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## The informal economy revisited: Examining the past, envisioning the future

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# Routledge Handbook of the Contemporary Philippines

Edited by Mark R. Thompson and Eric Vincent C. Batalla

# ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF THE CONTEMPORARY PHILIPPINES

The Philippines is a fascinating example of a “poor country democracy” where issues of economic development and poverty, political participation and stability, as well as ethnicity and migration are crucial. The *Routledge Handbook of the Contemporary Philippines* provides a comprehensive overview of the current political, economic, social, and cultural issues of the country. The *Handbook* is divided into the following four sections concentrating on a different aspect of the Philippines:

- domestic politics;
- foreign relations;
- economics and social policy;
- cultures and movements.

In terms of domestic politics, chapters discuss clientelism, bossism, dynasties, pork barrel and corruption, as well as institutions – the presidency, congress, the judiciary, the civil service, political parties, and civilian–military relations. The Philippines is confronted with many overseas challenges, with the foreign relations section focused on the country’s relationship with China, Japan, and the USA as well as assessing the impact of the Filipino diaspora community around the world. Regarding economics and social policy, authors examine industrial policy, capital flight, microfinance, technocracy, economic nationalism, poverty, social welfare programs, and livelihoods. The final section on Philippine cultures and movements highlights issues of customs, gender, religion, and nationalism while also examining various social and political forces – the peasantry, the middle class, indigenous peoples, NGOs, the left, trade unionism, the women’s movement, and major insurgencies.

Written by leading experts in the field, the *Handbook* provides students, scholars, and policy-makers of Southeast Asia with an interdisciplinary resource on the evolving politics, society, and economics of the Philippines.

**Mark R. Thompson** is Professor and Head, Department of Asian and International Studies and Director of the Southeast Asia Research Centre at the City University of Hong Kong.

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*Edited by Mark R. Thompson and  
Eric Vincent C. Batalla*

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# CONTENTS

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>List of tables</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	<i>xii</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xviii</i>
Introduction	1
<b>PART I</b>	
<b>Domestic politics</b>	<b>15</b>
1 Clientelism revisited <i>Masataka Kimura</i>	17
2 Patrons, bosses, dynasties, and reformers in local politics <i>John T. Sidel</i>	26
3 The political party system <i>Allen Hicken</i>	38
4 Combating corruption <i>Jon S.T. Quah</i>	55
5 The civil service: weaknesses and constructive informal practices <i>Rupert Hodder</i>	73
6 House of clans: political dynasties in the legislature <i>Julio C. Teehankee</i>	85



7	Pork transmogrified: the unending story of particularistic spending <i>Ronald D. Holmes</i>	97
8	Congress: separate but not equal <i>Diana J. Mendoza and Mark R. Thompson</i>	107
9	The presidency: a relational approach <i>Mark R. Thompson</i>	118
10	The judiciary under threat <i>Eric Vincent C. Batalla, Michelle Sta. Romana, and Karen Rodrigo</i>	130
11	Civil-military relations: norming and departures <i>Rosalie Arcala Hall</i>	144
<b>PART II</b>		
<b>Foreign relations</b>		<b>159</b>
12	Foreign relations between the Philippines and the United States <i>Howard Loewen</i>	161
13	From antagonistic to close neighbors? twenty-first century Philippines–China relations <i>Renato Cruz de Castro</i>	172
14	Towards strategic partnership: Philippines–Japan relations after seventy years <i>Dennis D. Trinidad</i>	186
15	Diaspora diplomacy <i>Joaquin Jay Gonzalez III</i>	197
<b>PART III</b>		
<b>Economics and social policy</b>		<b>209</b>
16	Bypassing industrial development <i>Eric Vincent C. Batalla</i>	211
17	Capital flight <i>Edsel L. Beja Jr.</i>	225
18	The changing configuration of capitalism <i>Antoinette R. Raquiza</i>	235



Contents

19	Economic nationalism and its legacy <i>Yusuke Takagi</i>	254
20	Technocracy and class politics in policy-making <i>Teresa S. Encarnacion Tadem</i>	262
21	The allure of <i>Pantawid Pamilya</i> : the conditional cash transfer program <i>Ma. Victoria R. Raquiza</i>	273
22	Informality and legality in women's livelihoods in Baguio City <i>B. Lynne Milgram</i>	284
23	Persistent poverty and elite-dominated policymaking <i>David G. Timberman</i>	293
24	From <i>pamilya</i> to <i>grasya</i> : microfinance <i>Asuncion Sebastian</i>	307
<b>PART IV</b>		
<b>Cultures and movements</b>		<b>319</b>
25	A syncretic culture <i>Paul A. Rodell</i>	321
26	Gender, nation, and Filipino Catholicism past and present <i>Coeli Barry</i>	330
27	Between rights protection and development aggression: indigenous peoples <i>Oona Paredes</i>	341
28	The resilience of the peasantry <i>Eduardo C. Tadem</i>	352
29	The middle class in society and politics <i>Temario C. Rivera</i>	363
30	NGOs in the post-Marcos era <i>Gerard Clarke</i>	376
31	Crossovers double-crossed: NGOs, semi-clientelism and political reform <i>Ben Reid</i>	386
32	The left: struggling to make a comeback <i>Nathan Gilbert Quimpo</i>	396

*Contents*

33	Trade unions: “free” but weak <i>Carmel Veloso Abao</i>	405
34	The women’s movement: policy issues, influence and constraints <i>Diana J. Mendoza</i>	418
35	<i>Bangsamoro</i> secessionism <i>Rizal G. Buendia</i>	427
36	<i>Moro</i> insurgency and third party mediation <i>Bruce E. Barnes</i>	439
37	The problem with a national(ist) method <i>Patricio N. Abinales</i>	448
	<i>Index</i>	462

# FIGURES

3.1	Electoral volatility pre- and post-martial law	41
3.2	Number of parties (seats)	43
3.3	Birth and death rates	43
10.1	Judiciary's share of the national budget, 2000–2016	139
14.1	Japan's exports to and imports from the Philippines	190
15.1	Cash remittances, 2015	200
16.1	Debt service burden (DSB) as a percentage of GDP and gross national income (GNI), 1985–2015	216
16.2	DSB as a percentage of current account receipts, 1985–2015	217
16.3	OFW remittances, 1989–2015	220

