

Bureaucrat capitalism, corruption and crime under Duterte and Marcos

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The conflict between the rival Marcos and Duterte reactionary cliques, both stark representatives of the corrupt and criminal ruling classes, has become increasingly hostile and is rapidly intensifying. The conflict has arisen from the Marcos clique's relentless pursuit to monopolize political power, even as the Duterte clique aims to shore up and preserve its old political power. These contradictions are intensifying with the approach of the 2025 midterm elections.

The following are key events that form part of the unfolding political situation:

- a) For more than ten days, the Marcos regime amassed several thousand police and military forces in Davao City. They besieged the private quasi-religious compound of Duterte stooge and dummy Apollo Quiboloy to carry out his arrest and make him face charges of human trafficking, sexual exploitation and child abuse. Duterte and his cohorts, including his daughter Vice President Sara Duterte, and senators Bato dela Rosa, Bong Go and Robin Padilla, deliberately misled the police and attempted to shield Quiboloy from arrest.
- b) Earlier, the Marcos regime also extradited and arrested Alice Guo, former mayor of Bambang, Tarlac. She fled to Indonesia to avoid testifying before the Senate where she is being depicted as part of the web of operations of Chinese criminal syndicates in the Philippines. The Marcos regime is trying to accommodate Guo in order to have her reveal the operations of the Chinese mafia and its links to the Duterte clique.
- c) Sara Duterte, who resigned last June as education secretary, displayed

outright belligerence when she faced the House Committee on Appropriations. She fended off questions regarding her questionable use of hundreds of millions of pesos in "intelligence funds." She now faces the prospects of being impeached from office. She refused to appear the second time to apparently provoke the Marcos-dominated Congress into slashing her budget.

d) The so-called Quad committee of the House of Representatives has been investigating in the past weeks the wave of killings during the "war on drugs" under the Duterte regime. Some former Duterte officials have given testimonies that point to Duterte and his closest cohorts as directly responsible for the extrajudicial killings.

These events show that the contradictions between the Marcos and Duterte cliques are quickly coming to a head. It remains to be seen whether this will culminate in Marcos allowing the arrest of Duterte to face trial before the International Criminal Court where he is charged with crimes against humanity. If anything, the massive police and military operations against Quiboloy are an indication of the extent to which the Marcos ruling clique is ready to employ armed strength to crush the political machinery of its opponents. Of course, the Duterte clique will not stand for this, and will likely mobilize all possible resources to defend its political and economic interests.

At any rate, there remains the prospect of this inter-factional conflict leading to an eruption of armed violence that could potentially rock the stability of the ruling Marcos regime, or lead to its further consolidation and monopolization of political power. The consolidation of the Marcos ruling clique, on the other hand, is bound to give rise to new contradictions among the different factions of the ruling classes, as well as among the rival bureaucrat capitalist interests within the Marcos ruling clique. Even now, the US imperialists are busy preparing their reserve horses of political groupings composed of former military officers and anticommunist groups, that are using the slogan of "clean governance" with the view of replacing the Marcos clique in 2028.

Whatever the case, the situation is indicative of the continuing crisis of the

ruling system which is thoroughly exposing itself as moribund and rotten to the core, led by bureaucrat capitalists mired in corruption and crime.

The crisis of the ruling system continues to bring great suffering to the majority of the Filipino people. Even as they demand that Duterte and his cohorts be prosecuted and punished for all their crimes, they are fully aware that the system under Marcos is basically unchanged, except for the faces of the people that presently hold the reins of power, whose bureaucrat capitalist avarice knows no bounds.

In the face of unprecedented scale of corruption, accelerated crumbling of social services, rising prices, rapid deterioration of people's living standards, and even worse forms of US-supported fascist barbarities, the people's struggle for national democracy has become even more crucial and urgent.

Crime and corruption under the Duterte regime

The ongoing congressional and senate investigations and exposés are baring the extreme rottenness of the ruling system. Beyond the grandstanding of attention-seeking and power-tripping politicians and clowns, these hearings have helped expose how bureaucrat capitalism and criminal activities have melded, and how the reactionaries in power amass large sums of money from illegal drug trade and other nefarious operations.

With both the Senate and House of Representatives dominated by Marcos' minions and sycophants, the hearings have been directed at exposing the direct involvement of Duterte and his cohorts in the extrajudicial killings of tens of thousands committed by police and criminal elements during his regime's sham drug war. These hearings are also exposing his links to overseas criminal syndicates involved in the so-called "POGO" operations, which saw an explosion during the time that Duterte was in Malacañang.

