



PROCEEDINGS 2026-09

Program on Social and Political Change

Data, Democracy, and Youth Engagement

Proceedings of the PULSO Symposium

19 November 2025 | 1:00 PM to 6:00 PM

San Beda University, Manila

Maria Corazon C. Reyes



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
CENTER FOR
INTEGRATIVE AND
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STUDIES



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"PULSO: A Symposium on Data, Democracy, and Youth Engagement. Convened by the Program on Social and Political Change (PSPC) of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) on 19 November 2025 at the Jonathan Sy Auditorium, San Beda University, Manila. Organized in partnership with the Philippine Political Science Association (PPSA) and San Beda University Manila."

Photo by Florence Seno/Red Lens

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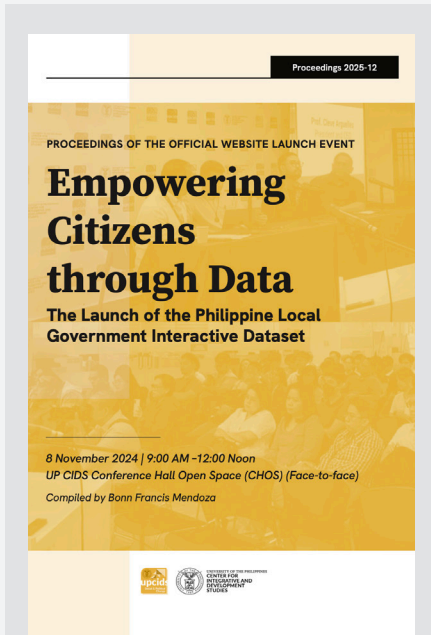
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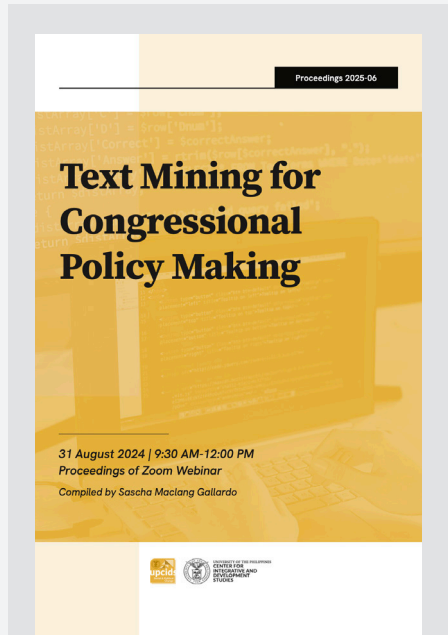
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About the Symposium

The Program on Social and Political Change (PSPC) of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) convened PULSO: A Symposium on Data, Democracy, and Youth Engagement on 19 November 2025 at the Jonathan Sy Auditorium of San Beda University Manila. The symposium was organized in partnership with the Philippine Political Science Association (PPSA), the country's premier professional organization for political science scholarship, and San Beda University Manila, an institution with a long-standing commitment to academic excellence and civic engagement, together with The REPUBLIC, the professional student organization of the university's Department of Political Science.

The symposium was anchored on the premise that democratic vitality in the contemporary period depends on the productive convergence of rigorous empirical inquiry and meaningful civic participation. In a context marked by information saturation, democratic stress, and rapidly evolving political communication, the organizers sought to address the persistent gap between data-driven academic research and youth-led political engagement. While empirical evidence remains indispensable for diagnosing democratic challenges and strengthening accountability, such knowledge often circulates within limited scholarly communities. At the same time, young citizens possess the communicative capacity and creative agility to translate complex political data into accessible narratives that can inform public discourse and mobilize collective action.

Designed to move from analysis to application, the symposium opened with research presentations that utilized the PSPC Philippine Local Government Interactive Dataset to examine patterns and dynamics in local governance. This was followed by a methodological session featuring Dr. Ronald A. Pernia, who discussed the use of Computational Social Science and Natural Language Processing in the systematic analysis of political discourse. The program then shifted toward creative praxis with the presentation of the winners of the Puliticlass: Politics in a Byte video competition, highlighting student-produced works that exemplified effective political communication in digital spaces. The symposium concluded with a plenary forum on the quality and consequences of youth participation in the digital age, featuring Dr. Bishnu Raj Upreti of the Nepal Center for Contemporary Research, alongside Filipino scholars, media practitioners, and youth advocates who reflected on parallel dynamics in the Philippines.

Held in observance of National Students' Day, PULSO underscored that scholarship and youth engagement are not separate domains, but mutually reinforcing pillars of democratic consolidation. By convening researchers, data practitioners, and student content creators, the symposium affirmed the importance of integrating analytical rigor with youth-led creativity in cultivating a more informed, inclusive, and participatory democratic public.

The symposium was conceptualized by Dr. Rogelio Alicor L. Pano, Bonn Francis A. Mendoza, and Maria Corazon C. Reyes of the PSPC. Documentation was prepared by Maria Corazon C. Reyes, Senior Research Analyst of the PSPC.

