

## **President Rodrigo Duterte's Radical Leadership**

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### **Abstract**

When Rodrigo Roa Duterte was elected as the 16th President of the Philippines, his radicalism or progressive attitude played an important role in governing the state. It was an impetus for his political, social, economic, and foreign policies. In this paper, I will assess Duterte's position on various issues and controversies from the viewpoint of Chantal Mouffe's theory of radical democracy. Using the interpretative method, I will examine the text from various works which purport to show Duterte as a radical leader. As a caveat, ordinary citizens and top scholars alike have displayed their huge bias against Duterte. This paper argues that President Duterte simply wanted to give what was due to the Filipino people. While he sought pragmatic outcomes, Duterte also knew that conflict and contestation are the starting point of the political. Duterte's style of leadership, in this way, presents itself as a reaction to elite democracy. Radical democracy is not meant to reject and/or replace democratic universalism. It desires to particularize what is needed by the existing democratic struggles so aimed at effecting structural change.

**Keywords:** Radical Politics, Elite democracy, Political Policy, Duterteismo, Political Action.

## **Introduction**

Most of the reactions of President Rodrigo Duterte's critics, especially on his war on drugs, are an attempt to vilify the former chief executive because of his aggressive and often adversarial style of leadership. What is striking is that for Duterte, the country's problems may be due to the procedural style of governance in the Philippines. Duterte thinks that to achieve the aim of providing the welfare to the majority of the Filipino people, he needs to be progressive in order to solve the problem of illegal drugs, criminality, and terrorism. But the move by the current administration to allow the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate Duterte on his war on drugs has since triggered a debate among scholars and ordinary citizens. What is central to this debate is the question of whether or not the violence or killings are justifiable. This paper argues that President Duterte's approach was a way of manifesting the pragmatic style of modern statecraft.

The paper begins with a discussion of the concept of the "political" and Duterte's radical approach to politics. This provides the context of radical democracy and the argument since advanced by Christopher Ryan Maboloc that the first president from Mindanao has premised his style of governance on such. The paper proceeds with a discussion on the concept of openness to antagonism into four views: First, as overcoming the challenge which means that conflicts must be legitimized because they part of the essence of democracy; second, that conflicts follow from the reality of exclusion; third, that the perspective is a way of decentering inequality which also means that the marginalized must not be treated as enemies of the rich but simply as their friends and co-inhabitants; last, that the openness to antagonism is a political action meant to minimize suffering among the marginalized.

### **Between Mouffe's "the political" and Duterte's "radical politics"**

Duterte being a pragmatic leader has provided the context of his own brand of radical democracy. He has laid the very foundation for a

radical type of leadership.<sup>1</sup> The former president of the Republic of the Philippines executes his political will in a radical style to realize the common good for the Filipino people, and in particular for the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed who are the usual victims of hopelessness due to a lack of an authentic democratic empowerment in the Philippines. The acceptance among Filipinos of Duterte's radical style of leadership is a clear expression of their support of the past president's way of solving things.

Determining the impact of radical democracy in Duterte's leadership is important for the future of the Filipino people. Mouffe thinks that in the concept of political logic, it is the reality of conflict that is shown. This means that antagonism will be always there in a society. And the role of politicians in the conflict, according to the latter, is for them to "consider the place of power, conflict, and authority."<sup>2</sup> For Duterte, such is the case. His radical leadership is staring at the post-colonial reality of Philippine democracy. It is a kind of politics in which the origin had been bound with the country's past history and the reality of exclusion that has sidelined many of the issues affecting its poverty-stricken regions, especially the Bangsamoro in Mindanao.

It has been assumed that politics dwells in the structures of government. However, it is impossible to eradicate conflict in all its aspects and dimensions.<sup>3</sup> Duterte believes that the type of governance in the Philippines is nothing short of "creative conflicts" between the ruling elite and the millions of Filipinos who remain powerless. For a truly democratic government to be effective, I argue that the leaders must act with a sense of urgency. To be radical is to recognize the inequalities of society and act in such a way in order to rectify them in a substantive way. Substantive justice is about results. Procedural justice is rooted in method. Radical politics in the case of President Duterte, according to Maboloc, who worked on the subject in the last five years, is a distinguishing circumstance. He suggests that conflict is

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Ryan Maboloc. "President Rodrigo Duterte and the Birth of Radical Democracy in the Philippines." *International Journal of Politics and Security* (IJPS), Vol.2, No.3, 2020, 132.

