to this rather under-examined nation-state at the heart of continental Southeast Asia. This reviewer hopes that a repeat of this most informative endeavor will produce other anthologies in the future, which will hopefully include the following: more in-depth studies of the present Lao political elite, particularly the members of military; studies of movements that aim toward the protection of human rights and democratization; works that interrogate the effects of engagement within the Association of Southeast East Asian Nations and the increasing pool of external aid; and works that examine the emergent millennial Lao and how they affect the colors and contours of Laotian politics and society.—**MATTHEW SANTAMARIA**, *PROFESSOR, ASIAN CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN*

*****

Wataru Kusaka. 2017. *Moral Politics in the Philippines: Inequality, Democracy and the Urban Poor.* Singapore: National University of Singapore Press; Kyoto: Kyoto University Press. 355 pp.

In the aftermath of the election of Rodrigo R. Duterte to the presidency of the Philippines on 9 May 2016, a flurry of opinions has emerged regarding how the election of an openly brusque, antidemocratic, and politically incorrect leader serves as the final nail in the coffin of what is now retroactively called the "EDSA Republic." The liberal-democratic government structure inaugurated by the 1986 EDSA Revolution (and its immediate offspring, the 1987 Philippine Constitution) has been adjudged as having fallen short of its transformative promise.[1]

Among the most vocal proponents of this perspective would be scholar-activist-turned-politician Walden Bello. In writing about the political economy of the Philippines, Bello would constantly refer to the nation's governance being suspended in an "anti-development state" (Bello et al. 2009), hobbled as it were (especially under the tenures of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III) by long-term institutional problems. Among them would be (a) the pressures of dependency on the United States and the global neoliberal economic agenda; (b) the impunity of the state's armed forces, police, and elite political families (most of whom benefited from the depredations of the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, the man deposed by EDSA 1986); as well as (c) persistent graft, corruption, and normalized fraud across many branches of governance, both at the local and national levels (Bello 2016; 2017).

---

[1] For example, Jose Luis Martin 'Chito' Gascon (a member of the 1986 Constitutional Commission, now the embattled Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights), would look back sadly on the state of Philippine democracy: "The mistake (of those in EDSA 1) was thinking it was sufficient to remove a dictator . . . and everything would fall into place . . . We have seen that that does not happen. We removed the dictator, but we retained the political system." (Gascon, in Chua 2006).

For some reason, however, there is a very significant silence in this body of literature on the most tangible legacies of the 1986 EDSA Revolution (EDSA 1986): its two sequels in January and May 2001, respectively (colloquially labeled EDSA Dos and EDSA Tres). In contrast to the seeming moral ascendancy of the original, the character of these sequel revolts has come down in history as highly partisan and uncomfortable, the former having led to the deposition of a legally elected president in exchange for another whose tenure led to a significant damage to democratic institutions. It may perhaps explain why Filipino writers and scholars (some of them even played major or minor parts in EDSA Dos) find writing about the topic ambiguous, polarizing, and conflict-stirring. It is probably serendipitous that Wataru Kusaka's recent work, *Moral Politics in the Philippines: Inequality, Democracy and the Urban Poor*, chooses to address this void of voices, cast a probing eye on Philippine society's political forces and public, and hold up an uncomfortable mirror to what Philippine politics has become.

From the preface to the book, Kusaka presents his research puzzle by referring to these two sequel "EDSAs." He points out how they pose a contradiction to his initial assessment of the Filipino polity as a people willing to "rise up and act on their own initiative to reform politics when the state failed to protect their welfare and livelihood" (x). The uncomfortable specter of EDSA Tres casts into serious doubt the "national unity" of the "democratic Filipino people" that supposedly deposed President Joseph Estrada—in *vox populi, vox Dei*.

Kusaka asks whether this division could be demarcated between a specific section of the non-elite and the rest of Filipino society—and their differing sets of values and biases. It is on this note that his book considers the following three questions: (a) "why did the middle class, self-identified as 'citizens,' play [an] ambiguous role vis-à-vis the consolidation and deepening of democracy"; (b) "what type of moral 'we/they' relation would promote or advance democracy"; and (c) whether "this perspective on moral politics offers new insight on why democracy in a stratified society is easily destabilized" (3–4). In addressing these questions, he offers the concept of "dual public spheres," wherein a middle class–dominated "civic sphere" more often than not will clash with the concerns and perspectives of the impoverished section of Philippine society in the "mass sphere" (5).

