

An Attempt at Dissecting the Presidency of Rodrigo Roa Duterte: A Very Personal View

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DIS-SECT. Verb.

Methodically cut up (a body, part, or plant) in order to study its internal parts. Synonyms: anatomize, cut up/open, dismember.

Analyze (something) in minute detail. Synonyms: analyze, examine, study, scrutinize, pore over, investigate, go over with a fine-tooth comb.¹

Considering the health scare and coup rumors surrounding President Duterte recently, the word dissect may take on vicious meanings. But the usage of this word in this essay is more related to making a serious study into how his presidency has evolved through the almost two years since he took over as the 16th President of the Republic of the Philippines. But mine is but an attempt as the subject of this study is a complex person which is why I have tried to also listen to other voices doing their own dissecting of the subject. And lately, there have been quite a lot appearing in both mass and social media.

Mine is also a very personal view. Having known him since 1962, almost half-a-century ago² and with our paths crossing at

¹ See: <https://www.google.com.ph/search?q=DISSECT&oq=DISSECT&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l5.5353j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8> (accessed 12 September 2018).

various junctures of our lives,³ I do have a glimpse of who he was before becoming President. I have also tried my best to follow the news in terms of how he has functioned as the country's Chief Executive. These long-time association with him and a continuing engagement of "experiential participation" as a citizen of this Republic might as well provide me with insights that could assist in the act of dissecting.⁴

So where to start? Numbers, as in statistics, could surely help. Since he got elected up to the time of his first State of the Nation Address, he enjoyed a very high ratings in popularity surveys, some of the highest enjoyed by any President (according to Pulse Asia, he had 91% trust rating). But the latest figures of the Social Weather Stations, indicated that "70 percent of Filipinos were satisfied, 14 percent dissatisfied and 17 percent undecided with Duterte's performance...This gives Duterte a 'very good' net satisfaction rating of 56 percent" which is still considered very good.⁵

What have accounted for the dip in his popularity rating? There are various opinions suggested by a few opinion-makers critical of his administration as to why including the following:

...(T)he country (is) reeling from the effects of rapid inflation, the sharp depreciation of the peso, and, amid the

² I was a Third-Year high school student of the Holy Cross Academy, Boys Department (now known as Cor Jesu College) in Digos City when he came to enroll in the same school. We were classmates for two schoolyears (1961-62, 1962-63).

³ In 1983-85, I was a political prisoner detained at the Davao City Metrodiscom. A few occasions, I was brought by the military to the Regional Trial Court for the court hearings as the martial law government of Mr. Marcos charged me with subversion. There, the State prosecutor was my former high school classmate, Atty. Rody Roa Duterte. When he served as Mayor of Davao City, there were also a few occasions when I met him.

⁴ Experiential participation is a methodology that improves on participant observation, as there is a far more involvement of the researcher in the whole process of research not just participating in activities during fieldwork but undergoes a set of experiences that provide a far deeper insight and understanding into the phenomena being studied. See Gaspar 2017, 68 and 2018, xix.

⁵ Audrey Morallo, "Duterte retains 'very good' satisfaction ratings in SWS Survey. *Philippine Star*. 11, April 2018, p. 1.

sustained decline in the value of stock market shares, a growing skepticism about the nation's future.... The people... will not keep quiet when the prices of food and other basic necessities begin to rise way beyond their earning capacities, when the purchasing power of their money is depleted daily, when they lose their jobs, and when they see their children die from lack of medicines and medical care... For many people, the economy, the law, and politics itself, are complex things that only a few can really fathom. But they can quickly sense when their leaders are being honest with them, or when they are feeding them nonsense."⁶

There is very serious grumbling among the people because of the worsening economy. And the public's foul mood has been primed by the President's blasphemous attacks against God and the Catholic Church, his profanities, and his excessive friendliness with China despite the latter's occupation of our territories in the West Philippine Sea.⁷

Instead of having the greater good of the country in mind, these people are only concerned about one thing: staying in power. They're willing to ruin the future of the country by selling out to China, scaring investors away and driving the economy into a downward spiral.⁸

Aside from the agriculture secretary, other political weevils have also slowly degraded decades-old democratic structures that guarantee checks and balances in the three coequal branches of government. For example, no one, not even the president can order warrantless arrests of individuals; neither can a sitting president dictate who will replace him when he deems he cannot fulfill his executive duties anymore. There are provisions in our basic law guaranteeing the process in any government

⁶ David "Measures of Spirit" *Public Lives. Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 9 September 2018c, p. A12, 12).

⁷ Butuyan, "The Emerging successors of Duterte. Flea Market of Ideas" *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 30 July 2018b, p. A14.

⁸ Robert Fuesl. "We're Going Down" *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 10 September 2018, A15.

transaction. These core principles are embedded in our democratic and good governance pillars. Alas, these are slowly being eroded by a *bukbok* style of governance.⁹

So how has this “bukbok style of governance” arise? This paper will answer this question by dealing with an element of Duterte’s Presidency, namely what kind of leader is he? Three lenses will be used from where we will dissect his style of leadership, namely: the indigenous governance style of the *datus* of Lumad communities, the transformational leadership model, and that of Plato’s philosopher-king model.

President Duterte: A Datu, Matikadeng, Fulong or Lukes?

Since he served as Davao City’s long-time Mayor and now as President of the Republic, has President Duterte exhibited some of the traits that transformed some adult men among indigenous communities also known as Lumad into *datu, timoay, matikadeng, fulong or lukes* who are highly regarded and deeply respected by their constituents?¹⁰ From the Paleolithic to the Neolithic eras up to the contemporary period where there are still Lumad communities whose cultures have generally held on to the way of life of their ancestors, such chieftains arose to sustain their indigenous governance systems. These are usually men who lived up to their communities’ expectations of a true leader.

