The Radical Politics of Nation-States: The Case of President Rodrigo Duterte

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Abstract

The advent of terrorism in the midst of political conflict requires an understanding of local context and history. Anti-establishment leaders like President Rodrigo Duterte expose the limits of liberalism. By applying the critical distinction between "politics" and the "political," we can imagine an alternative framework in our desire to unravel the narrative of Duterte's communitarian style. Disruption is not simply meant to put into question the status quo. The goal of progressive leadership is to transform society in ways that will improve the difficult lives of the people. While the president's critics say that he is authoritarian, it will be argued that radical means are needed to overcome the failures of Philippine democracy.

Key words: *radical democracy, President Duterte, terrorism, disruptive politics*

Introduction

Is President Rodrigo Duterte's radicalism a sign of the imminent end to elitist politics in Philippine society? Vicente Rafael (2016) believes that the Philippine president belongs to "an older world of authoritarianism that draws on fascist discourse and revolutionary martyrdom to do away with any constraints." The historian thinks that Duterte is angry at his detractors, especially those from the West, because the president "feels that such critics, by speaking out, are themselves violating his rights as the sovereign embodiment of the people – rights that include the right to violate the rights of some in order to protect the lives of others" (Rafael, 2016). Rafael appears to be saying that a leader who oppresses the powerless cannot be the liberator of his people. But Duterte is a living paradox. Though some sectors in Philippine society chastise him, Duterte remains extremely popular because Filipinos have faith in the idea that the present occupant of Malacañang possesses the important leadership attributes that previous presidents lacked. Without argument, Philippine society is witnessing a progressive approach to governance that the country has never seen before.

Rodrigo Duterte, the 16th president of the Philippines, was born in Maasin, Leyte on March 28, 1945. He finished his elementary at Sta. Ana Elementary School, in Davao City. The son of a former governor of the undivided Davao Province, Duterte went to Holy Cross College of Digos (now Cor Jesu College) to complete his secondary education, after

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having been expelled from the Ateneo de Davao University for misconduct. He graduated with a degree in political science in 1968 at the Lyceum of the Philippines and a Bachelor of Laws in 1972 from San Beda College. He passed the bar exam in the same year.

Karl Gaspar, a prominent anthropologist from Mindanao, was a schoolmate of Duterte in high school. Gaspar was incarcerated during Martial Law. Both met again some years after their graduation when Duterte was assigned as the prosecutor in the case filed against him by the Marcos regime. During an interview, Gaspar said: "I did not vote for him…When he won, I was hoping you know that change would come. I was a bit optimistic regarding how he could function as president and truly proud that we have somebody from Davao, from Mindanao who finally made it as the President of the Republic of the Philippines" (Basallajes and Dejito, 2018). But Gaspar was disappointed when Duterte allowed the burial of Marcos in the *Libingan ng mga Bayani*. He is still hopeful, however, that the president will fulfill his promise to end corruption, bring peace to Mindanao, and embrace a truly independent foreign policy (Basallajes and Dejito, 2018).

This study problematizes the style of leadership of Duterte. It will be argued that the linear approach to nation-building will not work given the reality of political discord in nation-states. But this inquiry also examines the role of solidarity in the attempt of charismatic leaders to reverse the fortunes of people. Duterte thinks that his radical means are necessary to alter the destiny of the Filipino people. But more than anything else, the non-traditional ways of his governance reflect the anti-establishment sentiment that now grips the order of things in the world.

To achieve its modest goal of explaining the meaning of Duterte's radical approach, this study employs critical analysis in Philosophy as a research methodology. Philosophy does not have a singular approach. The search for the truth depends on the rigor of critical thinking. But it is nonetheless concerned with profound questions. While philosophical thought abstracts from the real world, it also seeks answers to those questions that have implications to human life. While philosophical reflection is not a prominent way of doing research in Philippine studies, it is helpful if people understand their self-identity.

