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Desk

Towards A Paradigm Shift

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The configuration of policy issues that confront the Filipino public will define the manner by which our shared interpretation of the national reality will be reconfigured.

Orthodox nationalism, which framed the production of 'alternatives' for many decades had a handy – although ultimately useless – explanation for every symptom of national malaise: blame imperialism.

This inward-looking orthodoxy presumed a certain purity about domestic society. That purity has been polluted by things foreign: an alien culture, foreign capital, an internationalized language, 'transnational' (a term that has lost its meaning) corporations, multilateral financial institutions, and lately, the Internet. Orthodox nationalism wanted to conserve an indigenous culture that even now could not be fully defined, impose a single,

fabricated 'national' language that defies the growing internationalization of conversation, restrict 'foreign' capital flows, and heavily regulate enterprises that are of questionable nationality (modern corporations have, in fact, no nationality). The politically correct 'nationalist' position on the matter of the digital revolution has yet to be forged.

Many of the policy issues, social problems, and economic weaknesses that need to be confronted and resolved occur on the blind side of orthodox nationalism. The old orthodoxy cannot be the fountainhead of alternative policy positions.

What would be the politically correct 'nationalist' position on, say, the low savings rate, the underdeveloped entrepreneurial culture that now hampers our productivity, the inferior political capacity of the Philippine state, the culture of evasion, and the feeble sense of political obligation on the part of citizens?

Much of what went wrong with the Philippines over the last few decades may be directly or indirectly attributed to the nationalist orthodoxy that formed the unquestioned framework on which our political discourse was set.

Today, there is a consensus that one of the most debilitating factors that caused our economy to fall behind those of our neighbors was the prohibitive protectionist regime we constructed at the inspiration of the leading lights of Philippine nationalism. The extensive regulatory structure that protectionism implied caused domestic standards of productive efficiency to decline, skewed pricing mechanisms, encouraged profiteering in the private sector and corruption in government, necessitated mammoth subsidies that kept public finances constantly on the brink

of bankruptcy – in a word, retarded our ability to emerge as a trading economy adept at the realities of the modern world.

Filipinos, not foreigners, are responsible for bringing this nation to its knees.

Today, there is an emerging consensus in favor of a liberalized economy and a society that runs on the logic of market discipline. Orthodox nationalism, appropriated by the diminishing political left, has become the source of reaction rather than the mother of reinvention.

Contemporary circumstances necessitate the emergence of a new paradigm that will restate our options in the modern world.

This issue of *Kasarinlan* is the second collection of essays and papers reflecting the rethinking of policy issues and political positions by the various forces and personalities relevant to public decision-making in the Philippines. By putting together these papers and essays, the editors attempt to capture the many facets of a transforming discourse involving not only legislators and government analysts, but activists and advocates as well.

The papers collected for this issue will, hopefully, provide the readers enough material to appreciate the texture of the transforming discourse.

It will be important, however, to underscore the fact that the transforming discourse is not limited to one or the other ideological group. It is the consequence of an emerging national conversation, a convergence of world-views.

These are the rudiments of a probable consensus.