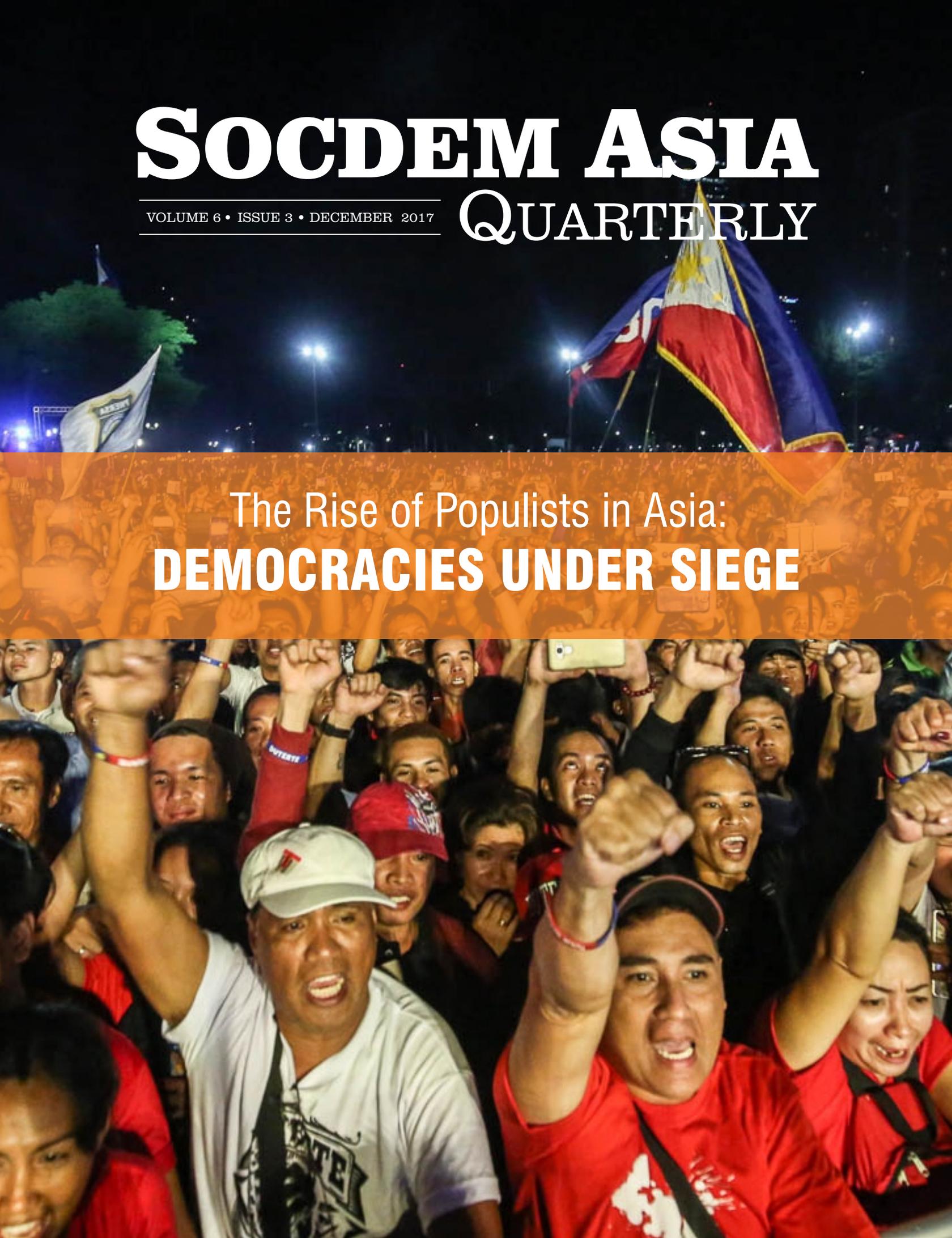


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The Rise of Populists in Asia:
DEMOCRACIES UNDER SIEGE

The Rise of Populists in Asia:

Democracies Under Siege



Richard Javad Heydarian
Editor-in-Chief

is an academic, policy advisor, and author. He teaches political science and international relations at De La Salle University, and as a specialist on Asian geopolitical and economic affairs he has written for or interviewed by Aljazeera English, Asia Times, BBC, Bloomberg, The New York Times, The Huffington Post, among other leading publications.

Populism is in the air. And the specter of popular autocracy is haunting much of the world. In recent years, a growing number of rapidly-growing economies, with long traditional of liberal democratic rule, have gradually succumbed to temptations of populism: charismatic leaders promising overnight solutions to complex problems besetting turbo-charged modernizing nations.

And surely, there are more fundamental structural forces at play in here. As Joel Racamora argues in the latest edition of the *Socdem Asia Quarterly*, “neoliberal economic policies marginalize large segments of the rural and urban population, creating the conditions for populism.” In short, the inherently disruptive and inequitable nature of economic globalization, which has brought tremendous prosperity to emerging market elites, is alienating a growing portion of the society that seeks its own rightful piece of the expanding pie.

This has been most acutely pungent in the case of the Philippines, long considered as the bastion of liberal democracy in East Asia, where growth as well as political power has been heavily concentrated in the hands of few conglomerates and political dynasties. The upshot is the election of tough-talking mayor-turned-president Rodrigo Duterte.

There is little doubt that Duterte, who cruised into a landslide electoral victory on the back of an all-out “anti-establishment” rhetoric, is a populist.

As I write in my latest book, *The Rise of Duterte: A Populist Revolt Against Elite Democracy*, the Filipino leader has often presented himself as the voice of the people, *the* guardian of the nation, *the* shield against criminal elements, and, in an often messianic vein, as the country's final hope and saviour.

Eerily similar phenomenon took place in India, the world's largest and -- along with the Philippines -- among Asia's oldest democracies. As Indu Ratra writes in the *Quarterly*, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has also adopted a similarly messianic message of national salvation and glory, “promis[ing] in his election campaign “achhe din” (good days) will come... He came up with slogans like “make in India”, “start up India”, and “new India” to make Indians feel proud and imbibe a sense of greatness of a big populous country.” Both Modi and Duterte have presented themselves as viable alternatives to a discredited, elitist, out-of-touch liberal elite, directly questioning the liberal tenets of their respective national constitutional orders.

As US political scientist Jan-Werner Muller notes in “What is Populism?”, populism is inherently anathema to liberal democracy and principles of pluralism. Troubling signs have also showed up in places like Indonesia, another rapidly growing economy and fledgling democracy, where religious fundamentalism has gained ground at the expense of pluralism.

This was most palpable in the controversial conviction of former Jakarta Governor “Ahok”, a Christian who is of Chinese descent, on charges of blasphemy. More troublingly, fringe fundamentalist have found fountain of support among opportunistic politicians seeking to tap into dark currents of fundamentalism and anti-pluralist sentiments among alienated sections of the society. This was evidently clear during Ahok's re-election bid, where we saw an unholy alliance between centrist politicians and fringe fundamentalist. “*The excuse that a [supposedly] smart [and rational] voter will bring a healthier democracy is not entirely false, but there is an important factor that enables the maneuver of free riders,*” Andi Saiful Haq warns in the *Quarterly*, referring to anti-democratic forces

that are bent on abusing the democratic space for undemocratic ends.

In developed Asian democracies such as Japan, meanwhile, the political landscape has, so far, been dominated by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, with little challenge from the democratic Left. As Jeff Kingston writes in the *Quarterly*, “*populism in Japan in mainstream politics is limited to the right wing. The potential for fundamental reforms of the status quo is therefore limited.*”

Populists, especially the right-wing varieties, have an exclusivist notion of national interest and Rousseau-esque 'general will', whereby only the leader and his supporters truly represent 'the people.' In contrast, critics and opponents are often portrayed as 'the enemy', bent on preserving the status quo at the expense of the masses.

This explains why, for instance, Duterte notes often accuses his critics of engaging in 'sabotage' and hatching up a supposed 'destabilisation plot'. He has rarely shied away from threatening his opponents with impeachment, imprisonment or worse. Duterte also epitomises the populist style of leadership. As Benjamin Moffitt explains in his latest book, “*Global Rise of Populism*”, populism is essentially about 'bad manners': the calculated defiance of the established rituals of power in order to project authenticity.

Duterte's invective-laced pronouncements, which often drive his affinity with his audience, are a quintessential expression of his populist appeal. Modi, meanwhile, hardly shies away from angry, emotional chest-thumping speeches denouncing his critics as treasonous and conspiratorial. One can be populist but not necessarily popular, as in the case of US President Donald Trump.

Duterte, however, has maintained high approval ratings since coming to power last June. He is often portrayed as one of the world's most popular leaders, along with the likes of Vladimir Putin of Russia. It is precisely the larger-than-life figures such as Modi and Duterte, who are dramatically reshaping the Asian democratic landscape. The latest edition of the *Quarterly* brings together ideas from leading activists, thinkers and scholars across the Asia-Pacific region, shedding light on the phenomenon of populism and the challenges it presents to progressive forces and the gains of democracy.

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Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly



Joel Rocamora

is a founding member of Akbayan. He was Secretary and Lead Convenor of the National Anti-Poverty Commission in the Aquino administration. He garnered his PhD in "Government and Asian Studies" from Cornell University

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte is a populist archetype: self-centered, violent, determined yet casual, inexorably pushing the government towards authoritarianism. It has only been a year since he was elected. But it is a year that threatens to gobble up our future. After writing about another populist president, Joseph Estrada, now almost ten years ago, I did not expect to be writing again about another populist president.¹

“Populism” used to be a political tool that media and academics in the West used to disparage leaders in the South. Not anymore. The election of Donald Trump and fear of right-wing populists in Europe have excised 'end of history' arrogance from Western political discourse. Rightwing populists threaten democratic politics in both the South and the advanced capitalist countries of the North.

Analysts from a range of political perspectives agree on one source – the problems generated by globalization. The location of national economies in globalized chains of production and distribution determine the specific problems. But there is one development common to both North and South, heightened inequality. Globalization pushed jobs to the South putting pressure on wages in the North.



Image: commons.wikimedia.org

Digong acts within the confines of elite political culture: highly personalistic, family-centered, with feudal norms of loyalty and honor

In the South, neoliberal economic policies marginalize large segments of the rural and urban population, creating the conditions for populism.

Explaining Duterte

Duterte and US President Donald Trump apparently like each other. They should, they sound very much alike. But Duterte is *sui generis*. It is difficult to explain Duterte with conventional political discourse. He does not know the difference between policy and bragging to drinking partners. While there's no way to **predict** Duterte, we have to attempt to understand the man.

He has, to start with, simply not grown up. He remains a *hambugerong bugoy*, a teenage braggart. Thus the constant bragging about his sexual prowess, the dirty talk, the tilting against convention. The problem is that he has an exaggerated sense of what he is capable of, thus the resulting frustration, the push for ever more personal control, the clear thrust towards authoritarian power.

