

Book Reviews

Jacques Bertrand and André Laliberté (eds.). 2010. *Multination States in Asia: Accommodation or Resistance*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press. 330 pages.

This book brings together case studies that examine state behaviour in addressing sub-nationalist movements and secessionist struggles across four regions of Asia. It also provides a good introductory chapter that broadly analyses the unprecedented growth of movements among ethnolinguistic and national groups in the world that seek substantial political autonomy from their respective states. As Kahn and Taylor point out, the world is being swept by a new kind of "post-national identity" politics with the upsurge of the "politics of recognition". The chapter presents a theoretical and conceptual exploration of nation and state that are oftentimes trivialized if not misunderstood.

Focusing on Asia, the book deals with the unresolved question of nation-state building, explaining the continued insecurity and instability that most countries have historically experienced. It explores and examines the variegated issues and concerns relative to the persistent quest of selected Asian countries in strengthening their state and nation. Hence, it puts into proper perspective the changing configuration of the world and the region against the backdrop of rising ethno-national consciousness, state centralism, and upsurge of democracy.

The eight country cases and one sub-regional case, pertaining to Central Asia, succinctly and analytically elucidate the diverse historical, socio-cultural, political, and economic factors that give rise to sub-national struggles of minority groups for self-determination, and actions and strategies adopted by the state in defense of its political boundary and protection of its sovereign rights. Towards the conclusion, the book successfully ties up the various theoretical insights drawn together from empirical findings and analysis of contributors.

While the book is a good contribution to the current literature on nation-state political dynamics, multiculturalism, and governance, I maintain that the set of objectives defined in its introductory chapter was partially met. It has yet to address some of the important issues

relevant towards the understanding of the complex relationship between and among the politics of identities, unifying nationalism, plural democracy, and state sovereignty.

One vital issue that needs to be highlighted is the question of empowerment. It should be considered that the state's nation-building project and national groups' state-building ventures are endeavours to fundamentally re-establish the balance of power disturbed by undue centralism of the state and its homogenizing policies. While most of the cases correctly express that many Asian states have, for a time, forged national unity, some of these initiatives have triggered political and social conflict and rebellion. What is baffling about the book is that none of the cases has investigated the fact that state's reform measures intending to accommodate the demands of sub-nationalist groups do not necessarily mean or aim to empower challenging groups but co-opt them into collaboration within the state power system itself. The disempowering actions of the state undermine the process of nation building both from the purview of the state and sub-nationalist movements.

Historically, the "divide and rule" tactics remain to be the effective and powerful weapon of most states in Asia. Given the variety of sub-nationalists movements cutting across religions, ethnicities, and cultures, they have never been united against a state that is democratic, democratising, or non-democratic. The state takes advantage of this division for even animosities between armed secessionist movements are beneficial to the state. They make use of two instruments: make policy concessions or share rents to co-opt or "encapsulate" in the language of O'Donnell leaders of rebel movements and thwart rebellion. Since some groups will cooperate with the state if it offers policies more to their liking, states generate cooperation and, if need be, thwart the threat of rebellion by making policy concessions. Alternatively, states are able to prevent threats to its power and legitimacy by sharing rents. Accommodating the national interest of sub-nationalist groups within the state system is rarely authentic and substantial. They are not geared to empower the sub-nationalist groups. This explains the continuing struggle of secessionist movements in most of Asian states.

In the Philippine and Indonesian cases for instance, Bertrand was not able to capture the complexity of the engagements of the Philippine state with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on the one hand, and the Indonesian State with the *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM or Free Aceh Movement). The accommodation of the MNLF within the state system has not prevented the MILF to pursue its struggle for a *Bangsa Moro* (Moro Nation); while the creation of an autonomous local government in Aceh, now led by former GAM secessionist leaders, has not precluded the emergence of new separatist armed movement in Aceh.

Moreover, the concept of a *Bangsa Moro* and "Acheh-Sumatra State" has been continuously vague even among key leaders of the separatist movements. This has been compounded by organizational divisions, which were more of a consequence of power struggle, leadership style, and personal differences rather than an issue of ideology or degree of intensity in religious beliefs. Although the primordial interest remains a ready resource that can be mobilized to counter state and nation building initiatives, oftentimes it serves as a bargaining tool against the state for the movement to advance certain political and economic concessions that go beyond the issue of the national question. I think this is not only relevant to the Philippines and Indonesia but most likely to other states in Asia. Unfortunately, no case in the book has discussed this important question.

While the book is regarded as a good literature in appreciating the theoretical bases and empirical issues that confront multinational states under a regime of mosaic democracy and responsive governance, readers are cautioned that accommodation and resistance has to be understood also within the framework of state co-optation and artificiality of identities. ♦

Rizal G. Buendia
Department of Political Science
De La Salle University, Manila

Anthony Meloto. 2009. *Builder of Dreams*. Mandaluyong City: Gawad Kalinga Community Development Foundation, Inc.

He's got the little bitty baby in His hands,
He's got the little bitty baby in His hands,
He's got the little bitty baby in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands.

Excerpt from "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"
American Spiritual by Obie Philpot

I praise Tony Meloto's book for what it is: a personal account of the author's experience in helping to build the prominent housing development organization, Gawad Kalinga (GK). He is explicit from the beginning that this is a description of his own experience, which may not agree exactly with others' experiences. He then offers a soul-baring recollection of the history of GK. In doing so, he fits his justification for his work and that of GK into an analysis of what ails the Philippines and what is needed to resurrect the plight of its poor and the nation's well-being more generally. As anyone who has met or heard Mr. Meloto in person knows, his is an inspiring story, as are his expressed hopes and dreams for the Philippines. For those who have been inspired by Mr. Meloto's message and for newcomers as well, this book will not disappoint.