Half-a-century ago, President Duterte’s Cebuano ancestors were part of the archipelago’s tribal population; however, after the Spanish conquest of our islands, his ancestors embraced Christianity. Generations later, some of them migrated to Davao where the President was raised. Despite the cultural gap between the Lumad and the migrant settlers, nonetheless, the indigenous mindset has not totally been lost among the Christian migrant settlers and their descendants. One does wonder if the traits of government leaders of today like the President can still echo those of the *datus* of the bygone centuries.

⁹ Rufa Cagoco-Guiam, “‘Bukbok’ Governance.” *Kris-Crossing Mindanao. Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 10 September 2018, p. A15.

¹⁰ These are the local indigenous names of tribal chieftains in the Manobo, Tagakolo, Blaan and Dulangan Manobos, respectively.

What traits have been associated with the chieftains then and now in Lumad communities? Because there are ethnohistorical and ethnographic documents that have recorded these traits - some of which can still be validated in the lives of some Lumad communities in the upland territories today which researchers have access to during fieldwork - it is easy enough to make a listing of these traits. In this essay we privilege some of this available literature.¹¹

But first what are their roles and functions? Here are a few examples. Among the Manobo datu in North Cotabato, these include the social (receive guests), economic (where and when the village would move for the next cycle of activities), political (keep the peace by setting up alliances) and religious functions (conduct rituals).¹²

For the Ata-Manobo datu in Davao del Norte these are: give advice to the people or his opinions on special & extraordinary circumstances; divide different functions among community members & facilitate assessment of functions; impose sanctions for failures of doing their tasks; determine the children's aptitudes and abilities and how they respond to situations and inclinations, as a way of testing their skills, and; supervise the observance of customary laws.¹³

For the Dulangan Manobo, lukes of Sultan Kudarat Province: have the authority to stand and speak for the community (given

¹¹ See Gaspar, Karl M. *Manobo Dreams in Arakan: A People Struggle to Keep their Homeland* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2011). Rolando O Bajo, *The Ata-Manobo: At the Crossroads of Tradition and Modernization* (Davao City: CARD Publications, 2004). Rafael, Tianero, *Violence and Christianization in Manobo Land* (Cotabato City: Notre Dame University Press, 2015). Rowena R. Boquieren, Marion Antoniette Daclar and Rosalinda Tomas. "Access to Land by IP Groups using Ethnographic Method to Inform Policy Makers." In *Final Report*. See <http://users/user/downloads/IP%20Land%20%Access20%FinalREport> - Boquieren%20rept - Feb 2015, (accessed 12 October 2016).

¹² Karl M. Gaspar, *Manobo Dreams in Arakan: A People Struggle to Keep their Homeland* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2011), 21.

¹³ Rolando O Bajo, *The Ata-Manobo: At the Crossroads of Tradition and Modernization* (Davao City: CARD Publications, 2004), 66-67.

his power that comes from his personally achieved qualities and his supposed supernatural abilities, and his command in the use of wealth materials); impose sanctions upon non-paying groups who renege on an agreed contract; can take away an individual or familiar wealth article/s for purposes of transactions they enter into; exercise control over the traditionally delineated area of influence of his hamlet & has a say in terms of the resources found in it in the name of the hamlet, and; deal with migrant settlers.¹⁴

For the Blaang fulong in South Cotabato, these include: exercise autonomous authority over an area depending on personal influence; have authority to administer justice serving as chief judge; conduct negotiations w/ other village chiefs -Maintain peace & order; make economic and political decisions affecting community, and; serve as over-all leader, counselor, mediator & protector.¹⁵

In order to be able to fulfill these roles and functions and maintain their communities' respect and admiration, the chieftains need the following traits or qualities:

- Have the capacity to resolve tensions & disputes; can solve problems of the community, and are able to have surplus with his livelihood so he can accommodate relatives or give gifts.¹⁶
- Are a model of good behavior, such as responsibility, respectability, concern for the welfare of the community, trustworthiness and peace-minded; show evidence of mental acumen to look through events and things in their proper perspective and address them with perspicacity (keenness of mental perception and understanding; has

¹⁴ Rafael, Tianero, *Violence and Christianization in Manobo Land* (Cotabato City: Notre Dame University Press, 2015), 39-40.

¹⁵ Rowena R. Boquieren, Marion Antoniette Daclar and Rosalinda Tomas. "Access to Land by IP Groups using Ethnographic Method to Inform Policy Makers." In *Final Report*. See <http://users/user/downloads/IP%20Land%20%Access20%FinalREport> - Boquieren%20rept - Feb 2015, (accessed 12 October 2016), 1.

¹⁶ Gaspar, *Manobo Dreams in Arakan: A People Struggle to Keep their Homeland*, 21.

ability for discernment); articulate in expressing ideas; have ability to be listened to by all, even by the elders; not only have the skill in facilitating/settling conflicts but also have the capability of offering service; are willing to solicit the help of other datus when he has a problem in his hands and is unsure of being able to settle this within his jurisdiction all by himself; show industriousness as evidenced by the number of livestock and the quantity of farming produce; are available to offer help to anyone in need and can attend regular meetings.¹⁷

- Show leadership skills; have earned the respect of their kin and co-householders; unsurpassed in oral articulation (to facilitate marriage contracts); have the qualities of bravery in combat and skill in the use of weapons (associated with his presumed supernatural power that make him supposedly invincible to battles and raids), and have command over the *binusaya* (warrior) subjects who at his word would kill erring individuals/groups.¹⁸
- Usually the oldest and wisest in village; expected to have a good character; have adequate communication skills, knowledge of customary laws, the ability to settle disputes/conflicts; have considerable amount of wealth in the form of cultural materials and have physical superiority in being a champion warrior.¹⁹

Naturally these are ideal traits and it has not always been possible for one chieftain to possess all these. But through the centuries there have arisen chieftains who did possess a combination of these qualities, otherwise how could their communities have survived the vicissitudes of time? Alas, these days when State and corporate agencies have corrupted many of the tribal leaders, many of them have become “tribal dealers” (a euphemistic labeling of datus who enter into contracts with corporate firms without consulting their communities and who

¹⁷ Bajo, *The Ata-Manobo: At the Crossroads of Tradition and Modernization*, 66-67.