# TABLES

3.1	Party system institutionalization	39
3.2	Electoral volatility in Asia	40
3.3	Party birth and death rates during house elections (seats)	42
3.4	Vote differentials between first and last place candidates	45
4.1	Performance of the Philippines on three corruption indicators, 1995–2016	57
4.2	Salaries of constitutional officials in the Philippines	58
4.3	Salaries of most junior officials (SG 1–5) in the Philippines	58
4.4	Ease of doing business rank in the Philippines, 2010–2016	59
4.5	OMB’s staff–population ratio and per capita expenditure, 2005–2014	61
4.6	Staff–population ratios of five Asian ACAs, 2005–2011	62
4.7	Per capita expenditures of five Asian ACAs, 2005–2011	62
4.8	Growth of OMB personnel, 2004–2014	63
4.9	Comparing the personnel and budget of the OMB and ICAC, 2004	63
4.10	OMB’s 2012 budget output by function	67
6.1	Dynastic composition of the House of Representatives, 1987–2016	87
6.2	Percentage of political clan members affiliated with the ruling party, 1984–2010	88
10.1	Average time (in years) taken to resolve criminal cases	136
10.2	Selected statistics on the performance of trial courts, 2005–2012	137
10.3	Lower court salary scale (in Philippine pesos), actual and projected	138
10.4	Budget appropriation for the judiciary from FY 2011–2016	139
14.1	Volume of trade with major trade partners, 2010–2013	188
14.2	Cumulative FDI in the Philippines by source country	190
15.1	Top ten destinations, 2013	199
16.1	Average annual growth rates of GNI by expenditure shares, by presidential administration, 1986–2015, at constant 2000 prices	218
16.2	Average annual growth and shares of gross value added by industrial origin, 1998–2014, at constant 2000 prices	219
16.3	Employment by industry, 2014 (in thousands)	221
16.4	Political stability and economic performance by presidential administration since 1992	222
17.1	Balance of payments of the Philippines	230

*Tables*

17.2	Balance of payments of the Philippines, adjusted for unreported flows	232
18.1	Gross domestic product growth rate and sector, value added	238
18.2	Breakdown of net capital inflows	239
18.3	Top ten wealthiest business individuals and families	240
18.4	Banks and flagship real estate companies owned or controlled by the business groups	241
18.5	Business elites and flagship corporations or subsidiaries in service industries	243
18.6	Business groups and wholly or partially owned companies in power, utilities, and gas	246
18.7	Ten business groups' net worth in 2006 and 2013	247
18.8	Business groups and their listed flagship holding companies	248
21.1	<i>Pantawid Pamilya</i> allocation and percentage of DSWD budget, 2008–2017	277
21.2	Performance of Philippine municipalities/cities with CCT on meeting Department of Health standards (as of November 2010)	280
21.3	Performance of Philippine elementary schools on meeting Department of Education standards in CCT-covered areas (as of November 2010)	281
23.1	Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines	294
23.2	Philippine income shares	295
24.1	Summary of microfinance models in the Philippines	312
24.2	Effects of social capital on MFIs	314
24.3	Common variables between the two highly effective MFIs	315
30.1	Types of non-stock corporation by average annual income, 2006	379
30.2	Self-defined membership of civil society organizations in the Philippines by social class (subjective)	380
33.1	Union membership and union density (1980–2012)	412
33.2	CBA coverage (1980–2012)	413
33.3	Strike coverage (1980–2011)	414
37.1	Philippine underground economy to GDP, 1960–2011	452

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# FOREWORD

We would like to thank Lily Brown, Jillian Morrison, and Dorothea Schaefer from the Routledge team for “roping us” into and supporting this project. Although it took much longer than we expected, it has, we believe, yielded a useful overview of the contemporary Philippines in terms of its politics, foreign relations, economy, and social policies, as well as cultures and movements. Written by leading experts in the field, the aim of this *Handbook* is to provide students, scholars, and policymakers of Southeast Asia an interdisciplinary resource on a number of these issues.

Inevitably however much has much been left out, in part because of space considerations but also because many overburdened scholars we approached were too busy to contribute. Thus there is much room for future efforts to put together a volume which covers areas that could not be addressed here. That said, we are very grateful to the talented group of academics we were able to win over to write chapters based on their current research (and for their patience during the long process of completing the manuscript as chapters came in up to the deadline). In that sense this volume is not just a summary of key issues but also a collection of cutting edge scholarship in various aspects of the contemporary Philippines. We believe this helps compensate for some of the unevenness in terms of coverage and makes it a useful contribution to understanding of this Southeast Asian nation.

We would also like to express our thanks to our hardworking research assistants, Anthony Lawrence Borja, Michelle Sta. Romana, and Alyssa Claire Go Uy of the Department of Political Science, De La Salle University in Metro Manila, and to Kitty Chan, research assistant, and Wong Chi Man (Patrick), student assistant, in the Department of Asian and International Studies (AIS), the City University of Hong Kong. Without their invaluable editorial assistance this volume would have taken even longer to complete. Finally, Mark Thompson would like to acknowledge that his work for this *Handbook* was supported by the Hong Kong government Research Grants Council, General Research Grant numbers 9042600 and 9041939.

# INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is a fascinating example of a “poor country democracy” where issues of economic development and poverty, political participation and stability, as well as ethnicity and migration are crucial. The *Routledge Handbook of the Contemporary Philippines* attempts to provide a comprehensive overview of the current political, economic, social, and cultural issues facing the country. It not only has a domestic focus but also offers analysis of the key aspects of the country’s foreign relations. Written by leading experts in the field, the aim of this *Handbook* is to provide students, scholars, and policymakers of Southeast Asia with an interdisciplinary resource on the evolving politics, foreign relations, society, and economics of the Philippines.

