

DISCUSSION

Discussants: Dr. Eva Duka Ventura

Department of Political Science
University of the Philippines

Ms. Shirley Advincula
Chairman, Dept. of Political Science
Ateneo de Manila University

Moderator: Dr. Romualdo B. Tadena

Executive Administrator
Philippine Center for Advanced Studies
University of the Philippines

Dr. Romualdo B. Tadena: Well, that was great. But I think we don't have time to catch up with my fellow elite. Could I call on another member of the elite, Ms. Shirley Advincula, to give the commentary on Compañero Atty. Llames' paper.

Ms. Shirley Advincula: With due respect to Dr. Tadena, I refuse absolutely to accept that label—being an elite. As I said yesterday, I consider myself a Waray even if I haven't been here for I don't know how many years. Well, anyway, I have read Atty. Llames' paper and I have made some comments that might be reduced to just a few series of questions. Atty. Llames has adequately described the role of the elite and the characteristic features of elite and indicators of elite-dominance universally applicable to all societies, I believe. Consequently, I feel that probably it would have been better if we had focused on Region VIII like showing concrete examples of, let's say, elite-dominance. For example, I would have wanted him to identify the elite, the so-called elite in this region. That may be a delicate subject, a taboo. But, it would help, I think, if we could objectively cite or identify these elites and divide them into specific categories. How does the elite constitute one single monolithic block here? Or can't they be divided into various categories? For example, can the economic elite be separate from the political elite? I also wonder if there has been any change in the composition of the elite say from 1900 or going far back, or more recently, probably from 1946. I'm interested in that—my family stayed here up to 1946—and I do have some vague perceptions of who constituted the elite at that time. I have a feeling, however, that the elite that I consider as having existed then has changed in composition. I know that several families have moved away from Tacloban and have been followed by new families. Now, of course, I speak of the Romualdezes as constituting the elite. They have been here. But I wonder if you might have considered them politically influential as far back as 1946. So these are some of the questions that I ask.

I like a specific illustration of elite dominance. In what specific ways, for

example, can the elite prove to be a stumbling block to development in this area? Have they consciously or unconsciously or deliberately attempted to preserve or maintain their present position to prevent new ones from coming in? Again going back to changing composition, I am interested here because Mr. Llames has said that the elite, being "high" up there, can't possibly relate to the masses. If there have been changes in the composition of the elite, I am sure that what that elite is now couldn't have been what an elite was before. So I don't think that they are incapable of relating to the masses. Surely if they have come from the masses, then they could be sympathetic to the masses and cannot possibly be completely unsympathetic or unaware of their plight. These are some of the questions I wanted to be answered. That's all. Thank you.

Tadena: May we call on Dr. Ventura, an intellectual elite from the Republic of Diliman.

Dr. Ventura: One of the joys of the teachers is in their pleasant catching up with the past. After not knowing where your former students have gone to, you suddenly find them back as members of the regional elite like Major Zamora over there and Mr. Llames. But I would really like very much to give a few points on the paper. I do feel that it is a very good paper. On the whole it is a scholarly work. And insofar as it has given all the prescription and all the resultant framework in this particular approach to the study of development, you can have this as an example to be pursued later on. But this is, in fact, where the weakness of the paper lies, that it is a very important paper insofar as it provides the theoretical underpinnings for students of development. However, as has been pointed out by Miss Advincula, we have greater expectations of the paper if only for its title alone: "The Role of the Elite in Developing Society" with special respect to Region VIII.

I agree with Miss Advincula that we have great expectations of the identification of what the elites have done or not done in the progress or non-progress of this region. There's another point that I noticed about the other aspect of development vis-à-vis modernization. I feel that in the attempt of the paper to differentiate one form from the other, there has been a setback in such aspects as cultural, social, psychological, and political development, with its interpretation of modernization focusing on the economic aspect. But again as I pointed out here, this may not be because of the intended neglect but simply because of a need for focus or limitation of the area of discussion.

