

## EDITOR'S NOTE

These 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> *Public Policy* issues present evidence and critical perspectives on policy dilemmas confronting the Philippines, particularly national security and defense related to the current tensions in dealing with China, energy reform, poverty reduction, development, globalization and governance. Academic experts analyze policy issues in four papers, initially delivered as public lectures for the President Eduardo J. Angara Fellowship and the UP Centennial under the auspices of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UPCIDS), and in three peer-reviewed research articles. The synthesis paper of three round table discussions organized last year by the UPCIDS shares the insights of diverse stakeholders about the institutions of government and governance. The review essay challenges critical thinking about globalization, its centralizing or un-centralizing world order, which impacts on the internal dynamics of politics, policy and governance, particularly within developing countries and in their external relations at the international level.

Raul V. Pangalangan's paper on "Judicialized Governance and Populist Democracy: Majoritarian Adjudication in the Philippines and Selected Asian Countries" explicates the concepts and empirical evidence of judicial overreach and judicial review, where courts render decisions on policy and political concerns. Pangalangan cites specific cases in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea that raise questions about the judiciary, as either a majoritarian or counter-majoritarian force in constitutional and democratic processes, by way of its judicial review contrary to executive and legislative acts and popular expressions. Focusing on the Philippines, cases brought to court pertained to saving trees, cleaning up the seas, entry of foreign investors, oil industry deregulation, overthrow of corrupt president, and limits on presidential term. The indications are that the judiciary, since judges are not elected, provide safeguards to populist tendencies that can obscure democracy and constitutionality.

In their paper, "Poverty and Globalization: Is a Radical Rethinking Called for?" Raul Fabella and Vigile Marie Fabella revisit the debates linking globalization, economic growth and poverty reduction in Third World countries. The authors

analyze the contentious issues about “deep determinants” of good *economic outcomes*, particularly economic policy and institutions. They provide ample literature review covering the debates. With new data sets and controls for institutional quality related to outcome variations, the authors account for globalization or openness in terms of trade ratio; various control variables, institutional or governance variables, namely, regulatory quality, voice and accountability; and poverty outcome as poverty incidence and poverty reduction. The authors assert that globalization has “strong positive influence on poverty and poverty reduction,” which does not require a radical departure from the thesis that globalization contributes to poverty reduction.

Two papers tackle the burning issue about the Philippine territory, national security, and defense capability, particularly in light of current tensions between the Philippines and China, and other Southeast Asian countries over jurisdiction in respective areas referred to as the South China Sea and the West Philippine Sea. In “Defining the National Territory: Security and Foreign Relations Dimensions,” Aileen S.P Baviera analyzes the Philippines’ core security and diplomatic interests that are affected by the definition of the country’s national territory, maritime boundaries and jurisdictional areas. Identifying strategic threats and regional factors, policy options are recommended for the country to pursue. This initiative contributed to the formulation by an experts group of a white paper entitled “Towards a Strategic Framework for Management of the West Philippine Sea”, as advocacy for policy stakeholders to take necessary action. The other paper, “In Defense of the Philippines: Assessing the Factors Affecting the Country’s External Defense Environment,” prepared by Herman Kraft, Jay Batongbacal, Nelson Cainghog, and Jaime Naval, calls attention to the factors creating the country’s external security environment relevant to determining defense requirements. The authors argue that to be relevant, the Philippines’ security framework must consider the country’s archipelagic configuration and its historic, socio-cultural and politico-economic inter-connections with countries in Southeast Asia and Asia. The Philippines must recognize the extent of its military capability amidst geopolitics, considering China’s aggressive stance in the West Philippine Sea. Policy directions are offered for government and other stakeholders.

Hoisting a critical policy issue in his paper “Empowering the Nation’s Working Poor,” Rene Ofreneo recommends policy reform to address the worsening condition of the Filipino working poor. Ofreneo examines the differences in the rights availed of by regular workers in the formal sector compared to the informal sector working in the informal economy, and the non-regular workers in the formal sector. The 1987 Constitution does not take exceptions to the duty of the state and the rights of workers for social protection. However, labor laws, policies, and practice do not extend the same rights without formal employer-employee relations. Citing empirical evidence on different types of working poor in the informal economy or informal sector and inadequacies in government responses, the paper advocates for “a coherent and comprehensive policy regime for labor and social protection”.

On energy issues, Rowaldo del Mundo’s “Reducing Power Rates in the Philippines” argues that the high costs of electricity undermines the country’s competitiveness compared to other Asian countries, despite the enactment of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA) in 2001. Among its effects worth emphasizing, poor Filipino households have to pay more for power consumption compared to those in Singapore and Japan. Del Mundo’s paper is an important reading for its analysis of the factors affecting power rates in the Philippines, particularly taxation, subsidies, fuel, purchasing power, and the electricity market. It asserts the need to reduce power rates through a mix of policy options. This calls for action by government policy actors, particularly the Department of Energy and the Energy Regulatory Commission.

Since recent disasters have caused havoc in the Philippines, Mario de los Reyes and Angelica N. Francisco recommend research based policy directions for disaster risk reduction in their paper, “Building Sustainable and Disaster Resilient Informal Settlement Communities,” synthesizing six study components done in Barangay Tumana in Marikina City. Environmental governance is now crucial since the Philippines ranks second in the World Risk Index for exposure to natural hazards. At least in the case of Tumana, the policy directions to build sustainable and disaster resilient informal communities involve the resolution of land tenure issues and slum upgrading, vulnerability reduction by geographic separation of the population from disaster prone areas, and risk resilience by community empowerment and institutional capacity building.

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Three round table discussions in 2014 elicited views from the multi-sectoral stakeholders that stimulate rethinking about Philippine institutions and governance. The synopsis highlights the poor performance of the three branches of government—executive, legislative and judicial and underlying factors, including the poor choice of elected officials and uninformed electorate; also the gaps in policies, particularly for social justice; and the challenges for reform.

The final piece, “Global Politics: Is it an Un-centralizing New World Order?” reviews at least five main academic works on the theme of globalization related to development, democracy, governance, politics and public administration. Primer Pagunuran weaves the review essay around the issue of centralizing or un-centralizing arrangements for many systems that have gone global in scale, whether or not hierarchies and pyramids are done away, where “nobody is in charge”, and where government is situated. The review compares varying perspectives on the dilemma of choice or decision, the constraints and challenges involved in global politics and governance, that can affect development and democracy particularly for the Third World.

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