The *Handbook* is divided into four sections concentrating on themes of domestic politics, foreign relations, economics and social policies, as well as cultures and movements. Individual chapters in the politics section of the *Handbook* discuss the major institutions of government (the presidency, Congress, the Supreme Court, the military, and the civil service) as well as political parties. Other chapters focus on informal (and often much criticized) arrangements in politics: clientelism, bossism, political dynasties, corruption, and congressional pork barrel. The second section concerns foreign policy with chapters on Philippine relations with the US, China, and Japan as well as “diaspora diplomacy.” In terms of the economy and social policy, chapters discuss the nature of Philippine capitalism, (the lack of) industrialization, capital flight, efforts at poverty alleviation, informality in women’s livelihood projects, microfinance, economic nationalism, and conditional cash transfers. The final part of the *Handbook* examines cultures (syncretic Philippine culture, the influence of Catholicism on local culture, indigenous cultures, and peasant culture) and movements (middle class, women’s, labor, NGO, left, and Bangsamoro).

## **Domestic politics**

“People Power” which overthrew the corrupt dictatorship of Ferdinand E. Marcos in the Philippines nearly 30 years ago put this Southeast Asian country in the international spotlight. Known in the Philippines as EDSA (named after the major avenue on which the largest crowds gathered), the February 1986 uprising influenced a number of other popular revolts against dictatorships in Asia and beyond: South Korean activists in 1987–1988, Burmese protesters in 1988, and Chinese student demonstrators in 1989. Even where the origins of the term “People

Power” were forgotten, commentators applied it to uprisings such as in Serbia in 2000, Georgia in 2003, Tunisia and Egypt in 2011, and the Ukraine in 2014. Yet for many Filipinos who remain poor and disillusioned with the post-Marcos order, this “heroic” transition to democracy appears to be little more than political folklore, as shown by the dwindling crowds at recent annual official celebrations of the uprising. In the Philippine case, as in many other countries after peaceful revolutions that brought down dictators, People Power has been followed by a troubled transition to democracy.

In the midst of a major economic crisis and the institutional decay of the late dictatorship period, Corazon (Cory) C. Aquino’s government was nearly toppled by military rebels who turned against her administration after she opened negotiations with the communist insurgents who had grown in strength during martial rule. The economy sputtered as foreign, particularly Japanese investors skipped the country, preferring the Philippines’ more stable Southeast Asian neighbors such as Malaysia and Thailand. Aquino’s successor as Philippine president, former General Fidel V. Ramos, brought the military under civilian control, restored political stability, and undertook key reforms during his 1992–1998 presidency, leading to a return to economic growth. The populist president Joseph E. Estrada, a former movie star whose “proletarian pot-boilers” that portrayed him as a lonely fighter for the disadvantaged against malicious upper class villains had won him a mass fan base easily transformed into votes, triumphed in the 1998 presidential election by the largest margin in post-Marcos Philippines. Faced with corruption charges leveled by his elite enemies, Estrada was overthrown in what was known as “EDSA Dos” but which was actually more of a “People Power coup,” driving Estrada from power in early 2001 despite his continued popularity among the poor. Discredited by a number of corruption scandals of her own, Estrada’s elite-backed successor, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, proved to be the most unpopular post-Marcos president. Benigno S. “Noynoy” Aquino III revived calls for good governance (which he dubbed the “straight path”), using the unpopular Arroyo administration as a convenient foil. The son of Cory Aquino, Noynoy Aquino was a political “descendent” of People Power, with strong upper class backing. Rodrigo R. Duterte’s presidency, which began in mid-2016, already represents a sea change in Philippine politics. Duterte moved quickly to replace the “liberal reformist” political order with its emphasis on civil liberties, if limited political participation, with an illiberal regime. A strongman committed to a bloody fight against the drug scourge, Duterte was long a local politician (as mayor of or the power-behind-the throne in Davao city) who then began implementing this policy nationally.

But for many scholars of Philippine politics, such personality-centered, macro descriptions of Philippine politics are secondary to underlying localized clientelist structures. In his chapter revisiting the clientelist paradigm of politics in the Philippines, Masataka Kimura, who has been studying Philippine politics for over three decades, shows the continued relevance of the “traditional” clientelist model of politics, “one involving an affective, diffuse pattern of exchange [typified by the] vertical dyad in the landlord-tenant relationship in traditional Philippine rural communities.” But the breakdown of these traditional clientelist ties has seen the emergence of class-based politics (in the form of a communist insurgency and a moderate social reformism) as well “machine politics” based on more instrumental, short-term dyadic ties and “bossism” in which violence replaces voluntary ties.

In his chapter on local politics, John T. Sidel offers a more critical assessment of the clientelist model. The results of the 1987 congressional and 1988 local elections proved to be a “harsh reality check” as “entrenched ‘provincial warlords’ and local ‘political dynasties’ who had attracted such attention and condemnation for their wielding of ‘guns, goons, and gold’ in defence of the Marcos regime” managed to regain seats in Congress and local offices in large numbers. Sidel’s study of “bossism” is an attempt to solve the puzzle of explaining the “enduring



entrenchment” of “subnational authoritarianism” even as a transition to electoral democracy was occurring nationally.

Distrustful and dismissive of earlier accounts of “patron-client relations” as the underlying basis of local politics, scholars of the 1990s instead noted the accumulated advantages of incumbency, the dull compulsion of economic relations, the structural logic of monopoly, the ubiquity of vote-buying and electoral fraud, and, more broadly, the importance of coercion – rather than clientelism or consent – as the basis of local “guns, goons, and gold,” or understood more subtly as embedded within the everyday fabric of social relations in localities across the archipelago.

In his chapter on Philippine political parties, Allen Hicken shows that the party system is relatively under-institutionalized. He argues that “the introduction of early elections in an environment rich in oligarchic elites but lacking a mobilized citizenry or mass organizations, hindered institutionalization” as did the “adoption of a particular set of electoral institutions [that] reinforced this tendency.” Furthermore, there were key institutional changes that weakened the party system – the creation of the *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* (New Society Movement) by Marcos during his martial law rule as a hegemonic party, the ban on presidential reelection in the post-Marcos era, and the idiosyncrasies of the party list system. Hicken suggests this low level of institutionalization adversely affects democratic governance because parties have “narrow constituencies and short time horizons – both of which are problematic for the provision of needed public goods” and it “undermines the ability of voters to hold politicians individually and collectively accountable. This can lead to voter disillusionment, providing opportunities for political outsiders with anti-party and sometimes anti-democratic sensibilities to rise to power,” such as Marcos and Duterte.