¹⁸ Tianero, *Violence and Christianization in Manobo Land*, 39-40

¹⁹ Boquieren et. al., “Access to Land by IP Groups using Ethnographic Method to Inform Policy Makers,” 1.

pocket a big chunk of funds intended for all, and/or those who are unable to resist the manipulation of government agencies and the military).

As for President Duterte, can we find these traits in him? Let us take a few of those that are mentioned in a few of our samples:

- **Has the capacity to resolve or settle tensions & disputes; have skill in facilitating/settling conflicts:** By and large, this trait has eluded President Duterte; instead of resolving or settling tensions/disputes, he has been the cause of the eruption of such conflicts. In the course of almost two years he has fought with all those he considers his critics and enemies: foreign and local human rights groups and advocates, media people, those of the opposition especially the likes of Trillanes and the *dilawans*, church-people who take to task his disrespect of the rule of law, and so many others. His relentless drug war that has claimed thousands of EJK victims has also angered a wide range of sectors from the relatives of the victims to those who cannot just tolerate such atrocities. The manner he has treated the Marcoses - from allowing the burial of the ex-dictator in the Libingan to his endorsement of Bongbong - has only provoked the ire of those who would not allow the memory of the vicious regime to fade without the Marcoses first acknowledging the evils committed by their patriarch and to return all that they stole from the State coffers. True he signed the Bangsamoro Organic Law but then he is partly to blame for the destruction of Marawi.
- **Is a model of good behavior, such as responsibility and respectability:** Polite society cringe whenever the President speaks extemporaneously, even in such formal events as during his State of the Nation Address as these have been occasions when he uses cuss words, rants and curse anyone he wants to attack at a given moment. His supporters and spin doctors would justify all these as the “Bisaya way” or that he is only joking; but no matter how they belittle the impact of this kind of behavior from the Chief Executive of the land, and even if critiqued as part of

the whims of the bourgeoisie, nonetheless, universal protocols demand that the President be a statesman. Women are especially offended with his rape jokes and misogynistic behavior, over and beyond his treatment of women leaders who oppose him (the likes of Robredo, Carpio, De Lima and Sereno). No wonder the foreign press has been harsh in their representations of him.

- **Has concern for the welfare of the community:** He has always claimed that he cares a lot for his country. However, if he is truly concerned for the welfare of the community, how come he has been powerless to arrest the fast-increasing inflation rate, resulting in rocketing prices of prime commodities, and contributing further to the poverty of the people. Instead of dealing with these urgent problems, he continues to wage the drug war but allows corruption to get worse within the bureaucracy. There is, however, one sector he is very concerned with, namely the military/police as he has doubled their pay to assure their loyalty and support on his drug war and to discourage any coup attempts.
- **Has trustworthiness and is peace-minded:** Has he been trustworthy in terms of fulfilling his election promises? He did promise to end the proliferation of drugs in a matter of months only, but this has not come to pass despite the tremendous loss of lives. He promised to end corruption, but he is surrounded with lackeys who are out to corner lucrative business contracts for their families and friends. He did promise to end all the rebellions through the negotiations with all armed groups. Except the MILF, all other groups are still waging their armed resistance to the State from the CPP-NPA to the ISIS-inspired extremist groups. He has not even succeeded in making sure that peace reigns within his own family and in the ranks of his political allies who are caught in power struggles.
- **Is able to show evidence of mental acumen to look through events and things in their proper perspective and address them with perspicacity (or keenness of mental perception and understanding, or has ability for discernment):** In fairness, there have been instances when the President did manifest such acumen and

perspicacity, e.g. when he referred to how “historical injustices” have been committed against the Moro/Lumad peoples in Mindanao, the times he critiqued the imperialist policies of the U.S.A., and when - at the early stage of his administration - he was open to working with the militant left by appointing some of them in his Cabinet. However, there have been more evidence of a lack of such acumen and keenness. Consider the following: how he concluded that his strategy would solve the drug menace, how he has allowed China to bully us so he can secure more investments and aid, how he has dealt with the rumors of his serious illness and how he is dealing with the country’s economic crisis.

- **Unsurpassed in oral articulation; articulate in expressing ideas and have adequate communication skills:** There is no question that during the election campaign, a major segment of the Filipino people - those from Mindanao, the OFWs, the rural folks, the urban poor - were mesmerized convincing them to vote for him. It cannot be denied he has charisma, that he is able to draw the attention of the crowds who can lustily laugh at his jokes, no matter how crude. When he goes abroad and meet the OFWs, they relate to him as if he were a rock star or a movie celebrity. Which is to say that President Duterte can hold a crowd at the palm of his hand. However, does this mean that as the Chief Executive, he has been able to articulate a clear vision of his administration and can then mobilize his audience to take an active part in nation-building that champions the common good? The fact is that there has been a paucity of visionary ideas coming out of his mouth that would inspire the people to downplay their own personal interests in favor of that of the nation. Instead, we’ve been bombarded with slogans reverberating like sounds from a broken record focusing mainly on the drug war and his tirades against all his perceived enemies. In his SONAS and addresses, we have not been gifted with a high eloquence fitting to someone who sits at the Presidential chair that quenches our thirst for inspiration and makes us proud as Filipinos.