If we are to have, therefore, a sincere suggestion that can be looked into, I would make several. The first one has already been mentioned: the identification of the elite, who, where, what, and how; are they anti-or pro-development as citizens. I feel that this is a basic paper from which you could take off and go into quite a lot of aspects of developmental examination as to the goals of the elite, where they will lead to if we can so far see the trend, given the time and the wherewithal in getting the empirical

data for this. The fact therefore that there was no empirical data to support the shape or structure of underdevelopment sphere in the region, except those very basic statistics on the population, the family income, and so forth, is a clue to the project that you probably could go into later on. The paper therefore is much more prescriptive in nature, rather than analytical. But on the whole, I don't feel that this is a paper which is suggestive of the other work that needs to be done. It's quite a tremendous work as far as the said areas are concerned.

Tadena: Okay, so having heard our two discussants give their reaction to the paper of the Compañero Atty. Llames, I have agreed with him that perhaps it would be a good idea to begin interaction from the floor and then we would give him about ten minutes to answer all the comments raised. In that way, we will be able to get a broader reaction from the participants of this workshop because I suspect that the reactions would be many and varied, and perhaps in the process of getting these reactions, we might be helping our government to subject a clue as to the empirical data to be used in further studies which Dr. Ventura has suggested. Any question from the floor please?

Ms. Corazon Maye: (Graduate Student, UPCT): Well, I would like to make a little disagreement with the speaker when he called the teachers the elite in the region. For one thing, the teachers may be the intellectual elite but not elite in the way you made us understand its meaning.

This is my question to the speaker in his capacity as Assistant Regional Director of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform. The agrarian reform program is designed to uplift the members of the agricultural sector from poverty and stagnation, and to make them dignified, responsible, and useful partners in nation-building. Among the oppressed or the exploited group in the agricultural sector are the farmers in sugarland—I mean, the tenants in sugarland. They are not only experiencing the old kind of poverty which is characterized by the lack of food, clothing, and shelter but they are also regressing to absolute state of poverty because as their elite benefactors live in luxury these tenant-farmers' poverty becomes more acute. What has the agrarian reform program or the Ministry of Agrarian Reform done to lift the tenants in sugarland to the level of decent living and make their existence more meaningful to them?

Tadena: May we hear from the gentleman over there?

Mr. Lysonger Padilla: (Faculty Member, U.P. College Tacloban): *May dalawang tanong ako na bale* request for commentary or elaboration. *Ang una po ay*, in relation to what O.D. Corpuz had said then in his attempt to define development. *Maaaring mali ang aking pagkakaintindi, pero ganito ang nais kong sabihin. Sinabi niya na ano daw ang mas tamang right: ang right of a few elite to preserve and pursue their political liberties, or the greater right of the Filipino masses to a decent standard of living—'yong food, clothing, and shelter. Bale ba nakikita ko sa statement na ito parang*

pino-postulate *niya ang* dichotomy between political liberties and economic development. *Ang tanong ko ay ganito: Dapat bang maging ganito o tama ba ang* perception *na* we have to sacrifice or accept the hypothesized opportunity-cost relationship between economic benefits of development and our preservation of traditional political liberty? *Ang ikalawang tanong ay* related *din sa* topic which was brought up by Miss Advincula, 'yong categorization *ng* elite *at* a large aggregate which within group variations are not recognized. *Halimbawa, palagay ko dapat may* distinction between the economic elite and the intellectual elite *sapagkat ang tunay na elite ay 'yong class na may kontrol sa* mode of production *ng* society. *Kung ii-include natin ang sinasabing intellectual elite, we might be closing our minds to the potential of development that this elite portends. For example, ang* intellectual elite *ng Pamantasan ng Pilipinas* are pro-development and for this are willing to sacrifice the traditional economic benefits. This, I do not think, would be the case for the traditional economic elite. *Iyon lamang po.*

Tadena: Dr. Sicat?