To elaborate this issue, the research firstly discusses the advent of terrorism and shows how the same is bred in nation-states like the Philippines. It begins with the Marawi Crisis since how Duterte has quelled the rebellion is suggestive of his strong leadership. Second, the meaning of radical politics in nation-states is considered under which the paper explores whether Duterte's style of leadership fits the description. Third, while the progressive approach of the current Philippine president is seen as disruptive, the paper argues that it is crucial in transforming Philippine politics. Fourth, this study examines the root cause

of the Bangsamoro problem and argues that Duterte's radical leadership is crucial in addressing the historical injustices done against Muslim Filipinos. Finally, the paper reveals a gap in personalistic politics and proposes that strengthening basic institutions is paramount in achieving the ends of social justice.

The Marawi Crisis and the Advent of Terror

On May 23, 2017, a terrorist organization called *Dawlah Islamiyah*, locally known as the Maute Group, raised the ISIS Flag in Marawi City, a bustling urban center in western Mindanao, 506 miles away from Manila. On the same day, while on an official State Visit to Russia, President Duterte declared *Martial Law* on the whole island of Mindanao. The Maute Group had one aim – to establish the first Islamic caliphate in this part of Southeast Asia. Led by two brothers, Omar and Abdullah Maute, the group made an alliance with another terror organization – the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). Five months after quelling the violent siege in Marawi, the Armed Forces of the Philippines reported that 802 militants, 160 government forces, and 47 civilians have been killed (Fonbuena, 2017). Duterte's leadership was critical in ending the rebellion. The president visited Marawi during combat to boost the morale of soldiers on the ground. No Philippine president in more than half a century has done the same.

The Abu Sayyaf group is infamous for the Sipadan hostage crisis. The notorious terrorist organization was organized by a mujahideen, Abdurajak Janjalani. Its links to Al Qaeda can be traced to the fact that Janjalani fought alongside Osama Bin Laden against the Russians during the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It was reported that the terrorist received six million dollars from Bin Laden to establish the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). The militant organization, which bombed the Superferry 14 passenger vessel in the Philippines in 2004, killing 116 people in the process, follows the *Wahhabi* doctrine of Sunni Islam. The ASG has attracted young Muslim Filipinos, mostly from the provinces of Basilan and Sulu.

Before the US 9/11 attacks, Bin Laden was consolidating power as the great leader of *Al-Qaeda* (Bergen, 2011). He inspired his disciples who often described the experience with the terrorist as a spiritual awakening. Peter Bergen (2011) wrote that the first encounters with Bin Laden by his followers were found to be awe-inspiring and felt with God-like reverence. Though born with an enormous fortune, being the son of a rich Saudi contractor, Bin Laden gave up a life of luxury. He was viewed as an extraordinarily charismatic man (Bergen, 2011). The terrorist was not just the titular head of the Al Qaeda organization – he was the symbol for *Jihad* or Holy War against the enemies of Islam (Bergen, 2011).

Extremist groups showcase their war as the struggle against what they claim as US hegemony in the world. Terrorist leaders persuade their young

recruits to wear suicide vests by presenting to them a type of an unjust socio-political order in which US imperial interests allegedly undermine the rights of Muslims. But terrorists have no ideology to speak of. They sow fear and only intend to disrupt normal civilian life. Nick Fotion (2004, pp.46) thinks that "there are, of course, degrees of innocence and guilt; but terrorists who choose all their victims in a random or near-random fashion cannot help but victimize people who are innocent of any political wrongdoing."

The random killing of innocent civilians is the conceptual trait of terrorism (Fotion, 2004). Walter Laqueur (1987, pp.143) believes that "terrorists…assume that the slaughter of innocents would sow panic, give them publicity and help to destabilize the state and society." The above point is the standard explanation. However, our task is to examine the reality of terror further in the tension between modern liberalism and the communitarian nature of politics in nation-states. This is indicative that at the heart of modern liberalism "is the problem of peaceful co-existence among people with different conceptions of the good" (Mouffe, 2009, pp.2).

Francis Fukuyama (1992) thinks of liberalism as the finality of history since authoritarian regimes have been collapsing. However, societies are marching into new forms of political enmity. The most contentious issue confronting modern democracy is the question of cultural hegemony. The oppression of millions has taken a radical turn. The political dichotomy between the bourgeois and the proletariat is no longer the greatest threat to the global order. Samuel Huntington (1996, pp.33) explains that "at a more general level, conflicts between rich and poor are unlikely because, except in some special circumstances, poor countries lack the political unity, economic power, or the military capability to challenge rich countries."