- **Is willing to solicit the help of other datos when he has a problem in his hands and is unsure of being able to settle this within his jurisdiction all by himself; has the ability to be listened to by all, even by the elders:** A wise datu knows and accepts his limitations; he is humble enough to realize that there are times he cannot just be a lone wolf in dealing with his community's problems. The higher the position, the greater is the need for teamwork and collaboration. Which is why the President has a Cabinet; and so many undersecretaries. At his disposal is an Advisory Council composed of highly respected government emeritus. For sure there is a powerful inner circle that serves as his *cordon sanitaire*, and one guesses that apart from Bong Go, these are some of his trusted allies when he was Mayor of Davao City and a few AFP Generals beholden to him. But are these the right people to be consulted? Presently, there seems to be little teamwork among the trusted men as it is getting clearer that the administration is in flux. This is clearest in how they are dealing with supposedly one of the President's precious gift to the Filipino people - turning the Philippines into a federal democracy. But for all intent and purposes, for the moment federalism is dead, getting very little support from the people.

This listing of the above traits that President Duterte should have if he is to replicate the indigenous style of leadership of our datos show that he has failed in living up to this template that arose out of the wisdom of our ancestors. Instead, he subverts the ideal model and comes up with his own style that can perhaps be referred to as "bukbok" style of governance. However, it is not as if he fails totally for there are traits to which he has manifested, namely the following:

- **Has physical superiority in being a champion warrior and has the qualities of bravery in combat and skill in the use of weapons:** In many photo-ops since he was Mayor, he has shown that he can muster bravery (as in the times he would enter the NPA area to negotiate the release of captured policemen) and is quite adept at the use of

guns. Unfortunately, he does not enjoy physical superiority as he has been hit with all kinds of illness for a number of years which led to all kinds of health scare these days.

- **Has command over the...subjects who at his word would kill erring individuals/groups:** From the Davao Death Squads of the Davao campaign when he was Mayor to the Davao Boys of EJK fame in today's nation-wide drug war...does the buck stop at the very top?

There is also another indigenous angle through which we can view President Duterte's persona and this can be deduced from a Maranaw folktale - Tales of Pilandok,²⁰ the quintessential *pusong* or trickster.²¹ Mayuga writes: "Barely a month since his victory, a country of 100 million is now on tenterhooks over Duterte's flip-flopping pronouncements. 'What is this new President?' people ask. Such real-life surrealism easily summons that folk hero of Duterte's native Mindanao—Pilandok, who must have seeped into his psyche in his youth. Have we actually opened a door to the realm of myth and fable with our first President from Mindanao?²² She warns her readers that with his authority and charisma, the President "captivates crowds in a way that none of the other presidential candidates could..." and "even as his words could easily be labeled "sexist, homophobic, even barbaric things people are less critical, not just because they would normally condone such statements, but also because they've been hypnotized."²³

Rafael also writes about President Duterte's use of obscenities and misogynistic remarks as a "way of asserting his sovereignty" and ...as "an enactment of a freedom from the constraints of

²⁰ Sylvia Mayuga, "President Pilandok" *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 7 June 2016. See:<http://opinion.inquirer.net/95092/president-pilandok#ixzz5QlCWJvJh>

²¹ Vicente L. Rafael, "Duterte, the authoritarian trickster." Commentary. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 5 September 2018, p. A11.

²² Tales of Pilandok was written by theater man Frank Rivera who directed the play involving the members of Mindanao State University's Sining Kambayoka. Pilandok also figures in poet Virgilio Almario's children's story - "Pilandok and the Crocodiles." See Mayuga, 2016.

²³ Sylvia, Mayuga. "President Pilandok." *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 7 June 2016. See:<http://opinion.inquirer.net/95092/president-pilandok#ixzz5QlCWJvJh>.

responsibility and the norms of decency.” By being actually undisturbed by his unrestrained profanities and sexual banter, he thumbs his nose at polite society that expects discipline and decorum from the Chief Executive asserting that “he will not be bound by the norms of decency, or *delicadeza*, as his political opponents insist, just as he refuses to abide by the laws of due process and the protection of human rights.” By acting in this manner, he becomes a “sort of trickster (the Pinoy *pusong*, a staple figure in traditional *komedya* and folktales) figure who entertains by veiling his aggression with jokes and obscenities.”²⁴ Unfortunately, there is a large segment of his audience who are drawn to this style and can turn un-critical in the manner that he deals with his critics that to him are but stereotypes and “caricatures ripe for vicious attacks.”²⁵

President Duterte: A Transformational Leader?

In the field of corporate management, there have arisen various theories on the various types of leadership. The more unfavorable ones are known as *authoritarian*, *paternalistic*, and *laissez-faire* types.²⁶ An authoritarian leader insists that those under him follow the vision of those that are in control, whether this is compatible with those that are being led or not; his focus is on efficiency and considers a democratic style as a hindrance to progress. On the other hand, paternalistic leaders serve as a parental figure who take care of his/her subordinates as a parent would. Thus, they show complete concern for his followers or workers. The *laissez-faire* leader’s style is where all the rights and power to make decisions is fully given to the worker who is given the free hand to decide on policies and methods but which which leaves followers to fend for themselves.²⁷

²⁴ Vicente L. Rafael, “Duterte, the authoritarian trickster.” Commentary. Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5 September 2018, p. A11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ D.E. Foster, “A Method of of Comparing Follower Satisfaction with the Authoritarian, Democratic, and Laissez-faire Styles of Leadership” *Communication Teacher*. 16 (2): 4–6, 2002.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Then there is the transactional leadership which focuses on the use of rewards and punishments in order to achieve compliance from followers. It works well within the existing status quo and would not try to change the prevalent culture. It emphasizes management techniques around compliance, structure, hierarchy, job tasks, reward and punishment, in contrast to more modern leadership techniques like empowerment and inspiration.²⁸

There is also the democratic leader who shares the decision-making among the group members which leads to social equality. It is based on the notion that everyone, imbued with human qualities should take an active part in making decisions. By virtue of their human status, they should play a part in the group's decisions. It is an effective style that leads to higher productivity owing to the high morale in the workplace. The better ideas and more creative solutions to problems arise. However, even if this is democratic, the leader must make decisions on who and to what extent is their participation. It also has a possible downside when roles are unclear, or time is of the essence, as it could lead to communication failures and uncompleted projects.²⁹

Lastly, there is the transformational leader who:

.... works with teams to identify needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executing the change in tandem with committed members of a group; it is an integral part of the Full Range Leadership Model. Transformational leadership serves to enhance the motivation, morale, and job performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms; these include connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to a project and to the collective identity of the organization; being a role model for followers in order to inspire them and to raise their interest in the project; challenging followers to take greater ownership for their work, and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers,

²⁸ Bernard M. Bass and Stogdill. *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research and Managerial Applications*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990.