Welcome Remarks

Prof. Christian Bryan S. Bustamante

Dean, College of Arts and Sciences at San Beda University



Professor Christian Bryan S. Bustamante, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at San Beda University, opened the symposium by extending greetings on behalf of Rector President Rev. Fr. Aloysius Maria A. Maranan, OSB. Dean Bustamante expressed the university's commitment to hosting activities that facilitate knowledge exchange between researchers and students. He emphasized the timeliness of the symposium's focus on data and youth engagement, highlighting the contemporary imperative for all citizens, particularly young people, to understand the significance of data analysis before drawing conclusions or making decisions. The dean articulated his confidence that participants would benefit from the insights shared by the assembled resource persons and speakers.

Symposium Overview and Context

Dr. Rogelio Alicor L. Panao

Convenor, Program on Social and Political Change

Professor, Department of Political Science, University of the Philippines Diliman

The symposium opened with an address by Dr. Rogelio Alicor L. Panao, who formally situated the event within the strategic partnership between the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies Program on Social and Political Change (UP CIDS–PSPC), the Philippine Political Science Association (PPSA), represented by its president, Dr. Reynold Agnes, and San Beda University Manila. Acknowledging the presence of fellows, researchers, institutional partners, and students, Dr. Panao framed the gathering not simply as an academic undertaking but as a deliberate convergence of rigorous scholarship and civic engagement.

Dr. Panao underscored the significance of holding the symposium in observance of National Students' Day, describing the timing as an institutional statement on the centrality of youth participation in democratic life. He characterized PULSO as an intentional intersection between empirical precision and democratic imagination, advancing a tripartite objective for the symposium: to disseminate evidence-based research, to foreground youth perspectives, and to integrate these strands into a coherent narrative relevant to national development.

At the core of the address was the articulation of what Dr. Panao described as an “information paradox” in contemporary civic life. Despite the proliferation of digital platforms and unprecedented levels of content consumption, he noted a persistent deficit in informed citizenship. Key governance indicators—including local fiscal behavior, executive accountability, dynastic persistence, and educational inequality—remain largely inaccessible or invisible to young citizens. At the same time, while the academe continues to generate methodologically rigorous, data-driven research, such knowledge is often confined within technical silos or restricted by limited access. PULSO was thus positioned as a corrective intervention aimed at bridging the divide between knowledge production and public engagement.



Dr. Rogelio Alicor Panoa giving the overview of the symposium

Dr. Panoa then outlined the structure of the symposium. The first segment featured quantitative research drawing on the PSPC’s longitudinal datasets covering the period from 1992 to 2022, now integrated into a publicly accessible online dashboard to promote open data and analytical transparency. The second segment shifted toward narrative translation through the Politicclass Vlog Challenge, which invited students to reinterpret complex political concepts into accessible digital formats, thereby testing the communicability of scholarly insights beyond academic settings.

He provided a concise overview of the four empirical studies featured in the first segment. Professor Luisito Abueg and Kathleen Nicole Vivas examined the “gender equality paradox,” using panel data from 1998 to 2013 to assess whether female local chief executives allocate resources differently toward welfare sectors, while accounting for fiscal autonomy and dynastic constraints. Professors Lara Reyes and Miguel Enrico Ayson analyzed the fragility of political dynasties in Laguna, linking failed dynastic consolidation to reputational shocks, legal challenges, and the emergence of a more market-oriented electorate. Professor Timothy Cipriano and Joseph Vincent Reyes investigated whether leadership turnover undermines governance outcomes, finding no statistically significant relationship between electoral volatility and education governance performance from 2001 to 2022. The session concluded with Ms. Victoria Tsui’s study on retrospective voting, which demonstrated that even in patronage-oriented contexts, voters respond to incumbents who visibly invest in social services.

Dr. Panao concluded by articulating the symposium's normative commitments. He called for a collective affirmation of both empirical truth and creative expression, emphasizing that young citizens are not peripheral participants, but constitutive agents in the pursuit of a resilient and meaningful democratic order.

Data-Driven Insights on Philippine Governance

This part showcases four research papers analyzing local government behavior through quantitative methods, drawing from Philippine Local Government Interactive Dataset of the Program on Social and Political Change (PSPC).

Beyond the Glass Ceiling: Female Leadership in Philippine Local Governance

Presenter

Luisito C. Abueg

Assistant Professor, UP Los Baños Department of Economics

Co-author

Kathleen Nicole M. Vivas

UP Los Baños

Professor Luisito Abueg and Ms. Kathleen Nicole Vivas examined whether women leaders in Philippine local governments govern differently, particularly in allocating public funds. Their study addressed a widely held assumption in Philippine political life: that female executives, shaped by social expectations around caregiving and social responsibility, are more inclined to prioritize welfare and development spending over infrastructure and other capital-intensive projects.

Rather than relying on stereotypes or anecdotal claims, the researchers turned to budgetary evidence. Using data from the Philippine Local Government Interactive Dataset covering the period from 1998 to 2013, they analyzed spending patterns in cities with relatively greater fiscal capacity, where local leaders enjoy wider discretion in shaping budget priorities. This approach allowed them to assess whether gender differences in leadership translated into observable differences in governance outcomes.

The results complicate common expectations. Female leadership, by itself, did not consistently predict distinct spending choices. The explanation emerged

when the researchers examined who these female leaders were. Nearly 9 in 10 female mayors in the dataset belonged to established political families. In such settings, governance decisions are often shaped by entrenched family interests and long-standing political routines, limiting the extent to which individual leaders—regardless of gender—can depart from established patterns.