Kusaka's work deploys this concept at three significant aspects of post-EDSA Philippine politics: the memorialization of the idea and legacies of "People Power," the conduct of elections, and the governance of urban space in Metro Manila—particularly in how it affects the informal settler/"squatter" sectors. Over the course of the book, he makes the following major assessments:

- First, in contrast to the supposedly broad enough space of moral discourse opened by EDSA 1986, EDSA Dos and EDSA Tres did not allow the bridging of divisions in expectations between the civic sphere and the mass sphere, due to the unwillingness of the middle class to acknowledge the reasons behind the masses' predilection for populism (120).
- Second, the middle class's prioritization of "rational policy debate" and "moral values" in choosing candidates for elective office visibly clashed with the masses' priorities of finding support and state assistance toward "solv[ing] problems . . . in relation to land, residence, and other necessities of life." Thus, existing voter education programs, mostly based on the middle-class perspective, is seen by the rest of the masses as unappealing at best or patronizing at worst (154).
- Third, contradictions in priorities in urban governance have allowed for the persistence of informal social and economic relations among the urban poor, street vendors, and informal settlers. Subsequently, their inability to either participate or convert to formal economic structures made them vulnerable to state restructuring of the city-space, which manifested in the demolition of stalls and squatter settlements. This state violence crystallized not only the precariousness of the masses' situation but also the prejudice of the middle classes against their

> miseries as something not born out of structural inequality but due to their alleged predilection for criminality.[2]

Kusaka's work takes its rightful place along multiple constellations of inquiry in contemporary Philippine political scholarship. First, he takes part in the changing terrain of writing about the histories and legacies of EDSA 1986. The field has already bucked traditional nostalgia and valorization, giving way to more critical examinations over the decades—laced either with disillusionment at worst or dispassionate analysis at best. Significant publications touching on the aftermath and legacy of EDSA 1986 now choose to either (a) revisit, expose, or reanalyze facts hitherto unrecorded in the history books (McCoy 1999; Magadia 2003); (b) analyze and criticize the movements, interest groups, and social forces involved (Casper 1995; Hedman 2006; Moreno 2006; Encarnacion-Tadem 2009; Kasuya and Quimpo 2010; Fuller 2011, 2013); or (c) provide critical perspectives in reading the symbolic value of EDSA to contemporary political agendas (Manzanilla and Hau 2016; Espiritu 2017).

Second, *Moral Politics in the Philippines* also joins an emerging subfield of inquiry documenting the political agency of the Filipino underclasses—particularly those problematizing the masses' relationship to the hegemonic sphere of middle-class reform politics. Building on similar lines of inquiry pursued by recent works (cf. Schaffer 2009; Pinches 2010; Kares 2014; Banta 2014; Magno and Parnell 2015), Kusaka contributes to raising and criticizing the patronizing nature of "the citizen's reform agenda" for the lower classes, which continues to alienate them from political and economic life, driving them further to the temptations and depredations of elite patronage.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, Kusaka's introduction of the "dual public spheres" framework might actually be a worthy continuation of the "genealogy of interpretations" used in the canon of Philippine political science, at least the one documented by Nathan Quimpo in his 2008 work *Contested Democracy in the Philippines.* In his work, Quimpo chose to review and critique, in succession, the elements and inadequacies of Carl Lande's patron-client framework, Dante Simbulan's elite democracy / patrimonial framework, Renato Constantino's neocolonial / dependency framework, Paul Hutchcroft's patrimonial-oligarchic state (booty capitalism), John Sidel's bossism, and Jennifer Franco's clientelist-electoral regime.[3] Subsequently, Quimpo introduces his own interpretation in his eponymous contested democracy framework, wherein

---

[2] This is covered under the entirety of Chapter 5 of the book.

- it is acknowledged that "the very meaning of democracy is contested";
- that the competing strands of *elite democracy* and *democracy from below* (i.e., the one espoused by social forces and popular interest groups) can deepen Philippine politics into "a participatory and egalitarian democracy" (Quimpo 2008, 23); and
- that liberal democracy, "despite its deficiencies, provides the opportunity for subordinate classes and communities to push for popular empowerment" (53).

Kusaka's work fills up the biggest gap in the assumptions of Quimpo's framework—that the organizations, movements, and agents pushing for *democracy from below* will always prioritize competing against elite forces, not among each other. Kusaka's "dual public spheres" framework, as it were, can help in explaining the contradictions that were not foreseen by Quimpo's work, such as the possibility of the mass sectors not automatically jumping in the political projects of progressive organizations, as well as the very real possibility of transformism, demobilization, and co-optation by these movements.