In his chapter on political corruption, Jon S. T. Quah documents the pervasiveness of corruption in the Philippines, identifying chief causes as low salaries, lack of effective detection and punishment, the importance of family and cultural values, and the lack of political will. He documents the ineffectiveness of many anti-corruption agencies since independence in 1946 but acknowledges that public perceptions toward corruption have improved during the administrations of Fidel Ramos and Noynoy Aquino. Nevertheless, he argues that the country’s anti-corruption model based on multiple anti-corruption agencies continues to be ineffective. Instead, Quah proposes the creation of a well-funded, adequately staffed single agency, which he dubs the Philippine Anti-Corruption Agency. Accordingly, a single anti-corruption agency for the Philippines would eliminate problems of coordination and overlapping functions as well as competition for resources that characterize the existing multiple agency model.

Writing about the Philippine civil service, Rupert Hodder offers a more optimistic take on Philippine bureaucratic performance. Despite the prevalence of models of “elite capture or patrimonialism” and “anarchic families,” he found “constructive informal practice” to be widespread both among permanent civil servants or political appointees. There are often high quality appointments and using “their authority to overcome inertia and entrenched habits within a department is woefully inadequate, most especially given the short time they have to turn a department around and set it on a new course.” Understanding the potential advantages of such informality “may even prove to be essential if the Philippine civil service is to be transformed thoughtfully and imaginatively, and its efficacy improved.”

In his chapter on political dynasties, Julio C. Teehankee argues that through a process of adaptation they have been able to “maintain their dominance in Philippine congressional politics.” He distinguishes between traditional, new, and emerging political dynasties with the

national legislature as the “nexus for national and local power dynamics, the mechanism by which political clans acquire, sustain, and reproduce power.”

In his chapter on congressional “pork barrel,” Ronald D. Holmes provides an overview of a hundred years of national patronage politics in the Philippines before analyzing this phenomenon in the post-Marcos era. In elections, pork barrel allows incumbent politicians to target voters by directing pork funds to their constituencies. But politicians also regularly siphon off funds for direct use in their campaign in order to “maintain a clientelistic network by dispensing various forms of assistance finance by such funds, or for personal enrichment.” Finally the pressure for “pork” means that all post-Marcos presidents must yield to legislators’ demands for particularistic projects in order to secure Congressional support for their preferred legislative programs.

In their chapter on the Philippine Congress, Diana J. Mendoza and Mark R. Thompson suggest that the national legislature is largely subordinated to the president due in part to its reliance on patronage distributed by the chief executive as well as the lack of programmatic political parties. The overwhelmingly elite character of representatives and senators contributes to its reactive character, aimed at protecting the oligarchy’s interest rather than passing innovative legislation. Yet Congress does have some tools with which to challenge presidents: congressional oversight hearings, impeachment/conviction, and other powers. It also has occasionally passed landmark legislation, particularly in areas of gender equality thanks in part to the successful efforts of the women’s movement.

The chapter on the presidency by Mark R. Thompson picks up on the debate about the role of clientelist politics and pork barrel in the post-Marcos Philippines. While recognizing its explanatory power, he warns against reducing “the presidency to its function as patronage dispenser.” He points out that the winners of post-Marcos presidential elections are not necessarily the candidates with the best patronage machinery but rather those with the more compelling campaign narrative. Moreover, he points out that effective patronage distribution cannot guarantee a president’s survival because extra-electoral elite strategic groups can oust them from office through a people-power coup such as against Joseph E. Estrada in 2001. Thompson also critiques a “presidential-style” approach which assumes personality characteristics are crucial, missing key constraints facing presidents. As a supplement to clientelist and presidential style approaches he offers the relational concept of presidential regimes, using a modified version adapted from U.S. political scientist Stephen Skowronek. This allows the evaluation of presidential performance not just in terms of personal and persuasive qualities, but also on the basis of sequencing the presidency within a political regime and analyzes the cycle of presidential challenges within the context of strategic moments that lie between regime structures and agents’ choices.

The chapter on the Philippine judiciary by Eric Vincent C. Batalla, co-authored with Michelle Sta. Romana and Karen Rodrigo, locates the courts in the country’s political system, noting that despite enhanced powers of judicial review and measures to strengthen its impartiality under the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the judiciary remains a politicized institution that is highly vulnerable to executive and legislative pressures. The chapter recounts the tension between the Noynoy Aquino government and the Supreme Court, leading to the impeachment and conviction of Chief Justice Renato Corona. Likewise, it traces problems of political vulnerability and judicial inefficiency to existing institutional practices and budget constraints.

In the chapter on civil-military relations in the Philippines, Rosalie Arcala Hall shows how they have evolved within the context of “the semi-democratic nature” of post-Marcos politics. Despite being based on a “Western template focused on a set of constitutional-legal civilian control mechanisms and a professional military, the elite-dominated and clientelistic nature of

Philippine politics” adversely affects the military’s relations to civilian authority. The military has been used for internal security and election monitoring as much as it has for external defense making the military “the state’s brokers to local power holders, and tying them inevitably into the murky civilian politics.” Since Marcos’ martial law rule the military has become increasingly politicized with factions emerging that have linked up to civilian groups trying to seize power.

## **Foreign relations**

Philippine diplomacy in the post-Marcos period often seemed to revolve exclusively around the axis of its U.S. ties, but the chapters in this section show that the nature of Philippine foreign relations has been more complex. After supporting the Marcos dictatorship (only partially and tentatively pressuring it shortly before its fall), the U.S. provided support for the fledgling Philippine democracy (that culminated in indirect intervention to help the Philippine government fend off a major coup attempt in 1989). But this was soon overshadowed by the Philippine’s Senate’s decision not to renew the U.S. bases treaty, a legacy of the colonial era, forcing the Americans to withdraw from two of their largest military facilities abroad in 1992. Philippine relations warmed with China economically, particularly in the early 2000s during the presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. But a series of corruption scandals linked to contracts with Chinese companies and China’s increasingly aggressive stance toward the South China Sea (dubbed the “West Philippine Sea” by Filipinos), led her successor, Noynoy Aquino, to move back toward closer ties with the U.S. while growing increasingly hostile to China. This seems to have changed under Duterte, though it is still unclear whether policy will actually mirror his anti-U.S. and pro-China rhetoric given China’s continued territorial claims in the South China Sea and the links built up over decades of close Philippines–U.S. ties. Throughout the post-Marcos period, the Philippines’ links to Japan have been of great importance.