One of the study’s more striking observations concerned what the researchers described as voter fatigue. In areas dominated by political dynasties, repeated male candidacies can weaken voter enthusiasm. Families respond by fielding female relatives, often spouses, who retain the political brand of the family while presenting a symbolic change to the electorate. This strategy allows dynasties to refresh their public image without relinquishing control.

Professor Abueg concluded by highlighting a central tension in Philippine democracy. While the country performs well in international rankings of gender equality, women’s entry into local political power remains narrow and conditional. For many, access to office is less a product of independent political ascent than a pathway shaped by dynastic calculations. The findings invite a more sober assessment of what women’s political representation means in contexts where family power remains a dominant force.

Three Houses: Dynastic Resilience and Vulnerabilities in Laguna Provincial Politics

Presenters

Lara Gianina S. Reyes and Miguel Enrique G. Ayson

Assistant Professors, Political Science Division, UP Los Baños Department of Social Sciences

Professors Lara Reyes and Miguel Enrico Ayson presented a close examination of provincial politics in Laguna from 2001 to 2025, focusing on a puzzle that sets the province apart from much of the Philippines. While political dynasties dominate most provinces, often benefiting from wealth, name recall, and entrenched patronage networks, dynastic control in Laguna has proven unusually unstable. This persistent fragility stands in contrast to the broader national pattern, where an estimated 80 percent of congressional representatives and provincial governors have dynastic ties.

Professor Ayson situated Laguna within the political landscape of the CALABARZON region, where dynastic dominance is the norm. In Cavite, political power is negotiated among established clans such as the Remullas, Revillas, and Tolentinos. In Rizal, the Ynares family has held the governorship without interruption since 1992. Batangas and Quezon exhibit competitive politics, but largely within a closed circle of political families. Against this backdrop, Laguna remains distinct, where three major political families—the Lazaros, Ejercitos, and Hernandezes—each attempted to secure long-term control through succession or term-limit workarounds. Each effort ultimately failed. The central question of the study was why strategies that succeed elsewhere consistently break down in Laguna.

Professor Reyes explained that the study combined statistical analysis with detailed case studies in capturing both structural patterns and political contingencies. The researchers distinguished between two sources of electoral support: “command votes,” rooted in traditional local networks and loyal bailiwicks, and “market votes,” shaped by voter evaluation of competence, credibility, and public image. Using data from 36 gubernatorial candidates, the statistical model showed that structural advantages do matter. Incumbency, prior office-holding, and dynastic ties all increased vote share, while crowded races reduced it.

However, these advantages proved insufficient on their own. The case of the Lazaro family illustrated how reputational damage can overwhelm even well-established political machinery. Despite Governor Ningning Lazaro’s long tenure and a strong electoral base in Calamba, her son’s succession bid collapsed amid corruption allegations involving large sums of public funds. Voters, the researchers argued, imposed a form of electoral accountability that dynastic resources could not neutralize.

A similar dynamic appeared in the Ejercito case. ER Ejercito initially won the governorship by capitalizing on celebrity appeal and a well-known political brand. Yet legal sanctions for campaign overspending and later graft convictions severely eroded his public standing, turning electoral success into political liability and preventing durable dynastic consolidation.

The final case, involving Governor Ramil Hernandez’s attempt to pass the governorship to his wife, offered the clearest test of the study’s argument. Despite commanding substantial resources and institutional support, the succession effort failed. The victory of Sol Aragones, a former journalist, demonstrated that voters in Laguna were responsive to programmatic platforms

and credible alternatives. Aragones prevailed not through patronage, but through a campaign centered on healthcare and sustained civic engagement.

Professors Reyes and Ayson concluded by characterizing Laguna as a critical case that reveals the limits of dynastic power. With a highly industrialized economy and an increasingly urban electorate, Laguna appears less receptive to traditional patronage politics. The findings suggest that while political resources remain important, they no longer guarantee dynastic survival when voters are confronted with reputational failures or compelling, issue-driven challengers.

Voter Responsiveness and Fiscal Behavior in Philippine Local Governments

Presenter

Victoria Tsui

Ateneo De Manila University

Ms. Victoria Tsui, a researcher and graduate from Ateneo de Manila University, presented a study on how voters respond to the way local governments manage and spend public funds. Her research examined whether Filipino voters practice what political scientists call “retrospective voting”—that is, whether they reward incumbents who demonstrate fiscal competence and make spending choices that are visible and meaningful to everyday life. The study approached voters as rational evaluators, asking whether patterns of spending and revenue generation influence electoral outcomes.

To explore this question, Ms. Tsui assembled a large dataset linking the electoral performance of 517 incumbents and candidates with the financial records of their respective local government units from 2007 to 2022. The analysis examined whether certain types of spending and levels of fiscal independence were associated with higher vote shares. Particular attention was given to investments in education and social services, as well as to the capacity of local governments to generate their own revenues rather than relying heavily on national transfers.

The findings point to a clear pattern: voters respond most strongly to spending they can see and directly experience. Investments in education and social services were consistently associated with better electoral performance. These

areas tend to produce concrete and immediate outcomes, such as classrooms, learning materials, health programs, and livelihood support, making it easier for voters to connect government action with everyday benefits. By contrast, less visible forms of spending did not generate the same electoral response.