In 1998, as a requirement in the annulment of his first marriage, Dr. Natividad Dayan, a former president of the International Council of

Psychologists, did an evaluation. Dr. Dayan found that Mr. Duterte was suffering from “Antisocial Narcissistic Personality Disorder,” a condition characterized by “gross indifference, insensitivity and self-centeredness,” “grandiose sense of self-entitlement and manipulative behaviors.”

She found him to be a “highly impulsive individual who has difficulty controlling his urges and emotions.” And she described him as having a “pervasive tendency to demean, humiliate others and violate their rights and feelings,” and was “unable to reflect on the consequences of his actions.” He was found to readily engage in “unhealthy and destructive behaviors” and had “poor capacity for objective judgment,” failing to “see things in the light of facts.”²

Duterte (he prefers to be called Digong) has talked about going against the “oligarchy”. Like Marcos he may go against specific oligarchs but he himself is unmistakably upper class. Digong has impeccable upper class credentials. On both sides of his family, he comes from the Cebu elite. His father was a member of Marcos' cabinet and governor of Davao province. He studied law in San Beda, an elite Manila university. His campaign was financed by upper class Mindanao oligarchs, from the Dominguezes to Floirendo, and the Alcantaras. The economic policies laid out by Finance Secretary Dominguez are unmistakably neo-liberal, serve the interests of the oligarchy.

More important, Digong acts within the confines of elite political culture: highly personalistic, family-centered, with feudal norms of loyalty and honor. His loyalty to the Marcoses, at great political cost because of widespread opposition to Marcos' burial at the heroes cemetery, is partly based on the votes he got in Marcos bailiwicks. But he himself says he has to honor the family debt of honor for his father's appointment to Marcos' cabinet. Maybe his petty vindictiveness is not common to the oligarchy, but his sexism certainly is.

While some progressives stretch the meaning of the term to include him, what anchors Digong is being a populist. His coarse language, his attacks on the UN, Western ambassadors, even the Pope on top of his rhetoric against his election opponents, enabled him to connect with the frustrations and anti-establishment sentiments of the bulk of voters. Populists succeed when they are able to bridge the discursive gulf between the Westernised elite and

poor people. Populism is possible only when the elite politician finds a shared cultural frame -- common ways of deriving meaning with the poor majority.

It is important to point out that Digong's populist personality is not a pose; that's really the way he is. Like Erap and other populists, he preferred the more openly freewheeling lifestyle of the *bugoy* – his days defined by late night, drinking sessions with friends. Digong's foul language, his misogyny, his linguistic violence, his *panghambog* (*bragging*) is characteristic of these drunken brawls. Despite many promises to clean up his language, it is unlikely that Digong will significantly change.

Like Erap's populist rhetoric, Digong's foul language constitutes a subversion of dominant political discourse and facilitates a sense of popular participation in politics. But it also personalises politics in such a way that participation becomes mainly symbolic. Citizen stakes in politics are dissolved and transferred wholesale to one person, in this case Digong, years ago Estrada. Digong may bring the popular *medjo bastos* into political discourse, but he does not bring citizens into formal processes of political participation. In contrast to populists who mobilise people, Digong like Estrada is a demobilising populist.

There are, historically, two kinds of populists, the mobilizing and the demobilizing populist. On top of rhetoric, mobilizing populists such as Peron, or closer, Sukarno use government resources to mobilize large numbers of people. Neoliberal populists such as Duterte “mobilise” urban and rural populations around occasional elections and mass campaigns without providing more regular participation within organisations.

What Has He Achieved?

Drugs

Duterte promised change. Indeed change has come but not the kinds of changes he expected. The most important change is the drug war. Seven thousand killed before the newspapers stopped counting, perhaps daunted by the scale of the massacre. While there are no reliable numbers, drug use has undoubtedly declined, demand and supply are both down. But not enough to match the ferocity of the campaign. When the campaign slows down, the enormous profits will drive supply back up. For now, I suppose we can chalk this up as an “achievement”, but at what cost? Duterte has savaged human rights

work, attacking human rights activists, saying drug addicts are not human so they have no rights. Institutional damage is long term. The heaviest is what the campaign has done to the police. When you have a president ordering you to kill, kill, kill, you begin to think you can do whatever you want. Killing a kidnapped South Korean businessman within the office of the police anti-drug task force within Camp Crame, the PNP headquarters, is only the most blatant example, there are surely many more. What adds to the sense of impunity is Duterte's promise that no policeman will go to jail when they follow his orders. What might prove most dangerous about the ethic of total war on drugs is the way it encourages distrust of all authority—except for the authority of brute force.

When a police team entered the Baybay Sub-provincial jail in Leyte and murdered Albura Mayor Rolando Espinosa and Raul Yap, the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and a Senate investigation called it premeditated murder. Duterte publicly asked them to plead guilty so he could then pardon them. The Department of Justice downgraded the charge to homicide,

*Institutional damage is long term.
The heaviest is what the campaign
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Image: Rappler.com



allowing them to be released on bail.³ The Senate, including erstwhile supporters of the administration protested, triggering yet another cross branch fight. A more recent example, the raid on the houses of Ozamiz City Mayor Reynaldo Parojinog on July 30 produced 16 fatalities including the mayor and his wife, sister, brother and nephew.⁴

Past administrations have struggled to reform the corrupt and incompetent PNP. Duterte's drug war has wiped out all these gains. In 2016, cops patrolled neighborhoods less frequently, conducted fewer investigations, slowed down in serving arrest warrants to wanted persons, and captured less high value targets, compared to 2015. Yet, last year, the Philippine National Police (PNP) spent P11.754 billion more than the year before that – P127.153 billion in 2016, from P115.399 billion in 2015.⁵ Murders and homicides under the present administration have risen by 40% over the same period the previous year (7,022 in July-November 2016, versus 5,019 in 2015), mostly with the poor as victims.⁶

Foreign Relations ⁷

The other major change has been in our foreign relations. Duterte's *macho* reaction to criticism of his drug war on human rights was to heap abuse on former US President Obama, the Pope, the United Nations, and most recently the European Union. He threatens to have human rights activists killed. Only China, Russia and the equally *macho* US president Trump have supported his drug war. If getting international media to pay attention is an achievement, Duterte is an over achiever. He is often in the news as a loud mouth, volatile leader.

Other than Duterte's intemperate attacks on foreign leaders and institutions, the other major change has been in Duterte's handling of the West Philippine Sea issue and relations with China. By working against the polarization of relations with China under Aquino and distancing himself from the US, I suppose we could say that he has introduced some independence in Philippine foreign relations. But it is an "independence" that has also introduced a lot of uncertainty, not least because of the 'bar room brawl' language of Duterte.

Duterte started things off with characteristic braggadocio. He would jet ski, he said, to a contested island and plant the Philippine flag. But when he visited China, he went clear across the other side, to

the outer limits of diplomatic sanity. He said: "In this shifting of political and cultural thing, America has lost it. I mean, I realigned myself in your (China's) ideological flow and maybe I will also go to Russia to talk to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin and tell him that there are three of us against the world: China, Philippines and Russia."⁸

Other than hyperbole, Duterte also said he would stop joint military exercises with the US. Thankfully, the military has, without making an issue of it, not obeyed. Cooperation with the US military, including US assistance in the Marawi fighting, has continued. The military has also quietly lobbied for resources to refurbish facilities in Kalayaan and other islands near Chinese facilities, a direct challenge to China whose claims include those islands.⁹

A diplomatic stance that does not identify the Philippines as aligning with one or the other power on the issue of who controls the West Philippine Sea is indeed necessary. Being aligned with the US has not prevented the Philippines from losing control over Panatag Shoal nor has the US done anything to stop Chinese militarization of contested islands. But Duterte's diplomacy makes the Philippines look like a puny kid cringing before the neighborhood bully. Constant reference to how much investment and aid China has promised makes the Philippines look like a slavering vassal.

Peace

A few months ago I asked a Norwegian friend if Duterte would win the Nobel Prize if he succeeded in concluding peace talks with the National Democratic Front (NDF) and the MILF. He laughed and said yes, if he can get past his bad image from his drug war. Actually Duterte has done more "confidence building" for talks with the NDF than any other president before him. I assumed that a president from Mindanao could do more for peace in Mindanao. One year into his presidency, Duterte is nowhere near the Nobel Prize.

Despite recent threats from Duterte to cancel talks, he has not formally communicated this to the NDF. Talks with the NDF will probably continue despite stopping many times. Reports from several sessions in Europe show that Sison, who remains the main person assigned to the talks by the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), has intervened several times to keep momentum going.

For the CPP, current conditions for the negotiations are very favorable: CPP members are in cabinet and sub-cabinet positions, seven members are in the House of Representatives, they are some distance into their desired “belligerency status” because of the talks, yet being able to use front organizations to criticize the administration, most important, being able to continue armed attacks and “revolutionary taxation”. These are the best possible conditions, enabling the CPP to grow without giving up armed struggle.

Duterte has openly expressed his frustration, complaining that he has given the CPP a lot, but they continue to kill soldiers and police. In Davao, he kept the NPA at bay, limiting armed encounters. Focused on the centers of power, the NPA was not a threat to Davao City or to the mayor. As President, Duterte can claim success only if armed encounters are stopped altogether. He has focused therefore on concluding a joint ceasefire where the NPA would be committed to stop attacks with a monitoring team in place. On and off unilateral ceasefires have not prevented armed NPA attacks and continuing “revolutionary taxation”. Duterte and the CPP have parallel problems with their armed groups. Duterte is worried that the military, not fully in his control despite his courtship, would not go along with a political settlement that would not remove the armed capability of the CPP. The CPP leaders doing the negotiating cannot be sure that local NPA units, especially those with lucrative rackets like illegal mining in Caraga, will obey a ceasefire order. Duterte has a bigger problem: Success requires an effective joint ceasefire. The CPP has openly favored the ongoing “talk and fight” situation. They would rather not test their ability to get local NPA to obey them.

Talks with the MILF should have been easier, the Aquino administration got talks to the point where only congressional approval of the Bangsa Moro basic law (BBL) needed to be finalized. Duterte's mistake was to believe that he could get the MILF and the Nur Misuari MNLF to work together for peace. The Marawi fighting seems to have disabused Duterte of this. A slightly revised BBL has been submitted to congress and is likely to be approved by the administration “super majority”. The MNLF refused to participate in the process of revising the BBL. Despite Duterte's bending over backwards to accommodate Misuari, he has not had any more success than with the NDF.