<sup>2</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *En Torno A Lo Politico*, (Argentina: Fondo de Cultura Economica de Argintina, 2007), 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

unavoidable in Philippine society due to the moral divide of the people.<sup>4</sup> This is where the political is grounded, one that is rooted in power relations and not just institutional mechanisms.<sup>5</sup> Duterte saw the historical injustices in Mindanao. Such is a bad turn of the political in the Philippines and one that has compelled Duterte to face political antagonism.

A number of studies has shown that political disagreements are apparent in the communal relationship of Filipinos. The fact of the matter is that the Philippine state government has been ruled by elite families. This situation discriminates the Filipino poor, which makes the economic divide apparent. The reality of extreme poverty implies that the future of the people had been in the hands of the economic elite. The ruling elite simply makes use of the democratic processes to perpetuate themselves in power.<sup>6</sup> As a result, there is a struggle on the part of the poor while the rich sought to maintain their position in the realm of political power. Wataru Kusaka (2017), for example, sees structural issues as the root cause of the problems in Philippine society.

A democratic society allows the challenge of confronting partisan politics. Such is usually caused by different forms of hegemonic relations in the many aspects of the political culture. However, partisan politics in the Philippines is grounded in the unequal economic, social and political conditions of the people. This germinated from the selfish intentions of an elite-driven bureaucracy. Elitism dictates the kind of democracy practiced in the Philippines and as a consequence, the majority of the people are left behind. Millions of Filipinos stay voiceless when it comes to economic or social policy making. They are disadvantaged in terms of income and the opportunity for human well-being. Their agony is a result of neo-liberal policies imposed by a feudal economic that dates back to the Spanish period. Since the 70s, the gap between that rich and the poor has never been more apparent.

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<sup>4</sup> Christopher Ryan Maboloc, *The Radical Politics of Nation-States: The Case of President Rodrigo Duterte*. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, Vol.6, No.1 (2018): 116.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Labastin, *Two Faces of Dutertismo; Two Faces of Democracy in the Philippines*," in *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 5, No.1 (2019): 16.

Mouffe says that in order for a democracy to address the gaps brought about by social inequalities, politics has to be distinguished from morality. For example, "moralizing" politics fails to look into the root cause of the problem which is the uneven power relations in society. Political decisions hence must be grounded in the analysis of power. Liberals like John Rawls do not make a clear distinction between moral and political discourse.<sup>7</sup> The problem is that without this distinction, reducing politics into morals has the tendency to condemn differences. Duterte understands power relations. He acts based on the recognition that the poor do not stand a chance against the powerful. Elitist democracy tends to focus on the procedures without thinking that these procedures may be unjust since they are a product of uneven structures that favor the rich and powerful. Procedures are designed by and for the elite. To rectify this wrong, Duterte knew that there is conflict and antagonism. The former president understands that politics is not meant to be a moral subject. To be political means not to take a neutral position but to side with the oppressed.

Political antagonism, however, does not mean that a leader wants to court conflict. This is a misunderstanding. Radical politics is about recognizing the inherent struggle in politics, or what is called an agonism. Duterte thinks that it is his duty to protect the people against crime even if that meant going the bounds of the regime of human rights. The struggle between life and death is apparent. Duterte's radical style is rooted in his belief that his mandate emanates from the sovereignty of country. In this way, his radical pivot to China and his ardent desire for an independent foreign policy are meant to show that the destiny of his country cannot be dictated by powers that impose their hegemonic advantage over others.