Beyond spending priorities, the study also found that voters value fiscal independence. Local governments that were more successful in raising their own revenues tended to reward incumbents with stronger electoral support. This suggests that voters view financial self-sufficiency as a signal of capable leadership and effective administration, even in political environments often described as dominated by patronage.

The analysis further revealed that voter expectations evolve as local governments become more fiscally capable. In wealthier and more financially independent localities, the electoral payoff of any single spending category diminishes. Voters in these areas appear to expect consistently high performance across multiple sectors, rather than being persuaded by targeted investments alone.

Ms. Tsui concluded that retrospective voting remains active in Philippine local politics, but in a selective and pragmatic form. Filipino voters, her findings suggest, are attentive to tangible results and administrative competence. The study highlights an important implication: electoral incentives can align with good governance when local officials prioritize visible public services and strengthen their fiscal capacity, reinforcing accountability through the ballot.

Electoral Volatility and Education Governance

Presenter

Timothy James L. Cipriano

Philippine Normal University

Co-author

Joseph Vincent P. Reyes

Philippine Normal University

In their presentation, Professor Timothy Cipriano and Joseph Vincent P. Reyes examined how the highly personalized character of Philippine elections shapes

the governance of education at the provincial level. Responding to concerns raised by the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2), Cipriano and Reyes' study asked whether frequent leadership turnover and personality-driven politics undermine sustained investment in education.

To address this, Cipriano and Reyes introduced the Candidate Centricity Index, a measure designed to capture how much local politics revolves around individual political figures rather than stable party organizations. The index combined indicators such as the strength of independent candidates, fragmented electoral contests, and frequent party switching. The study then compared this measure with provincial education spending patterns from 2001 to 2022 to assess whether more fluid and personalistic elections translate into unstable governance outcomes.

The findings challenged a common assumption. Rather than fluctuating with political change, education spending proved remarkably stable. Across provinces, there was no meaningful relationship between candidate-centered politics and the share of budgets allocated to education. Professor Cipriano explained this pattern as a consequence of institutional design. Education policy and spending are largely shaped by national rules and programs set by the Department of Education, which leave limited room for provincial discretion. As a result, education budgets remain relatively insulated from local political shifts, regardless of how competitive or personality-driven elections become.

However, the study also showed that this stability is not uniform. Fiscal capacity matters. In provinces that rely heavily on national transfers, greater political personalization was linked to slightly higher education spending. In these settings, local leaders appear to use education projects, such as school buildings, as visible symbols of performance that support personal political reputations. By contrast, in wealthier provinces with greater fiscal independence, higher candidate centricity was associated with lower education spending shares, suggesting that leaders may redirect resources toward other sectors that offer clearer political differentiation.

Professor Cipriano concluded by reflecting on the broader policy implications. While the centralized structure of education governance protects the sector from political instability, it also limits the ability of local governments to innovate or respond to specific needs. The study argued that improving education outcomes requires less emphasis on managing electoral volatility and greater attention to fiscal and institutional reforms that give local executives meaningful flexibility to adapt education programs to local conditions.

Decoding Political Narratives

Following the research presentations, the symposium turned to another essential dimension of democratic engagement: how political knowledge is communicated, translated, and made meaningful beyond academic spaces. If the first part of the program focused on producing evidence, the second explored how evidence travels. This session examined the role of language, narrative, and creativity in shaping how political ideas circulate across universities, media platforms, and civic communities.

The Politics of Keywords: Philippine Political Research Through Text Mining

Presenter

Dr. Ronald A. Pernia

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Ateneo de Manila University

Dr. Ronald Pernia presented findings from his text-based exploration of Philippine political research, demonstrating how computational tools can help map decades of scholarly work. The presentation drew on his recent UP CIDS discussion paper, “*The Politics of Keywords: A Text-Based Exploration of Philippine Political Research*”.

Theoretical Advances and the Big Data Turn

Dr. Pernia began by explaining that Philippine political science has evolved from a field focused on ideals and norms to one centered on empirical evidence and elite engagement. Over time, the discipline incorporated policy studies, citizen participation, and social movements. In the past decade, scientific polling and surveys have grown in importance, not only guiding political scientists but also providing politicians with a real-time sense of public opinion, or the “pulso” of the people. Contemporary scholarship often revolves around patronage and clientelism, though alternative frameworks such as contested democracy, rent-seeking theory, and critical approaches also play a role.



Dr. Ronald A. Pernia from Ateneo de Manila University

Dr. Pernia focused specifically on how big data tools can help analyze this evolving field. With the rise of machine learning, artificial intelligence, and data science, political research can now systematically examine large volumes of text to detect patterns, themes, and trends. Previous studies have applied these techniques to analyze State of the Nation Addresses, political rhetoric, and even Twitter sentiment during elections. While these methods are still emerging in Philippine political science, their potential for insight is significant.

Methodology and Data

The study asked several key questions: 1) How has Philippine political research evolved in terms of authorship, publication volume, and thematic focus? 2) Which topics dominate or emerge as important over time? 3) How do scholars convey sentiment or emotion in their writing? The last question recognizes that authors often lead readers toward certain conclusions through tone, framing, and word choice. Algorithms can detect these embedded sentiments and emotions, helping researchers quantify the scholarly mood across decades.