Corruption

Another major Duterte promise is that he would stop corruption. He makes a lot of 'drama' about firing people even if he only gets a “whiff” of corruption. He fired two long time associates, Pete Lavina and Mike Sueno. Halmen Valdez was collateral damage in the fight in the National Food Authority (NFA). But there are reports that all three were victims in vicious factional struggles in the administration. There are persistent rumors that the factions who dominate several agencies are busy making money. In the end, how can Duterte do anything about corruption when he has taken the poster boys and girls of corruption, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and the Marcoses into the fold? It remains to be seen where recently surfaced rumors of corruption by Duterte son, and Davao Vice Mayor Paolo “Pulong” Duterte will go.¹⁰

Traffic, Endo ...

During the campaign, Duterte made a big deal about the failure of the Aquino administration to do anything about the traffic problem in Metro Manila and other cities, promising to solve the problem within months. Well, it's already a year and traffic has gotten worse not better. Duterte's Department of Transport and Communications asked for emergency powers to solve the problem, but failing to provide details, neither the House nor the Senate has passed the required law. The only ongoing projects, a highway connecting the North and South super highways and several expansion lines for light rail transit were started during the Aquino administration.

Duterte's much ballyhooed “Build, build, build” infrastructure program remains on the drawing boards. His promise to stop contractualization, especially the widespread practice of firing employees just short of six months when they would have to be given the benefits of regularization, has bogged down in endless consultations. I can't think of a single campaign promise of Duterte that he has delivered. All of these promises – drugs, the Abu Sayyaf, traffic, peace, endo, many more, were made with tight three to six month deadlines. He keeps extending deadlines, and making excuses. Yet surveys show he remains popular.¹¹ One explanation might be that the economy remains buoyant.

Economy

The Philippines remains one of the fastest growing economies in Asia, and for that matter, the world. There are at least two reasons. The economy bequeathed by the Aquino administration already went through a five-year period of growth that has continued into the Duterte era. Second, Duterte has appointed professionals to economic policy-making positions and has largely left them alone. But they don't operate in a world of their own, they have to relate to other agencies of government, and to the legislature. There are worrying signs.

GDP growth in 2016 was a high 6.9 percent. Estimated growth in the first quarter 2017 was lower at 6.4 percent; second quarter figures are only slightly higher at 6.5 percent. This despite high growth in agriculture, which has perennially dragged down growth in other sectors. The culprit appears to be government expenditures, which make up almost a tenth of economic activity. The government incurred a P63.6-billion budget deficit as of end-May, narrower than the P75.1-billion gap incurred in the comparable year-ago period. At this rate, the 2017 fiscal deficit could be lower than the P353.4 billion in 2016 that was equivalent to 2.4% of

If I were a foreign investor, I might discount Duterte's dirty mouth but not Marawi and continuing NPA attacks.

Image: changescamming.net



gross domestic product (GDP). For 2017, the government has set the deficit ceiling at P482.1 billion, equivalent to three percent of GDP. gross domestic product (GDP). For 2017, the government has set the deficit ceiling at P482.1 billion, equivalent to three percent of GDP.¹²

One often repeated criticism of the Aquino administration by Duterte and his supporters was the slow pace of government expenditures. DBM secretary Ben Diokno is discovering that raising the government's absorptive capacity is not that easy. Diokno has pledged to spend as much as P8.4 trillion in infrastructure until 2022 to further boost GDP growth.¹³ As former DPWH Secretary Babes Singson could have told Diokno if he had asked, Filipino contractors are having difficulty absorbing the massive increases in DPWH projects. Complicating things even further is the expectation of billions in Chinese loans.

Another disturbing sign is that investments rose only to 7.9%, way below the 31.5% of a year ago, and the preceding quarter's 14.7%. More disturbing is the steep decline in investments in information technology and business process management, the fastest growing sector of the economy. New investments in IT-BPM sector fell by 34.96 percent to P7.08 billion in the first five months of the year from P10.88 billion in the same period last year.¹⁴ How much of this is the result of political conditions is not easy to determine. But if I were a foreign investor, I might discount Duterte's dirty mouth but not Marawi and continuing NPA attacks.

These developments are already having an impact on the poor. "An SWS survey for the first quarter of 2017 showed 50% of respondents regarded themselves as poor, a marked increase over the 44% in the last quarter, or an additional 1.5 million households. This reverses a trend of consistently falling self-rated poverty since 2014... It may well be connected with some hard facts. Headline inflation has risen sharply from only 1.4% and 1.8% respectively in 2015 and 2016 to 3.4% by March and April of this year... Food inflation alone already reached 4% as of April... Total employment as of January 2017 was 1.36 million people fewer than in January 2016."¹⁵

Other developments make it likely that inflation will continue to edge upwards. The peso closed at an 11 year low of P51.35:\$1 in late August. It's not because of international developments; the peso is the worst

performer among regional currencies. Peso devaluation is pushed by current account deficits (\$318 million in the first quarter, reversing the P730 million surplus of 2016) and declining international reserves (\$86 billion in September 2016 down to \$80.8 billion in July 2017).¹⁶

Duterte's much vaunted infrastructure program, estimated to cost \$167 billion (P8.5 trillion) over 10 years, will be financed out of the national budget, domestic and foreign loans and ODA.¹⁷ This departs from the Aquino government "Public Private Partnership" (PPP) financed mainly by the private sector. Some concern has been raised. Forbes magazine estimates that, within 10 years, even at a minimum concessional interest rate of 5 percent, the Philippines would be saddled with an additional debt of P13.75 trillion from the infrastructure program alone. By then, the country's debt-to-GDP ratio will hit 136 percent, a quantum leap from the current ratio of 42.1 percent.

To allay fears, Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno argued that only 20 percent of the infrastructure budget would come from foreign borrowings while the rest will be coursed through domestic loans. But 20 percent is still \$33.4 billion or P1.65 trillion. This would bring the Philippines' total foreign debt to P3.81 trillion, a 76.4-percent increase from the December 2016 figure. The domestic debt component would drive up the total debt stock to P15 trillion (before interest), a 146-percent jump from the December 2016 total of P6.09 trillion. This excludes new loans not related to infrastructure.¹⁸

What is the connection between Duterte populism and economic policy? Men Sta. Ana has a perceptive take. /Duterte's economics is about having quick-fix solutions and giving "free lunch," in both the literal and figurative senses. In Davao, Mayor Duterte was able to provide the free lunch, thanks to the overgenerous resources that the City of Davao received -- and continues to receive -- from the Local Government Code's Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA). The IRA allotment has a bias for a big population and a large land area, which Davao has. As mayor, Duterte did not have to bother about how to generate the resources. He had the IRA, and his alliance with all administrations resulted in additional largesse for him. As President, Duterte is copying what he did in Davao as mayor. He gets popular support for allowing free college education in state colleges and universities, free irrigation, free housing, and the like.¹⁹



Image: ABS-CBN News

Populism is a particular variant of the personalism, which pervades Philippine politics.

The Consequences of Duterte

Duterte won the election for the presidency not just because he was able to connect with people's frustrations, but also because he promised change. His main opponent, Mar Roxas played into this by focusing on "continuity" with the policies of the Aquino administration. Duterte has indeed changed things, but backwards. As Bonn Juego put it: "He is a 'traditional' politician in the sense that he is a veteran local political boss who has decoded the language and practice of power politics that have long defined Filipino political culture. He has perfected the skills for patronage politics, and learned the realities of money politics. Over the years, he has nurtured the capacity for coercion and violence through the use of guns and goons."²⁰

Populism is a particular variant of the personalism, which pervades Philippine politics. Personalism is a key element of continuity in Philippine political history. In several important ways, populism is a throwback to the pre-colonial political culture of local strong men. The slow pace of socio-economic change has, among other things, meant that the centuries-old political culture of the "strong man"

remains. Liberal democratic political culture, represented by the candidacies of Roxas and Poe, was 'trumped' by Duterte's populism. The fact that Duterte also had strong support in the ABC segments of voters means that even in the upper middle class and upper classes, "strong man" culture remains prevalent.

Writing about Estrada, but clearly applicable to Duterte, Karaos (2006)²¹ captures the character of contemporary populism best by contrasting it to clientelism:

There are a number of important differences between the clientelism of traditional politics and the relationship between Estrada and his urban poor allies. The first relates to the way the leader views the existing power structure. Populist leaders create and maintain their populist appeal by challenging – at least in rhetoric, if not in their actions – the existing power structure and typically portray themselves as the enemy of the elite. Estrada not only cast himself as an enemy of the rich, he even criticized the leaders of the Catholic Church for being elitist. Populist leaders make an effort to blur the class distinction between themselves and their followers. They build their legitimacy on this identification with the masses. By contrast, the traditional patron never sets out to confront the iniquity of the existing power structure. Instead traditional politicians seek to give legitimacy to the prevailing power structure by ensuring that the poor also get something out of it thru their intervention. They act as intermediaries between the poor and the political system. In the eyes of their followers, traditional politicians are seen as effective leaders because of their access to power. A second difference is the articulation of some kind of "class" or collective interest in a populist relationship. This is absent in clientelism. The latter succeeds in maintaining dependency by defining their relationship with their poor constituents in very particularistic terms. By contrast populist leaders cultivate a class identity by emphasizing how the poor are being victimized by the elite...

Populism and clientelism, however share an important characteristic: their abhorrence of institutions and institutionalized channels of interest representation. Because of this, both end up reinforcing existing power relations. They do not encourage the formation of independent organizations with stable linkages to political institutions; instead they cultivate the dependence of subaltern group on politicians who represent the poor's only access to the political system. In one short year, Duterte has seriously damaged other institutions, most importantly, the judicial system.

Duterte's casual attitude to the law, ironic for a lawyer, is coupled with his disrespect for facts. It's not just that he resents the media's criticism, he relates to facts in a way that's similar to Trump's 'alternative facts'. When he gets called on one of his more outrageous statements, he says he was just joking. More disturbing is the way his supporters manipulate social media. In what has been called "cyber tokhang", Duterte 'cyber warriors' circulate made-up stories about critics of the administration, worse threaten, and launch personal attacks on selected targets.²²

How much longer?

Conscious opponents of the Duterte regime, and others simply concerned with the damage to painfully built political institutions, often ask how much longer Duterte is going to stick around? They do not understand how he can still command high trust and performance survey ratings. I invariably advise people not to count on Duterte leaving or being forced out before his term ends in 2022. But we should keep in mind that Estrada, the only other populist president in Philippine history, was forced out of office in less than two years. In general, populist regimes do not last long.

I do not know if Duterte is a conscious populist. His oversized personality, his self-absorption makes him a perfect populist. On one side of his macho personality, his preoccupation with women, on the other, not unrelated, with violence. It is the people's fear for their personal safety that Duterte is responding to. A populist is not accountable. All he has to do is (re)present in his words and actions the people's fears, anger, and hopes. A President Rodrigo Duterte, however, is accountable.