In his chapter on Philippines–U.S. relations, Howard Loewen argues that there has been much continuity and limited change in this bilateral linkage. These ties evolved from the colonial era and the fight against the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during World War II. The 1951 “Mutual Defense treaty” has long been the basis of the Philippines–U.S. link. Yet when the Philippines decided not to renew the U.S. bases treaty, the Philippines looked more to Southeast Asia to increase regional cooperation. But in 2001 after the 9/11 attacks cooperation with the U.S. again increased as part of the international anti-terror effort. Loewen argues that even the anti-US rhetoric of the current president Rodrigo Duterte is unlikely to lead to “structural change” in Philippines–U.S. relations. Close relations are based on a “normative consensus” in foreign policy, particularly in terms of military cooperation and geo-strategic considerations.

In his discussion of Philippines–China relations, Renato Cruz de Castro contends that efforts to improve relations between the two countries have been inhibited by the South China Sea dispute and the presence of the United States as a Pacific power. Philippine concerns about Chinese maritime expansion waned briefly in the early twenty-first century as Philippines–China economic relations improved dramatically during the Arroyo administration which hoped for major economic benefits brought about by closer ties with China. But this Chinese “charm offensive” was undermined by continued “suspicions of China’s territorial ambitions in the South China Sea” which peaked during the presidency of the Noynoy Aquino administration.

Dennis Trinidad argues that in the twenty-first century the Philippines and Japan have worked towards deepening their strategic partnership. Domestically, Japan has seen the rise of hawks, particularly Abe Shinzo, at a time when the role of the prime minister in security

policymaking was growing. Both countries have been alarmed by China's more aggressive stance in both the East China Sea (particularly its dispute over the Senkaku islands with Japan) and South China Sea (with the Spratlys as a key point of contention with the Philippines) and this common threat has been a factor bringing the Philippines and Japan together. Both countries also (at least until the recent election of Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines) have had close security ties with the U.S. But Filipino leaders, including Duterte, who as of this writing has both visited Japan and invited Abe to his home city of Davao, have pragmatically looked upon Japan as a source of overseas development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment (FDI) to assist in the country's economic development.

In an innovative chapter, Joaquin Jay Gonzalez III argues that Philippine foreign relations should no longer be seen as one based exclusively on security alliances, economic cooperation, and trade but also one which takes into account the influence of large Filipino diaspora communities around the world who far outnumber Philippine foreign service officers in diplomatic missions. The impact of the Filipino diaspora is significant in a number of ways, including through membership in churches and other religious organizations, professional associations, non-governmental organizations, interest and advocacy groups, and other civil society groups. Moreover, migrants from the Philippines influence occupational practices, products, and services in many international cities. Gonzalez contends that a global "Filipinization" process, parallel to earlier Americanization, has a growing impact through the Philippine diaspora diplomacy on many major urban centers around the world.

### **Economics and social policy**

The Philippines has enjoyed strong economic growth (averaging over 6 percent for nearly a decade and a half). Noyoy Aquino's administration won plaudits not only from Philippine big business and civil society groups but also from international credit agencies and aid organizations, while its rating by Transparency International improved. But the former president's reformist platform – itself a legacy of the call for good governance that has dominated the post-Marcos era – was eroded by a major pork barrel scandal, rampant smuggling, selective justice, poor infrastructure, and a lack of systematic institutional reforms, as well as criminality and still festering insurgencies (communist and Muslim secessionist in the southern Philippines). Moreover, despite a huge increase in funding for a conditional cash transfer scheme (which critics say is often used for political patronage), poverty and unemployment remain stubbornly high in the Philippines. Agricultural productivity has stagnated and industrialization is very limited while the country has become heavily reliant on the service sector, a property boom, and, in particular, on remittances from an estimated ten million overseas foreign workers (about 10 percent of the country's population). Another growth engine has been the booming business process outsourcing sector, largely global call centers; although this boom may prove temporary as other developing countries with large English-speaking populations compete with lower labor costs.

After recovering from its worst economic crisis in recent history (1983–1987), setting the Philippines back decades and similar to the current Greek economic crisis in magnitude, there was only moderate recovery through to the Asian financial crisis (1988–2001) despite major economic reforms. But for the past 15 years the Philippines has been one of the high growth Asia economies and is now often touted as "new economic tiger." Yet despite a doubling of the size of the economy in the last decade and a half the distribution of wealth remains highly unequal.

In his chapter on the Philippine economy, Eric Vincent C. Batalla writes that the country's recent accelerated growth is mainly a product of various government reforms and initiatives

since the 1990s that stimulated the inflow of overseas remittances, the growth of the business process outsourcing and information technology (BPO-IT) industries, and the remarkable increase in government revenues. Huge foreign exchange earnings from overseas remittances and the BPO-IT industries have helped relieve the country of the foreign exchange and debt-service difficulties it experienced starting in the early 1980s. Despite its recent impressive growth record, serious economic challenges and weaknesses (e.g., poverty and economic inequality) remain. Given that the Philippines has bypassed the traditional route of industrialization for capital accumulation, the chapter reiterates the need to reconsider reviving the industrial sector as a national priority in order to sustain accelerated growth and absorb the still large and growing labor surplus.

While the economy has advanced in recent years, the chapter of Edsel Beja takes on the often ignored problem of capital flight. Using a new computational methodology, he shows that unreported foreign exchange flows amounted to more than US\$600 million during the period 2000–2013. Beja traces this problem to the weakness of the existing regulatory framework, arguing that “there are now more opportunities for trade mis-invoicing and financial flight today.” As such, he challenges government to rethink this framework and revisit its capital flow management techniques in order to reduce economic vulnerabilities.

Antoinette Raquiza examines how the Philippine big business exploited economic opportunities to gain dominance in the emerging service economy. The explosive growth of the service economy in the last two decades should also take account of the responses of the business sector to the changing economic and policy environments. Regardless of their sectoral origins, Philippine business groups established holding companies and used strategic partnerships, mergers, and acquisitions to gain entry and dominance in the services sector. These institutional arrangements, Raquiza contends, along with other business practices allow for a more nuanced study of the changing nature of Philippine capitalism.

