

On the Duterte Legacy

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By his own policies and actions, Duterte has defined his legacy. It is a malignant one characterized by treason, tyranny, butchery, corruption and deception.

1. Treason and Double Puppetry

Contrary to his lie that he has an independent foreign policy, he is a steadfast puppet of US imperialism subject to US direction and logistical requirements and surrounded by pro-US military stooges in his so-called security cluster. He has maintained all unequal treaties, agreements and arrangements that make the US the most dominant imperialist power in the Philippines economically, politically and militarily.

But what endears him most to US imperialism (especially its so-called deep state) is his pledge to destroy the revolutionary movement of the Filipino people in the name of anti-communism through state terrorism and to remove through charter change the national restrictions in the 1987 Constitution on foreign ownership of land, natural resources and all businesses.

As the chief representative of the Philippine oligarchy of big comprador-landlords and corrupt bureaucrats, he benefits materially and politically from his role as a marionette and is mindful of the capability of the US to remove him from power. But so far the US has allowed him to rule the people mainly because of his pledge to destroy the revolutionary movement even as the US displays a certain measure of concern over the extrajudicial killings in the so-called war on illegal drugs.

However, on his own initiative and for the benefit of his dynasty and his cronies, Duterte has vocally and practically waived the sovereign rights of the Filipino people over the West Philippine Sea and the

marine and mineral resources in the exclusive economic zone and extended continental shelf of the Philippines. He has allowed China to build and militarize artificial islands in the West Philippine Sea.

Duterte and his cronies get commissions and subcontracts from China in the exploitation of natural resources in the entire Philippine archipelago and from high interest Chinese loans and overpriced infrastructure projects. The involvement of close relatives and cronies of Duterte in the smuggling of illegal drugs and other commodities from China has been exposed. Duterte has engaged in the mass murder of suspected drug users and pushers in urban poor communities but he has protected the drug lords that pay obeisance to him.

2. Tyranny and Human Rights Violations

The Philippines is under the tyrannical rule of Duterte. Under various pretexts, such as a bogus war on illegal drugs and anti-communist campaigns of suppression, he has unleashed a wide range of human rights violations in order to terrorize the people and intimidate his political opponents. There is now a de facto fascist dictatorship of Duterte which may or may not be formalized by the transitory or regular provisions of a new constitution.

He has made presidential issuances (proclamations, executive orders and memorandum orders) that allow him and his armed minions to engage in campaigns of state terrorism against his critics and political opponents. Since becoming president, he has always waged an all-out war against the Filipino people and their revolutionary forces. He has issued Proclamation No. 55 to declare a state of national emergency over the entire Philippines since September 4, 2016. With or without proclaiming martial law, he can unleash acts of state terrorism against the people and his political opponents.

After pretending to be for peace negotiations with the revolutionary forces of the people, he has systematically prevented peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines by issuing Proclamation No. 360 to terminate said peace negotiations), Proclamation No. 374 to designate the CPP and NPA as terrorists and Executive Order No. 70 to militarize and make fascist the reactionary government and society in the name of anti-communism under the National Task Force-ELCAC.

Duterte's aversion to peace negotiations and demonization of the revolutionary forces are calculated to give him and his armed minions the license to engage in acts of state terrorism and human rights violations and to entrench his tyranny and realize a fascist dictatorship similar to that of Marcos whom he has glorified and emulated.

Duterte has ordered the mass murder of tens of thousands of poor drug suspects and the wanton destruction of lives and property in Marawi City in order to make himself appear as a strong man, to criminalize and corrupt his military and police and to spread a climate of fear among the people and his political opponents.

Subsequently, he has tried in vain to suppress the revolutionary movement by murdering suspected revolutionaries and legal social activists and bombing rural communities suspected of being loyal to the people's democratic government. He has thus aided the plantation, logging and mining corporations to grab the land and natural resources from the indigenous people and poor peasants.

3. Plunder and Aggravation of Economic and Social Ills

Contrary to his claims of being against the oligarchy, Duterte is now the chief oligarch in the Philippines and has released the imprisoned plunderers allied to him. Among his fellow oligarchs, he is the one with the absolute political power to engage in absolute corruption. But he is bound by the semi-feudal character of the Philippine economy and the class character of its oligarchy which is big comprador-landlord and bureaucrat capitalist. He heads his own pack of upstart oligarchs enjoying political power and seeking to shake down the earlier oligarchs who are not allied to him.