Dr. Pernia used natural language processing (NLP), a set of computational methods that allows computers to read and analyze human language. The analysis focused on 2,210 scholarly documents on Philippine politics indexed in Scopus, one of the world's leading academic databases. Instead of analyzing full texts, the study examined keywords, which are carefully chosen by authors to summarize the main themes of their papers. Keywords act as both marketing

and indexing tools and reflect the perceived importance of a topic. By analyzing these, the study could reliably capture the focus of political science scholarship.

The study used several analytical techniques. Frequency analysis counted the most common keywords, showing which topics dominate the field. Sentiment analysis measured whether the tone of abstracts was generally positive, negative, or neutral, revealing that scholars tend to write critically about governance challenges and democratic deficits. Topic modeling via Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) identified hidden thematic patterns by grouping words that frequently appear together. LDA does not label topics automatically, therefore human experts must interpret the clusters to assign meaningful labels. In this study, twenty clusters were identified, including topics such as “Populism and Authoritarian Legacies” and “Youth, Technocracy, and Public Policy.” This method allowed researchers to see recurring ideas and connections that might not be obvious from individual papers. Co-occurrence network analysis then mapped how keywords relate to one another, visualizing clusters of related concepts and showing the strength of their connections. For example, populism was strongly linked to Duterte, while other clusters connected themes like Mindanao and indigenous people or social networks and clientelism.

The insights gained from this methodology directly informed the Puliticlass Video Vlog Challenge, helping students select topics for translating complex political research into accessible video formats. By identifying the most relevant and high-impact themes in the scholarly literature, the challenge ensured that students focused on issues that are both academically significant and publicly engaging.

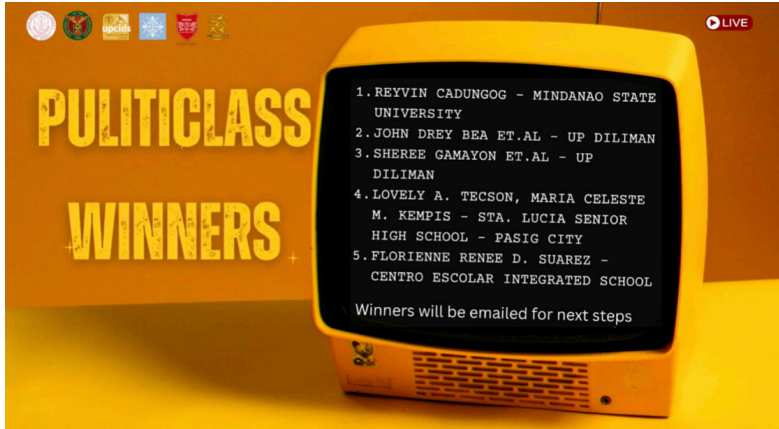
Results and Institutional Reach

The analysis showed rapid growth in political science scholarship over the years, peaking in 2024. Three Philippine universities—UP System, Ateneo de Manila University, and De La Salle University—dominate the field, while significant collaborations with international institutions in Singapore, the United States, and Australia demonstrate a global reach.

Dr. Pernia concluded that natural language processing and computational methods offer powerful tools to understand, map, and interpret Philippine political research. These approaches make it possible to uncover hidden patterns and to bridge scholarly knowledge with public engagement. The study not only reveals the evolution of the field, but also provides practical

guidance for initiatives like the Puliticlass Video Vlog Challenge, connecting rigorous research with creative, student-driven dissemination.

Puliticlass Vlog Challenge



Dr. Juanito Anot provided introductory remarks for the Puliticlass Video Vlog competition showcase. He acknowledged his colleague Professor Wayne Uyseco from Far Eastern University and PPSA President Dr. Reynaldo Agnes for the invitation. He congratulated students who participated in the Puliticlass: Politics in a Byte Vlog challenge. As one of the judges, he noted the difficulty in selecting winners among approximately 25 to 26 participants.

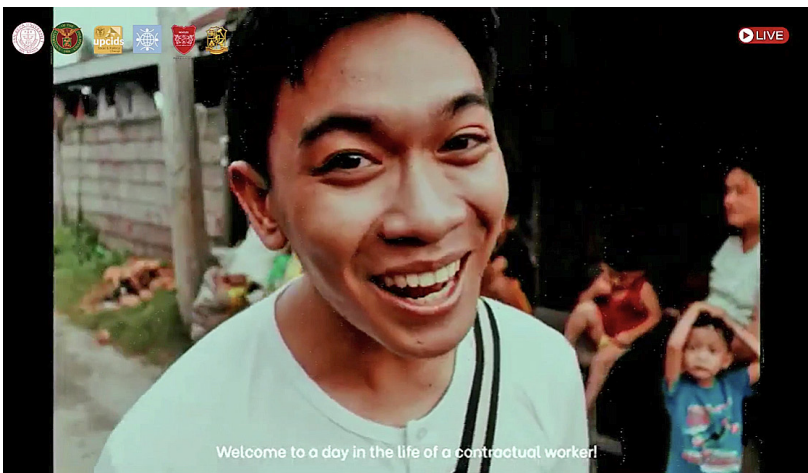
Dr. Anot contextualized the video entries within a framework drawn from National Artist for Literature Bienvenido Lumbera's book *Writing the Nation (Pag-akda ng Bansa)*. Lumbera posed the question whether film can liberate audiences. Dr. Anot adapted this framework to ask whether the student-created videos could serve liberating functions. According to Lumbera, film proves liberating when it opens spaces in people's consciousness that push audiences to accept or support causes or to act toward liberation.