²⁹ Foster, "A Method of Comparing Follower Satisfaction with the Authoritarian, Democratic, and Laissez-faire Styles of Leadership."

allowing the leader to align followers with tasks that enhance their performance.³⁰

The top trait of successful transformational leaders is that they are able to listen.³¹ It is common knowledge that those who are unable to listen with their hearts in a manner that their interaction with others is characterized by respect and compassion are those who often times face tensions, conflicts and difficulties in their relationships at home and at the workplace. To be able to listen with one's heart, leaders much not impose their will on others.

They listen to learn, not to teach or impose but rather to make sense of their environment and challenges, they are without any fixed agenda but enter into relationships with a purposeful intent in terms of building bridges. They listen towards finding solutions that bring about long-term good for all and not just their own interests. In the course of their listening, they can actually grow and find innovative ways of responding to issues and develop further as they have deeper insights into how they can play their part in solving the problem at hand.³²

Bass and Stogdill (1990) enumerates the different aspects of this style of leadership to include:

- Emphasizing intrinsic motivation and positive development of followers
- Raising awareness of moral standards
- Highlighting important priorities
- Fostering higher moral maturity in followers
- Creating an ethical climate (share values, high ethical standards)

³⁰ Bass and Stogdill, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research and Managerial Applications*, 5.

³¹ Kathy Caprino, "Transformational Leaders: The Top Trait that Separates them from the rest." 3 February 2018. See: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathycaprino/2018/02/03/transformational-leaders-the-top-trait-that-separates-them-from-the-rest/#41ea74b652cc> (accessed 2 September 2018).

³² *Ibid.*

- Encouraging followers to look beyond self-interests to the common good
 - Promoting cooperation and harmony
 - Using authentic, consistent means
 - Using persuasive appeals based on reason
 - Providing individual coaching and mentoring for followers
 - Appealing to the ideals of followers
 - Allowing freedom of choice for followers

They add that there are 4 components in this type of leadership, namely: idealized influence (the leaders serve as models or can truly “walk the talk”), inspirational motivation (are able to inspire others), individualized consideration (attention is given to each follower) and intellectual stimulation (they are able to challenge the others to be creative and innovative).³³ A transformation style of leadership takes place when the leaders’ engagement with their groups result in both leaders and followers “raising one another to increased levels of motivation and morality.”³⁴

Let us now apply these aspects and components in the manner that President Duterte has been exercising his style of leadership:

- **Raising awareness of moral standards, fostering higher moral maturity in followers and creating an ethical climate with high standards):** By largely ignoring the rule of law, he has not been able to raise society’s moral standards but have shown he can assert his prerogative to commit immoral acts knowing he enjoys a high popularity rating. If he cannot set a high moral standard for himself, how can he demand it from others who are within his inner circle and his appointees in the bureaucracy? No wonder many of them have been involved in corrupt deals or misbehaved in their respective offices. However, there is hardly any move on his part to take them to task and fire them. Alas, the level of ethical behavior of the President and his men (the likes of Alvarez,

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Aguirre, Piñol, Calida, Go, a number of Department heads and those in Bureau of Customs) leaves much to be desired.

- **Highlighting important priorities:** More and more it has become clearer that his administration's priorities should be in uplifting the poverty of a huge percentage of the population, diminishing the greed of the elite oligarchy towards creating a society characterized by greater equality, combating the uphill rise of the inflation rate and prices of prime commodities, providing more for the basic needs of the people, making sure the civilian government is strengthened to stop the politicization of the military and police, protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development. Instead, he insists that his priorities would be to succeed in his drug war even if it leads to thousands of EJKs and to please his allies in the military/police and bureaucracy so he can remain in power.
- **Encouraging followers to look beyond self-interests to the common good, providing individual coaching and mentoring for followers and appealing to the ideals of followers:** One can assume that there are good people among his followers and those who work under them who quietly fulfill their jobs for the good of the country. Unfortunately, there are also those who have clearly manifested that they are in government jobs to advance or protect the interests of their political dynasties. One only has to monitor what is taking place in Congress, especially the House of Representatives. No wonder, people's rating of Congresspersons in various pulse surveys have consistently shown their low regard of them. Considering the burdens he carries and his illness, one assumes there is very little time left to coach those within his inner circle. And how can he appeal to the high ideals of his followers when his own behavior cannot provide a good model to them?
- **Promoting cooperation and harmony:** If one is to monitor the daily news and be updated what his happening to his Cabinet members, there have been instances when one can easily detect a lack of cooperation

among them. This has been clear in dealing with the inflation rate and the prices of goods, especially rice, in the response to the Marawi crisis, in dealing with China, and in pushing for charter change especially the element of federalism.

- **Using authentic, consistent means:** In terms of the drug war and the manner he deals with his critics, he has remained very consistent. But in various policy decisions, there has been a tendency to vacillate. One good example is in dealing with large-scale mining. At the start of his administration, he appointed Ms. Gina Lopez as the DENR Secretary; but when she pushed hard to minimize destructive mining, the President yielded to the pressure of corporate mining interests to fire her. In his last SONA, he again took a strong stance against mining; but recently a DENR staff indicated that given a drop in the mining sector's share in the GNP, there will be more mining operations.
- **Using persuasive appeals based on reason:** It has been shown that you cannot reason out with the President, especially if there are clear differences in your views and opinions. He has fixed ideas and once he holds on tightly to these, he will not allow the rise of a public sphere where there are debates to allow "the best argument to arise."³⁵ This has been very clear in his approach to wage his drug war, in his disregard of the importance of human rights, in attacking his critics and in matters related to decorum.