In a narrowly drawn dichotomy about the values they advance, development NGOs are sometimes divided between those "which come from a Christian missionary tradition and take a 'charity' approach to tackling problems of poverty, and those which are . . . (politically motivated to) seek the mobilization of the poor" (Lewis, 2001, p. 166). Meloto's message plays primarily to the charity end of the dichotomy. As he asserts in an early passage:

If we have hit the mother-lode of goodwill . . . (it is) an affirmation that there is no lack of generosity or caring in this world. There is enough of it to create abundance and peace for all, where no

one is homeless or hungry, if those who have more in life understand the wisdom of not leaving those who have less, behind (p. 7).

But Meloto attempts to separate GK from other charitable NGOs because it rolls up its sleeves, enters the communities of the downtrodden, and slowly builds dignity and skills among the poor. This is accomplished through a model he calls "radical volunteerism," which requires "an army of volunteers willing to hand-hold individual poor communities for at least two years . . . We needed at least ten volunteers per community to start the various programs, conduct values formation seminars, and attend to partners and visitors who wanted to help." Couples for Christ (CFC) provided the army of volunteers "with missionary zeal and global reach to do the job. . . Their work turned out to be harder than raising resources to support them" (p. 120).

Despite Meloto's downplaying the fundraising role, many observers will see this as GK's most striking attribute. Fundraising is only one part of what Meloto calls the "GK Way" (p. 136). He sketches out an understanding of intersectoral relationships quite similar to those that European and Canadian authors refer to as a 'third way.' It is an approach that works between antithetical groups but also engages them in the solution — soldiers and rebels, Muslims and Christians, landowners and landless, government and business. He suggests that it does so by inserting social conscience into business, employing retirees as social entrepreneurs, instilling dignity and self-respect in the poor, and rejecting injustice across all social classes (pp. 136-138). His account — and the numerous testimonials in the book from benefactors — illuminate a bold and energetic marketing appeal that has been extended to influential and well-to-do leaders throughout the Philippines and to Filipino expatriates around the world.

As an American onlooker, I am unqualified to critique Mr. Meloto's account of his experiences beginning in Bagong Silang and carried forward nearly to the present in what later became GK. Some may feel he has underplayed other CFC members' involvement, but we must acknowledge that he discreetly cautioned that this is his account of his

experiences. None of us knows, after all, exactly what he experienced nor what it meant to him. It is a poignant story in the face of danger and daunting impediments in which Mr. Meloto and his colleagues offered themselves up selflessly and passionately to improve the lives of poor Filipinos. Most readers will find themselves, as I was, personally moved by the story and its dedicated participants.

Nonetheless, as I read the book I developed concern, related not to Mr. Meloto's experience, but to his analysis of Philippine society, solutions for its problems, and the future he implies for GK's ongoing role as societal antidote. The first is an inconsistency, from my view, in Mr. Meloto's analysis of the problems of Philippine society. In one passage the author argues that "(t)he great social inequity in the Philippines was the marginalization of the vast majority from the sources of life, by a small minority that controlled political and economic power and resources" (p. 64). "The victims of injustice and exploitation," he goes on to say, "were often made the scapegoats for being idle and selling their votes. Insult was added to injury by blaming the powerless for the country's woes" (p. 65). And even under the relative stability of Ramos' presidency, he notes, "the masses remained poor. Economic benefits remained at the top for a few who already had them in excess . . ." (p. 66).

Given these structural and political causes of poverty, one wonders about other passages that seem to blame the poor for their plight. "Poverty is the lot of those who fail to practice what they preach or what is preached to them," Meloto writes (p. 13). Even more mystifying is this:

It became crystal clear to us that the State was not the enemy of its citizens, the market was not the enemy of its consumers, the Catholic Church was not the enemy of its parishioners, the rich were not the enemy of the poor who needed their help. And the poor were not the enemy of the rich who needed them to get to heaven (p.143).

While we understand the need to provoke the poor toward self-empowerment, some may suspect that this incongruity is an unintended byproduct of a marketing appeal that avoids offending potential

benefactors. As Mr. Meloto told the 2006 commencement audience at UP's National College of Public Administration and Governance, "(I)n dealing with dishonest men, just be honest. We cannot change people if we make them our enemies. Engage them and bring out the best in them" (p. 408). In Philippine culture, honesty often entails not causing important others to lose face; this may be important in face-to-face fundraising, but societal-level solutions to Philippine poverty need also to confront structural and political dynamics more directly.

A few thoughts about leadership for GK are also in order. Scholars note that voluntary sector leadership is increasingly focused on leaders' roles in sensemaking — creating and sustaining meanings and vision — rather than on more formal activities of giving orders and oversight. Fowler (1997, p. 234) has suggested that NGO leaders need to be "motivators charting future directions for development and then mobilising followers ... to generate a vision they want beyond aid." In this regard, former UP President Jose Abueva's back cover remarks aptly characterize Meloto as a transformational leader.