Dr. Anot considered the video entries as film-like works challenging the status quo, addressing issues including patron-client relationships, digital literacy, populism, migration, contractualization (referred to locally as "endo"), gender issues, jeepney drivers' concerns, red-tagging, and other topics. Most participants supported various causes and advocacies. Some demonstrated liberation from the current political landscape. He emphasized that youth constitute the nation's

strength, hope, and power to effect change. He encouraged participants to share videos beyond YouTube channels, disseminating them through Facebook and showing them to diverse audiences (youth, teachers, and older generations) for the broader public to better understand Philippine political dynamics.

Professors Nathaniel Candelaria and Maria Elize Mendoza provided remarks via video, congratulating all Puliticlass video contest participants organized by the UP CIDS Program on Social and Political Change in partnership with the Philippine Political Science Association and San Beda University. He expressed pleasure in watching and evaluating entries, impressed by the work, effort, and creativity invested in outputs. He expressed hope that youth would continue speaking about pressing social and political issues beyond the contest, as the country needs their voices.

The Winning Entry: Contractualization



The top entry discussing the concept of contractualization in the Philippines comes from political science students of the Mindanao State University

The winning video from the student organization, The Parliament of the Mindanao State University (MSU) focused on contractualization (locally termed “endo”), a pervasive labor practice in the Philippines that denies workers regularization and job security. The video creatively depicted “Day 89 of the world,” critiquing the six-month probationary cycle that denies workers regularization. The presentation employed engaging visuals, narrative storytelling, and statistical data to make the issue accessible and compelling.

Contractualization, or “endo” (end of contract), constitutes a practice whereby employers hire workers on fixed terms of less than six months to avoid granting regular status. The six-month threshold derives from Philippine labor law, which entitles workers completing six months of service to regularization with attendant benefits and security. The video highlighted that 95 percent of the Philippine labor pool is affected. Workers endure cycles of temporary employment without job security, lacking access to the benefits from the Social Security System, PhilHealth, Pag-IBIG, and security of tenure. The video’s message emphasized the paradox: workers have employment but no security.

For companies, contractualization functions as cost-cutting. Regular employees are more expensive because they are entitled to benefits (Social Security System, PhilHealth, Pag-IBIG, security of tenure). Companies therefore prefer temporary workers. Even though labor-only contracting is illegal, companies devise methods to make it appear legal through protection schemes or by modifying terms to avoid providing benefits and job security. The video queried how regularization can occur when employment lasts only five months and two weeks.

The video referenced Executive Order Number 51, signed in 2018, which aimed to enforce law against illegal contracting and labor-only contracting. However, it did not completely ban contracting. The video criticized insufficient political will to truly end the practice, which continues weakening labor rights. The video concluded with a call to action, urging policymakers and citizens to address the adverse consequences of contractualization on workers and the economy.

To conclude this segment, Professor Matthew Miranda’s feedback praised entries for translating academic concepts (patron-client relations, red-tagging, digital activism, populism, governance, human rights) into accessible formats. He commended how students across diverse social backgrounds and different academic institutions engaged with various political concepts and topics, proving youth capacity to navigate political discourse nuances. He emphasized being assured and motivated by witnessing how active and willing youth are to explore, interact with, and critically engage politics in all its nuances, layers of meaning, and contexts. He expressed hope that endeavors like Puliticlass contribute to encouraging everyone to become actively concerned and involved in being part of the solution to political challenges faced in everyday lives, in the country, and globally.

The PULSO Forum

In an Age of Information Abundance and Digital Connectivity, Are Filipino Youth Truly Active Democratic Participants?

Moderator

Professor Dennis F. Quilala

UP Diliman Department of Political Science

Panelists

Dr. Bishnu Raj Upreti

Nepal Center for Contemporary Research (joined virtually)

Dean Brian S. Bustamante

San Beda University

Professor Wayne Winter Uyseco

Far Eastern University

Youth Uprisings: The Nepal Case Study

Dr. Bishnu Raj Upreti, research director at the Nepal Center for Contemporary Research and adjunct professor at Agriculture and Forestry University in Nepal, presented via virtual participation. He structured his presentation around four interrelated components: the state of youth in Nepal, the September 8–9 uprising driven by the youth, lessons from the uprising, and implications considering that uprisings occurred in 2025 in several parts of the world including Nepal, Morocco, Kenya, Peru, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

The State of Youth in Nepal

Currently, 42.6 percent of Nepal's total population constitutes youth (ages 16 to 40 years), representing approximately 12.4 million individuals. Many face problems related to employment opportunities, proper recognition, and other social challenges, generating substantial frustration. The governing



From left to right: Assistant Professor Dennis Quilala, Dr. Bishnu Raj Upreti, Assistant Professor Wayne Winter Uyseco and Dr. Brian S. Bustamante

system in Nepal has been dominated by poor governance, maladministration, corruption, resource misuse, elite capture, and skewed resource distribution. These factors have intensified youth frustration. This generation maintains substantial internet presence, constantly acquiring information, leading them to realize that Nepal's governing system is not functioning. This awareness motivated protest desires.