The information that are now being publicly bared confirm what the Filipino people have long held: that Duterte's so-called drug war was a sham and that his anti-drug rhetoric was a hoax to establish himself as the drug megalord. During his time, Duterte employed the police and military to stop

the operations of local drug manufacturers to monopolize the supply of drugs, favor drug lords who knelt before him and paid for his protection, and punish those who refuse. He used his sham war on drugs for politics by linking political rivals to drugs to make them targets of assassinations, and used politics to expand his criminal empire.

Duterte and his cohorts have been in collusion with Chinese criminal syndicates who also controlled a network of "gaming operations," which served as fronts for online scamming, prostitution and other nefarious activities. These illegal operations inside the "POGO hubs" thrived under Duterte's protection. These criminal syndicates are intertwined with big business operations involved in land grabbing, human trafficking and slave labor, smuggling, illegal mining, land reclamation and others. They benefited from government contracts which covered them with the mantle of legitimacy.

Confirmatory information has come to light pointing to the direct personal culpability of Rodrigo Duterte and his cohorts to the killing spree and other crimes. These strengthen the Filipino people's conviction to hold Duterte, as well as former police chief Bato dela Rosa, Bong Go and other cohorts, accountable for the innumerable crimes under their rule. These crimes were perpetrated during the course of his sham drug war, as well as in the anticommunist campaign of political repression against the patriotic and democratic mass movement, and the counterrevolutionary war of suppression.

Crime and corruption under the Marcos regime

The Marcos regime, installed through a manufactured "landslide victory" in the 2022 elections, is the biggest byproduct of Duterte's criminal and bureaucrat-capitalist enterprise. The Marcos-Duterte "uni-team" in 2022 was a hoax, just as the sham drug war was. The façade of unity, however, crumbled just after a year because the greed for wealth and power of both sides is boundless and cannot be equally satisfied amid the crisis of the ruling system and the decreasing resources for sharing.

Since the second half of 2023, the Marcos and Duterte cliques have

become increasingly hostile toward one another. Duterte demanded preservation of his military and political influence, economic interests and criminal operations, while Marcos pushed to consolidate, expand and monopolize political and economic power. With his influence and power quickly eroding, Duterte resorted to open antagonism and mobilized resources in an attempt to organize coups and uprisings.

Key military and police officers of Duterte were appointed by Marcos to important government posts, but would later be booted out and replaced with Marcos allies and loyalists. Marcos pretended to accommodate Duterte's daughter, Vice President Sara Duterte, appointing her as secretary of the Department of Education (although her original demand was to head the Department of Defense), and providing with hundreds of millions of pesos of "confidential funds" both as vice president and education secretary.

In the face of public censure of Duterte's sham war on drugs, Marcos distanced himself by claiming that his regime's war on drugs is "bloodless." In fact, the number of people being killed by police and vigilantes continues to rise, according to news monitors. Marcos has mobilized his men to take over the illegal drug trade in the Philippines, which has slowly shifted from one international cartel to another, from the Chinese drug syndicate to the US-Mexico Sinaloa drug cartel, with smuggling going through the Clark Air Base.

Upon assuming power, Marcos secured US support by allowing the expansion of its military presence, increase its military bases, and fortify the Philippines as a stronghold in its strategic plan to "contain" China's economic and military influence. Following US aims, Marcos cancelled China-funded government contracts for infrastructure projects including the ₱142 billion South Long-Haul railway project, the ₱82-billion Mindanao railway project, and the ₱51-billion Subic-Clark railway project, all of which Duterte contracted with promises of large amounts of kickbacks. Marcos has been assured by the Japanese Import-Export Bank and World Bank to finance those projects with the prospect of pocketing the kickbacks for himself.

Corruption under the Marcos regime has worsened with Marcos controlling several billions of pesos of "confidential and intelligence funds" which are not publicly audited, and other "unprogrammed funds." Last year, Marcos spent at least 1 billion pesos for overseas trips, jet-setting from one country to another on the pretext of "inviting foreign investors." Amid widespread poverty and hunger, Marcos and his family are living lavish lifestyles, spending hundreds of millions of pesos in private parties and concerts. He has his hands on the ₱550-billion Maharlika Investment Fund which he uses to favor business friends in exchange for political favors. Government contracts go to Marcos cronies such as Ramon Ang, Enrique Razon, the Aboitizes, the Villars and others, who rake in billions of pesos from so-called public-private partnerships.