All said, despite my personal agreement with much of the arguments, narratives, and perspectives within Kusaka's work, certain questions and possible gaps linger with me. First, I find it curious that the book has nary a reference to George Lakoff's earlier, similarly titled work *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think* (1st ed., 1996; 2nd ed., 2002). Of course, it must be granted that Lakoff's landmark study is primarily a work of political ethics, sociology, and cognitive science analyzing American politics—a context which may have specific and more advanced societal problems than the Philippines. Nonetheless, much of its lexicon, concepts, and patterns of analysis are arguably also applicable to the moral and societal divides being experienced in Philippine society—further assisted by the institutional heritages of its colonial relationship with the United States.

---

[3] The lengthy review of these aforementioned works is recounted in Quimpo 2008, 23-44.

Second, I felt that while Kusaka criticizes the very nature of "moral politics"—particularly that which "makes a non-issue of interest politics . . . by separating people into 'good' and 'evil,' thus escalating fragmentation and exclusion" (257)—there could have been ample space in discussing the theoretical questions regarding the role of morals and moralistic discourse in politics. While his arguments seem sensitive to the negative implications and exclusionary nature of moralistic posturing, he could have probably more forcefully contributed to addressing a relevant theoretical argument first posed by Wendy Brown, which notes how "moralistic reproaches to certain kinds of speech or argument kill critique not only by displacing it with arguments about abstract rights versus identity-bound injuries, but also by configuring political injustice and political righteousness as a problem of remarks, attitude, and speech rather than as a matter of historical, political-economic, and cultural formation of power" (2001, 35). Kusaka, to his credit, admits these limitations and hopes to pursue future research along these lines.

In closing, I must admit that reading through Kusaka's comprehensive narrative of the moral divide between the Filipino public did not just remain as an intellectual exercise for me. It became quite an emotional experience as well. As a student of democratization, as well as the politics of interest groups/social forces in the Philippines, the story he paints can be quite disheartening. Indeed, my own experiences as a scholar-activist have already disillusioned me with the old romantic notions that the Filipino masses are truly of the same mind and heart as the networks of activist and civil society organizations I normally engaged with. Yet Kusaka's choice quotations and anecdotes (both about the middle classes' disdain for the impoverished, and the palpable despair of his respondents from the masses) drove home to me just how wide the actual gaps of ideologies and aspirations are between our countrymen.

In reading this book, one may get the nagging feeling that if only Filipino scholars, public intellectuals, and indeed political actors have been sensitive to this moral divide, we may have probably foreseen the societal ferment and resentment which catapulted Duterte to Malacañang—something that many of them have yet to directly address.[4]

---

[4] For comparison, see the recent anthology by Curato (2017), which tries to comprehensively document the personality of Duterte, the emergence of his political machinery as well the adaptation of the Philippine state's problematic institutions to his hegemony—and yet gives very limited portrayal to the ground-level sentiments, perspectives and sociological realities of the voter population that supported Duterte's candidacy.

Indeed, Kusaka himself tangentially sees the rise of Duterte as Filipinos "tak[ing] a risky gamble in order to break the paradox of neoliberalism and democracy" (264).[5] At the same time, it is also a refreshing and necessary wake-up call—one especially needed after the clearly unwarranted hagiography of Noynoy Aquino's election and presidency,[6] the purveyor of political nostalgia that may have blinded us to our country's stark inequality and divide, the price of which we are currently paying for with the continuing degradation of our democratic institutions, and the literal shedding of blood of thousands of our countrymen.—**Hansley A. Juliano**, *Lecturer, Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, Loyola Schools, Ateneo de Manila University*

References

Banta, Teresa K. 2014. "Imagined Revolutions: On the Urban Poor Collective Imaginary and the Reconstruction of Edsa Tres (A Cultural Inquiry on the Case of Sanapa NGC-East Side In Barangay Commonwealth)." MA thesis, Ateneo de Manila University.

Bello, Walden. 2016. "How Neoliberalism Killed the Philippines' EDSA Republic." *Green Left Weekly*. https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/walden-bello-how-neoliberalism-killed-philippines-edsa-republic.

——. 2017. "EDSA, Neoliberalism, and Globalization." Speech delivered at Coalesce Conference, sponsored by Ateneo Lex, Ateneo de Manila, March 2017. http://www.waldenbello.org/edsa-neoliberalism-and-globalization.

