

Peasant struggles for land and power in the Philippines, and in many parts of the world, have persisted into the 21st century. As long as significant degrees of land-based exploitation, poverty, social exclusion, and rural political conflicts remain, these struggles will likely continue, and these will be marked by ebbs and flows. The dynamic ups and downs in the push for redistributive land reform will be determined, to a lesser degree, by the capacity of peasant movements and their societal allies to, themselves, launch political initiatives or by the technocratic state actors' ability to carry out autonomous reform actions. To a greater degree, however, successful outcomes will be determined by the ability of pro-reform societal and state actors to forge alliances and launch joint and/or parallel collective actions for redistributive land reform.

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Kuhonta, Erik Martinez, Dan Slater, & Tuong Vu (eds.). *Southeast Asia in Political Science: Theory, Region, and Qualitative Analysis*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008. 455 pp.

Pernicious dualisms within the social sciences, particularly in political science, have continued in recent years, albeit minimally abated and on a more polite discourse level. First and foremost is the unbearably drawn out debate between qualitative and quantitative methods that has tested the civility of even the most polite of scholars. Added to these epistemological and ontological battlegrounds are the parallel debates on “small n” versus “large n” sample sizes, interpretivism versus positivism, meaning versus causal inferences, and—more specifically within comparative politics—universal theory formulation versus nuanced area studies. Oftentimes, the core issue of establishing viable bases of comparison, qualitative bases in this volume's case, as a key component of a sound comparative framework, is lost in the shrillness of the debate. This well-intentioned anthology is partly successful in addressing this theoretical and methodological quandary, but a significant amount of work remains.

This compilation of essays focusing on the past, present, and potential contributions of qualitative analysis in Southeast Asian

political science researches, and within the broader swath of comparative politics, is an incisive addition to these vigorous debates, which can hopefully offer perspectival balance. Through an extensive survey of the use of qualitative research methods in regional political researches, the editors and contributing authors have deftly reframed the debates beyond theoretical and methodological “one-upmanship” brought about by the aforementioned dualisms, and into the various pathways toward “knowledge accumulation.” Collectively, they strive to bring Southeast Asia area studies into commensurately increased prominence and relevance in the subfield of comparative politics, in a relationship of mutual “cognitive respect” (Peter Berger, as quoted by Donald Emmerson, 304) within “overlapping spheres”—“the zone of greatest area-discipline intimacy and transaction” (304).

The broad scope of the book lends an important role to the introductory chapter in bringing thematic cohesion to the volume. The coeditors, Erik Martinez Kuhonta, Dan Slater, and Tuong Vu, aim to use the discussion of knowledge accumulation through the following channels as a unifying instrument: causal arguments, conceptual and typological analyses, and interpretivism. This approach works well to serve its intended purpose of illustrating the theoretical contributions of both Southeast Asia area and political studies; yet, as the subsequent chapters unevenly pursued, knowledge accumulation must directly tackle key methodological questions to effectively address the aforementioned issue of establishing viable bases within appropriate analytical frameworks. The coeditors could have bolstered the importance of methodological issues in their integrative discussions, through inclusion of key qualitative comparative strategies in the use of specific research methods, so that other contributors can correspondingly follow suit with greater evenness throughout the essays.

The individual chapters successfully deliver expansive and substantive reviews of key theoretical developments in political studies within the region. Kuhonta’s discussion on various theories of the state points to a “more even balance” between state and society and a pronounced variation among the states within the rational-legal and patrimonial spectrum even in the pursuit of seemingly similar development goals. Slater’s chapter on political regimes delves considerably into the region’s starkly diverse democratization experiences and offers a promisingly effective way to offer qualitative support to mainly quantitative analytical frameworks through the use of longitudinal

historical analysis of causal mechanisms, as McCoy employed in his examination of the weakening effects of personalization on civil-military relations in the Philippines (71). Delineating the contributions of Southeast Asian regional and political researches to the study of electoral and party politics, Allen Hicken concedes that these contributions to the stream of knowledge within the field are “relatively modest,” (101) and his diplomatic advocacy of methodological balance unfortunately does not point to a specific strategy that can lead to the region’s greater significance within the field.

Tuong’s examination of the literature on contentious mass politics utilizes the rich tradition of scholarship within the region to appraise the theoretical and methodological effectiveness within the primary four genres in the field, and comes to an intriguing conclusion that testing can be innovatively applied to qualitative approaches—a step that can potentially reinvigorate topics and genres experiencing degrees of knowledge exhaustion. Benedict Kerkvliet’s discussion on agrarian politics highlights the importance of ethnographic approaches in extracting the nuances of peasant views and orientations but did not explicitly delve into practicable cross-country comparative strategies. In pointing out the conceptual complexities that surround civil society movements within the region, Meredith Weiss credits region specialists for disaggregating the concept into a more robust and nuanced conceptualization but notes that commitment to the “thick description” approach may hinder the vast potential for cross-regional analysis given the increasingly transnational nature of civil society activism. Kikue Hamayotsu’s deliberation on the contributions of Southeast Asia area and political studies to the discourse of religion and political transformation explicitly indicates a prevalence of descriptive knowledge that has significant utility to conceptual and theoretical clarification but falls short of its comparative viability and consequent broad theoretical potential.