The poverty of peoples is the least of the West's concern. The war of cultures is the dragon that will slay modern day liberalism. In various parts of the world, a form of non-traditional state-building is unfolding. After the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, the latter established liberal institutions along tribal lines that are constantly challenged by a crippling extremist insurgency (Schaeffer, 2016). Liberals did not anticipate the rise of radical states. Progressive movements came into the picture to challenge the central tenets and the universal appeal of liberal values. Iraq to this day is still marred by lawless violence, a consequence of a failed Western experiment that insists on a brand of democracy that the Iraqi people find alien to their own way of life.

The political struggles in the second half of the past century have become the stress test for Marxist theory. The idea of hegemony points beyond its Marxist interpretation. History cannot be dissolved as some of form a totality (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). In fact, the homogenous way of understanding the

struggles in the peripheries of society should be rejected. Our historical situation says that we have to look beyond the grandeur of liberal concepts. Modern society and capitalism are in such a quandary that the rich-versus-poor divide is no longer sufficient to understand the complexities of modern day politics. We need to underscore the relevance of culture and history to unveil the solid reasons behind the emergence of progressive styles of governance in the world that appear to eschew established political norms.

The Radical Politics of Nation-States

Chantal Mouffe's *The Return of the Political* is an important work in which she explains the distinction between politics and the political. For her, politics is concerned with structures and institutions while the political refers to the reality of conflicts in socio-political relations. Radical democracy does not presuppose any moral position but rightly distinguishes the political from the moral. Mouffe thinks that conflict is the unavoidable characteristic of the political. In this sense, agonistic politics is grounded in the belief that society is not a uniform set of identities. While citizens desire to achieve the common good through a shared vision, the reality is that there are hierarchical differences in the polity.

Deliberative democracy suggests that human reason should be operative and foundational in the conduct of the affairs of the state. Consensus is viewed as the basis for the possibility of harmony in society. But the idea of social harmony is ironical since it is the dominant majority that often imposes its will. This implies the permanence of dissension or disagreement (Mouffe, 1995). The powerful sees as a necessary birthing pain the sacrifice of the people to achieve a certain form of socio-political order. But the idea of a consensus is no more than a cover up for the protection of the self-serving interests of the elite. For instance, Indigenous Peoples (IP) in the Philippines have been displaced and many are forced out of their ancestral homes due to extractive mining activities (Ty, 2010).

Mouffe (1995) thinks that modern liberalism failed to recognize the value of the political. Social cooperation for liberals is rooted in a neutral starting point. But the vision of a well-ordered society is no more than a theoretical innovation. Liberals seem to suggest that conflicts can be done away with through a negotiating process (Mouffe, 1995). However, Mouffe (1993) says that any well-ordered society does not leave enough space for disagreement. In contrast, there is a need to imagine conflict as a condition for establishing pluralism in society (Mouffe, 1993).

Radical democracy embodies the politics of nation-states. Tom Nairn and Paul James (2005) explain that ethno-nationalism emanates from small-town narratives. The tension in nation states necessitates leaders to act as martyrs for the people. Macario Sakay is a primary example (Ochosa, 2005). The colonial

government had labeled him a bandit. The reality was that the revolutionary simply continued the fight against the Americans. The story of Miguel Malvar, for instance, reveals that an interesting trait of heroes is that as a leader they have acted like a father-figure whose main task was to protect the people (Ochosa, 2005). In such a context, local folks find the soul of their community by way of blood ties.

Given a unique culture, history, and belief system, a nation-state is bound to form its own conception of the good. Thus, the politics of nation-states defies a common logic (Mouffe, 1995). For example, a leader like Duterte would demand that no foreign country should interfere in his decisions. It is for this reason that he is perceived as unconventional. Duterte's unprecedented pivot to China and his open admiration of the kind of leader that Vladimir Putin is do not mean that he wants to be influenced by those two world figures. Rather, his move is an act of defiance from the established global order.