Bello, Walden, Herbert Docena, Marissa de Guzman, and Marylou Malig. 2009. *The Anti-Development State: The Political Economy of Permanent Crisis in the Philippines*. Pasig City: Anvil.

Brown, Wendy. 2001. *Politics Out of History*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Casper, Gretchen. 1995. *Fragile Democracies: The Legacies of Authoritarian Rule*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Chua, Yvonne T. 2006. "EDSA 20/20: Jose Luis Martin 'Chito' Gascon." *Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism*. http://pcij.org/stories/jose-luis-martin-chito-gascon.

---

[5] Lest it be assumed that Duterte's tenure will remain unassailable, recent developments seem to have pushed Kusaka to develop his analysis further, ending with an appropriately-ominous assessment of Duterte's erratic first year in power: "[W]ithout legitimacy from due process, if his social bandit-like morality is felt to be untrue, his tenure will be critical. . . . Duterte's national politics can be fragile not because of the violation of liberal democratic principles, but because of the failed promise of a bandit" (Kusaka 2017, 73).

[6] See, for example, Rocamora 2010; Villacorta 2011; Cruz 2015 and Claro, et. al. 2016.

Claro, Josemaria E., Glenn Vincent K. Atanacio, Katrina Isabel B. Gadong, Jenny L. Cabago, and Ardigail C. Sarangelo. 2016. *The Aquino Legacy: The Filipino is Worth Fighting For*. Manila: Presidential Communications Operations Office.

Cruz, Efren S., and Neni Sta. Romana-Cruz. 2015. *The Aquino legacy: An Enduring Narrative*. Makati City: Imprint Publishing.

Curato, Nicole, ed. 2017. *A Duterte Reader: Critical Essays on Rodrigo Duterte's Early Presidency*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Encarnacion Tadem, Teresa S. 2009. "Introduction: Examining Global Civil Society Movements in the Philippines." In *Localizing and Transnationalizing Contentious Politics: Global Civil Society Movements in the Philippines*, edited by Teresa S. Encarnacion Tadem, 1–24. Plymouth: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and Rowman & Littlefield.

Espiritu, Talitha. 2017. *Passionate Revolutions: The Media and the Rise and Fall of the Marcos Regime*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Fuller, Ken. 2011. *A Movement Divided: Philippine Communism, 1957–1986*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.

——. 2015. *The Lost Vision: Philippine Left, 1986-2010*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.

Hedman, Eva-Lotta E. 2006. *In the Name of Civil Society: From Free Election Movements to People Power in the Philippines*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Kares, Faith R. 2014. "Practicing 'Enlightened Capitalism': 'Fil-Am' Heroes, NGO Activism, and the Reconstitution of Class Difference in the Philippines." *Philippine Studies* 62 (2): 175–204.

Kasuya, Yuko, and Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, eds. 2010. *The Politics of Change in the Philippines*. Pasig City: Anvil.

Kusaka, Wataru. 2017. "Bandit Grabbed the State: Duterte's Moral Politics." *Philippine Sociological Review* 65:49–75.

Magadia, Jose Cecilio J., S.J. 2003. *State-Society Dynamics: Policy-Making in a Restored Democracy*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Magno, Chris, and Phillip Parnell. 2015. "The Imperialism of Race: Class, Rights and Patronage in the Philippine City." *Race and Class* 56:69–85.

Manzanilla, JPaul S., and Caroline Hau, eds. 2016. *Remembering/Rethinking EDSA*. Pasig City: Anvil.

McCoy, Alfred W. 1999. *Closer than Brothers: Manhood at the Philippine Military Academy*. Pasig City: Anvil.

Moreno, Antonio F. 2006. *Church, State and Civil Society in the Philippines: Narratives of Engaged Citizenship*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Pinches, Michael. 2010. "The Making of Middle-Class Civil Society in the Philippines." In *The Politics of Change in the Philippines*, edited by Yuko Kasuya and Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, 284–312. Pasig City: Anvil.

Quimpo, Nathan Gilbert. 2008. *Contested Democracy and the Left in the Philippines after Marcos*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Rocamora, Joel. 2010. "Partisanship and Reform: The Making of a Presidential Campaign." In *The Politics of Change in the Philippines*, edited by Yuko Kasuya and Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, 73–89. Pasig City: Anvil.

Schaffer, Frederic Charles. 2009. *The Hidden Costs of Clean Election Reform*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Villacorta, Wilfrido V. 2011. *Noynoy: Triumph of a People's Campaign*. Pasig City: Anvil.