generative, is also fraught. It is a contested space where personal longing, historical trauma, and ideological manipulation collide. For OFWs, it becomes a strategy for remaining tethered to the homeland, but it also risks being subsumed into projects that revise or erase critical histories. To analyze these memory practices is to engage the shifting terrain of digital remembrance, where remembering is a struggle for meaning, and forgetting, a mechanism of control.

CONCLUSION

Social media disinformation has profoundly reshaped the imagined communities of OFWs, fracturing collective memory and enabling the resurgence of authoritarian politics in the Philippines. These digitally mediated communities, sustained through platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok, extend a sense of national belonging across borders. But rather than fostering solidarity, they have become prime terrain for emotionally charged, algorithm-driven disinformation campaigns. Through affective appeals, strategic nostalgia, and curated digital intimacy, these campaigns recast the Marcos Sr. dictatorship in glowing terms and legitimize the political ascent of Marcos Jr. What emerges is not a coherent diasporic memory but a fragmented constellation of conflicting historical narratives.

This fragmentation is not accidental. It exploits the vulnerabilities often accompanying diasporic life: physical and emotional distance from the homeland, reliance on social media for news and community, and a deep longing for rootedness. Disinformation leverages these conditions by embedding itself within vernacular forms of memory: personal testimonies, vlogs, short-form videos, and community posts that resonate as authentic but often carry the invisible imprint of political agendas. As Assmann and Halbwachs remind us, memory is not just preserved, rather, it is shaped, circulated, and contested within specific social frameworks. Vernacular memory, in this case, becomes a double-edged sword, offering

diasporic communities a way to make sense of the past from their own positionality, while simultaneously rendering them susceptible to manipulation through emotionally persuasive, but historically inaccurate, retellings.

The erosion of shared memory through such practices contributes to a deeper crisis of trust. It weakens democratic deliberation, obscures historical accountability, and constructs an illusion of popular consensus around authoritarian figures. Marcos Jr.'s election is emblematic of this dynamic: his campaign did not merely revise history but strategically disseminated those revisions to forge emotional identification, portraying dictatorship as discipline and economic collapse as golden prosperity. In this sense, the digital space becomes not only a medium of communication but a battleground of memory—a *lieu de mémoire* where history is constantly rewritten in service of power.

In the face of such challenges, the task of memory work becomes even more urgent. Rebuilding collective memory cannot rely solely on fact-checking or platform moderation. It requires a broader, community-based response rooted in democratic values and historical justice. This includes demanding accountability from tech platforms, promoting media and historical literacy among overseas Filipinos, and nurturing grassroots memory projects that challenge disinformation with care, nuance, and truth. As Halbwachs insists, collective memory is not static. It is constructed, reconstructed, and therefore vulnerable but also reclaimable. In the words of Maria Ressa: “Without facts, you can’t have truth. Without truth, you can’t have trust. Without trust, we have no shared reality, no democracy.”³¹ In a time when memory itself is under siege, reclaiming that shared reality is not only necessary, it is a radical act of resistance.

³¹ Maria Ressa, “Nobel Peace Prize Lecture,” in *NobelPrize.org* (10 December 2021), <<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2021/ressa/lecture/>>.

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