By pursuing the neoliberal policy of unbridled greed, Duterte has perpetuated and aggravated the exploitation and oppression of the people by foreign monopoly capitalism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. The foreign monopoly firms and the big comprador-landlords take the superprofits and make the toiling masses of workers and peasants and even the middle social strata suffer the pre-industrial underdevelopment, unemployment, low income, soaring costs of subsistence, inequality and widespread poverty.

The Philippine economy is now more than ever dependent on the importation of fuel, capital equipment and components for reassembly and fringe processing; and on highly exploitative foreign investments, loans and the export of raw materials and cheap English-speaking labor. Of the labor force of 45 million, 10 million of them stay unemployed in the Philippines and the deployment of another 10 to 12 million signifies the lack of employment for them in their own country.

Under the Duterte regime, the GDP shares of agriculture and industry as basic productive sectors have shrunk in relation to the rapid bloating of the service sector. While the toiling masses suffer decreasing incomes for their subsistence, the big comprador-landlords and high bureaucrats accumulate wealth and engage in conspicuous consumption. The twenty richest comprador-landlords are estimated to own more wealth than the poorest 62 million Filipinos.

The trade deficit keeps on widening and needs to be covered by bigger amounts of foreign loans. The budgetary deficit is also widening and the Duterte regime is compelled to increase revenues by imposing excise taxes on basic commodities at the expense of the toiling masses in accordance with neoliberal policy. Budgetary allocations for public education, health, disaster relief and other social services have been reduced but those for the pay and perks of high officials, for intelligence and discretionary funds and for military and police compensation, equipment and operations have greatly and rapidly increased.

The public debt has risen rapidly as result of accelerated profit and capital remittances by foreign corporations, importation of manufactures and even food staples, debt service payments, big comprador-landlord incomes, bureaucratic corruption and military expenditures. The neoliberals and fascists in the Duterte regime are bankrupting and wrecking the economy and their own reactionary government. And yet they claim in their propaganda that the communists and revolutionary movement of the people are responsible for the underdevelopment and poverty in the Philippines.

4. The Fascist Line and System of Deception

Duterte and his propagandists use the fascist line of glorifying the leader, making him appear as the faultless messiah despite his broken promises and failures, and at the same time demonizing all his

critics and opponents and subjecting them to red-tagging, personal insults and slander, physical threats and actual physical attacks, especially murder by car-riding or motorcycle-riding assassins.

The glorification of Duterte and demonization of his critics and opponents are complementary in generating both mass admiration from the ill-informed and the climate of fear among those concerned with mere survival. But even some academics are so dumbfounded that they call Duterte euphemistically a “populist” rather than a demagogue or a ruffian as he very well exposes himself through his public behavior and vulgar statements.

Duterte uses an entire system of propaganda to glorify himself and put down his critics and opponents, He has a centralized propaganda agency that sets the line for all propaganda agencies of the civil bureaucracy and the military. He monopolizes the poll survey firms to produce soaring rates of satisfaction and trustworthiness.

He has in social media an army of paid influencers, trolls and bots several times bigger than the similar army of the Marcos family which supports him but specializes in revising Philippine history, worshipping the unlamented fascist dictator Marcos and damning his opponents. He has payola for radio and TV broadcasters either to support him or keep quiet about his crimes. He manages to have a major portion of the electronic and print media and threatens to take over those that are not under his complete control.

Most important of all, a corporation owned by his dummy has acquired the TIM, the local company counterpart of Smartmatic since 2018. This enabled Duterte to rig the mid-term elections in May 2019 in favor of his senatorial candidates and party list groups. With control of the Comelec and its electronic counting system, he can decide the results of any election or referendum.

Duterte won the presidential election of 2016 with a plurality vote of only 39 percent, with the help of his oligarchic allies in Luzon like the families of Marcos, Arroyo, Ramos, Estrada, Enrile and other plunderers of past regimes. Since then, he has been enjoying a fake popularity rating in the stratosphere

despite his colossal crimes of treason, tyranny, mass murder and plunder. And now he practically owns the Comelec and its vote counting system for rigging the results of any election or referendum.

Unless he is overpowered by the sovereign people in unarmed mass uprisings as Marcos was overthrown in 1986, the traitor, tyrant, mass murderer and plunderer Duterte and a series of dynastic or fascist successors will continue to oppress and exploit the people. But then of course, the people are more than ever compelled to rely on their armed revolutionary movement as the more effective weapon for overthrowing not only Duterte and his successors but the entire semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system. ###

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