Duterte's political base cuts across classes, genders, generations and from right-to-left. This is the main source of Duterte's political strength. Over time this

can also be a source of weakness. Each of these segments of Duterte's base bring their particular demand or complaint. Taking off from Laclau's analysis of populism, the late Ben Anderson said populism allows each person to "...look at all these people with their different demands and realize that in some way they are all brothers and sisters. Everyone is being blocked or mistreated, or poorly served in the same way. Laclau calls this equivalence." The problem is that once a populist gains power, this equivalence will disappear but the demands, and resentments remain.²³

The Duterte regime may also fall victim to one consequence of our weak party system. Duterte, like other presidents before him, came to power without a majority in the legislature; many local governments are partisans for the preceding administration. Without much ado, this changes as congressmen, governors and mayors move to the administration party to get a share of spoils. Pretty soon the number of claimants to available spoils will outpace supply. If the pace of polarization has produced a credible counter center, the direction of movement of opportunistic politicians will shift. At best, the regime will become an early lame duck regime.

The decline in the political fortunes of the Duterte regime will partly depend on the development of an alternative center. What remains of the Liberal Party, with the majority of its members having moved to the administration party, is valiantly trying to play that role. But to counter Duterte populism the LP will have to address the anti-establishment anger of the population. Civil society organizations are in the forefront of anti-Duterte mobilizations, but they face the same problems as the LP. "Civil society organizations...may have tried their best to represent the interests of the poor, but they have largely failed to give voice to the cultural viewpoint of the poor."²⁴

In the end what is required is "Left Populism" to counter the "Right Populism" of Duterte. The Communist Party of the Philippines cannot play this role because its set ideas on "people's democracy", "democratic centralist" organizational frame and its insistence on armed struggle inhibits popular participation. Only "Democratic Left" groups **have the potential** to touch base with popular sentiments and develop a "Left Populist" alternative.

Having given up on armed seizure of state power, these groups have to develop electoral means of accumulating power. Among "demleft" groups, Akbayan has the most consistent experience of electoral participation. It also has the broadest base in local areas. But it has not maximized this local base to win local elections. It continues to be preoccupied with national politics.

Even as it touches base with the resentments and anger which fuels populism, Akbayan and other "demleft" groups have to develop a socialist alternative and provide a policy frame for populist sentiments. The sooner Akbayan can provide a credible promise of change, the sooner people will realize that Duterte's failure to bring about change has to culminate in regime change.

The decline in the political fortunes of the Duterte regime will partly depend on the development of an alternative center.

Image: Rappler



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Case for Progressive Populism

A Fresh Indian Initiative



Indu Ratra

Ms. Indu Ratra, having graduated in Political Science Major, is a post-graduate in Human Resource as well as Business Administration.

She has been engaged in human resource management and keeps abreast of political-ideological developments in India, as an active member of ADS since 2006.

Right-wing populism is winning across the world, and can no longer be dismissed as a blip. Without countering its menacing march, all progressive ideas will be marginalised to the point of irrelevance. To be sure, the crisis facing the left-progressives is existential. A similar trend is witnessed in India in the last three years, with an unassailable ascendancy of a right-wing Hindu nationalist party in Indian politics, with the progressive opposition getting increasingly fragmented. Although populism is not a new tactic, the current form is complex and needs to be deeply understood and effectively countered. In India, we had a heavy bout of populism in the 1970s when Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister. Her party's slogan "Indira is India and India is Indira" reeked of sycophancy by her party leaders; made her the supreme leader of her party and an unbeatable politician in the country. Since then, dynastic politics became almost institutionalised. The rest is history.

What is populism? Is it necessarily detrimental to democracy? There are quite a few definitions and interpretations of populism in world politics. The one, prevalent in the west is that, populism refers to a movement in which an outsider or an anti-establishment figure tries to capture power by

directly appealing to the masses. In the developing world, populism would mean, announcement of more and more redistributive policies, offer of largesse, waiver of loans etc., usually before the elections. Such announcements are not adhered to after the election. Yet another common understanding of populism is when the leaders appeal to various identities of the electorate, religious, ethnic, linguistic, race, gender, and so on, which are not linked to their economic or developmental interest. As Napoleon Bonaparte once memorably said, “Politics of the future will be the art of stirring up the masses”. This perspective of populism appears to be more persuasive as people respond to the appeals of identities and values they believe in and often vote against economic self-interest. George Lakoff, an American cognitive linguist has explained this electoral phenomenon and voters behaviour, elaborately in his seminal work “Do not Think of an Elephant”.

Populism can undermine democracy and vitiate politics. This has been brought out by Bernard Crick in his two editions of the famous book “In Defence of Politics”. He says, “Leaders of great democracies can subvert politics as a form of rule by the rhetoric and tactic of populism.” He argues, populist political leaders choose to ignore the limitations of constitutions and rules framed by the law makers.

Having deciphered, to some extent, the complex concept of populism, let us examine how it plays out in India with Narendra Modi, the Indian Prime Minister, the supreme leader of Bharatiya Janata Party. First, populists believe in throwing up new ideas, in posturing, and claiming to be innovative. Ernesto Laclau, a noted author on populism, said, “Populism relies on empty signifiers”. But populists succeed in capturing the imagination and aspirations of the voters who buy into the “dreams” dished out by these leaders. Narendra Modi promised in his election campaign “**achhe din**” (**good days**) **will come**. The incumbent Congress government of 2009-2014 was beset with corruption, and the whole country was outraged at the amount of black money stashed by Indians in Swiss banks. Modi promised to bring it all back into the country. He came up with slogans like “make in India”, “start up India”, and “new India” to make Indians feel proud and imbibe a sense of greatness of a big populous country”. Although in day-to-day life of common people, these slogans are empty, without making any tangible impact. Second, populists are anti-elite and anti-pluralism. Modi's



Image: thewire.in

Modi is not tired of calling himself a tea-seller, his humble upbringing, although he was gifted an expensive suit, which he gave up after public criticism.

party and government have displayed these traits to their fullest. Modi is not tired of calling himself a tea-seller, his humble upbringing, although he was gifted an expensive suit, which he gave up after public criticism. His party is anti-pluralism under the tacit support of his government. There have been, in recent months and years, harassment and oppression of Muslims and Christians, two groups, treated as “outsiders” by the party. The ruling party

believes in *Hindutva*, a concept that advocates a form of nationalism based on the majority Hindu population. Third, populists portray themselves as victims when they are in power. The ruling BJP maintains that the Hindu majority has been discriminated as the Muslims have been privileged by the Congress party, long-in-power since 1947, because of vote bank politics. This assertion is not empirically true; but they manage to sell this theory of 'majority victimisation', which, in a democracy, is an anachronism, they give ad nauseam the example of Jammu and Kashmir where Hindus have been driven out by the majority Muslims in an "ethnic cleansing". True, this has happened in Jammu and Kashmir, but that state of India has a special history. Any occurrence in that state cannot be generalised. Fourth, populist parties are monolithic in nature as well as function. The BJP is a monolithic party with a single-community base and ideology. The party is controlled by Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangha (RSS), the ideology of which is to establish a Hindu Rashtra (country). When the ideology of a party has religious base, it tends to be monolithic in its functioning too. Admittedly, BJP has internal democracy; there is, for instance, a consultation process amongst the top leaders, but despite all these nuances of democratic participation, the writ of RSS runs in the party, and their decision is final. Fifth, populists claim to be close to the people; in fact, they pride themselves in their proximity with the people. Narendra Modi has a regular broadcast in government-owned All India Radio, called 'Man Ki Baat' (to speak my mind)". He directly talks to 1.25 billion people of India, not that all of them listen to it. Another ominous habit of the populists is to announce major policy decisions through public speeches, television interviews and press briefings. This subverts the democratic institutions, mainly the parliament which is the supreme law-making body. In fact, Modi, when he entered the parliament after winning the elections, he touched the parliament stairs with his forehead, an Indian way of paying ultimate respect. He said, "Now I am entering the temple of our democracy". Yet, he by passed it many a time while announcing policies for the country. Sixth, populists tend to be simplistic as they oversimplify the policy challenges. Take for example, at one scoop, Modi banned the use of '500 and 1000' currency notes, supposedly to check corruption and use of black money by the Maoist groups. It caused enormous logistical problem for people to queue up in the banks for hours to change their notes. This is what was called demonetisation; it was a major policy change, made

to look so simple. It is like Donald Trump linking job losses in America with immigration and outsourcing.

If above are the characteristics of populists what do they do to foster populism. We may discuss three actions they take from our experience in India. One, occupy the state. They fill the state institutions with their cadres. In India, the major economic wing called Planning Commission was abolished and a lesser body (called NITI Ayog) was created where members have been hand-picked. The University Grants Commission, which runs the Universities in India, and the Indian Council of Social Science Research, which funds quality, and advanced research, are all run by BJP appointees whose determining qualification is merely their association with the party. There are many such examples to show how state institutions are being infiltrated. Second, they engage in mass clientelism. The present government is enrolling people from all sections into their schemes like 'Jandhan Yojana', cash in the hands of people, bank loans to corporates and lucrative positions to individuals. These clients then do the bidding for the government and the party. Third, they put down the dissent in civil society. The present government has withdrawn the permission of many development organisations to receive foreign funds. It has choked the NGOs in state funding. The tax bodies and investigative agencies are set after those critical of the government. We are not suggesting that the offenders should not be brought to book. But selective application of law raises misgivings about government's intentions and strategy.

How do progressives counter the onslaught of right-wing populism? Progressives have to do at least two things to fight it: one conceptual and the other strategic. Progressives have to understand, unlike Karl Marx had suggested that a human being is homo economicus, and that all human relations and responses are driven by economy. Human beings are emotional creatures with multiple interests and drivers. Progressives need stories that are emotionally compelling. They must have messages that resonate with all constituencies. That is where we argue for progressive populism, what we mean by populism is what appeals to voters. The strategic response is that progressives should stop treating the right-wingers as less educated, ill-informed reactionaries. Such a dismissive attitude does not help in understanding how they frame their messages. In Britain, the Labour Party made this



Image: www.thenational.ae

Human beings are emotional creatures with multiple interests and drivers. Progressives need stories that are emotionally compelling.

mistake in 1980s, until they lost the fourth successive general election. Then they began to study their opponents and came up with effective alternatives and counterpoints. Progressives have to redouble their efforts; they cannot keep the idea-space empty, as someone said, 'tragedy occurs in a vacuum'.