The prevailing international human rights regime, which is liberal in scope and practice, appears to have no impact on Duterte's frame of mind. Duterte's radicalism translates to divisive policy decisions. But Duterte, it can be argued, does not oppose the universal concept of human rights, although he thinks that protecting the lives of the people is on top of his agenda. Duterte has not categorically said that he wants to do away with due process. What he has suggested during his speeches was that the police have the right to defend themselves if there is a threat to their lives in their pursuit of criminals.

But the mystique in Duterte's style of leadership indicate how he has effectively captured the imagination of the majority of the Filipino people. Duterte is paradoxical because while he is accused of violating human rights, people continue to believe in his cause of protecting the public from hardened criminals. Although he curses prominent personalities, including Pope Francis, the predominantly Catholic country has not wavered in their support for Duterte's tough approach to politics and governance. Duterte has plenty of critics who point out the controversial appointments of some personalities to official posts, but the president popularity has not waned because he has also instantly fired public officials who are allegedly involved in corruption. He is accused of machismo, but he remains endeared to women in his sorties because of his ability to charm his way into the hearts and minds of the masses.

Modern politics cannot be dictated by absolute norms. Modern democracy cannot be limited to rational discourse (Mouffe, 1995). Modern societies recognize the right of the people to express dissent against the government. The crowd in street protests are considered as part of informal democratic interactions. Politics goes beyond parliamentary deliberations. Alan Finlayson (2009, pp.13) says that while modern democracy reveals the

"accommodation of various identities and interests," the reality is that "radical democracy emphasizes how these are permanently contested in ways that transform them."

Reynaldo Silvestre (2016) says that, "Mr. Duterte is radical because, as empirically defined, he opposes the established political structure, wholly or partly." Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that radical democracy is dependent on difference-politics. The Filipino people agonize from the inequalities in the socio-political and economic structures of the country. Many do not see hope. His supporters think that only Duterte can defy the powers-that-be stationed in the capital. Silvestre (2016) says that it is Duterte who "opposes a unitary and highly centralized political structure that had crafted myopic public policies." Silvestre (2016) points out that the radicalism of Duterte is "a deliberate and persistent thrust toward a qualitative change in the socio-political *status quo*."

Disruptive Politics and Personalistic Leadership

Duterte has been criticized for targeting human rights, freedom of the press, and the Catholic Church. The president appears to be obliterating his opposition. Sen. Leila de Lima, a vocal critic, is in jail. Supreme Court Chief Justice Ma. Lourdes Sereno, an appointee of the past administration, was booted out from office in a *quo warranto* case. Indeed, Duterte's brand of politics is perceived as nothing short of being disruptive. The Philippine president disdains protocols and veers away from the established traditions of the office. Mustafa Dikec (2017) says that disruptive politics is not only for the sake of disruption. Disruption is necessary in the attempt to question the *status quo*.

Duterte's presidential campaign capitalized on the failures of the Aquino government. By exacerbating the suffering of the people during Typhoon Yolanda due to his impersonal approach, President Aquino just showed proof of his inept and weak leadership. In contrast, as one of the earliest to go to Tacloban City, Duterte presented himself as the hope of the people. Duterte was seen as a caring father figure. This highlighted the incompetence of the former administration. Such complemented the feelings of disillusionment in the minds of many Filipinos.

In fact, Duterte's personalistic leadership has become a legend to many who idolize him. What is the source of the Duterte legend? First, his popularity may be anchored in his boldness in addressing the problem of criminality. He has threatened drug personalities in public when he was mayor. Duterte views the world using lenses that have an impact in the mindset of the people. For him, the duty of a leader remains singular – to protect public order. The ethical way, it appears, is not part of his political equation. For the majority who knows the troubles of Philippine democracy, it is the political will of a leader that matters. President Aquino lacked courage. In a

country that is wanting in discipline, Duterte succeeded in presenting himself as the true champion of law and order.