The chapter on economic nationalism by Yusuke Takagi provides an alternative to the view that nationalist economic policies from the 1930s to the early decades of political independence reflected the influence of, or capture by, vested interests. He argues instead that the leading policymakers were influenced by policy ideas prevalent at the time. The framers of the 1935 Constitution decided on a strong executive branch of government and protectionist policies in reaction to the Great Depression and the rise of the Soviet Union. The 1950s adoption of import-substitution industrialization and retail trade nationalization reflected the leading and worldwide policy prescriptions and ethnic sentiments during this era. Furthermore, the autonomy of policymakers from the powerful economic interests was demonstrated when the government imposed foreign exchange controls which were opposed by the mighty sugar bloc. Takagi finds it relevant in this regard that most economic bureaucrats and economists did not come from the elite but from the middle class.

Teresa Tadem writes about the persistence of neo-liberal, technocratic policies but argues that elite class politics (i.e., inter-elite and intra-class conflicts) have impacted on technocratic policymaking in the post-Marcos era. This has produced mixed results, suggesting unpredictability caused by contention between the neo-liberal agenda and local vested interests. For instance, during the Cory Aquino administration, powerful technocrats sympathetic to the policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank defeated a proposal made by other technocrats for selective debt repudiation. On the other hand, “crony capitalists” in Aquino’s administration allowed the survival of monopolies such as the Philippine Long Distance Company (PLDT), which is controlled by her natal family, the Cojuangcos. But the neo-liberal agenda has been significantly advanced since the Ramos presidency. Tadem sees class dynamics and populist politics still leading to the appointment of socially minded technocrats to

government whose interests are not necessarily aligned with those of the dominant neo-liberal technocrats.

The chapter of Ma. Victoria R. Raquiza questions the effectiveness of the conditional cash transfer (CCT) program, the flagship anti-poverty program of the Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Noynoy Aquino administrations, and backed by the World Bank as well as the Asian Development Bank. She argues that technocrats have favored it because of its consistency with the neo-liberal project. Yet evaluations of the CCT program in the Philippines have not shown a reduction in poverty levels or a significant impact on health and education outcomes. Under the Duterte administration, although the CCT still forms part of the government's ten point socio-economic agenda, a faction of socially minded technocrats is seeking its phase-out in favor of implementing a more universal poverty alleviation strategy.

The chapter by Lynne Milgram probes the used clothing retail trade run by women in the streets of Baguio City. Milgram provides a picture of the blurred boundaries between formal and informal economies as well as between legal and illegal practices surrounding the livelihoods of the marginalized. Despite local ordinances against street vending, street vendors do not consider their means of earning their livelihood to be illegal but a right to make a living. Through location-based associations, they are able to secure concessions from the city government to sell in the streets and aisle locations in public markets so long as they pay the daily rent. Milgram argues that both government authorities and urban vendors are "complicit" in creating gray spaces of livelihood practice that serve both parties.

In his chapter on poverty alleviation, David Timberman argues that the root problem of poverty in the Philippines is principally one of politics/governance and less one of economics. Timberman notes the durability and power of a "hybrid elite" whose policies have disregarded and even damaged the interests of the poor, as reflected in their perennial unwillingness to support family planning, inclusive growth, and end armed conflicts. Government spending has been chronically inadequate and misused, and agriculture neglected, with a rice policy that raises the cost of this dietary mainstay for poor Filipinos. Accordingly, how to overcome elite and special interest dominated policymaking is a fundamental challenge, with the chapter offering some suggestions in this direction.

Financing plays a crucial role in poverty alleviation and in the development of the livelihoods of the entrepreneurial poor. The chapter by Asuncion Sebastian looks into microfinance as an alternative to government and other private sources of credit. Noting that microenterprises comprise more than 90 percent of the total number of enterprises in the Philippines, she argues that keeping the microfinance sector robust is critical to the economy. However, Sebastian makes a distinction between successful and less-successful microfinance institutions (MFI) based on loan repayment delinquency rates and MFI sustainability, arguing that success does not depend on lending methodology nor on social capital alone, as emphasized in the microfinance literature. Her research suggests that the more successful microfinance institutions combined social capital with efficient credit management systems.

## **Cultures and movements**

As suggested by the chapters in the economy and social policy section, culture and ideas play an important role in the country's political, social, and economic development. The Philippines also has a wide variety of social movements that aim to bring significant change to Philippine culture and society.

Paul Rodell provides a short introduction to Philippine culture, which he labels as syncretic, as Filipinos have adapted various historical and external influences to produce their own



distinctive cultural adaptations. The chapter elaborates on fundamental values evident in everyday Filipino life – family and kinship, food, and music. The discussion of the latter two demonstrates Rodell’s argument about the syncretic nature of Philippine culture, which is enriched and not necessarily overcome by historical and external influences. Despite strong family traditions, Rodell observes changing gender relations that “promise to reshape the future Filipino family,” with fathers spending more time with their children and being more openly affectionate and mothers pursuing professional careers after birthing resulting in household duties being increasingly shared between the parents.

Coeli Barry analyzes Catholicism’s profound influence on the Philippines’ cultural, political, and social fabric. The chapter discusses nationalism and Church–State relations as well as focusing on gendered social norms that ensure the continuity of Catholic religiosity. A critical aspect of this continuity is the preponderance of Catholic schools founded by women’s orders which strengthen ideals of family and values of “motherly sacrifice and female virtue” among the daughters of the elite and of the growing middle class admitted to these schools. Barry shows the powerful role the Church has played in shaping the country’s history since the Spanish times. In fact, the country in the early decades of independence identified itself with Catholicism and proudly proclaimed itself as the only “Catholic country in Asia.” However, the expression of anti-Church sentiments, especially by many nationalist politicians and intellectuals, has likewise been a significant part of the country’s political history. The recent passing of the Reproductive Health Bill in 2012 signifies the increasing complexity in the relations between Church leaders and the laity which Barry believes has implications for the country’s traditional identity as a Catholic nation as well as its economic development. She writes that “there is a great deal that remains to be seen about how the country’s economic development may be affected and great hope that reduced family size might help reduce the high levels of poverty in the country.”