Mouffe argues that it is actually "anti-political" to say that the common vision of every democratic government must be freed from partisan conflicts. In a democratic state, the reality of antagonism and conflict will always be there. The problems of society cannot be solved by means of negotiations and agreements that only have value on paper. Since the problems are structural, the solutions must take into

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<sup>7</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, (London: Verso,1993), 147.

account the context of the past. Mouffe says that “a project of radical and plural democracy has to come to terms with the dimension of conflict and antagonism within the political and has to accept the consequences of the irreducible plurality of values.”<sup>8</sup> This pluralism means that the state should embrace diversity and inclusion. But Mouffe thinks that there is always pluralism in democracy.<sup>9</sup>

There is no such thing as a free world; where there is no leftist and rightist; that there is only one and absolute democracy in all of the world in which one is free from partisan conflict. Western societies love to cement an optimistic democratic vision. President Duterte understands that he has to be pragmatic and must work with the existing representative democracy in the Philippines while being conscious of the fact that it is controlled by the elite. The problem, according to Maboloc, is not Duterte, but elite democracy. This is, for instance, the difference when it comes to the commentary of Manila scholars who see Duterte in a different way (Curato 2016), although Julio Teehankee (2016) thinks of Duterte as someone who was inevitable. The President recognizes certain conflicts to arise because the oligarchy sponsors politicians to run, including giving payoffs to members of the media to promote this candidate. People can be easily misled. However, the historic reform in government that Duterte has done is enlightening the Filipino people when it comes to the struggle against the elite. Maboloc says that distributive democracy is not enough. Democracy must recognize contestation as starting point of a democratic society.

What is so striking in Duterte’s radical politics is his opposition to the oligarchic nature of the Philippine state (Silvestre 2016). This is apparent in the issues involving the water concessionaires, the PAL Terminal 2, Mighty Corporation, and Roberto Ongpin, explains Maboloc. But the presence of corruption in government is already systemic.<sup>10</sup> To that effect, the problem of graft and corruption has become a part of the country’s political culture.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 152

<sup>9</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *Liberalism and Modern Democracy*, (New York: Suny Press, 1995), 190.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Ryan Maboloc, *The Predatory State and Duterte’s Radical Politics: The Case in the Philippines*. In *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, Vol. 7, No.2 (2019), 164.

Maboloc stresses that “unless the Filipino people will mature in politics, it is only then that there is overhauling on the elitist nature of Philippine democracy and this cycle continues even today because no single man can reform this system.”<sup>11</sup> The predatory nature of the state can be traced to the pre-American period where the country's Spanish colonizers epitomize the elite. The patronage system came through by way of traditional succession.<sup>12</sup> The ilustrados formed the elitist political platforms favoring the exclusive lineage of the ruling class.

It is hard for the unprepared ordinary Filipinos longing to be mature politically to lift the hand against elitist politicians who are mostly veterans and are exemptional tacticians. Most of these traditional politicians are manipulative. They are like the brains of a corrupt behavioral system. This kind of paper-making in government has been systematically established by the elitist breed of traditional politicians a long time ago. In which case, they have become extremely exploitative. Their exploits include making laws. However, it is not only about establishing their agenda into national laws but more so, this explains the bad effects of an inefficient government service. Many of the elite politicians seem to act like they are the hero or protagonists while to them, Duterte is the antagonist. But in truth, traditional politicians have been taking advantage of the poor and influencing the state to the delight of their patrons.

### **Radicalism as the Openness to Political Conflict and Antagonism**

First, as far as Mouffe is concerned, conflict and antagonism will always be there. This means that conflict and antagonism need not be eliminated, though its reasons must be politically legitimized. The reality of agonism or struggle between classes is the essence of democracy. The value of imposing fair procedures from an authority like that of the authority of the President is a form of positive legitimacy. This is needed especially when antagonism and conflict are used in overcoming the challenges of a pluralistic society. A genuine democracy welcomes new forms of political power. According to Mouffe, when considering the concept of the “good” in a pluralist society, the idea of diversity is at the heart of the matter. As such, the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 168.

value of diversity in a pluralist society is a form of challenge to the government.

Turning now to the challenge in politics in the area of democratic discourse, it should be noted that societies can never overcome conflict and division. The aim of a political leader is to establish unity in a context of conflict and diversity. In Mouffe's language, she states that politics is concerned with the formation of a 'we' which is harmony as opposed to a 'them'. This "we/them" dichotomy explains the idea of non-conformity. What is specific to democratic politics is not the overcoming of the we/them opposition, that is harmony/non-conformity but the diversity of opinion in which discourse can be drawn in a meaningful way. This is why grasping the nature of democratic politics requires a sense of coming to terms in social relations with the reality of conflict and antagonism in society.