Evidence from NGO studies, however, remains divided about the long-term efficacy of heroic leader/founders. The visionary and charismatic skills of a Tony Meloto prove invaluable in bridging social divides in a developing country and sustaining followers' enthusiasm in the face of stark obstacles. But NGOs that become dependent on such leaders often face longer-term problems in organizational governance and institutionalizing practices in the organizational middle and with external stakeholders. That is, as these organizations grow and mature they invariably confront the so-called "founder transition dilemma," in which the levers of governance need to shift from the visionary founder to a broader, presumably democratic, board of directors, and day-to-day decision making falls increasingly on professionalized and empowered managers throughout the organizational ranks. Clearly the book contains a story about grassroots empowerment, but Tony Meloto's omnipresence in the story and as a national icon portends a double-edged challenge for the future of the organization: sustaining an inspirational purpose while also empowering democratic governance and professional stewardship throughout the organization.

My thoughts about leadership pertain also to the introduction I chose for this review. I confess when a friend showed me a copy of the book a year ago I was horrified by the cover. The image of Mr. Meloto — with the children of different faiths photo-shopped into his arms — immediately inspired my recollection of the timeless American spiritual with which I began this review. The more I read — about GK’s dependence on an “army of CFC volunteers” — the more perplexing it became to identify a rationale for the hubris implied in that image. The gold sticker on the front cover identifying my copy as the “special People Power edition” added further irony.

I commend Mr. Meloto’s prescription as an important piece in building the Philippine nation — especially for empowering the voices, hopes, and confidence of average Filipinos. But the goals of empowered nationhood will be difficult to accomplish, in my view, as long as so much of the vision hinges on a charismatic hero whose benevolent likeness radiates from petroleum company billboards and the front cover of his own book about nation-building. Those who accept this book as a motivational tome will most certainly come away inspired; those who want more than a partial prescription for a thriving Philippines may be disappointed. ♦

Ralph S. Browery
Askew School of Public Administration
Florida State University



Jorge V. Tigno (ed.). 2009. *State Politics and Nationalism Beyond Borders: Changing Dynamics in Filipino Overseas Migration*. Quezon City: The Philippine Migrant Research Network and the Philippine Social Science Council. 169 pages.

How is the Philippines as a state managing migration nationally, regionally and transnationally? How does it secure the well being and

interests of its nationals outside its territorial jurisdiction? What prospects does this deterritorialized condition hold for the Philippine state? And what has been the response of the members of the Filipino diaspora in turn to this new condition vis-à-vis the state?

These are just some of the questions the Philippine Migration Research Network (PMRN) attempts to shed light into in its 8th publication, *State Politics and Nationalism Beyond Borders: Changing Dynamics in Filipino Overseas Migration* (2009) edited by Jorge V. Tigno. A 169-page compilation of studies by three political scientists and a lawyer, the volume purports to offer a different perspective to explain the nature and dynamics of Filipino overseas migration by drawing attention the political aspects and significance of the so-called Filipino "diaspora."

However, it is apparent from the outset that migration as a discourse is probed here by looking into the role of the state as the guiding framework. Accordingly, with the magnitude, diversity and continuity of Philippine international migration, the state cannot be left to deal with the phenomenon narrow-mindedly at just the domestic or national level. How exactly this will be done, however, seems to be the larger question to which even the volume contributors would be happy to find the answer.

The state, the volume argues, is called upon not solely to consolidate its gains from the economic remittances of migrants but to play an active role in promoting the well-being of its nationals abroad. This ought to be done supposedly by working with the governments of host countries and through such measures as, say, granting equal political rights to migrant Filipinos. The volume also invites researchers, academics and those interested in migration research to examine the sociopolitical ramifications of overseas migration by giving a glimpse of how Filipino "diasporic" communities are influencing state policies in the homeland and in host societies. It must be pointed out, however, that scholars have actually long tinkered on locating both public policy and the transnational experience of migrants while contemplating on the traditional questions of migration studies. Consider, for instance, Irma Watkins-Owens' *Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants in the Harlem Community, 1900-1930* (1996), Amitava Kumar's *Passport Photos* (2000), Donna Gabaccia's *Italy's Many Diasporas* (2000), Carmen

Theresa Whalen's *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia: Puerto Rican Workers and Postwar Economies* (2001), Matthew Frye Jacobson's *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Polish, Irish and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (2002), and Erica Lee's *At America Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (2003), among others.

Accordingly, the papers in the volume attempt a multilevel frame of analysis because there is no single level of analysis to explain the nature and dynamics of Filipino migration. It may be worth mentioning though that it is precisely the lack of a single commonly accepted theoretical framework that is blamed for the dearth of good, insightful studies in immigration (see for instance, Massey et al.'s contention in the article "An Evaluation of International Migration Theory: The North American Case," published in *Population and Development Review* in 1994). Social scientists, critics argue, tend to approach migration research not from a shared paradigm but from a variety of contending theoretical perspectives from across disciplines and ideologies.

In "Out of Many, One? East Asian Labor Migration, States, and Regional Cooperation," the first paper in the volume, Tigno argues that the examination of labor migration flows, particularly in East Asia, may offer the best lens for observing the dynamics of state interaction in dealing with overseas migration. He then discusses the push-and-pull factors of labor migration such as population, income disparity, the economic promise of remittances, and even Japanese anime. As to how exactly the popularity of Japanese anime in many countries in Southeast Asia may be able to propel migratory flows, however, he did not elaborate.