L. Makasiar Sicat: The two discussants have brought out the point that is indicated. Now I'll ask to proceed in terms of the identification of the elite, particularly in Region VIII, for I have another "bone to pick" with the paper reader although I hope that this will be considered only a "tiny bone" to pick. And that has to do with the definition of the word "elite" itself. I take it that the author, the paper reader, adopted the definition of the elite given by Lasswell. From my own personal point of view, this definition tends to be rather deficient and rather circumscribed because it describes only what the elite gets; anything which they can possibly give in terms of, say, influence, devoting or investing some time to the affairs of the lowly, etc., is overlooked. I'm afraid too much of a one-to-one correspondence has been made between professional growth and the elite. My question is: What makes a person become eligible to be called a member of the elite versus the rest who would simply be "masses." I don't think that simple possession of wealth would be enough to elevate somebody to that category because, after all, one need not be a "have." Anyone could also be an opinion leader even if he is a "have not." Even ethnic minorities, I would say, would have their own elite component. For these reasons then, I think it might be possible to answer the question of whether there is an elite in Region VIII to speak of, to pinpoint who they are, what they do and what they have failed to do so far.

Thank you.

Tadena: By the way, I am sure that there are some members or participants of this workshop that have questions to ask. Now would it be possible for you to write on a piece of paper your question? We can read them and of course, you can also identify who the person asking the

question is because it might be possible that some questions may be repeated. If you could do that, then I'll just call on one young gentleman here in front.

Mr. Rolando Modina (Student, U.P. College Tacloban): Atty. Llamas' prescription for development in our country, as well as in Region VIII, is very bright. The sincerity of his intention and commitment to the upliftment of the Filipino poor is obvious to the point that he has decided to free himself from the fear that critics might call him an idealist. The endorsement made for the realization of development along the establishment of a new humanism citing Marcos and Pope Paul VI, respectively, are radical. These specific ideals I believe are geared to the progressive ideologues of the Third World. The strategy for the effecting of liberation, emancipation, development, etc., however is highly questionable and controversial. It carries with it contradictions, principally the advocated theoretical process suggested by the paper vis-à-vis the socioeconomic reality of the subject nations. The paper lamented foreign indebtedness, calling it a symptom of dependence on the First World. This, according to him, would result to unintentional neocolonialism. At one look, the idea appears logical but there is something into it. And it is very important. The "unintentional" as an adjective to neocolonialism. I don't agree with that. Colonialism and domination are implementations of plans previously designed by expansionist-oriented people, most specifically the financial and political elite of those people. The act is a connivance and surely *intentional*. As colonialism develops, the elite are recruited to the colonized country by membership or participation in the colonialist exercise. The recruited elite adopt the color and value of their foreign partners in the process. There seems to be no destruction as this occurs. However, the agents of the connivance remain unless a total revamp of the ideological commitment on the members occur. We have the issue of foreign indebtedness of a nation which is a subject of connivance. With the connivance all too clear, answers to queries of development can only but easily be provided. It depends, however, on the analyst's ability to view the situation in a broader scope, and of course again, on the ideological belief and commitment. The standing foreign debt of our country this year is more than \$6.4 billion, in peso value, that would amount to more than ₱47 billion. Billions more than the national budget, this is a result of that slogan "Development through foreign borrowing," presumably the motto of our development agents. Even before the conclusion of every credit agreement, the imitators of the borrowing activity are conscious of the consequences of the act. It is not the elite who will shoulder the total effect of this massive foreign borrowing but the ordinary and the poor taxpayers who, of course, comprise the great majority of the population. To reinforce this stand, I would not have to cite the revelation of one of the participants of this conference, the representative of the Samar Integrated Rural Development Project concerning the sponsors of the said project, which is the World Bank and the Australian

Government. He spoke of millions, or is it billions? That's a lot of money. But, of course, the project is primarily concerned with the peace and order in the area. It seeks to counterpoint the disturbances of the equilibrium in Region VIII. Nevertheless, the importance of the project can never deny the existence of the borrowing activity.