In Duterte's political policies, the challenge is to establish unity among a divided people. Mouffe's view of conflict and antagonism can take place in Duterte's political environment. In fact, Duterte sees the challenge of politics. Duterte thus maintained his style of being distinctive in his leadership. Duterte's challenge was the "how" to overcome the we/them dichotomy in the state. People are attached to their preferred political affiliations. People are also tied to the fact of party loyalty. In this way, it is the state's challenge to do maintain some kind of unity in the state amid political conflicts given the conditions of pluralistic diversity. A leader must protect the common good. This is the goal of politics in the midst of dissent. While it can be said that some of the President's critics have been charged in court or incarcerated on various charges, including Sen. Leila De Lima, the general population are actually free to express themselves in various platforms where they can express their protestations.

Second, Richard Rorty, Jurgen Habermas, and Rawls represent a common contention that conflict and antagonism have no significant function in a pluralistic democracy. Mouffe thinks that a government that is focused on fair procedures or democratic processes is under the illusion of a well-ordered society.<sup>13</sup> The other illusion is the contention that real justice can be achieved immediately based on an

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<sup>13</sup> Mouffe, *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, 9.

agreement. On the other hand, to solve any form of injustice in the state, liberals believe that it is imperative to separate private from the public. This is the only way, according to Rawls, in order to serve the interests of justice. The public sphere is the venue for political discourse in which the rules are drawn based on the values shared by the participants as they try to resolve concerns that are founded on the demands of public reasonableness.

In such cases, Mouffe says that such view fails to recognize the true direction of power relations in the polity. For Mouffe, when a democratic government establishes an agreement or consensus, there will be an exclusion and such exclusion is the beginning of conflicts and eventual struggle. Hence, justice in this sense, cannot just be addressed right there and then because of the presence of conflict. In fact, this is what constitutes openness to antagonism as a conflict struggle. What Duterte's critics do not understand is that the President knows the moral divide in society. When they criticize the President, they only look at their prejudiced lenses from the perspective of Manila as the center of power. A pluralist society, however, is open to radical approaches in order to achieve authentic change. Mouffe writes:

A pluralist democracy needs also to make room for the expression of dissent and for conflicting interests and values. And those should not be seen as temporary obstacles on the road to consensus since in their absence democracy would cease to be pluralistic. This is why democratic politics cannot aim towards harmony and reconciliation.<sup>14</sup>

Democratic politics should always be open to conflict struggle. This is evident in the case of Duterte. Being the President, he believes that conflict is there. As such, to live means to have the political will to act despite all conflicts. In fact, contestation can never be eradicated because it is essentially a part of the whole democratic process when dealing with social and economic policies. As a leader who was voted to represent the sovereign will of all Filipinos, Duterte knew that he must pursue the common good despite the opposition against his

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 8.

radical methods. This is what he sought to achieve in gathering all Muslim groups in the Bangsamoro to lay down their arms and become a part of an authentic nation-building process. The president's openness to antagonism healed the big gap among Muslims and Christians who were fighting each other in Mindanao.

Third, Mouffe's concept of politics has successfully portrayed that antagonism can take many forms.<sup>15</sup> One of these, very interestingly, is that it can function as a means to decenter the inequalities in the state. Democratic political positioning is not as always equal. There are those in the poor groups who feel excluded in contrast to those who are in the reign of power and thus, they belong to an inclusivist elite group. To decenter inequality is to take the marginalized poor not as enemies of the rich to be destroyed, but as a competitor whose ideas should be valued. In Mouffe's words, for a competitor with a right to defend his ideas is a form of maneuvering. This means that openness to antagonism is not a struggle between two enemies but a struggle between competitors or between adversaries.<sup>16</sup> The competing groups, however, still share the common allegiance to the democratic principles of liberty and equality. Radical democracy, in this way, is not meant to disintegrate society and its conflicting forces. Rather, it seeks to unify them by finding that common ground.