Tigno points out that any attempt to link the markets and the areas that make up the East Asian region must take into account not only the free movement of goods but more importantly, the movement of people whose mobility likewise alters the social, cultural and political landscape of both countries of origin and destination. He suggests several areas that national authorities might want to look into, such as improving the capability of state agencies to produce labor market information, simplifying immigration regulations and procedures, and adopting

mechanisms to monitor compliance to international migration convention, among others. These measures presuppose, however, that the origin country can easily bargain with the destination country and demand mutual concessions on equal footing. They also imply that the state (or at least the people at the helm of government leadership) exercises enough political will to work for the protection of its overseas workers as a national interest. But the documented cases of Filipino workers who are abused and maltreated by their employers in receiving states, as well as the chronic failure of relevant Philippine agencies to intervene in their behalf, offer a stark reality on the gap between the actual and the ideal.

No doubt, however, Tigno deserves a pat for raising an important point which he may not necessarily be the first to observe but expounds on rather persuasively. According to Tigno, the paradox in the region as well as the rest of the world is that while there have been a lot of efforts to open the market for goods and ideas, it is the exact opposite in the case of the free movement of labor. He warns that any effort to solve the migration question from simply a national perspective is doomed to fail.

Sciences Po senior lecturer David Camroux in his paper "Nationalizing a 'Transnational Diaspora?: The Philippine State and Filipino Emigration'" examines the diverse character of the Filipino "diaspora" that underlies the proposition of how overseas migration from the Philippines has become a focal point for national identity. He says it is valid to speak of Filipino diaspora to the extent that it captures new forms of movement. Camroux examines not just the intricacies of the Filipino migration discourse (e.g. how to situate irregular migrants, the Filipino expatriate medical professional, transnational children leading binary lives) but also how the weight of current migration literature is heavily oriented toward the American experience.

But even among the diasporic communities, Camroux says the state plays a role by setting the parameters that "both limit and mobilize their energies." It is difficult not to agree with Camroux's observation that while the Philippine state actively attempts to control outmigration, it does not exert as much effort in managing return migration. If any, this

only shows that Philippine foreign policy when it comes to overseas migration is obviously the export of human resources, not the management of the movements of its nationals.

Camroux argues “transnationalism” as a concept does not quite capture the experience of overseas Filipinos. “Transnationalism” as a concept is limited, he explains, because the Filipino’s sense of belongingness goes beyond hypothetical transnationalism. He suggests instead what he refers to as “binary nationalism” and which allows the individual to be both rooted abroad and at home simultaneously. It should be pointed out, however, that as early as the 1990s, a number of transnational migration scholars have been arguing that migrants remained rooted in their homelands long after they have become part of the countries that serve as their new homes. Migrants and their descendants, scholars have long observed, participate in the social, economic, cultural and political processes that transcend borders although they are physically situated in the countries that received them (see for instance Glick-Schiller et al. *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered*, 1992; Basch et al’s *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*, 1994; *Transnationalism from Below* edited by Michael P. Smith and Luis Guarnizo, 1998; and the Portes et al. article, “The study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field” which appeared in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* in 1999).

Like Camroux, a number of social scientists have also long speculated about the terminological limitation in, say, distinguishing what is global, international and transnational (for instance, Waldinger and Fitzgerald in the article “Transnationalism in Question” which appeared in *American Journal of Sociology* in 2004; Barkan’s “Introduction: Immigration, Incorporation, Assimilation, and the Limits of Transnationalism” published in the *Journal of American Ethnic History* in 2006; and Lucassen’s “Is Transnationalism Compatible with Assimilation? Examples from Western Europe since 1850” published in *IMIS-Beitrag* 29 in 2006) and have proposed solutions ranging from conceptual redefinition to more rigid empirical investigation.

Stephan Rother's "Transnational Political Spaces: Political Activism of Philippine Labor Migrants in Hong Kong," introduces an ongoing research which link transnational political space with good migration governance using migrant organizations in Hong Kong as vector. Rother aims to identify the political aspect of transnational social spaces between the Philippines and Hong Kong and situate it as a form of governance from below. Interestingly, this presupposes that political activism among migrants have been effective, if not instrumental to some extent, in advancing Philippine politics. The paper does not show, however, how exactly migrant organizations have been influential (if at all) in the crafting of state policies for overseas Filipinos. Rother himself admits that migrants are not unified as a political bloc, not to mention the perennial question of legitimacy among the organizations that are supposed to represent them. As this is an ongoing research (at least at the time it was written), Rother is aware of its current limitations and seems to be working to provide a more detailed picture of the actors and the interactions in the transnational political space in both Philippines and Hong Kong. The ultimate findings of his study are definitely something worth looking forward to.

In "Overseas Absentee Voting in the Philippines: A Comparison of the 2004 and 2007 Elections," lawyer Henry S. Rojas contextualizes overseas absentee voting as a means by which the state incorporates Filipino migrants by granting them no less than the right to participate in electoral exercise. He then compares the 2004 and 2007 elections, particularly in terms of the extent of participation by the overseas Filipino community, registration, voter turnout, accessibility, and election integrity. Accordingly, voter turnout in 2004 was a commendable 65%—supposedly a significant achievement considering overseas voting turnout is typically lower anywhere else (citing the author's own study of 17 countries in 2004). Interestingly, however, there were a total of just 359,297 registered absentee voters out of supposedly 7.76 million Filipinos scattered around the world. The number of registered voters almost doubled during the 2007 elections but voter turnout was way, way lower (just 16.22%). Some of the factors mentioned to explain this bizarre outcome include the fact that the 2007 election was not a presidential election, the growing apathy and cynicism of overseas voters, and the inaccessibility of voting centers, among others.