Second, the development of Davao City reflects the huge confidence of the public in Duterte. Between 1980 and 1986, the city was a picture of chaos and a violent insurgency. Duterte changed this situation when he became mayor. Duterte promised that he can also achieve the same result for the whole country. Deterring criminals is one of the instruments that the president thinks will bring discipline and public order. Davao's story is not a miracle. It is a product of strong leadership and the kind of discipline that Duterte inculcated in the local population. Duterte's governance centered only on one thing – his peace and order campaign. But while this is the case, Davao has since achieved real progress and development. For Duterte, the job of a politician is not to be a preacher.

Religious critics say that Duterte is terrorizing the poor. The Catholic Church's opposition to his "War on Drugs" is grounded on the claim that many of the victims of summary executions belong to the poor. According to Fr. Daniel Franklin Pilario (2017, pp.160), "the only cries we hear are the wailing of mothers, widows, and children as they see the bodies of their beloved now bloodied and lifeless." Fr. Pilario is expressing the pain felt by the victims of summary executions, most of whom lived in poor neighborhoods. Extra-judicial killings are wrong, but the victims remain voiceless because they are stricken with the fear of more violence. The poor, Fr. Pilario (2017) continues, "painfully suffers in silence." Still, the president has remained unperturbed. He even vowed to pursue a relentless campaign against illegal drugs.

In another front, Duterte is also waging war against the country's oligarchs. It seems to be the case that the traditional elite in the capital are shocked by the unpredictability of Duterte. The president has challenged prominent individuals. He has forced big time tax evaders like Mighty Corporation to settle its obligation amounting to thirty billion pesos, the biggest tax settlement ever in the country's history. Hence, the trust and confidence of the Filipino people in Duterte remain high because they think that he delivers on his promises.

The problem is that the critics of the president express things without realizing that their judgments appear to be impositions of standards that are bred in the West. Such is ignorant of the history and context that local folks share. Moralizing the political is tantamount to painting a homogenous world order that is overly dependent on Western rationalizations. It disregards the reality that such external standards also preclude people from determining the importance of their communal values. While ideals and universal values are good on paper, the reality on the ground is different given the context of culture and history that people are situated in.

In the politics of nation-states, it is critical to see how local folks have

interacted with their own leaders. The social bond is stronger. The relation between the leader and his constituents is beyond the formality of public discourse. For example, Duterte deals directly with ordinary people, goes to the wakes of fallen soldiers, and uses a language that the common *tao* (human person) can understand. Western-bred politicians are impersonal. But local politics is always personal. The people's deep sense of belonging naturally arises from the solidarity within one's group. This type of unity often ignites the drive that characterizes the quest for self-determination.

There is resistance to the licentious approach of Duterte. However, local context is important to demonstrate Duterte's disruptive style. Millions of Filipinos have long been repressed by an old order that continues to ignore the plight of the poor. It is not just the rising middle class that pushed Duterte's prominence to a higher level prior to the national elections. Rather, it is the failure of the second Aquino administration to recognize the just demands of ordinary Filipinos that paved the way for all the troubles that we find in contemporary Philippine politics.

The unique feature of politics in nation-states, including the traditions and cultures in which societies are embedded, encourages people to believe that democracy should embrace difference. This is the only way for Philippine society to escape the totalizing gaze of an oppressive political order that is rooted in its colonial history. Decentering politics necessitates the collapse of the present political terrain. As a leader, Duterte is unafraid of the repercussions of his decisions to his future in office. This type of aggressiveness renders the judgment that the president is in fact sincere in his desire to change the course of the nation's fate. Filipinos trust the president because they have been fed up by a rotten system that only caters to the elite but has deprived the ordinary citizen the opportunity to enjoy one's entitlements and socio-economic rights.

Tracing the Root of the Bangsamoro Problem

The rebellion in the Bangsamoro must be differentiated from the Philippine Revolution. In fact, according to Orlino Ochosa, the revolution against Spain "was national and democratic in form but not in outlook since the leadership was predominantly middle-class Tagalog" (Ochosa 2005, pp.11). The unity in early Philippine society was an alien thing. But it was not the Filipinos who caused this social fragmentation. The Spaniards imposed their "divide and conquer" rule to serve their selfish colonial goals. The "Magdalo" and "Magdiwang" faction of the *Katipunan* was a clear example, with the *ilustrado* Emilio Aguinaldo ordering the execution of Andres Bonifacio, the founder of the *Katipunan*, who was a *masa* (common folk).