This understanding of competition in Mouffe's concept of politics is a consequence of radical democracy. In fact, it is hinged on what is considered as the opposition to processes that are grounded in "fair procedures" in government. In every deliberative democracy, all political questions are moral questions and therefore, they can be resolved rationally by some form of universalism. Such is by way of negotiations and agreements. In Mouffe, this should not be the case, because politics is rooted in particular contexts and situations of discourse. If morality is used to solve political problems, then outcome is a type of impartiality that is determined by an absolute norm of morality that can be antithetical to others. Meaning, it may not be able to solve everyone's interests equally. For Mouffe, political problems are not moral problems. What is needed is immediate action based on the recognition of pluralism and the reality of conflict and antagonism.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

Fourth, Mouffe says that politics in its nature is a complex reality. It must not be taken as a form of "Liberal Utopia" as what Rorty is claiming. Mouffe stresses that "liberals should not consent to that understanding that democracy is meant to minimize suffering and have maximum tolerance towards political action," since for her, "to radicalize democracy is to require the very existence of multiplicity, plurality, and conflict and then view them in the reason why there is politics."<sup>17</sup> Mouffe says that antagonism is, indirectly, a form of political action because it does not wait that a lot of people will suffer from tolerance. A democracy becomes radical when it does not tolerate injustices in the political. In fact, it does not favor short-term reforms. It abhors negotiations and types of deliberation that uses familiar terms to make compromises that only favor those who are in the ruling class.

Antagonism for Mouffe implies that immediate action in the political is one that is not based on an agreement. It is an action that is grounded in a philosophical foundation where it can answer questions pertaining to the nature of human freedom and equality, sovereignty, and power.<sup>18</sup> For Mouffe, democracy is contaminated with philosophical queries and political questions. There is no neutral ground that is why it is considered dynamic. Furthermore, Mouffe suggests society is, by nature, not a homogenous set of identities because people are diversified and inconsistent in their various kinds of social order.

As the ruling elite continues to enjoy being at the top, they are actually subtle abusers of fair procedures. For example, Maboloc explains that elite families control politics. Their children will soon take over as politicians. When elected, they become public officials even if they lack the competence to govern. This makes the state at their absolute disposal in which the huge opportunity arises for them to manipulate the system. This manipulation is so well founded in the affairs developed by means of a patronage system. The fact is that Philippine society is under the realm of elite bosses who dictate that progress is something that is exclusive to the powerful. Such is the beginning of exploitation, which leans toward the poor in a

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<sup>17</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony, Radical Democracy, and the Political*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 99.

<sup>18</sup> Mouffe, *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, 7.

clandestine manner, especially for the minority and indigenous people. The origin of the predatory state in the Philippines is the elitist type of governance by the ruling class.

Duterte maintained his consistency in his political positions. After his six-year term as the President, “Tatay Digong” as he fondly called, accomplished important things for Philippine democracy. For him, despite all criticisms, what matters is that he did his job and it will be up to history to make the final judgment, especially with the controversies surrounding the war on drugs. The former President is a strong leader who issued threats to drug personalities in public. He defied other politicians who questioned his policies. Remarkably, his opponents also cannot understand his radical democratic wisdom. Intimidation, in this respect, is one of the instruments that the president believe can deliver public order.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps, to categorize him objectively, it is not wrong to say that Duterte is the antagonist who can be heralded as a “legend” to the majority of Filipinos.

### **President Duterte’s Radicalism and Mouffe’s Radical Democracy**

President Duterte’s tough policies can be premised in Mouffe’s own concept of radical politics, which states that democracy should not just be overwhelmed by agreements and negotiations, but on solid ground.<sup>20</sup> Duterte’s approach is meant to protect the common good. He is out there to defend millions of voiceless Filipinos, I would like to say. The political policies of the former President were demonstrative of his economic, social, and foreign policies that are rooted on the exigency of the problems Filipinos faced. The pivot to China, his position against oligarchs, and his preferential option for Mindanao, signify a radical style of reform. In the Philippines, radical politics is a self-grounded reality.