The chapter written by Oona Paredes deals with the Philippines’ indigenous peoples (IPs), a sector of society threatened by what she terms “development aggression” and often caught in the crossfire between the military and insurgent groups. Yet IPs, aided by a law that further protected their ancestral domains, have had some success in preserving their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities. However, social discrimination and economic marginalization are forcing young IPs to move out of their ancestral domains and pursue mainstream educational and employment goals. Thus, despite government support for their rights, IPs face a serious challenge of retaining their ethnic and cultural distinctiveness.

Eduardo Tadem examines the peasant moral economy in a province north of Manila which shows the resiliency of the peasantry as a class despite the decline of the peasant mode of production. Accordingly, against the backdrop of a rapidly changing social and economic landscape, the peasants of the Sacobia villages in Pampanga province retained their class character and community identity which distinguished them from rural workers in service-related occupations. Their resilience was supported by the observance of traditional cultural norms, which placed a high value on traditional concepts of land property rights and dispute resolution; on family and kinship ties as well as cooperative and reciprocal forms of labor; on the special status of village elders; and on informal credit systems. Tadem’s chapter calls for a rethinking of government policy which, with its prolonged urban and industrial development biases, has neglected the agricultural sector and the peasantry as a class.

Temario Rivera chronicles the rise of the middle class and its participation in the country’s political development. While not a cohesive group, the middle class has demonstrated its influence through its participation in critical political episodes and led various social and political movements from the 1950s through the Marcos and post-Marcos periods. During the term of president Noynoy Aquino, middle class civil society organizations figured prominently in the



passage of key legislation such as the Reproductive Health Law, Human Rights Victims Compensation Law, and the Sin Tax Law. They were also in the forefront of the public outrage against controversies involving government corruption and incompetence such as handling of the disaster wrought by Typhoon Haiyan, the pork barrel scandals, the *tanim-bala* (bullet-planting) at the airports, and the Mamasapano incident. Rivera argues that the Aquino administration's failure to address the travails of the middle class helped enable Rodrigo Duterte to win the presidency in 2016. He notes that the election of the new president opened up new opportunities but also new risks for the middle class.

Gerald Clarke provides a comprehensive background on NGOs, covering that community's bright and dark sides in the "neo-Tocquevillian environment" of the post-Marcos Philippines. After its explosive growth in the 1990s, Clarke observes that the NGO community is now "diffused and fragmented." Despite its weakening arising from political differences and the decline in foreign and government funding, this community has retained its relevance in the country's institutional landscape, serving as an important political actor and likewise responding to state weaknesses in promoting sustained and broad-based development. An important development in government-NGO relations, according to Clarke, is the interchange of personnel between government and the NGO community. He regards appointments of NGO personnel to government as beneficial, bringing "progressive NGO developmental perspectives into government while helping NGO peers to negotiate the labyrinthine features of Philippine bureaucracy and to organise and lobby with political guile."

By contrast, Ben Reid considers such NGO "crossovers" as having limited efficacy, especially in the context of the Philippines' exclusionary, elite-based politics. In his chapter based on research on the Estrada to the Aquino administrations, Reid instead sees elements of clientelism at work in government-NGO alliances. Select NGO groups and leaders are able to gain access to government and reap select advantages. Despite the rhetoric of reform, such alliances with government have failed to produce broad-based gains in social reform. Reid argues that the experience of crossovers supports the Gramscian perspective about civil society in that NGOs are "critical to maintaining the hegemony of elite over society and ensuring consent."

In his chapter on the Philippine left, Nathan Quimpo discusses the decline of the movement in the post-Marcos era but argues that the Philippines still offer opportunities for rejuvenation for the Philippine left's program for structural change because of continuing widespread poverty and economic inequality as well as political instability. The chapter provides historical background and analysis of the democratic and revolutionary left, particularly the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and New People's Army (NPA). Quimpo notes that because of changed political conditions and organizational strife in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the CPP-NPA has weakened and has had little impact in the Philippines recently, with an estimated armed strength of less than 4,000 in the 2010s. As such, the CPP has opted to support the participation of national democratic (ND) groups in elections and has used peace negotiations with government for tactical purposes while waging its strategic, protracted war. However, splintered, non-ND left groups, which distinguish themselves from the CPP and regard themselves as the Democratic Left (demleft), have experienced gains as party-list groups in Congress. Nevertheless, given their limited mass base, Quimpo argues that they remain ineffective in countering the strategies and "dirty" tactics of traditional politicians during elections.

Social movements emerging from the influence of the Philippine left are similarly fragmented and have had a mixed impact on state and society. The chapter by Carmela Abao discusses the Philippine labor movement, once a powerful countervailing force against big business and government. Since the mid-1990s, the movement has experienced considerable decline, both in terms of numbers and militancy. Trade union density peaked in 1994 with 31 percent

of the total number of wage/salary workers. By the 2010s, union membership registered less than 9 percent of the total number of wage workers. Similarly, unionists going on strike were less than 1 percent of union membership in 2011 as compared to 4 percent in 1981. Abao attributes the decline of trade unions in the Philippines principally to “contractualization,” or temporary employment arrangements.

Diana J. Mendoza writes about the women’s movement, its history, and performance. The movement, initially spawned by national and social democrats but now joined by independent feminists, has brought about dramatic changes in a conservative Philippines despite opposition from powerful institutions like the Catholic Church. Although fragmented, women’s movement organizations have demonstrated their ability to unite and influence policy. They have been instrumental in the passage of important legislation including the Magna Carta for Women, the Anti-Rape Law, the Anti-Violence against Women and Children Law, and the Reproductive Health Law. Notwithstanding these significant advances, Mendoza argues that restrictive laws and policies still exist, including the ban on divorce and abortion and the delisting of emergency contraception.