The initiative just taken, on 16 August 2017, is promising. The entire opposition of left and progressive parties have come on one platform under the leadership of a Social Democrat. Usually, the parties come in alliance to win elections, and then they split at the earliest opportunity. But, this time around, they have come under an idea, which is called "Sanjha Virasat Bachao", (save our real heritage). This takes the battle into BJP bastion which is "nationalism, heritage, Indianness" etc. Now the debate will be on what exactly we should 'preserve' and what now we should embrace, or build upon. This new platform is talking of dynamic conservation of our heritage, not going back or

undoing history. Progressives have to engage the right-wingers on their ideas; not dismiss them. They have to be engaged and defeated-intellectually, strategically and electorally. All this happens in people's arena and for the people. Populism has become a part of political strategy by those the right, centre and left. So the idea is to defeat right-wing populism which is subversive, divisive and violent, and introduce progressive populism that is plural, inclusive and emboldening.

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The Alienated Democracy

A State without People, Election without Voters,
and Party without Ideas



Andi Saiful Haq

Director of Institute for Transformation
Studies – INTRANS, Indonesia, Jakarta

The Current Fall of Democracy

It is such naïve to say it the current failure of democracy. There have been so many scholars of democracy reminding us that when capitalism has coopted democracy further, democracy would never stand tall as a system of value. Democracy would only serve as the operational instrument of capitalism for the interest of expansion and accumulation. The symbiotic relationship between capitalism and democracy is almost inevitable because both target the same object: What differs is democracy calls it as 'people' while capitalism calls it as 'market/consumer'.

Democracy is facing a dead-end in addressing crucial problems. Should democracy close its eyes against the economic and social inequalities where the world is only ruled by a small number of the rich while millions of people are still suffering from starvation? Does not democracy and human rights strongly refuse colonialism? If so, why do countries operating military aggressions can cast off democracy when it deals with developed countries? Can't democracy liberate Palestinian people? Or why democracy, which always calls for equality, fails to serve justice? Also why democracy able to limit power but fails to limit the destruction caused by capitalist expansion of multinational corporations?

It seems that the jargon stating that democracy is an operational tool for capitalism has almost become a reality. Robert Reich highlights the situation as 'supercapitalism' where capital started to infiltrate and operate within the political system, until finally it can control power through election, policies, and regulations. The presence of State is merely an entrance lock to investment and conflict of natural resources. Reich argue¹:

“Democracy is the appropriate vehicle for responding to such social consequences. That's where citizen values are supposed to be expressed, where choices are supposed to be made between what we want for ourselves as consumers and investors, and what we want to achieve together. But the same competition that has fueled supercapitalism has spilled over into the political process. Large companies have hired platoons of lobbyists, lawyers, experts, and public relations specialists, and devoted more and more money to electoral campaigns. The result has been to drown out voices and values of citizens”

Capitalism never allows State intervention to the market, but when the market suffers from crisis, the State was asked to tackle the problem and at the same time to calm the people.

It is not the fault of democracy, but there is a big gap in the democracy and open electoral system which enable capitalism to penetrate and influencing the political power. Even the same gap was used by the radical groups to also gain political legitimation. Terrorist groups and network always use the pretext of freedom of speech, freedom to associate, and freedom to politics to propagate without fear of imprisonment. Recently they use electoral instrument to directly influence the state.

The inability of democracy to keep capitalism at bay, the failure of democracy to control the destructive effects of capital expansion, is putting democracy at fault as the instrument of capitalist expansion. Moreover, democracy is accused as the cause of social and economic inequality between the East and the West. Democracy exacerbates the already existing wounds between Islam and other world. Without democracy, China proves to be able to establish itself as the new economic power. The question then is, do we still need democracy?

The Free Riders of Democracy

Democracy that shied away from the economy, unable to take a stand on the importance of the freedom of the nation, democracy that closes its eyes on the problems of social justice and environmental destruction is an alienated democracy. This kind of democracy would only create more regimes that preserve their business interest rather than to fulfill the interest of its citizens as the main point of democracy: from people to people.

An alienated democracy is a democracy that lost their people, where voters don't vote. The labor party and left party lost their support from the working class. Republican Party lost its republicans. Liberal Party lost its root from the libertarians because its support on war. Political parties have lost their ideological character. What happens afterwards is the emergence of alternative political movements coming out from the stagnation of the existing democratic system with the acceptable ways of criticism, as shown by the birth of small parties, i.e. Sex Party, Tea Party, Pirate Party, Internet Party, etc. The empty space in democracy is also used by the ultra-right groups to regain their political support in the US and Europe.

Meanwhile, on the other parts of the world, the so-called Islamic State (IS) wages a new war as a response to US and Europe military aggression in Iraq and other Arab countries. ISIS conducts crime against humanity in its occupied territories. They also took over the oil fields previously occupied by the US. Although they finally were pushed back, ISIS was able to inspire other Islamic radical groups to surface. Groups like Hizbut Tahrir are considered as two political parties in line with the teachings of ISIS. Conservative islamists tried to use the election in Algeria, Egypt, Turkey and Indonesia to take over power. Election as the main instrument of democracy was hijacked easily by the radical and intolerant groups to gain legitimate power.

Meanwhile the Brexit phenomenon finally put an end to Great Britain membership in European Union alliance. The aging demography caused senior citizens in the UK fear of economic crisis in European zone, thus won the option to exit the EU. The fear has outnumbered UK younger generation who are more optimistic to see the future with EU.

Trauma of Democracy and the Reproduction of Mass Fear

The phenomenon of the rising right populism characterized with chauvinistic, racist, and xenophobic tendency is not because they have found a formula of a new movement as the anti-thesis of democracy. It is due to the failure of democracy and social democracy to strike a fine line with capitalism. Moreover it is the failure of the State's election-based regime to deliver social, economic, and cultural justice of its citizens. The democratic institutions such as legislatures, executives, and judiciaries seem like losing their roles and authorities to serve the feeling of justice. Often in the conflict between public and companies, labor and master, and other voices from the streets or class action against state policies, public are defeated. When the economic crisis hit, their taxes become the money to bailout on behalf of stabilizing the economy.

Democratic states close their eyes against military and intelligence operation carried out by developed states for the interest of giant companies in several parts of the world. The war soldiers lost their utmost important element: the causes of war, the reason why they went to war. No wonder why IS then easily took over the oil fields. Again, right populism only reproduces old jargons behind new propaganda to disseminate most fundamental fear of the nation-state, 'become natives with no land, no source of life'. This fear is exploited and reproduced through the modern communication machines. Those were the propaganda that gained them victories in Brexit, in the US, and also in Jakarta, while pro-democracy parties and freedom groups have been too long enjoying the conjunction of democracy and capitalism. Progressive parties have become numb of their political struggle. Socialism, democrats, libertarian, environmentalism are now seemingly become mere remaining of their party names. The fact is the public are confused to differ programs between labor party and conservative party. Amidst the failure of those democracy defenders, the fear of being instilled by the Right groups had succeeded to drag the public particularly senior citizens, religious republican groups, and pensionaries to return to the ancient political option: race identity and land ownership. To them, there is nothing more fearful than that. Right populism stands over the fear of their supporters and the failures of Democratic Party supporters.

Obama, Jokowi, Indonesian Islam and the Rise of the Millennials

Obama issued among the most progressive social security policies in the history of the US. Obamacare is the health care scheme that provides Americans with no health insurance to get a decent health service. The Congress revoked the Obamacare and health bill with a slight victory: 217 supported the revoke compare to 213 refused. After two periods of Obama and Democrat victories, Democrat Party was accused to shift more to the left.

The biggest lost in the democrat was created out of self-distrust. In the campaign, Hillary used the sign 'Right Way' as her official campaign team logo. Despite she stated in several of her campaigns to continue Obama's programs, Democrat Party was obviously demonstrated its ideological anxiety. Through her symbol, Democrat was trying to confess that they have been leaning far to the left. Fear of losing its support from the Liberals, Democrat ended by losing its progressive groups and youths who saw more change in Sanders than Hillary. American public were shocked by the defeat of Democrat Party in the last election. For the first time in the history of the US, pro-Democracy groups hit the street to refuse the result of the election. The US democracy has been a hostage of right populism.

In Asia, the 2014 election brought Joko Widodo as the seventh President of Republic of Indonesia. Many issues being used to attack him as a communist, foreign accomplice, party doll, among other insults and accusations, failed to prevent him from winning the presidential election. The former Solo City mayor was widely known to be modest, hardworking, free from corruption, does not distance himself from the people, a public-oriented bureaucracy and the quick response to public complaints were in the public memory. In the second year of his Presidential tenure, the effort of coup d'etat was said to be conspired against him by some Muslim groups using the momentum of Jakarta's election through mass mobilization. However, Jokowi showed his leadership, courage to dismiss any threats. It is fortunate that most of the Indonesian Muslims are moderate and tolerant. The presence of Islamic mass organizations already established since the early 20th century such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah serve as the



Image: theconversation.com

The excuse that a smart voter will bring a healthier democracy is not entirely false, but in the case of Jakarta election there is an anomaly. Smart is not enough, the voters more influencing by religious and racist issues.

The similar phenomenon occurred in the US. Republican Party and their presidential candidate, Donald Trump, won the election by defeating Hillary Clinton who supported by Barack Obama. The loss of Democrat Party was followed by massive demonstrations to protest the result of US election. It was the first in the US history, the liberals, the leftists, and pro-democracy groups refuse the result. The controversial Trump was considered anti-Islam, ultra nationalist, anti-immigrant, and often announce his gender-bias and racist remarks. In Jakarta's governor election, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or Ahok, who took charge of the capital city leadership since Jokowi left the position, finally lost in the second round of election. Ahok was popular as a clean, strict, and capable of managing city's infrastructure and made bureaucracy more people-centered. However, Ahok's achievements could not overcome the fear of Jakarta voters filled with hate speech from radical Islamists who effectively preached hatred and bigotry. Ahok was attacked with religious and racial slurs, created

narratives that instilled fear among Jakarta voters on being ruled by a Chinese and infidel (non-Muslim). Anies Baswedan and Sandiaga Uno won the second round of election by taking the advantage of the intolerant groups such as FPI which is reputed as anti-democracy and often spurs violence. So did the power of anti-Jokowi nationalist populist group under Gerindra Party with its coalition with the Ikhwanul Muslimin group within the PKS, and Hizbut Tahrir network aiming to establish Islamic *Khilafah*. They made Jakarta's governor election as a political laboratory before really taking over the control of power.

As the highest political manifestation form of people's voice, the state guarantee that no one should not be haunted with hear and false information. There must be also a guarantee that the election is free from hate speech and other discriminatory practices. The state must guarantee whoever is chosen from the election process should have no authority to reduce the citizen rights and is prohibited to undermine the main responsibility of bureaucracy in delivering non-discriminatory public policies. In Jakarta election, democracy turns out not only a contestation of pro-democracy political power, but it also enables the hijacking by anti-democracy groups to gain power by the legitimacy of election. The excuse that a smart voter will bring a healthier democracy is not entirely false, but in the case of Jakarta election there is an anomaly. Smart is not enough, the voters more influencing by religious and racist issues.