Duterte realized that politics has its very own contingencies. But he acted not based on the fear of moral judgment but on the basis of his political will and the recognition of the agonistic nature of politics. But this is not because of Duterte’s immense popularity. It is due to the need to rectify age-old injustices and empower the millions of

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<sup>19</sup> Maboloc, *The Predatory State and Duterte’s Radical Politics*: 128.

<sup>20</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *Politics and Passion: The Stakes of Democracy*, (Great Britain: Centre for the Study of Democracy, 2002), 14.

Filipinos who are the subject of important policies in government. For instance, while the passage of the law for free college education in state colleges and universities happened before him, it was Duterte who gave the budget signaling the implementation of such a program of paramount importance. For Duterte, there cannot be a good life if Filipinos do not take into their own hands the control over of their lives.<sup>21</sup>

### **President Duterte's Social Policy in Action: The War on Drugs**

Drug cartels and syndicates are like a living organism. To defeat them, one has to go after the head. This is the gist of Duterte's policy in relation to his crusade against illegal drugs. The war on drugs is not something new. It has happened before in Latin America as Colombia and Mexico battled cartels and big-time criminals. In the Philippines, the sad part is that most of the Filipinos who are into illegal drugs belong to the extremely poor families. This pertains directly to our specific situation wherein for so many Filipinos poverty, exploitation, and injustice have become their way of life.<sup>22</sup> The plight of the poor is tied to the unjust structural policies of the ruling elite. Criminals, many of whom have nothing in life, prey on innocent people in the dark alleys, ways harming the virtuous citizens.

The Philippine National Police was labeled as an instrument of Duterte's alleged violent approach to solving crime. However, it can be said that for the most part, police officers are just trying to comply with the mandate of their duty to protect innocent people. It can be said that they have been motivated by Duterte's style of leadership, which is rooted in the strength of his political will. Such also equates to concrete political action. Drugs according to Duterte is the primary cause of paralysis in government. In other words, illegal drugs and other crimes related to it paralyzes the vision of good governance. When the war on drugs was framed by the Philippine media, many Manila scholars saw it negatively. Those critics are oriented toward the Western mind and its liberal values. The West, however, cannot wash its hands when it comes to violence and its ill effects.

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<sup>21</sup> Christopher Ryan Maboloc, *Situating the Mindanao Agenda in the Radical Politics of President Duterte*. In IQRA, Ateneo de Davao University, Vol. 4, (2017), 13.

<sup>22</sup> Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), *Catechism for Filipino Catholics*, (Manila: ECCCE Word & Life Publications), 333.

Most critics who belong to elite academia are up in arms against Duterte. But Duterte is maverick, His campaign against criminality was at the centerpiece of the Duterte administration. While he has realized that what he promised in terms of eradicating drugs in six months, it is clear that his approach made a huge mark in terms of catching big time drug lords and the surrender and rehabilitation of two million drug dependent Filipinos as shown by the record of the PNP and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency. No other President has taken a radical approach to solve society's problems. Duterte's critics forget that the high trust rating of the president is due to his authenticity and no-nonsense desire to keep criminals out from the streets in order for the common Filipino to enjoy his everyday life.

### **Duterte's Foreign Policy in Action: Leaning to Russia and China**

One of the most controversial accounts of Duterte comes from the fact that he trusts Russia and loves China in comparison to the United States. As what Maboloc asserts, by welcoming China and opening a new era in the China-Philippines relations, Duterte is sending a strong message to the world that he is someone who will not cower under US influence nor the dictates of domestic power brokers.<sup>23</sup> The President was criticized when he visited Russian President of Vladimir Putin, although this happened long before Russia invaded Ukraine. The visit, reports say, is purely for business. When it comes to China, he remained pragmatic in his foreign policy, which centered on not antagonizing a superpower given its military might. In many of his pronouncements, he said that the country cannot afford a war against China.