The September 8-9 Youth Uprising

The uprising resulted from three interrelated causes. The immediate cause involved banning social media platforms. Some international social media platforms were not prepared to register in Nepal or respect national regulations. The government adopted a firm stance and issued an ultimatum. When platforms refused to register, the government began closing them. This made the youth very frustrated because some used these platforms for employment opportunities, income generation, and entertainment.

The two underlying causes related to demands for anti-corruption measures and good governance, both interrelated concepts. Geopolitically, Nepal's strategic location between China and India is sensitive, with this area being of concern to the United States and European Union. The context was also geostrategically sensitive. At that time, the government was adopting a more nationalistic stance, attempting to develop a more self-dependent economic

system. It was opening northern routes with China, attempting to convince China to support Nepal's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The government was expanding relations with Russia and other nations. These moves angered forces opposed to such orientations, creating clear strategic interests in the situation.

Escalation and Violence

On the first day, young students and youth protested, demonstrating against corruption, bad governance, and the social media ban. Suddenly, external intervention occurred through people who were not genuine youth of that age group. Their involvement worsened the situation. Security forces began shooting, and nine young people died on the third day, intensifying protests significantly.

On September 23rd, protests remained related to previous days' grievances. On September 24th, the character changed dramatically. Throughout the country, groups unrelated to previous protests began burning houses of individual political leaders, businessmen, company buildings, even the Supreme Court. People attacked and burned human beings inside those houses, creating horrific violence. In the middle of the second day, the Prime Minister resigned and the government collapsed. The military assumed control temporarily and began negotiating with different groups. After two days, a new government was formed, supported by only one youth group rather than by ruling political parties.

An agreement was reached to dissolve parliament and hold parliamentary elections on April 5th. This remains contested and debated, with several ongoing court cases, as the legal government claims the process is improper.

Consequences and Fallout

This unprecedented uprising led to political instability and insecurity. Violence became a serious concern. Approximately 15,000 prisoners escaped from jails; half returned, but half remained in society. Police weapons and equipment were smashed and taken by criminals, and 76 people died. Arms and ammunition from police offices were looted. The violence was horrific. Economic fallout was massive, with reported losses equivalent to almost one trillion rupees. The hospitality sector faced great job losses. Tourist arrivals dropped sharply, and investor confidence remained quite low. Instability risk persists.

The uprising occurred because political parties and ruling elites failed to understand youth spirit. What the youth wanted (need, change, corruption correction) has not been addressed. Instead, more complicated issues are emerging.

Lessons from the Nepal Uprising

Several lessons emerge from the uprising. Youth visioning and youth sensitivity toward justice require understanding. If genuine youth engagement is desired, recognition of their meaning and purpose is essential. They want something very quickly and have less tolerance. Tolerance issues also became serious. Security forces need to consider these dynamics.

Theoretically, the youth were strongly and collectively organized with substantial peer influence. Therefore, any governing or ruling elite must understand that without comprehending real youth psychology and youth aspirations, it becomes very difficult for government officials to deal with youth, engage them in mainstream development, and involve them in politics.

A huge challenge exists regarding transforming political parties. Political parties' youth wings fail to genuinely understand youth expectations, what they want, why they want it, and their time span. Meanwhile, the youth want immediate results and correction. If governments cannot provide this, uprisings like this may occur. Any ruler or manager needing to engage the youth or manage them in national development programs must first understand youth issues. This understanding lacks at both political and implementation levels. In one sense, it is a club of elderly people. They make plans, envision plans, and plan for youth betterment, which is incorrect. In the past, Nepal has not heard that youth need to be part of the policy process, part of the social process, part of decision-making. Policymakers need to seriously consider engaging the youth in policy processes, social processes, and making them part of decisions.

The Filipino Youth Context

Professor Wayne Winter Uyseco of the Far Eastern University Department of International Studies addressed political engagements online given the plethora of available online data. Many assert that young people might not be substantially engaged, but Professor Uyseco disagreed, emphasizing different platforms and generational contexts. Examining political landscapes

today requires consideration that technology is not exogenous but integral to political discussions. When discussing political participation, it need not exclusively concern offline engagements or traditional political participation. Political engagements online constitute a key factor or instrument for younger generation involvement in politics.

Sometimes online engagement represents a first step for younger generation political involvement. In Nepal's context, social media banning served as a catalyst for younger generation street protests, as they viewed it as infringement on civil liberties. Some scholars note that aside from social media banning, younger Nepalis posted online about corruption-based issues, including the hashtag #NepoBabies, which became trending in Nepali social media, leading them to call out government officials for corrupt behavior or practices.

This pattern may be similar in the Philippines or Indonesia, where corruption scandals become catalysts for youth involvement and openness in political discussions. Professor Uyseco emphasized that online platforms should not be discredited, but welcomed to understand contemporary political participation, not just traditional street action, as they remain viable platforms for people to speak out, engage, learn more, and perhaps discern whether information they receive is acceptable, accurate, or palatable to masses.

Comparing Contexts: Why Has the Philippines Not Been as Violent?