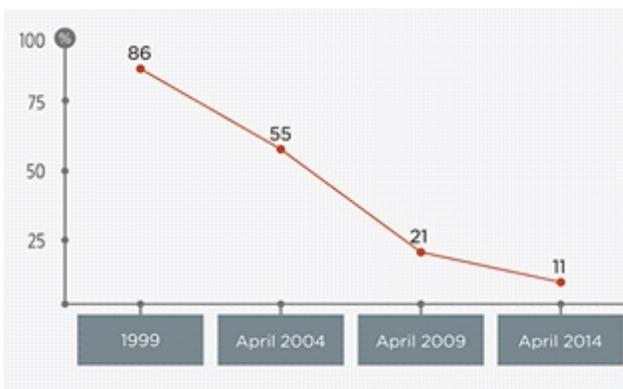
To give the matters of communications and information management, technology, education, health, and social economic justice fulfillment to the market mechanism is similar to offer democracy beheaded in front of the altar by those free riders who use the instrument of democracy and a pretext of political freedom to reach their political purposes.

Be it Brexit in the UK, Trump's victory in the US, Ahok defeat in Jakarta, those are clear examples that democracy alienated from the public interest would only yield a defeat at the end of the history. A state which fails to deliver economic, cultural, and ecological justice under the doctrine of capitalism, putting it as the 'invisible hand' in economy, would be a failed state, a crippled one waiting for the time it transformed into a totalitarian ruled over ideology by a certain group. Unfortunately, the one that brings the state to the gallows is the most praised instrument of democracy, the general election.

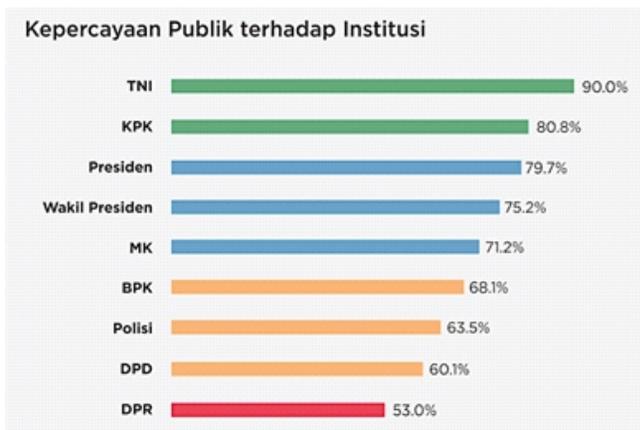
strong fortress against the threat of radicalism. Until May 2017, according to national survey done by Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC), Jokowi is still leading with 32% electability, far in front of other figures as presidential candidates in 2019 upcoming election.

A new hope too emerges in Indonesia although the level of voters' attachment to political party decreased. Party ID (identification of attachment to one of parties) was only 11% in 2014, far low than 86% in 1999². Several research institutions at the end of 2016 released statements pointing the fact that DPR (legislatives) and political party are the most untrusted institutions by the public far behind KPK (anti-graft commission), national police, and the military. In 2019, there would be around 89% Indonesian voters who are still undecided about their party preference.

Graphic 1: **Party Identification (%)**



Graphic 2: **Public Trust to State Institution (%)**



Data Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Jakarta, 2016

This has led several youths to establish a new party named Indonesian Solidarity Party/*Partai Solidaritas Indonesia* (PSI), which seeks to benefit from the demographic bonus, leading young voters as the majority in the upcoming 2019 election. With a slim, open, flexible, and egalitarian, organizational structure, PSI tends to rise as a social movement rather than an electoral party. The issue of anti-corruption and anti-intolerance as the main campaign materials received a considerably good response. In addition, the party enacts a gender balance policy, an obligation that all party officers are under the age of 45, and never previously an officer at an already existing party. The consistent movement positioned PSI as a widely known party for youths, millennials -- a party that is new and thus detaches itself from old political generation.

Justine Trudeau: Liberal Centris from Canada

The right populist wing may clap hands for a while, but not in Canada. The Liberal Party (classified as a center party) succeeded in winning the 2015 election which ended a decade of the Conservative Party in rule. Justine Trudeau was elected as Canada's Prime Minister at the age of 43, making him the youngest PM in the history of Canada.

Trudeau is a democracy who takes side. A democracy with no fear of the future -- an optimist one. In his victory speech he stated, "we beat fear with hope, we beat cynicism with hard work. Most of all, we defeated the idea that Canadians should be satisfied with less." It is a democracy that gives the power to the State to refuse war, stagnation, status quo and racism. In his campaign, Trudeau promised he will not be hostile towards Muslims in Canada as well as to withdrawn from war against ISIS.

He formed a gender balance cabinet and reflects a meritocracy of ministers under the age of 50. Behind Trudeau, one million marijuana consumers supported him since he promised to legalize it for health and medical purposes. He shows what humility is, with his wealth and tattoo, he exercises the spirit of social solidarity, friendly towards Islam, and represents the character of millennials currently dominating the world demography.

En Marche: New Europe is On the Move with Macron

2017 shares the almost similar case in France. Emmanuel Macron, 39, became the first France president elected without the support of political party. One of his strengths was that the old parties did not stand at his back, in which he said to be longer heard by the French. This includes Socialist Party where Macron developed his political ability. His tolerance and against anti-immigrants stand point are shaped during his involvement in the Socialist Party. He was one of Hollande's favorite ministers, and he feels that people of France need a new hope but the answer is not with the old political party.

In April 2016, Macron resigned from the government to build En Marche! Party which means 'on the move'. Although En Marche could not officially put Macron as the president against Le Pen, it gave En Marche party volunteers a freedom to move and focus. They are youths working with internet algorithm to map the districts and identify voting areas to represent French voters. En Marche cadres knocked 300,000 doors, discussed and decided what the French voters really want.

They came to houses, talked for 15 minutes with tens of thousands chosen, the classic method of political organizing. The result, Macron won as the President of France. He gained a dramatic victory, defeated his contender from conservative National Front that have been disseminating fear of multiculturalism in France. Mass media in France are full with hate speech from Le Pen's supporters. The scandal which thrown Fillon and Hamon from the first round of presidential candidates had made the situation a turning point: Hollande supported Macron, and his victory was inevitable. It was a relief for immigrants and Muslims in France, and paves a new way for the EU and Europe defense pact without NATO. It may be a positive signal of Asia-Europe relation. In June 2017, the victory of En Marche which then changed its name to La République en Marche! (LREM) won the first round of France legislative election. The newly established party by Macron with volunteers of their 30s went a straight victory with 31,9% vote. The five pillars of France Republic - democracy, fraternity, freedom, and egalitarianism - are still alive.



Image: Scott Olson/Getty Images

Democracy Needs Millennial Republicans' Support

Based on the aforementioned reflections, it is clear that 'disseminating fear' is the main ingredients of the populist right group to win election. Unfortunately, those ancient jargons caused diseases in within the organs of democracy as well as problems with other countries. Finally democracy is stuck in the middle when Islamic radical groups tried to hijack democracy to gain public legitimation. A massive correction must be done by political parties already aged to read the signs of time. Canada's Liberal Party could be an example: it shifts to the center and strictly refuses hostility against Islam and anti-immigrants. Another is En Marche which, originally borne out of the tradition of Left Party, shifts to the center by choosing to join the French youth to determine their future. The similar model is also being developed by PSI in Indonesia. With a segmented party model, PSI is able to emerge and become the only youth party, and truly new. PSI is the representative of millennials that would be useful for Jokowi in the 2019 election.

Democracy is a government system. It should be attached to the character of openness, positivity, meritocracy, and cleanliness. Democracy must be free from the pressures of capitalism, because the state must not abide to capital and do the 'laundry' during crisis. More importantly, democracy must embed to public interest. The ultimate failure is when democratic institutions such as executives, parliament, and political parties do not represent public at large. Parties must not reflect fear that may spark the emergence of Right Populism.

Democracy needs Obama, Jokowi, Trudeau and Macron. it even needs more of millennial republicans, youths with enlightenment, a new conscience that the state has been dragged farther from its original mandate. This awareness has grown along with new communication medium in the internet where state boundaries had withered. Millennial republicanism is the future of democracy and world peace. Millennial republicanism is the spring where democracy, human rights, social and economic justice, and world peace shape the new world. It is a world where each individual and nation entity lives in fraternity, equality, unity, and solidarity. It is exactly like what the Social Democrat thinkers idealized.

Social Democracy without the Party

Theories of democracy shall include the lessons from latest practices to prevent it from the same failure in the future. It should stop to find the equilibrium between State and the Market if it serves only to legitimize capital power over the working class. The task of Social Democrats, particularly center-left parties, is to work and speak directly to the public. Stop printing old books, because all can be done online. Party intellectuals must stop preparing a plea to defend old parties reluctant to transform themselves. Old parties may only learn from their graves.

The resistance against war, racial discrimination, chauvinism, xenophobia, human exploitation, destructive effects of capitalism, and gender discrimination, along with the call for internationalism, peace, social security and social justice are issues own by the Social Democrats. However, Social Democratic party has been

unconfident all along with all of those. It found the momentum in several new practices. Unfortunately, not even one of the progresses was born out of party which claim itself Social Democrat.

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Populism in Japan:

Monopoly of the Right



Jeff Kingston

Director of Asian Studies,
Temple University Japan

Around the world, populism is claiming to represent the 'real people' and targeting the Establishment, corruption, immorality and the legitimacy of all rivals. Populists feed on social discontent and promise to clean up a bankrupt system that is rigged for the favored few while the interests of the 'real people' are neglected. They also invoke culture wars and promises to revive and protect traditional values and community ties that have been sundered by a self-seeking elite. They promise a better life and trade in disappointment and nationalist grandstanding. It is about an individual on a crusade who expresses empathy and anger on behalf of "the people" while channeling that anger and feelings of helplessness. It is a movement that promises redemption and vindication for followers and perdition for opponents.

The contagion of populism sweeping around the world is usually ascribed to economic woes and the dislocations of globalization. Following the 2008 global financial meltdown, pundits warned that the world is "turning Japanese" in the worst sense of policy drift and prolonged economic stagnation. Subsequently, populists have exploited unease about job security and rising inequality, stoking

resentment against the broken promises of globalization made by the political and business establishment.

Japan shows some limited signs of turning into an illiberal democracy—press freedom has declined and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is eager to revise the Constitution in ways that would curtail civil liberties, but it is not an authoritarian polity and populism is not a powerful political force. It would seem that the post-Bubble economic collapse of the 1990s and beyond with a rising misery index would have sparked a populist revolt, but there is little evidence of this in Japan. In 1993 and 2009 the voters threw the 'bums' out of office, but the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) rebounded and continues to dominate Japanese politics as it has since 1955, when it was established.

