

CHAPTER IV

DUTERTE'S POPULIST POLICY AS THE INDIRECT LEGITIMATION FOR HIS POLICY OF WAR AGAINST DRUGS

This chapter analyses important points of Duterte's populist policy that has brought him a major support from the Filipinos that even in a year after election, his popularity remained. The chapter goes deeper into the discussion how Duterte chose the populist policy to gain nationwide support to keep defending his controversial policy despite critics from domestic and international bodies. The chapter does not only review the drawbacks and shortcomings of Duterte's controversial policy on war on drug, but also discusses his accomplishments in his early stage that, somehow, are not related to drug policy. It also reviews how he remains popular in the midst of massive critics; what makes it possible for him to gain major support despite his controversial policy. Lastly, it presents the fact that leads to a conclusion.

Duterte has chipped away with temerity and disdain at the country's democratic institutions, but in the stormy, sometimes chaotic politics, where rulers have been traditionally shattered by violent street protests, he is only speaking about succession this early in his term. Not only has it exposed Philippine democracy's hollow nature, it has also placed the country on an unavoidable road, apparently, to a thoroughly authoritarian rule. Duterte does not seem to care about massive criticism by international institutions because, in politics, he relies initially on his own people who see him, not as a dictator, but rather as an unusual reformist who, although he does not stand by unconventional methodology, wants to change rather than maintain status quo in the Philippines. Such policies and commitment contribute to the popularity of Duterte among his people behind the indecisive political actions of the former presidents (Panarina, 2017).

In unleashing a series of reforms Duterte wasted no time. He started to call mayors and local officials accused of drug activity from fighting drug gangs, including politicians. An April 2018 poll conducted by Pulse Asia Research, an independent pollster, reported

that Duterte's campaign against drugs is his major achievement. Nevertheless, many other critical laws or orders passed under the watch of Duterte are strongly supported by both legislative chambers (Gulf News, 2018).

A. Duterte's Populist Policy in Economics

Although the Philippines' oligarchy is seen as the key form of Philippine democracy[68], oligarchs have since 1935 been elected by the Philippines as president. The election of Duterte might have changed the trend whether the elections represent their choices or the absence of them. As with any newly elected president, Duterte was confronted with the challenge of coping with the economic distress of the Philippines. Poverty has long been connected to the oligarchies who own most of the country's resources and dominate them in the Philippines. While poverty reduction was a pledge of a prolonged presidential campaign, Duterte's pro-poor stance revived the expectation that the dictatorship would be overthrown. A good launch was made on the 10-point socio-economic agenda of the current administration. It encompasses existing economic strategies and a renewed focus on infrastructure development, environmental modernization and the extension of social welfare programs. The economic team of Duterte, composed of highly skilled people, recognized PNoy's efforts to improve the country's economic status. Such openness to integration and revision of the past economic policies was essential to prevent legacy economic growth from deteriorating (Untalan, 2016).

In unleashing a bunch of reforms, Duterte took no time. Initially, he called mayors and local officials suspected of drug participation, including those in the policy field. An independent pollster Pulse Asia Research study conducted in April 2018 reported that his biggest achievement to date is Duterte's anti-narcotics campaign. However, under the supervision of Duterte there are many other important legislations or orders that are strongly supported by both congressional houses (Gulf News, 2018).

While Philippine oligarchs are the main enemy of Philippine democracy[68], since 1935, Philippine oligarchs have

been elected as president. The election results may have changed the pattern whether they reflect their choices or the absence thereof. Duterte faced a challenge to fix the economic situation of the Filipinos, as any other newly elected president. Poverty has long been related in the Philippines to landowners who own and manage most of the country's resources. While poverty alleviation was the promise of the Presidential candidates for the permanent campaign, it was the bad picture of Duterte that revitalized the hope of the revocation of the program. The 10-point socio-economic agenda of the present administration was a positive start. This incorporates existing economic policies with renewed focus on the growth of infrastructure, agricultural reform and expansion of social welfare programs. The Duterte business team, made up of highly qualified individuals, acknowledged PNoy's efforts to improve the country's economic condition [69]. Such transparency to integrate and update the previous economic policies was essential in order not to hinder hereditary economic growth (Untalan, 2016).