Rojas' paper is insightful but also invites a lot of questions. For instance, given such low voter turnout—the already low overseas voter registration notwithstanding—to what extent then are overseas Filipinos influential in shaping Philippine politics? Do they make a difference? One is also tempted to ask if overseas absentee voting effectively provides voice to the overseas Filipinos as electoral participants and as stakeholders in the national policymaking process, in accordance to legislative intent. Granted, an overseas absentee voting law within a dual citizenship infrastructure is an instrument for incorporating the previously neglected migrant sector into Philippine politics. But then again, this implies that overseas voters are actually, if not substantially determining the course of democratic exercise in the Philippines.

Overall, the compilation offers an insightful and introspective look into the intertwined discourse of Filipino overseas migration and politics. The conjectures raised in the volume may not be entirely new but they nevertheless provide a significant contribution to the widely studied but still empirically impoverished subject of Filipino “diaspora.” ❖

Alicor Pano
*Graduate School of Public Administration
International Christian University*



Yuko Kasuya. 2009. *Presidential Bandwagon: Parties and Party Systems in the Philippines*. Manila: Anvil Publishing Inc. 268 pages.

Political parties are institutions within the political system that provide representation to citizens and serve as instruments through which socio-economic and political concerns are articulated. Political parties are breeding grounds for local and national legislators, local government leaders and aspiring Chief Executives to hone their administrative and negotiation skills before and after elections. Yuko Kasuya's work *Presidential Bandwagon: Parties and Party Systems in the Philippines*

discusses the dynamics within political parties and the manner in which they function amidst the backdrop of the country's distinct political culture and processes. It explores the key relationship between political parties and the executive branch. Kasuya emphasizes that as political parties move towards democratization, their composition and direction change correspondingly. The book provides several perspectives on how the executive determines the character and structure of political parties in relation to the prevailing political landscape as conditioned by public opinion, policy demand and government action.

Kasuya's book is divided into eleven chapters that deal with the dynamics surrounding the Philippine political party system and the Chief Executive. Chapter 1 provides readers with a general overview of the work. Chapter 2 discusses the effects of regime changes in the political system. Kasuya argues that different rules pertaining to elections have led to the fragmentation and volatile character of political parties. The chapter reviews the evolution of political parties from the Commonwealth era, post-World War II, martial law under the Marcos regime up to the restoration of democratic government in the post-Marcos era.

In Chapter 3, Kasuya introduces the presidential bandwagon framework which states that legislative aspirants align themselves with viable presidential candidates. The ability of legislative aspirants to provide patronage is likewise considered by presidential candidates. The framework stresses that the term limits on the President further aggravates weak party-voter ties and that party members can be nominated despite the absence of loyalty to the party. Chapter 4 centers on the prevalence of patronage in Philippine elections. It describes various patronage strategies employed by political parties at the local and national levels.

Chapter 5 focuses on the role played by the President's control of legislative patronage. The chapter highlights the importance of controlling fund allocation to legislators by the President. Such control is manifested through the President's utilization of the release of the legislative pork barrel as a form of bargaining chip to pursue his or her own political interest. Chapter 6 tackles the permeability of party nomination. Kasuya refers to permeability as the probability that a candidate can obtain party nomination by exerting effort. Kasuya argues

that one's party background does not matter in receiving the nomination. If a candidate is deemed to have a high probability of winnability the chances of receiving party nomination increases.

Chapter 7 discusses party affiliation behavior. It tackles situations where political party members choose to stay with the party or transfer to another party. Party affiliation is largely determined by prospects of winning their desired position in government and is anchored on the strength of the party's presidential candidate to win in the elections. Chapter 8 talks about the legislative party system formation and its instability. Kasuya reiterates that the instability of the legislative party system in the post- Marcos era is not rooted in changes in local level functions but rather in changes in the nature of presidential competition.

Chapter 9 discusses the need to understand the conditions of party stability at the presidential level. Kasuya argues that the increase in the number of presidential candidates beyond two relevant candidates, as well as the absence of an incumbent president running in the election, result in political party instability reflected in party splits, creation of new parties and party merger. Chapter 10 reviews the relationship between presidential term limits and party system instability in other countries that underwent democratization. Kasuya claims that the logic of the party system instability found in the Philippine case is also present in other settings and as such can be considered a cross national phenomenon.

In conclusion, Kasuya states that one way of resolving political party instability is to readopt the provision that the President can run for re-election. However, she emphasizes that the book only analyzed one of the consequences among the potentially many effects of term limit variation. Kasuya reiterates that there are many other potentially important consequences that have not been explored, including the accountability and responsiveness of the President, budget politics and executive-legislative relations in the legislative process. She adds that since more countries have become democratic in recent years, there is some urgency to identify what contributes to democratic consolidation.

Kasuya's work offers readers a variety of angles in examining how political parties and the Chief Executive interact in the Philippine context.

The perspectives presented are discussed with strong theoretical grounding, supplemented with adequate qualitative and quantitative data derived from the local and international political system.