One after another, five major criminal cases involving at least ₱202.1 billion against the Marcoses arising from plunder and accumulation of illegal wealth under the 1972-1986 Marcos dictatorship have been dismissed since 2022 (the recent decision of the Supreme Court declaring the 57-hectare Paoay estate in Laoag to be ill-gotten pales in comparison).

Bureaucrat capitalism brings untold sufferings to the Filipino people

The reactionary government of the ruling classes of big bourgeois compradors and big landlords is run by bureaucrat capitalists who use the vast powers of the state to serve the interests of their imperialist masters, their class interests, in general, and the economic and political interests of the ruling faction, and their dynastic, familial or personal interests, in particular.

These bureaucrats, especially high-level government officials, are capitalists because they run the state as a profit-making enterprise, or use the state to make vast amounts of profit for their businesses. They get kickbacks from government contracts or bribe money for favors or protection of illegal activities. The worst of these bureaucrat capitalists plunder hundreds of millions or billions of pesos and stash the money into their overseas bank accounts or other forms of assets. Big bourgeois compradors and big landlords have become bureaucrat capitalists

themselves, deftly using executive power or legislation to favor the expansion of their economic empires.

Especially since 1986, the reactionaries have come up with more and more political parties reflecting their fractionalization, often, with the dominant or ruling clique organizing a new one. From the old Nacionalista Party and Liberal Party, they organized such parties as the PDP-Laban, the People Power Party, Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino, Lakas-CMD, and now the Partido Federal and so on. These ruling classes are essentially no different from one another.

These parties all stand on the common ground of subservience to foreign economic and military powers, economic policies of liberalization, privatization and deregulation and maintaining the façade of democracy, but go after each other's throats, in trying to get a bigger slice of the bureaucrat capitalist pie. Reactionary politicians jump from one party affiliation to another, with the ease of changing shirts. As the popular Estrada quip goes, "weather, weather lang."

The broad masses of the Filipino people are oppressed under the bureaucrat capitalist state. They are overburdened with onerous taxes and innumerable fees and impositions, but do not get enough in terms of state-provided health care, free education, free public housing, or subsidies for production, unemployment, public utilities and other public services. These are instead privatized, commercialized and operated for profit, making people pay twice over, or denying them access to such essential utilities and services.

The big bureaucrat capitalists indulge in luxury in complete disregard of poverty and hunger that surround them. They depict themselves as serving the poor by handing out grocery bags during calamities or during elections, completely ignoring the glaring roots of the people's suffering, and obscuring the fact that they themselves are responsible for the calamities besetting the masses.

Just outside their gated subdivisions, the vast majority of the Filipino people suffer grave hunger and hardships, while even more, live precariously on the threshold of poverty. They suffer from landlessness, grossly low wages,

lack of income, widespread joblessness, economic dispossession, rising prices of goods and services. The living standards of the broad masses of workers, peasants, semiproletariat, the pettybourgeoisie are rapidly deteriorating, while the ruling classes and the bureaucrat capitalists accumulate more and more wealth.

When people organize and fight for their rights and well-being, the bureaucrat capitalists employ the coercive instruments of the state to carry out political repression and fascist suppression. Bureaucrat capitalism is the social and economic basis of fascism. State military and police forces direct their guns against the people and, without hesitation, pull the trigger against those who stand up and fight back. Military and police officers are themselves bureaucrat capitalists who line their pockets with money mulcted from the people.

The Marcos regime is presently the most concentrated expression of the bureaucrat capitalist, fascist and neocolonial state. The worsening forms of oppression and exploitation and the grave socioeconomic conditions under the Marcos regime underscore the necessity and urgency of the Filipino people's fight to end imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism, and put an end to the semicolonial and semifeudal system.

Acutely aware that there is no future under the current rotten system, the democratic, progressive and revolutionary forces of the Filipino people are ever determined to resist with all their might. The broad masses of the Filipino people must be aroused, organized and mobilized to struggle for national democracy. A broad united front must be built to rally all anti-fascist and democratic forces to expose, isolate and fight the US-Marcos regime and its counter-revolutionary hangers-on. The national democratic forces are the solid and determined core and vanguard of the anti-fascist united front.

No amount of fascist repression can crush the Filipino people's ardor to fight back against their oppressors and exploiters. They must continue to strengthen their organized strength and wage all forms of mass resistance from strikes to mass demonstrations. They must carry out revolutionary action, principally by waging armed struggle in the form of protracted people's war, with the strategic aim of seizing political power and establishing the democratic people's government.