Jamie Davidson’s essay on the “intellectual evolution” of political ethnicity in the region, from primordialism and constructivism to the more recent statist and consumption approaches, highlights the importance of this topic in a region often plagued with ethnic conflict and violence, but notes the yet unrealized potential for substantive comparative researches. Regina Abrami and Richard Doner’s expansive review of Southeast Asian qualitative researches on political economy recognizes the need for more intense and broad theoretical engagements, but not to the detriment of rich contextual particularities. Ardeth

Maung Thawngmung puts forward the crucial role that rural political economy should play within regional political studies, but acknowledges the daunting task of mainstreaming the concept due to geostrategic and prioritization realities. Greg Felker's discussion of globalization issues from the vantage point of the region's varying degrees of illiberal adaptation scrutinizes the seeming paradox between reinvigorated state strategies for domestic control and the increasing international "imbeddedness" of the region's economies.

Finally, Donald Emmerson's chapter entitled "Terms of Enlistment" provides a crucial unifying perspective towards the end of the book, and a most promising departure point for, hopefully, more intensely focused volumes in the future. He positions himself as a sensitively diplomatic broker between besieged area specialists and political science disciplinary stalwarts. David Laitin's annihilistic tendencies aside, I share Emmerson's (324) bright outlook in the potential for an innovative and productive zone within the "overlapping spheres" where scholars who inhabit both worlds can "seek their own terms of enlistment" within themselves and with others who share this often precarious space.

Most contributors call for more explicit comparative research within the region. But with the notable exception of Slater, few have offered practicable methodological avenues that can advance cross-country researches. This is the area where innovation becomes vital to productivity. Methodological scrutiny must be carefully undertaken to improve the comparative robustness of concepts and theoretical frameworks, and their utility in the identification of causal mechanisms. Adherents of a quantitative comparative politics polemically point to their methods without borders—passport-ready and willing to travel on short notice. Qualitative methods advocates, and those who uphold the virtues of triangulation, have been working towards their cosmopolitan credentials with increasing levels of success, but much work remain at the operational level of knowledge accumulation. Area specialists cannot be content with using intensive "one-country" studies as raw materials for their comparative endeavors without compromising the integrity of their research design. There must be a greater scrutiny of the delineation of qualitative method parameters and their cross-country viability at the very outset of comparative researches. Qualitative area specialists cannot be relegated to the roles of raw-data harvesters "upstream" nor reality-checkers "downstream,"

and must be recognized both for the richness of their “thick descriptions” and their contributions to theory-building.

In their concluding remarks, the coeditors emphasized the importance of policymakers having the ability to categorize and conceptualize “to bring events, personalities, and figures into some abstract container.” Qualitative methods, in this light, is said to offer a set of immensely useful tools for supporting policy recommendations through the identification of critical causal mechanisms (329). But ultimately, in order to deepen the comparative significance of qualitative approaches, both the manufacturing process and material composition of the said “containers” must undergo intense scrutiny to validate their “travel-worthiness” at the midrange and global levels.—**ROLANDO S. FERNANDO**, SENIOR LECTURER, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES, DILIMAN, QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES, AND RESEARCH FELLOW AT THE INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, MANILA, PHILIPPINES.

San Juan, Epifanio Jr. *Toward Filipino Self-Determination: Beyond Transnational Globalization*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2009. 184 pp.

In his latest book *Toward Filipino Self-Determination: Beyond Transnational Globalization*, Epifanio San Juan, Jr. uncovers the concealed operations of power and the historic inequalities of political economic systems that have impacted Filipinos in an age of globalized crisis and contradiction. While the definition of globalization is often debated, for the majority of people in the Philippines, the process of globalization can be more accurately described as “gobble-ization” (McLaren and Farahmandpur 2001). Similar to the mass destruction in the Philippines caused by Typhoon Ondoy, the mechanisms of corporate globalization have enabled an international ruling class to pillage the resources of the islands, leaving behind an entire population submerged in the overflows of structural adjustment, debt, and privatization. The rule of the high water is the doctrine of neoliberalism where every layer of the nation’s social fabric is a site of looting, as the market has become the organizing logic of an entire social sphere. San Juan’s book is an important contribution to the fields of globalization, race, and postcolonial studies as he foregrounds the domains of transformative possibility