I believe that the recommendation to restore the provision that the President can run for re-election would prove to be very contentious as this necessitates redefining the term limits of the President in the Charter. Such a move would be met with considerable opposition from public opinion and civil society. It would also make its proponents unpopular in the public eye as the proponents would be branded as leaders out to perpetuate themselves in public office. The political viability and timing of changing the President's term limits should be discerned carefully. There is a need to evaluate the relevance of the rule as it applies to our present time. Restoring the ability of the incumbent President to seek re-election would not lead to the long term stability of political parties, and the author acknowledges this point. In addressing political party system stability, it is imperative that an overall assessment of the institutional character of Philippine political parties be made.

For them to become responsive political institutions, incremental and long term reforms must be established within political parties in the Philippines. These reforms should be predicated on parties adopting ideologically and issue-based platforms of government as well as developing stronger ties with the electorate through a conscious and sustained effort by party leaders to educate and enlist participation among citizens. By making political parties accessible, citizens would begin to have different mindsets. With their escape from patron-client arrangements, citizens are transformed as partners of political parties. With increased access, citizens would have a better understanding of advocacies forwarded by political parties. More importantly, citizens become better educated in formulating their positions on specific socio-economic and political issues. Thus, over the long term, citizens can become wiser and discerning voters. ❖

Michael G. Antonio
Department of Social Sciences
St. Scholastica's College, Manila

Athena Lydia Casambre. 2010. *Discourses on Cordillera Autonomy*. Baguio: Cordillera Studies Center. 108 pages.

In the book *Discourses on Cordillera Autonomy*, Athena Lydia Casambre resurrects scholarly interest in the study of regional politics in the Cordilleras. She makes an illuminating account of the factors that contributed to the failure of achieving regional autonomy. She does this by providing a comprehensive background of the debate on regional autonomy as well as the relevant political actors involved in the process. She also introduces the concept of frustrated discourse as an interpretation of the engagement among the major players as they demand autonomy.

The book presents a lengthy introduction that details the history of consultations among non-governmental organizations, local politicians and insurgent groups based in the Cordilleras. The author provides a comprehensive analysis of the various inputs advanced by the contending parties as they seek to set the agenda for autonomy. This is followed by a chapter that features a critical analysis of the failure to achieve regional autonomy. It is in this segment where the author makes a significant contribution to the literature through the unmasking of the myth of a regional identity. The notion of a homogenous regional identity has often been peddled by partisans as a strong basis for advancing claims of regional autonomy vis-à-vis the central state.

It is suggested in the book that the lack of unity among the people of the Cordilleras can be traced to the varying meanings that political leaders and social movements attach to autonomy. The adamant subscription of these groups to their respective discourses has resulted in what the author labels as a frustrated discourse. This satisfies the major objective of Casambre's research on the Cordilleras where she had intended to zero in on the points of divergence among the different participants in the debate. The third chapter contains what essentially amounts to a prescription for transforming the Cordillera issue into a more productive discourse. The author suggests that an anthropological rather than an ideologically or politically driven discourse must be attempted. It is clear that actors on the ground have not followed this particular track hence

genuine autonomy seems far-fetched despite significant attempts toward this end in the past.

The strongest part of the book is Casambre's employment of a hermeneutic approach that emphasizes identity-based politics. This allows her to provide a cogent explanation for the failure to attain the goals of regional autonomy. Her understanding of the nuances of discourses of the various parties involved in the autonomy issue is highlighted in the third essay in this book. She criticizes the imposition of alien discourses to the resolution of the Cordillera question. This is reflected in her critical review of the various methods as well as provisions of legislation aimed at granting genuine autonomy to the peoples of the Cordillera. Essentially, she argues that there is incongruence between state intervention and the indigenous cultural norms and practices of the Cordillera communities. Casambre has done a great deal of research on Cordillera matters and she speaks very convincingly of the failure of the central state to understand the anthropological nuances of the Cordillera controversy and utilize such knowledge so that the national government can be seen as a credible broker for aligning the divergent interests of the various groups.

The author is also very critical of the strategies that have been applied by national policymakers. She cites legal provisions like the imposition of land titling as a sign of ignorance at best or at worst as an instrument of elite exploitation by state authorities. She posits that such provisions contained in the proposed Organic Acts creating an autonomous region fail to recognize that the local population there have their own indigenous practices for settling issues of land ownership as well as resource management. She opines that indigenous practices of the Cordilleras emphasize two things: one is the primacy of access to land by the people; and two, the value of equality among the people. She fears that the imposition of land titling will eventually result into the disenfranchisement of the less powerful groups in the Cordilleras. In the end, she pushes for a redirection in the discussion of issues on regional autonomy. For such a productive discourse to emerge, Casambre stresses that priority must be given to a discussion of the more substantial aspects of autonomy before procedural aspects are emphasized.

The book employs a variety of methods for data gathering to substantiate the claims about the salient factional differences within a region that most outsiders view as a homogeneous society. These include research on public documents, key informant interviews, and observation of participants during various forums. It may be assumed that the author's long association with the Cordillera Studies Center based in the University of the Philippines in Baguio has provided her with a spectator's view regarding the evolution of the discourse on Cordillera autonomy. She draws from various forums organized by the UP-based think tank to thresh out the perceptions of the various local actors as they engage not only each other but national based political forces on problems related to a political and administrative arrangement that will satisfy the various groups in the region.

Aside from being rich in detail, *Discourses on Cordillera Autonomy* validates a major approach in identity-based politics that emphasizes the role of relationships among groups and how they use elements of culture to shape such relationships. Such approach puts primacy on the present set of circumstances as having a more formative impact on group identity rather than subscription to more abstract primordial ties.