The Americans instituted a patronage system that created the division between national and provincial elites. As

a result, the centralized government that Americans instituted guaranteed the domination of the Tagalogs in Manila. This created not only the rich-versus-poor or elite-versus-masses dichotomy, but also a profound Christian-Muslim divide. For Salah Jubair (2007, pp.9) the truth was that the "Philippine government refuses to solve the problem in Muslim Mindanao to the satisfaction of the Moros because most of the implementers do not have sympathy for the Moros."

The series of events that led to the outbreak of the war in Mindanao all started with the 1968 Jabidah Massacre (Gloria, 2014). In the island of Corregidor, a group of young Muslim military trainees in the Armed Forces of the Philippines were executed by their comrades after protesting the non-payment of their monthly allowance. Recruited by then President Marcos for a clandestine plan to infiltrate Sabah, the murders ignited the political feelings of Muslim Filipinos. Despite the reality of being neglected by Manila, Filipino Muslims had no prior interest in politics. For Jubair (2007), many Muslim Filipinos in Mindanao carry profound grievances against the government. He says that "when the very survival of the Moros was threatened by this 'ethnic cleansing' they were forced to react, organize and fight back to survive, which later shaped into a revolutionary struggle with ideology, political and military machinery." (Jubair, 2007, pp.10).

Abhoud Shed Lingga (2015) says that Muslim leaders think that Mindanao should have been excluded from the *Treaty of Paris* because the Spaniards have never subjugated the island. Renato Constantino (1974) explains that the isolation of Muslim Mindanao allowed it to preserve its local culture and religion. He also points out that "throughout the Spanish occupation, the Muslims were not considered part of the developing society and was treated a foreign territory" (Constantino, 1974, pp.6). Francisco Lara Jr. (2015) writes that before the Spanish colonizers arrived in the country and attempted to conquer Mindanao, the region has already been under the control of Muslim sultanates.

The political and social division in Mindanao is rooted in the exclusion of the Bangsamoro. Muslim Filipinos resent their poverty (Rasul, 2007). The Muslim Filipinos have persisted in their struggle for political freedom (Lara, 2015). Past administrations have failed to find a lasting solution to the Bangsamoro problem. The subjugation of Muslim Filipinos continues because the majority benefits from the socio-economic divide. In this sense, the unity in the Bangsamoro has become so elusive, "even if that unity is meant to refer only to unity in overarching purpose, not organizational structure" (Ferrer, 2015, pp.126).

The rural South in the country often yields a sad picture of a mansion that is surrounded by shanties whose occupants live in dire or abject misery. Such has become the image of the economic and political backwardness of the Bangsamoro for decades. Millions have remained poor due to the

malevolence of social and political domination (Maboloc, 2017). For the people in Manila, the Bangsamoro is nothing but a breeding ground for terrorist organizations like the ASG. Wataru Kusaka (2017) says that the president's strong appeal among Muslims is evidenced by his timely call to recognize the rights of Muslims as the original inhabitants of Mindanao.

The economic injustices committed against Muslims is apparent in view of the inability of the national government to allocate enough resources for the basic services of the people. In this regard, the struggle for recognition is a question of how a historical wrong can be corrected by means of radical leadership. Recognizing the rights of Muslim Filipinos means that the state must enact laws that support their welfare – sufficient income, enough food, and decent shelter.

Discrimination silences the capacity of human beings to expand their freedoms and live the kind of life they value. The prejudice against Muslim Filipinos means that the youth in Basilan and Maguindanao have lesser chances or nothing to attain a life that is truly worth living. Being hopeless, some young Muslims are forced to take up arms to rebel against the government or join extremist groups. Duterte hopes to reform the old social dynamics in a radical way by spending his political capital exorcising the evil spirit of a colonial past.