So why no populist revolt after Japan's economic bubble collapsed in 1990? In *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2017) Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser argue that populism is “an illiberal democratic response to undemocratic liberalism. It criticizes the exclusion of important issues from the political agenda by the elites and calls for their repoliticization.,,

Populism feeds on significant disparities in wealth, power and cultural values between the governing elite and “the people” in addition to a shared feeling of exclusion. It is also characterized by disregard for institutions protecting minority and individual rights.

Japan offers an unfavorable context for populists because politics is influenced by a culture of low-key self-effacement and concern about forging careful policy consensus. This is to say that a bombastic, meretricious, self-congratulatory candidate like Donald Trump is unthinkable. Income disparities are relatively modest as are ostentatious displays of wealth. There is considerable social cohesion in Japan despite a fairly high rate of relative poverty (15.6%). Japan's gini-coefficient that measures income inequality (lower is more equal) of .33 is lower than nations where populism erupted in 2016 such as the U.S. (.39) and the U.K. (.36), but higher than S. Korea (.30) and Hungary (.29) where populism on the left and the right, respectively, has boosted the current governments. Anti-migrant activism, though not unknown, is limited because non-Japanese resident in Japan total about 2.23 million in addition to foreign



Image: The Japan Daily Press

Japan offers an unfavorable context for populists because politics is influenced by a culture of low-key self-effacement and concern about forging careful policy consensus.

trainees (192,000 in 2015) and foreign students (240,000 in 2016) out of a population of 126 million, so less than 2%. Japan's welcome mat for asylum seekers is also miniscule, accepting just 28 refugees from a total of 10,901 applicants in 2016.

The Zaitokukai, a rightwing fringe organization, has been at the forefront of anti-foreign agitation, targeting Japan's zainichi community of ethnic Koreans who came to Japan in the prewar era, often under duress, and remained after Japan's defeat. They are in many respects culturally assimilated, but continue to be economically and socially marginalized even after a few generations. In recent years Zaitokukai conducted several small anti-zainichi demonstrations in areas where there are concentrations of ethnic Korean shops and residents and also at zainichi schools, engaging in hate speech, but the courts issued injunctions and imposed fines while larger counter-demonstrations repudiated the hatemongering. In 2016 the government enacted a hate speech law aimed at curtailing such discriminatory actions.



Image: Washington Post

The largest manifestation of contemporary populist activism has come from the left by various groups who oppose nuclear energy

So populism is not feeding on resentments stirred by glaring economic disparities, a large foreign-born population or a significant Muslim population. And the cultural disparities are also limited in Japan as there is no fundamentalist religious groups of any significance and overall people don't seem too bothered by the lifestyle, corruption or excesses of the Establishment elite, perhaps numbed by familiarity and apathy.

Prime Minister Abe supports a neo-liberal agenda of economic reforms and his economic policy, called Abenomics, appears to be clever branding of pro-business policies that amount to welfare for the wealthy. The LDP won the 2012 elections in a so-called landslide despite gaining more than a million votes less than in 2009 when it lost in another so-called landslide. Typically under Abe, the LDP has been winning only 25% of the eligible vote and when

he campaigns he avoids invoking culture war issues because he understands that the rightwing nationalist stances he holds don't resonate with the public. Instead Abe always campaigns on Abenomics, promising to boost the economy. He advocates deregulation, free trade and globalization trade initiatives like the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), but the strongest public backlash targets his efforts to loosen constitutional curbs on Japan's military forces, restart nuclear reactors, lessen transparency and suppress dissent.

The largest manifestation of contemporary populist activism has come from the left by various groups who oppose nuclear energy following the 2011 triple reactor meltdowns in Fukushima, the Abe government's 2013 state secrets legislation and efforts to lift constitutional constraints on Japan's military in 2015 by enacting legislation that greatly expands what the Self Defense Forces can do in support of the US. Older activists joined younger ones united in SEALDS (Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy) in efforts to block all of these unpopular moves, mounting mass demonstrations reminiscent of the 1960s, but without the violence. Abe, however, shrugged off this outpouring of populist agitation. Public opinion polls show that a majority remains opposed to his agenda, but Abe still managed to maintain popularity despite popular repudiation of his signature policies. SEALDS did try to forge unity among disparate small parties on the left during the 2016 Upper House Elections, getting them to back joint candidates, but the LDP still won a convincing victory and SEALDS disbanded.

Abe has benefitted enormously from the TINA (there is no alternative) effect as polls during his post-2012 tenure conducted by NHK, the quasi-state broadcaster, indicate. Among his supporters, the lack of an alternative has consistently been the major reason given for supporting Abe. The political opposition is in disarray and none of the parties poll above single digits. Due to disproportionate representation of rural constituencies that tend to favor the LDP in a system that the Supreme Court ruled is in a state of unconstitutionality, the system is rigged in favor of the LDP, explaining why it commands an almost two-thirds majority in both houses of the Diet. Oddly, while this issue is fought in the courts and debated in the Diet, it doesn't seem to arouse a sense of exclusion or populist activism by progressive voters who are marginalized by this travesty of democracy.

Rightwing populism in Japan involves conservative elites grandstanding against the system from which they emerged and represent. In that sense, Japanese populism is similar to its counterparts in the US, UK and Europe where these elites have managed to convince the public that they represent the “real people” or “the silent majority” even when they don't. Japan's ersatz populists from time to time emerge to challenge the Establishment they are so intimately involved with. This is often called the Iron Triangle—a construction involving cozy and cooperative relations between the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), big business and the bureaucracy that is sometimes also dubbed Japan, Inc. to convey how the system is business friendly.

Japanese-Style Populism

Tanaka Kakuei, prime minister from 1972 to 1974, invoking his rural roots, speaking like a common man and proudly acknowledging that he was not a university graduate, positioned himself as the promoter of rural welfare and touted a plan to spread the wealth of Japan's 1960s economic miracle by extending regional transportation links and building out infrastructure. He hailed from Niigata, a relatively backward rural constituency located along the Sea of Japan, but he was a canny infighter in national politics, gaining supporters and power based on a cash-and-carry approach to politics.

He refined the art of raising funds and spreading them around, seeing opportunities in helping businessmen navigate the bureaucracy, gaining access and doing them favors. He was notoriously corrupt, forced out of power in 1974 and subsequently convicted of accepting money for favors. Even after his conviction, however, he was reelected several times and served as a 'shadow shogun', pulling strings behind the scenes to decide who became premier and how cabinet positions were allocated within the party.

In the 21st century, Koizumi Junichiro emerged as an artful populist who ran for president of the LDP in 2001 by promising voters to destroy the party. This proved an unlikely but immensely popular pledge and he prevailed against the wishes of party leaders. He had an ambitious agenda of neo-liberal reforms and when some LDP members opposed his efforts, he ousted them from the party and orchestrated a gripping campaign spectacle with his

rock star appearances and by fielding women candidates, dubbed Madonna assassins, against the party old guard. He made it into a between supporting reform of the postal system, an issue few voters grasped, or siding with the anti-reform vested interests, good versus evil. He gambled on a snap election and rode a wave of Koizumi fever to a landslide victory, a populist neoliberal raging against the conservative Establishment he represented.

Telegenic and charismatic, Koizumi was the first Japanese prime minister who understood the power of media in the theater of politics and remained popular throughout his tenure. He was very accessible to the press and barked out pithy sound-bites, controlling the message by giving the media what they needed on his terms. He did manage to partially reform the postal system, reined in spending on public works, ignored party factions and revived banks reeling from bad loans accumulated during the Lost Decade of the 1990s,

Telegenic and charismatic, Koizumi was the first Japanese prime minister who understood the power of media in the theater of politics and remained popular throughout his tenure.

Image: chinadaily.com.cn



but did not destroy the LDP. His maverick, dynamic image stood in contrast to his mostly dour, faceless predecessors and unlike them he didn't sugarcoat his agenda, instead embracing the slogan, "No pain, no gain". He harped on Japan's huge economic problems and pledged sweeping reforms that would cause significant dislocation, asserting this was the only way for Japan to rebound. He offered hope of better times down the road, but only if the public would bite the bullet now and improbably voters loved it.

Koizumi managed to extend the party's appeal to younger urban voters by renouncing the old guard and convincing people he was on their side against the vested interests even as his popularity helped the party that represents those interests.

He handed the baton to Abe Shinzo in 2006, who left after a year in office because he lacked Koizumi's charisma, was far more ideological and seemed out of touch with voters' priorities, hence his sobriquet cluelessness. But Abe returned to power in 2012 and until the summer of 2017 remained remarkably popular—though not being a populist. Indeed, for a political blueblood so prominently tied with the vested interests, he would need more than an image makeover.

Right-Wing Populists

Abe has, nevertheless, learned about the potential of populism. Tokyo Governor Koike Yuriko (2016-) has understood the lessons of Koizumi in mastering the theater of politics. She won public acclaim in promoting transparency and accountability regarding two major projects—the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and the relocation of the iconic Tsukij fish market. Both projects bore all the markings of dubious backroom deals by the LDP that betrayed the public trust to the benefit of well-connected cronies.

There were, accordingly, public hearings and significant media coverage of her role in trying to cut costs for the Olympics and exposing the chicanery of her predecessors in green-lighting the fish market's relocation to a site on intoxicated grounds. In both instances, Koike gave voice to widespread public concerns and was adept at making the LDP old guard squirm in the limelight as they tried to defend their actions and reputations. It was a classic David versus Goliath – we the people against the powers that be - so that even as she backed down and compromised she won kudos for standing up to

them. Her victory was not in prevailing—she clearly did not—but rather in having the guts to challenge the powerful dinosaurs that call the shots in Japan.

Koike, however, is an improbable populist, raised in an exclusive suburb, highly educated and fluent in Arabic and English. She also was an award winning television broadcaster before serving as Environment Minister (2003-06) under Koizumi and briefly as Defense Minister under Abe. She embraces rightwing political positions, visits Yasukuni Shrine every year (ground-zero for an unrepentant view of Japan's wartime rampage through Asia 1931-45) and belonged to Nippon Kaigi, an elitist rightwing lobby organization that wields considerable political influence in the corridors of power.

During her campaign for governor in 2016, she spoke of closing a school for zainichi, ethnic Koreans resident of Japan who suffer considerable discrimination and are targeted with hate speech.

But she shrugged off this reactionary baggage and reinvented herself as an anti-Establishment maverick, wearing green sashes to suggest an environmental engagement. She defied the LDP by running for governor against the party's candidate and won and subsequently withdrew from the LDP and established a party in the beginning of June 2017, Tokyo First (Tomin First no Kai), leading it to a landslide victory a month later that decimated the LDP in the Tokyo assembly elections.