If there is one weakness in this book, it would be the dearth of attention paid to the discourse emanating from the government. Congressional records both from the House of Representatives and the Senate could have been mined by the author to elucidate on the rationale and plans of the state for achieving a solution to the conflict in the Cordilleras. In spite of this shortcoming, the book succeeds as a work on hermeneutic analysis because Casambre understands this approach primarily because of her specialization in applying qualitative research and analysis. This book provides significant insights to policymakers for understanding the dynamics of regional politics. This can be seen in the author's incisive analysis of the various themes that had emerged from the debate on Cordillera autonomy. Casambre differentiates between the levels of politicization that had impinged upon state initiatives to resolve the Cordillera question. She points out that there are significant demands for autonomy as opposed to an observed depoliticized significance of regionalization. The author is clearly a scholar who can

Speak with authority on the issue of Cordillera autonomy and it behooves policymakers and academics interested in matters of political devolution and administrative decentralization to read her account. ❖

Raymund John P. Rosuelo
University of Makati



Marites Dañguilan Vitug. 2010. *Shadow of Doubt: Probing the Supreme Court*. Manila: Public Trust Media Group. 268 pages.

In one of the most controversial books published in the Philippines in 2010, Marites Vitug, editor-in-chief of *Newsbreak*, takes her readers into the inner depths of the Supreme Court of the Philippines. The book caused a stir as the original publisher backed out of the potentially litigious task of publishing the book so, *Newsbreak* publishers had to do it themselves. Vitug's interest in the Supreme Court stemmed in part from curiosity of its men and women who serve in what is called the country's "last bulwark of democracy."

The book is divided into five main parts: the prologue, part one with three chapters, part two with two chapters, part three with four chapters and an epilogue. The book also contains a list of the justices of the Supreme Court and chapter references.

Chapter one titled "Parting the Curtains" explains how the Supreme Court operates and discusses its traditions and functions. Vitug starts with a story of the retirement of one of the justices of the Supreme Court which serves as an instructive point: one of the few times that the justices and the Supreme Court itself are open to the public is during the retirement and reception for the retiree. She explains some of the traditions which suffuse the Court's actions and manner of operations. This chapter explains in detail the point of the book: the Supreme Court is an institution that is not easily transparent and with a culture dominated by secrecy.

speaking with authority on the issue of Cordillera autonomy and it behooves policymakers and academics interested in matters of political devolution and administrative decentralization to read her account. ❖

Raymund John P. Rosuelo
University of Makati



Marites Dañguilan Vitug. 2010. *Shadow of Doubt: Probing the Supreme Court*. Manila: Public Trust Media Group. 268 pages.

In one of the most controversial books published in the Philippines in 2010, Marites Vitug, editor-in-chief of *Newsbreak*, takes her readers into the inner depths of the Supreme Court of the Philippines. The book caused a stir as the original publisher backed out of the potentially litigious task of publishing the book so, *Newsbreak* publishers had to do it themselves. Vitug's interest in the Supreme Court stemmed in part from curiosity of its men and women who serve in what is called the country's "last bulwark of democracy."

The book is divided into five main parts: the prologue, part one with three chapters, part two with two chapters, part three with four chapters and an epilogue. The book also contains a list of the justices of the Supreme Court and chapter references.

Chapter one titled "Parting the Curtains" explains how the Supreme Court operates and discusses its traditions and functions. Vitug starts with a story of the retirement of one of the justices of the Supreme Court which serves as an instructive point: one of the few times that the justices and the Supreme Court itself are open to the public is during the retirement and reception for the retiree. She explains some of the traditions which suffuse the Court's actions and manner of operations. This chapter explains in detail the point of the book: the Supreme Court is an institution that is not easily transparent and with a culture dominated by secrecy.

Chapter two tells the tale of two clashes between the President and the Supreme Court. The author compares the conflict between President Diosdado Macapagal and the Supreme Court of his time with that of his daughter, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the Supreme Court of her time. The major difference between the two conflicts is that the conflict of the father with the Supreme Court was public, confrontational and involved the prestige of the Office of the President. The daughter, on the other hand, while being blocked by the Supreme Court on some of her extra-legal actions sought to subvert and influence it away from the glimpse of the public eye. The chapter also discusses the Supreme Court's role in the downfall of President Estrada and presents in detail how the former's indecision put in power one of the most unpopular presidents in Philippine history.

The third chapter delves into the struggle between the Supreme Court and the House of Representatives due to the former's inability to account for the Judicial Development Fund, which was the Supreme Court's means to augment its budget. The Supreme Court's disorderly accounting system and its haphazard handling of public monies sooner or later would make it a target for calls for accountability. In this chapter, Vitug details the events which almost led to a constitutional crisis because neophyte congressmen sought to impeach Chief Justice Hilario Davide due to the inability of the Supreme Court to explain how it allocates and accounts for its funds. Vitug lays the root cause of the crisis on the Supreme Court's doors owing to the absence of scrutiny and transparency, which she calls the Court's original sins.

Chapter four describes Macapagal-Arroyo's efforts to pack the Supreme Court with loyal allies. It also gives a detailed understanding of the process of the selection, nomination and appointment of the justices. Vitug further explores the links of the justices to persons of political influence as well as the attempts of the latter to influence judicial appointments. Vitug also writes about the appointment stories of several current justices which show the interplay of qualifications, merit and fitness with political connections and powerbrokers.