The Philippines is an economic growth state that exceeds Indonesia. The country led by Rodrigo Duterte recorded economic growth of 6.6% in the fourth quarter of 2017, with a 6.7% rise last year. Philippine economic development has only lost to Vietnam and China as the fifth fastest in Asia. The industry that can expand by 7.3% is powered by the Philippine economy. One third of the Philippine economy is in this sector. There's Vietnam above the Philippines. In the fourth quarter of 2017, this socialist country recorded an economic development of 7.65%, allowing it to grow 6.81% throughout 2017.(CNBC Indonesia, 2018).Among the legislations and orders are.

1. Ease of Doing Business Act

Republic Act No. 11032 was authorized in May 2018 and is recognized as the 2018 Ease of Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act. Such legislation enhances people's relations with the public by streamlining the administration.

2. Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Law

Signed in December 2017, a new progressive tax law includes reduced personal income taxes to reduce the effects

of higher taxes on alcohol, automobiles, carbon, oil and cigarettes.

3. The OFW Bank

The Overseas Filipino Bank was established to satisfy its campaign promise by buying the moribund Philippine Postal Saving Bank from Land Bank of the Philippines.

The economic platform of Duterte seems to be on the right path. A leading Philippine economist, Gerardo Sicat said that Duterte had inherited strong macroeconomic fundamentals from the Aquino government, such as a good investment credit score and a decrease in the total debt-to-GDP rate. Addressing to poor public infrastructure investment efficiency from his predecessor and in particular his stance against reducing constitutional limits on foreign direct investment, the Duterte government, in the awareness of this, has dedicated 900 billion pesos to improve construction of infrastructure. It also plans to relax the limits of constitutional land ownership in order to attract foreign investors. However, the current government's goal is to reduce poverty from 21 per cent to 13 per cent by 2020, with a focus on addressing rural problems and depriving the poorest families. Existing poverty alleviation services like Conditional Cash Transfer, which provide households with money in exchange for fulfilling some conditions, have been maintained and the new Family Income and Expenditure Survey results from the Philippine Statistical Authority have been revised to recognize policy changes.

“Duterte has lots of balls. He’s the only president who brought the Balangiga bells [seized by US forces in 1901 as war booty] back to our country, who said no to the US, the United Nations, and the European Union. He has guts. He doesn’t beg for support,” said one “silent” supporter – a successful entrepreneur who relishes the president’s maverick image abroad. Filipinos see the Duterte populist policies in the economy as a good change. They have never felt such change with a leader before. This is one reason why the people of the Philippines are still very fond of Duterte even though he has a controversial policy (SCMP, 2019).

B. Duterte's Populist in Social System

Duterte obviously made a strategic decision to start his domestic policy by imposing "law and order" utilizing somewhat repressive and militaristic tactics that are strongly criticized by Western democratic societies, but at the same time quickly won him the above-mentioned "respect" of ordinary people. This morally contradictory decision promoted Duterte's popularity among the nation since most of the population was tired of ineffective liberal reformism. Moreover, not just the poor and the oppressed showed their support for the new president, but rather members of all social strata, including the rich and the middle-class (Panarina, 2017). Some of Duterte's populist policies in social systems are:

1. Universal Access to Tertiary Education Act

Signed in August 2017, this law has epic long-term effects. Under Republic Act 10931, underprivileged Filipino students now have the opportunity to obtain a graduation degree free of charge. It provides free education and exemption from other fees at State Universities and Colleges.

2. 10-year Philippine Passport

In August 2017, Duterte signed Republic Act (RA) 10928 providing for a 10-year period of validity for citizens of the Philippines over 18 years of age.

3. National ID Law

It took over 20 years for this law. Previous leaders re-emphasized the possibility of abuse, harassment or misuse of a national ID database under pressure from different groups. Just two years have gone by for Duterte. Duterte signed a long-debated Philippine Identification System law on 6 August 2018, which aims to provide a national database of all Filipino citizens and a biometric chip-based identity card. The new ID program, which will begin on 1 January 2019, will promote government transactions, reduce crime and improve safety.

Majority of the Filipinos are in favor to what the president has been doing as shown by the periodic surveys conducted by independent bodies. The feedbacks of the

Filipinos are mostly positive to Duterte. He drew massive support from overseas Filipinos (Gulf News, 2018). Reuter (2018) and Gulf News (2018) reported that the Filipinos were overwhelmingly satisfied with President Duterte's bloody drug war. The quarterly survey of 1,200 Filipinos by Social Weather Stations returned a rating of ' excellent ' for Duterte's campaign.