An area in Philippines studies that has received increased attention in recent years is the Mindanao conflict, more particularly the Bangsamoro conflict. In his chapter, Rizal Buendia discusses two competing perspectives on territorial rights that are at the root of the conflict, namely: the right of the sovereign Philippine state and the Moros’ right to self-determination. Buendia argues that the controversy over self-determination has led peoples and states to armed conflict, including in the Philippines. Although not able to transcend their separate ethnic identities, the Moro aspiration for a nation-state continues, spawning secessionist armed movements from various groups. Buendia points out that Moro secessionism faces resistance not only from the Philippine state but also from other states confronted with similar problems. Buendia argues a more appropriate institutional framework of political governance that would accommodate social and ethnic diversity is necessary, suggesting the failure of the unitary system of government to establish lasting peace in Mindanao.

The chapter written by Bruce Barnes discusses third party mediation in local and international initiatives to resolve the Bangsamoro conflict since the 1970s. Traditionally, third party mediators were Muslim countries and organizations including the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), Libya, Indonesia, and Malaysia. In 2009, the consortium International Contact Group assumed the role of mediator in the peace talks, thus breaking the traditional practice of having solely Muslim countries and organizations as mediators. The chapter points to the political, cultural, historical, legal, and institutional complexities that were present in negotiations for peace since the 1970s. Drawing from these experiences, Barnes stresses the need to take account of diverse cultures, personalities, religions, and political mechanisms in the design and conduct of mediation.

Patricio Abinales contests dominant views of state-building and nation formation that mainly come from the “cosmopolitan metropolis” and not from the body politic’s “backwaters,” arguing that such perspectives only tend to reinforce marginality of certain people in the national narrative. He points to the problematic character of writing from a national perspective “when political actors, processes and institutions that are based in the ‘unsafe’ frontiers and in minority communities, are factored in.” He examines this difficulty by looking “through the eyes of a Muslim woman with Chinese lineage, a smuggler and whose family members are ‘spread’ all over the world as overseas workers.” Abinales also touches on the need to dwell on the political and economic netherworld populated by smugglers, drug lords, and assassins. He argues that the illicit sector has been indispensable to the success of every major Filipino political leader since the time of Commonwealth President Manuel Quezon. Abinales also points to factors indicating that these “fissiparous tendencies can be reversed.”

## Conclusion

Returning to the theme of the challenges facing democracy in a poor country, chapters in this *Handbook* document a number of the dilemmas the country faces. While its electoral system is competitive, the Philippines is still characterized by extensive clientelism, bossism, and weak parties, with Congress dominated by dynasties, the Supreme Court subordinated to the President, and Presidents sometimes facing coup attempts by discontented elites. Efforts to combat corruption in government have met with only limited success, but informal practices in the civil service have often proved constructive.

In terms of diplomacy, the post-Marcos Philippines, like other relatively weak developing countries in the region, has attempted to “balance” between rival great powers – an effort complicated by a nationalist reaction against the U.S. (a legacy of the colonial period and of American intervention) and the need to rely on the U.S. to counter a rising China, with close relations with Japan also a part of this balancing strategy.

Despite the return to strong economic growth in the past 15 years – after a major economic crisis in the 1980s and only slow recovery in the 1990s – the Philippines continues to suffer from widespread poverty and high levels of inequality, in large part a legacy of the failure of the country to industrialize. Efforts to combat this with government programs by socially minded technocrats, such as the Conditional Cash Transfer scheme, have produced only limited success with a neo-liberal economic paradigm still hegemonic. Agricultural productivity and industrialization have stagnated while the country, and a new breed of leading capitalists, have become heavily reliant on the service sector, a property boom, and on remittances from overseas foreign workers (who also make up a politically significant diaspora that influences the country’s foreign relations). Even under a self-proclaimed “leftist” president, Rodrigo Duterte, there are few signs of the revival of nationalist economic policies, prominent from the 1930s to the 1950s.

The Philippines has long been dominated by a “hybrid elite” whose policies have disregarded the interests of the poor, with government spending chronically inadequate and often misused, and agriculture neglected. A key challenger to elite interests, the Philippine left movement, has been in decline in the post-Marcos era but continues to highlight the need for structural change given continued widespread poverty and economic inequality. The Philippine labor movement, once a powerful counterpoint to both big business and government, has suffered major setbacks, both in terms of membership and the frequency of strikes, with “contractualization,” or temporary employment arrangements, being a major reason for the decline. This however has not meant that at the grass roots level, ordinary people have not been active in trying to improve their own welfare as the example of female street vendors shows. Microfinance has played a crucial role in improving the livelihoods of the entrepreneurial poor, particularly in ones that combine social capital with efficient credit management systems.

Filipino culture can be understood as syncretic, with Filipinos adapting external influence to produce their own distinctive cultural adaptations. Although indigenous peoples in the Philippines have been threatened by “development aggression,” with many young people leaving to seek opportunities outside their communities, thanks to legislation that protects their ancestral domains, indigenous peoples have had some success in preserving their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities. Similarly, resilience in the Philippine peasantry can be found, supported by the traditional concepts of land property rights and dispute resolution, on family and kinship ties as well as on cooperative and reciprocal forms of labor, the special status of village elders, and on informal credit systems. A relatively small but influential middle class has had a major influence on the country’s political development.

## *Introduction*

Although the “neo-Tocquevillian environment” of the immediate post-Marcos Philippines has given way to fragmentation and diffusion, NGOs have brought progressive perspectives to issues of political, social, and economic development. Yet in the context of elite-based politics, the “crossover” of NGO leaders into government has often failed to produce broad social gains, but rather served to maintain elite hegemony.

The influence of Catholicism in the country has been particularly profound, influencing Church–State relations and working to uphold gendered social norms. Yet anti-Church sentiments by nationalist politicians and intellectuals have also been an important part of the country’s history. The women’s movement, by contrast, has been quite successful in pushing forward its agenda despite opposition from conservatives, particularly in the Catholic Church.

In terms of the country’s major religious minority, Muslim Filipinos, although often unable to transcend their distinct ethnic identities, the Moro aspiration for a nation-state or substantial autonomy remains. Despite the involvement of third party country mediators, particularly from the Organization of Islamic Countries, conflict between Muslim rebels and the Philippine state remains one of the country’s most important unresolved problems.

Finally, dominant national narratives from the “cosmopolitan metropolis” of Metro Manila have reinforced the marginality of a number of groups: women, overseas workers, Moro separatists, and criminals, despite the importance they have played, usually behind the scenes, in the country’s recent history.



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