Palabay remarked that: "Human rights advocates...criticized President Duterte for making what they described as a 'sick joke' about the victims of the administration's brutal campaign against illegal drugs. 'Stop making a joke out of people's lives, misery and rights, Mr. President.' Stop mockery and distortion of human rights and people's rights in his sick attempt to justify extrajudicial killings and other rights violations."³⁶ Rosales

³⁵ Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1. Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984, 25.

³⁶ Bea Cupin, "Is Duterte a dictator? Here's what allies, enemies say" *Rappler*. See: <https://www.rappler.com/nation/195664-duterte-dictator-reactions-allies-enemies>, 2018.

echoed this sentiment to stop “mocking traditional institutions and values that are meaningful to the people, such as religion and the dignity and rights of human beings.”³⁷

A consistent behavior of the President is his tendency to hurl insults at his critics to the point where he strikes “below the belt.” Rivera wrote this commentary (in reference to Mayor Tomas Osmena and his ostomy bags or stoma): “One would think that, political differences notwithstanding, cancer and personal misfortune shouldn’t be part of the arsenal of the President’s list of insults. Alas, the President, unfamiliar with the concept of a low blow fights dirty, unafraid of consequences, and meaning to hurt.”³⁸

Butuyan has the final say on President Duterte and the ideal of being a transformational leader: “The President still has two-thirds of his term to change course by becoming the transformational leader our people have long aspired to have, and which he is in a unique position to perform. But if he continues in the path he has taken so far, he will join the line of false messiahs who end up forsaking our long-suffering people.”³⁹

He adds: “The people had their hopes for a better life dashed by a succession of neoliberal democracy leaders for 30 years after the 1986 revolution. This gave rise to a leader predisposed to authoritarian rule like President Duterte. If Mr. Duterte fails, people may become even more desperate for alternatives. The communist movement has been patiently waiting in the wings, ready to be propelled to power by the people’s ever-worsening disenchantment with the status quo.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Cited in *Ibid.* Ms. Palabay is spokesperson of Karapatan. Ms. Etta Rosales is the chair of CHR and convenor of the group Peras (Participatory Education on Rights Awareness and Social Action).

³⁸ Kay Rivera “Another day, another low blow.” Hints and Symbols. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 10 September 2018, p. A14.

³⁹ Joel Ruiz Butuyan, “Transformational Leader or False Messiah?” Flea Market of Ideas, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, June 18, 2018a, p. A12.

⁴⁰ Butuyan, “The Emerging successors of Duterte.” Flea Market of Ideas. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 30 July 2018b, p. A14.

President Duterte: A Philosopher King?

Based on his book, *The Republic*, Plato defines a philosopher-king as ruler who possesses both a love of knowledge, as well as intelligence, reliability, and a willingness to live a simple life. To have an ideal just society in the Roman Empire, philosophers must rule as kings and kings should be able to philosophize. "Plato argues that kings should become philosophers or that philosophers should become kings, or philosopher kings, as they possess a special level of knowledge, which is required to rule the Republic successfully."⁴¹ In Plato's view, only a person who is a philosopher can be trusted to rule well for : (p)hilosophers are both morally and intellectually suited to rule: morally because it is in their nature to love truth and learning so much that they are free from the greed and lust that tempts others to abuse power and intellectually because they alone can gain full knowledge of reality."⁴²

In dealing with this title, emphasis is on the first rather than the second word as Plato did not deal much with the notion of kingship per se as he relied on "conventional Greek contrasts between king and tyrant on one hand and between the king as individual rule and the multitudinous rule of aristocracy and democracy."⁴³ One ruler, Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor who was in power from 161 to 180 CE posited that even kings should be philosophers, rather than that only philosophers should rule. He lived up to Plato's philosopher-king ideal as he could claim an understanding of law, philosophy, and language and was "noted for his focus on the protection of poor and orphaned children and ensuring legal rights for freed slaves...; during a series of famines...he oversaw the relief effort."⁴⁴ Fulfilling his desire to be a stoic philosopher, he wrote personal notes that

⁴¹ Giulia Matassa, "Plato's Argument for Rule by Philosopher King. See: <https://www.e-ir.info/2013/04/17/should-philosophers-rule/>, 2013.

⁴² Melissa Lane, "Philosopher King." See: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/philosopher-king>, 2018.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Scotty Hendricks, "What Happens when a Philosopher Becomes a King? See: <https://Bigthink.com/Scotty-Hendricks/mediations-on-the-philosopher-king-Plato-and-if-utopia-is-possible>, 2018.

became a book known today as *Meditations* “while on the battlefields at the edges of the civilized world, finding nightly solace in philosophy to escape from the daily chaos of war.”⁴⁵

However, there was a shadow side to his rule: he persecuted the Christians and supported his son’s desire to succeed him even if the young Aurelius was known to be “megalomaniacal, arbitrary, and unvirtuous” and had the makings of an autocratic absolute ruler.⁴⁶

History would not be kind to Plato’s musings on this kind of leader. A few authors have written on this matter. The Austro-British philosopher Karl Popper “blamed the idea of the Philosopher-King for justifying the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century.”⁴⁷ Popper claims that philosopher-kings “dreams of ‘social engineering’ and ‘idealism’,,, (led) directly to Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin (via Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx respectively).⁴⁸

Matassa argues that Plato’s argument for “a group of knowledgeable persons who have the ability to bring about happiness and justice in the Republic is ideal, but extremely unrealistic” and unpersuasive as his argument asks of us “not only to be disinterested in the political process, but also to leave our rights and opinions in the hands of a benevolent dictator.”⁴⁹