Chapter five, the shortest chapter, contains selected cases where the Supreme Court flip-flopped on several important issues. These flip-flops, in Vitug's view, are due to some of the justices' failure to study the cases before them because of lack of time or plain neglect. The justices' inability to look deeper into the cases before them leaves the *ponente* or the decision writer great leeway in writing the decisions. Thus, in major instances, the Supreme Court reverses itself even when it has made final decisions on the same cases. The chapter is very revealing of the habits of some justices in interpreting what the Constitution says.

Chapter six is a case study of Chief Justice Reynato Puno, whom Vitug dubs as "the Chameleon." Vitug peels away the many layers surrounding Puno to reveal a man who, with his seemingly gentle demeanor sought to become the leader of the "moral force" that will change Philippine politics. He is revealed to be a complex character brimming with political ambition. Vitug showed that Puno was inconsistent with his judicial philosophy because he was shifting from one position to another. While Puno seemingly championed human rights by introducing the writ of *amparo* and promoting free speech, he was strangely silent when the notorious Presidential Proclamation 1017 that declared a state of emergency in the country was issued by Macapagal-Arroyo. He is a chameleon according to Vitug because he is able to blend into the different political environments that he enters where people see what they want to see in him.

Chapter seven continues the search into Puno's life as Chief Justice. Here, Vitug acquaints her readers on how Puno saw no inconsistency in joining prayer meetings and worship services with his duties as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court who shall not favor by reason of creed, one party over another in his decisions. These worship services also allowed Puno to be visible to the public and the leaders of these groups were actually urging him to consider running in the 2010 elections. In Vitug's view, Puno's dabbling into matters political was an attempt to look for a bigger podium than the Supreme Court: the Presidency of the Philippines.

Chapter eight looks into the competition and rivalry for the position of Chief Justice when Puno retires. Vitug profiles the two leading

contenders, Justices Antonio Carpio and Renato Corona, and gives the readers their political backgrounds and connections. At the same time, she also evaluates personalities and actions of the two so as to allow the readers insight into the possible judicial conduct of the two if they become Chief Justice. Vitug's apparent guess that Renato Corona, who was more malleable and supportive of the Macapagal-Arroyo Administration, would probably be chosen over the more fiery and independent Carpio eventually became true.

Chapter nine details what Vitug calls the "lost momentum" for reforms in the judiciary. While reform programs started under Chief Justice Davide, it seemed Chief Justice Puno was selective on what programs to continue. The Supreme Court also suffers from a "supreme" backlog in the number of cases to be resolved by the justices. While the justices always admonish and discipline lower court judges who fail to dispose of their cases, the former are lenient among themselves and do not, as a matter of policy reveal the caseloads of justices. Vitug points to leadership as the major factor in this loss of momentum.

In her epilogue, Vitug writes of more cases of judicial politicking and how the justices will navigate them. She concludes that one cannot only judge the justices on their rhetoric and prose but also from the lives they lead and the actions they take. In the end, a vigilant public will be the true "last bulwark" of democracy when the Supreme Court, in efforts to protect its mystique, chooses secrecy over transparency.

Vitug's book is the first major attempt by a non-lawyer to look into the workings of the Supreme Court. While the judiciary was seen as the province of legal scholars and lawyers, Vitug's insights shatters the myth that only they can understand how the Courts work. Vitug's inquisitiveness has put into an accessible volume, a guide to understanding the way the Supreme Court operates and the personalities that shape it. Even the institutional and political contexts are explored relentlessly by Vitug.

Vitug breaks major ground in studying an institution which has been neglected by political scientists. She reminds her readers that the

depoliticization of the Supreme Court is ultimately impossible. The accountability of every institution is the essence of democracy. Politics as the study of the processes and institutions, in which people make, impose and amend rules that govern them, should not be lost when examining the Supreme Court's role in Philippine politics and society.

The book's main weakness is the lack of notes on interviews, information and data sources. For a book this controversial, Vitug should have meticulously put endnotes when she attributes and quotes statements from persons and documents. Even if these notes have nothing but "anonymous interview" in them, it would have at least confirmed to other scholars that Vitug's sources can be traced and the research that she has done can be replicated. It would have also saved her a lot of controversy. Vitug also has the tendency to mix her observations with the facts when she could have first detailed the facts she is examining and then put her observations afterwards. Vitug writes for a general audience and scholars and researchers might somewhat find it odd that Vitug does not formally follow the canons and rules of research reports. As it is, the book is a journalist's look into the Supreme Court and should be taken as such.

What this book offers is a demystification of the Supreme Court and its pretensions as the ultimate bulwark of democracy. Vitug challenges her readers to explore further why a group of unelected men and women should be given a free pass when they commit misdeeds or abuse the privileges, which membership in the Supreme Court gives them, while their elected representatives are always criticized and shamed when they commit the same.

This book should challenge political scientists to look into one of the most secretive institutions in the Philippines and remove its self-imposed mystique. It is recommended reading for students of Philippine public administration, politics and governments both in the undergraduate and graduate levels for its level of detail and seminal importance. Scholars, policymakers and civil society should also take heed of the lessons provided by the book especially on transparency and accountability and

their equal application to every political institution in this country. Vitug has done her country a lot of favor. A true consolidation of democracy in this country would mean that every institution wielding power over the people should never be spared from examination and critique. ♦

Julio S. Amador III
Foreign Service Institute
Department of Foreign Affairs