The root of the Bangsamoro problem, thus, is historical injustice. The Bangsamoro Organic Law, which has been approved recently, is meant to rectify the mistakes of the past. It sets aside a block grant of 100 billion pesos. The law is anchored on the concept of wealth sharing and self-rule. Duterte is determined to give Muslim Mindanao their genuine autonomy, including the power to control and exploit the natural resources in the territory. Shariah courts will also be recognized, giving Muslim Filipinos the right to pursue the administration of their own justice system, subject to limits set in the Philippine Constitution.

Strong Leader, Weak Institutions

Duterte inherited a position that was hungry for someone with the bravery to determine the destiny of a people weakened by regional divide, hopelessness, and confusion. The president thus emerged as a strong leader who is afraid of nothing. Nations that are former colonies often suffer from the stigma of an extractive economic system that has impoverished the lives of the people. The Philippines falls fittingly into that description. Given this, in the minds of many, someone who has the will to do what is necessary to dismantle systemic injustices is the kind of leader that people need.

But the problem of Philippine democracy is not just a question of leadership. For the longest time, Filipinos have been deprived of their sense of identity, having been subjected to colonial rule. The vast majority do not control their future. The oligarchs and political elite define for the people the meaning of their

existence. A poor child born in the province is forced to think that human poverty is a no more than a curse. The lack of inclusiveness in the domain of the public sphere means that people are powerless.

The point is that focusing on Duterte's personality glosses over the real issue that the Filipino people has to face – their lack of unity. Of course, a society should be able to determine how it can benefit from the political will of a leader. Duterte has a huge appeal because the Philippines as a country needs discipline. This lack of discipline may be partly blamed on colonial history. But if the country must inoculate its future generations from the ignominy of the past, then it must pursue institutional reforms collectively.

Strong leaders appear to be necessary because institutions are weak and undemocratic. When dysfunction is entrenched in the bureaucracy, the inefficiency of the government system is no more than a reflection of the pervasiveness of structural inequalities. It is of course wrong to say that Duterte's alleged lack of decorum has no impact in the moral lives of the people. But any analysis must move beyond Duterte's persona. Political commitments can be shattered by some contingent interests anytime. The primary duty of citizens is to strengthen the basic structure if as a society they so desire to serve the ends of justice.

Conclusion

Let us draw some conclusions. The first has something to do with terrorism and its relation to politics. Terrorism has arrived upon Philippine shores in part due to the Muslim insurgency. But if the Filipino people were to confront it, then beyond the need for strong leadership which Duterte has shown in his resolve to quell the Maute rebellion, it is necessary to uproot the consciousness of the people from the desire for homogeneity. Following the analysis of Mouffe, a universal moral order will only bring more problems.

The second has something to do with the meaning of democracy. Democratic institutions are never perfect. Duterte is seen as the kind of leader that Filipinos need. The context of post-colonial politics in the country is important. For Duterte, the protection of the public is what the common good is all about. The problem, in this regard, is not the vitriolic language of the president. While the country is a communitarian society, it can be argued that institutional mechanisms to political reform must remain relevant.

The third suggests that people cannot overestimate the value of consensus and it is wrong to underestimate the reality of conflict and antagonism. Radical democracy insists that people must be emancipated from the dictates of cultural hegemony, which is the original intent of Laclau and Mouffe. The Western point of view cannot and must not dictate how local folks are to

determine the political values that they embrace. These are intangible things that people share by reason of history and blood ties. Radical politics, in this way, is historically rooted.

The fourth concerns the struggles of the Bangsamoro. Duterte is in an opportune time to be able to advance the interest of Mindanao and finally liberate it from the claws of Manila's imperial rule. The domination of the Muslims by the Christian majority is obvious. Massive poverty plagues the people in the Bangsamoro. The historical context of Mindanao cannot be put aside. Mindanao was not subjugated by foreign rulers. Duterte knows that such plays a crucial role in understanding the importance and purpose of his radical leadership.

Lastly, weak leaders, as shown by the failures of President Aquino, are disastrous for any society. Charismatic leaders have firm commitments to a cause. The antagonistic nature of politics may be disruptive by nature, but such is necessary to achieve concrete changes in the lives of the people. The radical means of Duterte appear to be non-negotiable. But the bigger challenge lies in the fact that to sustain meaningful transformations under the present administration, institutional reforms should be seriously pursued.

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