This was a victory for Koike's brand of populism, slaying the dinosaurs, and a repudiation of Abe. She championed transparency and accountability, issues that Abe seemed to be on the wrong side of given two recent scandals involving alleged cronyism on two separate school projects. In terms of undermining transparency, he championed the state secrets legislation in 2013 and very unpopular conspiracy legislation in June 2017 that witnessed him trampling on parliamentary norms.

The opposition accused him of establishing a surveillance state and curtailing civil liberties just as David Kaye, the UN special advisor on freedom of expression, released a damning report about shrinking press freedom in Abe's Japan. Abe's arrogance of power explains why he plummeted in the polls, from 60% earlier in the year to 26% by mid-July, although he has since rebounded to nearly 40%.

Koike plans to take her populist movement national with a new party Japan First (Nippon First no kai) to offer an alternative to the LDP since none of the opposition parties command more than single digit public opinion support. But translating her Tokyo appeal into a nationwide movement faces stiff challenges even if people are keen for an alternative. Problematically, she and Abe occupy the same ideological bandwidth so she needs to present an alternative policy agenda to highlight their differences and tap into the dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Pushing for a comprehensive indoor smoking ban in Tokyo in preparation for the Olympics and work-life balance to cut down on excessive hours are sensible policies and there is a lot more low-hanging fruit in terms of policy options that could enhance her national stature.

Koike now faces heightened scrutiny. In 2012, Kazusa Noda, who Koike named as head of Tokyo First in 2016, suggested the current Constitution should be invalidated and that Japan should return

to the pre-World War II Constitution. To the extent that Koike and her party members come under closer scrutiny, the media may pop her populist bubble. Indeed the relatively progressive newspaper Asahi began that process in challenging her pro-transparency image, pointing out that she has embraced significant policy reforms without consulting relevant stakeholders in the government or explaining her plans to residents. (*Asahi* 8/3/2017, *Mainichi* 8/5/2017)

In conclusion, populism in Japan in mainstream politics is limited to the right wing. The potential for fundamental reforms of the status quo is therefore limited. The victory of the left-centrist Democratic Party of Japan in the 2009 elections signaled that there is great discontent with the status quo, but the party could not get traction on its social welfare agenda and was discredited for questioning aspects of the US alliance, with the media and bureaucrats helping to undermine it. By 2012 the party lost credibility and has never recovered, a collapse that weighs heavily on prospects for a social democratic or leftist alternative in Japanese politics.

Populism in Japan in mainstream politics is limited to the right wing. The potential for fundamental reforms of the status quo is therefore limited.

Image: bostonglobe.com



The populist explosion, the neoliberal implosion, and the challenges to the Left



Vec Alporha

Veronica Alporha is a faculty member at the University of the Philippines Los Baños. She earned her BA Social Sciences, with areas of concentration in History and Political Science, from the University of the Philippines Baguio. She is currently finishing her graduate degree in History in UP Diliman. Before joining the faculty, she was a student leader and served as the Chairperson of the University Student Council. She also served as the national chairperson of Bukluran ng mga Progresibong Iskolar UP System (BUKLURAN UP SYSTEM). Her research interests include intellectual history, history of social movements, and historiography.

The rise of populist leaders in the United States and Europe warranted an unprecedented growth of interest in the concept previously dismissed by academics, activists, and politicians. John B. Judis' *The Populist Explosion: How the Great Recession Transformed American and European Politics* (2016) is a valuable contribution to the growing body of knowledge on populism. Judis examined populism by using both historical and comparative approach in explaining the explosion of populist politics and the implosion of the establishment's predominant worldview. Judis' assessment explored both the economic-material, and the socio-cultural precipitation of populism in various points of history.

In explaining the beginnings of the populist movement in America for example, Judis looked as far back as to the **People's Party of 1891 that challenged what it perceived as the plutocracy peddled by both the Republicans and the Democrats.** This movement formed by farmers and laborers challenged the consensus on self-regulating market espoused by the two large parties. In explaining the rise of populists in Western Europe and the U.S. in various periods the 20th century, Judis looked at how populist leaders

directly went head-on against the consensus on neoliberalism and Keynesian economics. In simple terms, Judis' explanation of populism as a political logic adheres to the pattern where a sector is critical of the establishment that carries the predominant worldview.

In most cases, these challenges reflect the sidelined sentiments of people and voters coming from different classes and sectors. Judis talked about the silent majority whose fears, insecurities, and frustrations were silenced by the louder voices in public discourse. In the tumultuous era of the 1960s for example, when feminism, anti-war activism, and the civil rights movement gained outstanding momentum, right wing populist George Wallace rose into national prominence. He incessantly opposed racial integration and defended segregation in the name of putting forward the interest of the “average white man.” In other words, Wallace tapped on the sentiment of a huge American sector by constructing racial minorities as outsiders that undermine the whites, and the establishment as the coddlers of these “othered” minorities.

Picking from Ernest Laclau, Judis made a distinction between left-wing populism and right-wing populism. While populism in general pits the “people” against an establishment, right wing and left wing populists got different interpretations of who comprise the people and who are their adversaries. For the populists in the right, the people are composed of the lower and middle class whites, the coddlers are the politicians and businesses, and the others are the racial minorities, immigrants, and refugees. In the left, the people are the working class and the enemy is the capitalists and the state that protects their interests. Judis demonstrated this in characterizing the right and left wing populists in the U.S. like Buchanan and Trump, and Perot and Sanders; and the right wing populist groups in Northern Europe and the left wingers in Southern Europe like the France's National Front (FN) and Greece's Syriza, respectively. Left wing populists like Bernie Sanders and Alexis Tsipras would pit the people, the working class, against the minority who wields the power and influence. Right wing populists, on the other hand pit the people against the power wielders in the establishment and against constructed outsiders. In the case of Marine Le Pen for instance, she would take hardline stance against illegal immigrants and

asylum seekers while attacking both the conservatives and socialists in government.

Across periods in history, Judis explained that the rise of populist leaders or movements is often preceded by a crisis. In the 1930s for example, the Great Depression allowed for the rise of populist leader Huey Long and his Share Our Wealth clubs. Judis' present arguments and observations were largely based on the Great Recession that affected Europe and America. The varying experiences of countries during and after the recession determined the kind of populism that emerged from their contexts. In the midst of the Eurocrisis for example, right-wing populists found fertile grounds on rich and relatively stable countries like Denmark and Germany, while left-wing populists gained foothold on the most affected Southern European countries like Greece and Spain.

For the right wing populists in Northern Europe, the influx of immigrants and refugees caused economic and cultural tensions. Immigrants were perceived to be at the receiving end of social services funded by the taxpayers. Hence natives of Denmark, France, and Germany saw this poor sector of their population as the ones who benefit the most out of their taxes while the white middle class get trapped in the middle. Right wing populists in Europe can be described as both anti-tax and anti-immigration. These populists also lament what they perceive as the blurring of their nation's collective identity due to the presence of different cultures and religions brought by immigrants. For Marine Le Pen, the presence of Muslim women wearing burqa in their cities undermines the secular value of the French society. For the left-wing populists in the South, the European Union caused more harm than good. The sanctions of the EU in the national policies of Greece were blamed for the unmanageable debt crisis that devastated their entire economy.

One observation that can be made from Judis' comparison of right wing and left wing populist is that the two movements converge in one idea: **the tragedy of the Great Recession should be blamed to the failure of neoliberalism and its appendages.** Such include the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the European Union (EU), the International Monetary Fund, and even the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Left-wingers like Syriza resisted the austerity measures imposed by EU and right wing populists like Trump was critical of the NAFTA because they see trade deficit as something that costs America jobs. Imported goods also compete American products and they saw it as the reason for the decline of manufacturing in the U.S.

Right wing populists blamed businesses for the importation of cheap immigrant labors, and left-wingers lament tax cuts on businesses. EU was a common enemy for the Syriza and for the UKIP: Syriza for the austerity measures, and UKIP for facilitating free migration within Europe where workers from poorer European countries like Spain, Greece, and Portugal can easily move to the more prosperous North.

From Judis' observations, we can make several speculations but the most important one can be summarized in one sentence: the enemy of neoliberalism is no longer socialism or social democracy, but populism. In several instances in Europe, the failure of social democratic parties to hoist themselves as alternative to the neoliberal and conservative parties caused them key sectors. These failures are often caused by their cooptation to neoliberal framework as in the case of François Hollande and Gerard Schröder. Hollande's electoral victory was hinged on his promise to oppose neoliberalism, but when his attempts failed to improve employment rate or generate revenue, Hollande succumbed to the pressure of EU and European Central Bank (ECB) to lower France's deficit and issue tax concessions.

The times when these left-wing parties turn away from their promises, to counter the problems inherent in the neoliberal consensus are the exact same times when they are lumped with the neoliberal establishment. When this happens, populist movements take on the political vacuum left by these left parties. Unfortunately, more often than not, the creation of new populist alternatives to the status quo are done through means that peddles untruth, illiberal values, demagoguery, and charismatic strongmen that bank on people's anger and frustration, and insecurities. This remains true from Jean Marie Le Pen's "[holocaust] is just a detail in the history of World War II" (Chrisafis, 2016) to Donald Trump's "I will build a great great wall on our southern border and I'll have Mexico pay for that wall" (BBC, 2017).



Image: GMA Network

The enemy of neoliberalism is no longer socialism or social democracy, but populism.

In this populist turn in European and American politics, how can the progressive movement takeoff, re-launch its agenda, and reclaim its place? Social democrats, socialists, and democratic socialists have been successful in various aspects of the struggle since the earlier half of the twentieth century. Welfare states are the testament to these successes. When the populists co-opt the welfare state benefits in their narrative of exclusionism, however, the progressives are relegated to the sideline of the public discourse. Their rhetoric was subjected to cynicism and their trusty sectors were hijacked by the populist language.



Image: newsinfo.inquirer.net

The populists are not the problem. They are just manifestations of certain crises that were buried and brewed for decades and generations.

In other words, the progressives earned big victories, but their ideological and discursive losses caused gravitation to the perceived populist alternatives that are simple, stimulating, and agitating. For the progressives to comprehend and respond to this trouble, they should realize two things: one, the populists are not the problem. They are just manifestations of certain crises that were buried and brewed for decades and generations. And two, populists may be powerful now but they cannot be powerful forever. As what Filipino sociologist, Nicole Curato (cited in Unson, 2017) would always say: “Societies are more powerful than strongmen.” Efforts to make sense of this recent transformations in Western politics should be done with willingness to comprehend and recognize the truth and validity behind the reasons of people in turning to populist leaders and movements as their panacea; and to recognize that combatting the exclusionary politics of populist movements require, not impatient bickering and alienating language, but persistent resistance, patience, and continuous reevaluation of what progressive politics entails in an age of complexity.

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