President Putin told Duterte that Russia is willing to help the Philippines, although the business agreements were put on hold due to the Ukraine war. But what was accomplished during the visit? It goes to show that Duterte is making that pivot away from the American sphere of influence although his administration had been quick to point out that the US remains to be a strong ally of the Philippines in the Pacific. When it comes to China, Duterte received

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<sup>23</sup> Christopher Ryan Maboloc, *Fighting the Oligarchs: President Duterte and the Argument Against Elite Rule: A Perspective from the Academe*. In MALIM; Jurnal Pengajaran Umum Asia Tenggara, Vol. 21, (2020), 39.

more than 24 billion dollars in terms of commitment, although his critics were quick to point out that a huge portion of what was promised never came to be materialized. In this way, one need not be an apologist for the former president. Let us call spade is a spade.

### **Duterte's Economic Policy in Action: The Case of Boracay**

In assessing Duterte's economic policy, critics need to understand how his progressive approach influences his behavior. The closure of Boracay was a radical move. More than what the media wanted to portray the closure was about Boracay's management of its waste system. Boracay is world class, but Duterte wants nothing of its coliforms. Again, his political will was at work to rehabilitate the island, although this meant hundreds of millions in foregone revenue. While the purpose is environmental protection, what was at issue is the President's strong stance which to the Boracay residents had a great impact on the incomes. Duterte, however, remained unperturbed.

Duterte knew all about the great discomfort the closure caused the people. But Duterte's strong resolve to clean the island was critical. The beach, six months after, was restored to its previous glory. But on the part of the President, it is a matter of leadership and his fervent desire preserving the Philippine environment. In this regard, environmental preservation is paramount essentially to the economic development of the country. The same pattern that had happened on the events in Ferdinand Marcos burial in the "Libingan ng mga Bayani," "the Manila Bay Dolomite Issue," the "Laglag bala" issue that haunted NAIA and Duterte's support to the LGBT community.

Since the elite few appear to be intimidated and antagonized by Duterte's political will, the President has since caused that great discomfort on the part of the oligarchs who considered his approach authoritarian and fascist. This fact that Philippine Airlines has to pay their decade old of tax liability shows the power of Duterte's persuasion. This is a matter of an authoritative desire from a former President, so drawn out from his love for his native country. In this regard, Duterte's style of radical politics that dealt with the oligarchs is essential to force the elite few to act justly and know that they are no longer in control. However, what remains to be seen after the

President bowed from office is the fruits of an empowered population who are now aware of the troubles of an uneven social and political order.

### **Transvaluation of Values and Duterte's Leadership**

The attitude of people is to question whatever is new. The main role, as I see it, of radical democracy in Philippine politics is to give interpretation to our values about democratic concepts. Being radical in government means that people have to go beyond intellectual talks or being on a moral high chair. Filipino discourse on politics states that the Filipino style of radical democracy does not ignore human bias, physical influence, and personal character in reality of politics. In Duterte, it was more of tackling the real issue in political logic because he believes that Filipinos can also enhance democratic citizenship. Public service for Duterte means hating complacency in public service. The President knows that the bad state of politics in the Philippines. What this President wants to do is to value that deep understanding of radical democracy in the context of Philippine society. Democracy for the Filipinos is about discipline. Radical politics is rooted in a pluralistic society. Meaning to say, the basic understanding of the common good for the Filipino people is diverse and therefore must not be suppressed by the ruling class.

### **Conclusion**

The paper began with the discussion of Mouffe's concept of the political and Duterte's radical politics. This is important as it provides the real context as to the meaning of radical democracy and the resulting argument that Duterte premised his approach on the concept. It proceeded with the long discussion about the openness to antagonism. I presented four views. One, as overcoming challenges. Meaning, that conflict must be legitimized because it is part of the essence of democracy; two, as a conflict struggle because it follows with a harsh reality of exclusion; third, as decentering inequality which means that to decenter inequality, the poor must not be treated as enemies of the rich but as friends and companion.

The openness to antagonism is a political stance. To minimize the suffering among the marginalized, it has to be solved

pragmatically. By this, I mean that Duterte is a strong leader with the resolve to act on the basis of substantive justice. After such, with the deep discussion on openness to antagonism, I tackled the motivation behind Duterte's political position. Based on the idea that Duterte sought to go beyond moralizing and acted outside the norms of the usual procedures of justice, as explained by Maboloc, I conclude that Mouffe's radical democracy is apparent in Philippine Democracy.

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