Lane posits that this notion of a philosopher-ruler has come to “signify a general claim to domination by an unaccountable, if putatively beneficent, elite, as in certain forms of Marxism and other revolutionary political movements.” She claims that Plato’s ideal was also espoused in the Islamic world by the medieval philosopher Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (who)...championed the notion of a religiously devout philosopher king.” A thousand years later, this model became reality with the rise of the Ayatollah Khomeini,

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*. Routledge, 2002. Cited by Matassa 2013.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

“a figure acting as the interpreter of law” that led to a “revolutionary state that he shaped in Iran.”⁵⁰

Woolf considers a major flaw in Plato’s argument in the fact that he describes and argues “in favor of what Voltaire defined as a ‘benevolent dictatorship’, where an enlightened despot, without the need to consult people, would nevertheless govern in their interests.”⁵¹ Viewed within the view of contemporary times with the realities of a modern state “where people are continuously asking for a greater say in the running of government, and with a negative view towards totalitarianism due to the happenings of the 20th century, Plato’s argument becomes increasingly inapplicable.”⁵²

Thus, how do we situate President Duterte within Plato’s purview? A beneficiary of EDSA People Power in 1986 that ended the Marcos martial law regime and restored the flawed democratic system, he along with Cory Aquino, Fidel Ramos, Joseph Estrada, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Noynoy Aquino got elected one after another through popular elections. They govern a modern state on the bedrock of a Constitution that stresses a government framed within the representative model of democracy as it is to be ‘of the people, by the people, and for the people’. Unlike the state envisioned by Plato, the state is no longer “an instrument in the hands of the elite, or in the hands of ...philosophers, but a public and neutral arena where interest groups come together to argue and discuss policies.”⁵³ Not only do the electorate determine who will represent them at governmental level, but they also have a pluralist attitude towards politics.

⁵⁰ Melissa Lane, “Philosopher King.”

⁵¹ Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 62.

⁵² Giulia Matassa, “Plato’s Argument for Rule by Philosopher King. See:<https://www.e-ir.info/2013/04/17/should-philosophers-rule/>, 2013.

⁵³ Giulia Matassa, “Plato’s Argument for Rule by Philosopher King. See:<https://www.e-ir.info/2013/04/17/should-philosophers-rule/>, 2013.

No writer has come up yet with President Duterte's reading list that guides administration's vision and policies, although there has been the rumor that he consults Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. Does he read Plato's *The Republic* and mused about being a philosopher-king? But if we follow the arguments of Popper, Woolf, Matassa and Lane, President Duterte has functioned as a philosopher-king, but unfortunately, veering towards being a dictator; so claims a few writers:

Butuyan posits that in the country today there is "legal anarchy and (that) de facto dictatorship loom large in the horizon."⁵⁴ In dealing with the conflict among his allies that led to the change in the leadership in Congress, he wrote: "Seeing the President go uncharacteristically silent in the midst of all the conflicts among his allies, the vision that comes to mind is that of a Roman emperor who watches with equanimity while gladiators fight in front of him... They can fight all they want among themselves, but only for the purpose of pleasing the supreme leader. But they must never engage in acts of defiance that would directly and intentionally displease the emperor."⁵⁵

Nery concurs that "President Duterte has dictatorial tendencies, but is the Philippines back under one-man rule? Not yet — but we're getting there, fast."⁵⁶ Fuesl writes that "worst, (he has been) bending the law and its spirit into (his) very own small-minded world."⁵⁷

Temario Rivera, former chair of the University of the Philippines' Department of Political Science, said at a forum that Duterte has shown "an inclination to becoming a despot" and has shown a "more pronounced dictatorial tendency over his two years in office."⁵⁸ He added that he "has shown an increasingly

⁵⁴ Butuyan, "Legal anarchy in the horizon. Flea Market of Ideas" Philippine Daily Inquirer, 10 September 2018d, p. A14.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ John Nery, "Is Marcos a Dictator." Newstand. Philippine Daily Inquirer. 27 April 218b, A14.

⁵⁷ Robert Fuesl, "We're Going Down." Philippine Daily Inquirer 10 September 2018, A15.

⁵⁸ RG Cruz, "Analyst says Duterte has growing dictatorial tendency; Palace says 'nonsense'". ABS-CBN News. See:

more pronounced authoritarian tendency, predisposition for what in common terms we refer to as a strongman rule."⁵⁹

David refers to President Duterte's dictatorial tendencies as symptoms of being a narcissistic leader. Borrowing Eddy's description of such a leader in terms of traits he asks the reader if these are also the traits of the current President, namely: 1) "Being seen as very superior," i.e. they need to insult others in order to affirm their own greatness, 2) "Expanding their own power," meaning they always need to pick up a fight to show they are really powerful, and, 3) "Being admired by all," especially by high-status people or by those they have insulted or injured.⁶⁰

The hallmarks of his administration are defined by his abrasive and combative rhetoric in dealing with his critics, the tough stance in waging the drug war, declaring and then extending martial law in Mindanao and a total negation of the importance of human rights which is enshrined in the Constitution.

Citizens and netizens displeased with the President's performance began to speak of him as an authoritarian leader when he consistently manifested a disregard for the rule of law and human rights resulting in tens of thousands of supposed drug addicts killed as they allegedly resisted arrest; however human rights advocates and journalists have claimed many of them are victims of extra-judicial killings. He has hounded his critics and found ways to put them in jail (e.g. Senator Leila de Lima) or impeached (Supreme Court Justice Sereno). Despite his strong words during the election time and his SONAS that he will drastically minimize corruption in government circles, investigative reports coming out show that many in the State bureaucracy - in reference to Solicitor General Calida and in reference to the Presidential alter-ego Bong Go and the military/police ranks are taking advantage of their positions of power to grab a piece of the pie or make hay while the sun still

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/07/20/18/analyst-says-duterte-has-growing-dictatorial-tendency-palace-says-nonsense>, 2018.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Eddy Bill, Psychology Today, 20 June 2018. Cited by David (2018).

shines. Dictatorships always tend to provide favors to those closest to the powers-that-be.