Professor Quilala, before proceeding to questions, expressed interest in comparing Nepal's case with the Philippines and Indonesia, noting definite similarities and youth engagement. He inquired why the Philippines has not experienced comparable violence.

Professor Uyseco responded that based on personal observations, the key difference relates to catalysts. In Nepal, passage of law or practice banning social media (shutting people up generally) made younger people angry. In Indonesia, a series of statements from political elites, particularly wealthy leaders, criticized masses for not knowing anything, essentially criticizing masses or the poor outright, causing masses to become angry.

In the Philippine context, it appears somewhat late or still brewing. Observing how politicians or elites operate reveals a waiting game regarding what happens regarding corruption scandals. People are still waiting. Flooding in Cebu and

various Philippine regions should have been a catalyst, becoming one of only two large movements without sustaining itself due to lacking organic elements.

The Trillion Peso March occurred in September, but afterward, no consistent large-scale movements were deployed across sectors. Isolated movements came from universities (La Salle, UP, FEU), but not as large-scale as the Trillion Peso March. A long interval preceded the next big event, which occurred recently with a religious group. Calls for another movement toward late November led to scattered and disorganized movements without consolidated voice or call for action. Examining all these movements reveals different opinions regarding what should happen next with the Philippines. This disorganized voice adds to catalyst lack, which would supposedly make social movements stronger as opposed to what happened in Indonesia and Nepal.

Dean Bustamante noted that many young people are currently on social media (whether Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, though he limits himself to Facebook). Unlike earlier decades (1970s, 1980s, 1990s) when many young people were on streets expressing political participation through voluntarism or activism, nowadays many young people conduct activism online through social media.

His observation was that young people nowadays have different motives or interests for participating politically online. Some participate online because of idealism, wanting to express something based on principles and values. Others participate politically online for adventure, viewing online and social platforms as battlefields of ideas and different political groups.

As an educator and politician, his advice for young people emphasized needing people engaged in politics, particularly young people, who are motivated by idealism. Based on 2025 voters' profile, more than 60 percent were young people. Even in 2022, many voters were young people. His question was: if more than 50 percent of voters are young people, why do we elect certain kinds of people? Where is the idealism? Everyone complains about why such people were elected, with many young people complaining on social media. His question remained: why did you elect them?

Young people have the power. If young people are united and moved by idealism, they could change the Philippine political landscape in 2028 through unity and inspiration by idealism. He expressed concern that many young

people nowadays, particularly those engaged in politics, are already influenced by patronage and clientelism culture.

Open Forum Summary

A student from National University posed a question to all panelists: Do you think the youth have the collective will for good governance?

Dean Bustamante responded that “will” is meaningless without “act.” Youth must translate online sentiment into electoral discipline. They should stop complaining about corruption if they participate in vote-selling.

Professor Uyseco responded that collective will exists, but collective action is lacking. Participation must happen daily (calling out wrongdoings in real-time), not just every three years during elections.

Professor Quilala observed that in the Philippines, compared to Nepal and Indonesia, the current government has not really stepped over the line yet, meaning no clear, unified, single catalyst has pushed the youth to the brink. Uprisings in Nepal and Indonesia were triggered by very specific, immediate actions, with the social media ban in Nepal and elite insults in Indonesia. In the Philippines, issues exist (flooding, corruption scandals, contractualization), but they have not coalesced into a single, overwhelming moment. That is why movements remain scattered and have not reached a tipping point. The youth are watching and waiting. If the government continues failing to address their concerns, if corruption continues to worsen, if issues become unbearable, a similar uprising may occur here. The question is when that tipping point will come.

Closing Remarks



Dr. Reynold Agnes, President of Philippine Political Science Association (PPSA) and professor from the Far Eastern University

Dr. Reynold D. Agnes, president of the PPSA, delivered the closing remarks thanking all speakers, presenters, organizers, and especially students who participated. For him, the symposium demonstrated something powerful: the power of numbers. He cited 2025 voter statistics: total registered voters numbered 75,940,535; millennials (ages 29 to 44 years old) constituted 34 percent; Generation Z (ages 18 to 28 years old) constituted 21.8 percent; combined youth vote approximated 63 percent.

This demographic dominance means youth possess the raw power to dictate election outcomes. They can remove political dynasties, reject corruption, and demand accountability, but only if they act collectively, consistently, and with conviction. He stressed that the researches presented are evidence demonstrating that dynasties can fall, voters reward performance, corruption has consequences, and that the youth can organize, create, and lead.

The question he then posed was what participants would do with this knowledge. Will the youth remain passive information consumers or become active change agents? Will they complain online or vote with integrity? Will they be adventurous or idealistic? The choice, the power, and the future belong to them. On behalf of the Philippine Political Science Association,

he thanked participants and encouraged continuing to bridge evidence and action, data and democracy, knowledge and citizenship. He concluded with the exhortation “*Mabuhay ang kabataan. Mabuhay ang Pilipinas*” (Long live the youth. Long live the Philippines).

Center for Integrative and Development Studies

Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

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The Program on Social and Political Change (PSPC) provides a platform for understanding the varied social and political challenges facing modern Philippine society and polity from a multidisciplinary perspective. In relation to this, the Program also designs empirical studies using a variety of methods and approaches which form the basis for policy inputs and discussions at the local, national, and international levels.

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