The totalitarian streak is also manifested in the manner that media has been treated by this regime. There are available statistics as to how many journalists have been harassed, with a few becoming EJK victims. At various junctures, Rappler, the Philippine Daily Inquirer and ABS-CBN had faced difficulties in fully enjoying freedom of the press. Mayuga writes that at one time, these words were spoken: "Just because you're a journalist, you're not exempted from assassination if you're a son of a bitch" which led the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines, Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility, and College Editors Guild to issue strong protest statements "as these words could "easily (be) misinterpreted as a declaration of open season on all Filipino journalists."⁶¹

No wonder, President Duterte has been vilified in some sections of the foreign press. In a *Time* article on the Brazilian front-runner of the next presidential elections, Jair Bolsonaro was quoted as saying that "he advocated the possibility of unbridled state violence and defended Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, whose henchmen raped women with dogs, as well as Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, who has boasted of personally killing criminal suspects."⁶²

In her book, Kakutani refers to the current reality where there is "a disregard for facts, the displacement of reason by emotion, and the corrosion of language are diminishing the very value of truth."⁶³ She explains this phenomenon in terms of "how post-modernism and deconstruction" - the post-modernist argument that all truths are partial (and a function of one's perspective) led to the related argument that there are many legitimate ways to understand or represent an event - formerly the dual darlings of lefty academics everywhere, have been co-opted by dark forces of

⁶¹ Sylvia Mayuga, "President Pilandok." Philippine Daily Inquirer. 7 June 2016. See: <http://opinion.inquirer.net/95092/president-pilandok#ixzz5QlCWJvJh>.

⁶² Matt Sandy, "Rio's Scandal." *Time*, 3-10 September 2018. p. 28-32.

⁶³ See Stephanie Zacharek, "Truth in the post-truth Era" *Time*, 6 August 2018.

the right.” by the likes of Trump. In one cover story of *Time*, Trump, Putin and Duterte were lumped together as “strongmen” who can so easily manipulate truth and have such abhorrence for a feisty media.

However, in a few occasions, President Duterte had no qualms referring to himself as a dictator. At a gathering of former Communist rebels, he was quoted saying that “if weren’t for his dictatorial style, his country would stagnate and never improve.”⁶⁴ *“If you say dictator, I am really a dictator. If I don't act (like a) dictator, son of a b****, nothing will happen to this country. That's true. If I don't act (like a) dictator, which is my style now, nothing will happen to this country...I had to (act like a dictator). Besides, you have chosen me as your president. Why won't you follow me when my dreams are all for you?”*⁶⁵ In another occasion, just days before the 32nd anniversary of the EDSA People Power Revolution, he was quoted as saying: “If I don’t act like a dictator the Philippines won’t progress.”⁶⁶

To this, the opposition cried out: We don’t need dictators! ACT Teachers Representative Antonio Tinio in a message to media indicated that - “Duterte is a self-confessed dictator. This accounts for his disrespect for human rights and due process, antipathy towards a free press, contempt for institutional checks and balances, and dislike for competitive bidding for public infrastructure projects.”⁶⁷ Senator Paolo Benigno Aquino, reminded the President that the country did not need dictators as it would bring back the days of Marcos, a “dictatorship that brought about violence, killings, loss of jobs and liberty, corruption, and massive debt.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Sun Star Manila, “Duterte as a dictator,” 2018.

⁶⁵ Article does not cite author. See <https://www.rtc.com/news/418255-duterte-dictator-philippines-government/> (accessed 12 September 2018).

⁶⁶ Pia Ranada, “Duterte: If I won't be a dictator, nothing will happen to PH” *Rappler*, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/195611-duterte-dictator-change-philippines>, February 09, 2018

⁶⁷ Bea Cupin, “Is Duterte a dictator? Here's what allies, enemies say” *Rappler*, February 09, 2018, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/195664-duterte-dictator-reactions-allies-enemies>.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Akbayan Representative Tom Villarin indicated that he was not surprised with the President's statements that only confirmed "all along what he is doing since day one of his administration." He added that: "Dictators bring down a country, bring pain and untold sufferings to people and the children who will have a traumatized future."⁶⁹

Conclusion

This essay attempts to dissect President Duterte as to what kind of leader he has been or what has been his style of leadership. This assessment is done through the lens of three points of view, namely, the indigenous leadership model of respected chieftains among our indigenous communities especially those whose traditional governance system remains in place, the transformational type now favored by many corporate and civil society institutions, and that of the philosopher-king as initially conceptualized by Plato and how this type has evolved through contemporary history.

Appropriating ethnographic data, it is easy to conclude that President Duterte fails to embody the ideal traits of Lumad chieftains. His style of leading the affairs of government veers away from that of the *datus* and *fulongs* who are able to exhibit true wisdom, deep compassion and selfless service towards the common good.

On the other hand, he is nowhere near to the required level of a transformational leader. Instead, the level that he occupies as a leader is one characterized by elements of the *laissez-faire*, paternalistic, autocratic and undemocratic styles. At best he is able to reach the level of transactional style, but he got stuck there and can't seem to move up the scale. This is such a major disappointment as the people elected him to office - pronouncing optimistically that change is coming! - thinking he would be an alternative leader who is better able to deal with the country's woes compared to former Presidents who were mainly from the elite of our society.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

More and more Filipinos today no longer believe that the hope for radical change will happen. And one major reason behind this is that he modeled himself in the mold of the philosopher-king with strong tendencies towards a totalitarian rule. Many voices have now been raised across the country asserting that President Duterte's recent moves smack of the style of a dictator. And in fact, he claims at times that he is one. This is echoed by opinion makers who think that his promise of change for the betterment of the country "is not coming...because the iron hand of government is being used against the people instead of being wielded against crooked leaders who ruin our country."⁷⁰

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⁷⁰ Butuyan, "A Golden Age for Warlords." Flea Market of Ideas. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, August 27, 2018c, p. A12.

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