Atty. Llames called for the elite to act in a "group-purpose approach manner" to purge the colonial bias of our value system. Now I ask: How can we purge the colonial values when the state of things of which we are a part are still and have ever been and, I think, will ever be as a regular recipient of the colonial influence and culture? The presence of the multinational corporations and the presence of the foreign-sponsored educational institutes like the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), and the EPZ, representing the fragmented technology in Mariveles, Bataan guarantee that the colonial bias must remain. We cannot prevent the activities of these entities from influencing our culture and value systems, likes and dislikes, patterns of consumption, etc., not to mention our eco-political orientation. The elite cannot take the role of purging the colonial bias. It is also clear that the elites are the principal displayers of these colonial lines of thoughts. In the process of decision-making, they carry with them these colonial lines of thought and all those sophisticated managerial techniques originated mostly by American administrators, notably McNamara and company.

Finally, I would like to comment on the issue of mass support and participation of the masses with the elite in the development activities. The question is: How can the elite attract sincere support and participation with all those anti-labor laws, civil rights denial, unfair minimum wage, etc.? On the question of minimum wage, we all know that one-peso increase on the ten-peso minimum wage is going to be effected. What can eleven pesos do vis-à-vis the high prices of commodities? Of course, Minister of Planning Sicat explained that more increase in the minimum wage would discourage the speedy and fast arrival of new, foreign investments. The message is clear. Labor must sacrifice. But for how long? A study conducted by the NEDA and the Development Academy of the Philippines found out that the ordinary Filipino worker needs ₱45 as minimum wage to support the basic needs of his family nowadays. Subsequently, the Bishops' conference found out that he needs ₱54 in order to continue living. But what happened to these bright suggestions? I don't know. I think that the increasing income gap between the elite and the masses escalates the tension integral to the conflicting values of these antithetical groups. And the dangerous result of this, the ending of the conflicting orientation, will provide the basis of the guide in the construction of new intentions by the resultant maintenance of the new equilibrium.

Salamat po.

Tadena: The question and the ideological issues have joined as you heard from the discussant. I request that anybody who would like to ask a question be succinct and clearer because you might be, in the process of

our discussion, asked to give commentaries while other participants give their own opinions.

Josefino Naval (Student, U.P. College Tacloban): I will not be long like Mr. Modina. I'd like to make first this comment on Atty. Llamas' paper: that it presents some contradictions. First, he wants us all to be involved in development. But, he also presented the contradiction that the elite will submit to that. And somehow, he made some statements that the elite somehow will be made to realize to play an important role in the development. But this is questionable. In the first place, the elite especially are influencing the whole process already. Now the elite is also influencing education. In fact, education has been the instrument of the elite to perpetuate injustice, oppression, and poverty. And we could see somehow that even the UP System, founded by the people's money presents its own contradictions. More rich people are admitted to the University system and being guilty of these, I suppose, O.D. Corpuz made some contingent democratization moves. I'd like Dr. Fernandez to support the program and make the democratization really democratic. Secondly, I'd like to make some comments to Miss Advincula. I don't agree when she said the elite are not detached from the masses. Although some elite come from the masses, once they are in the elite, they tend to imbibe the culture, the values, and biases of the elite. So it is impossible that a new elite will say to his formerly fellow poor people he will influence the elite class because, in the first place, he is already an outcast. That's all.

Tadena: We were sure that this topic is going to elicit a lot of comments. Now could we hear again from the body? Who is still interested?

Fernandez: Somebody awakened me half-asleep. I'd like to make comment very briefly. Unfortunately, I'm not yet president of the university. Not yet. And I'm afraid Mrs. Sicat has priority to it. But when I was Dean at UP Tarlac, my program called for a people's college, a completely tuition-free college of the University because most of our students there could not afford the tuition fee. On the substance of the discussion, I just have one brief comment to make. I agree with the distinction that should be made between different types of elite because I know that nationwide, and I suppose it would be true in any region, the business sector tends to be more progressive than the other sectors. Why? Because a businessman would like to have more people buying his goods and if you increase the purchasing power of the people, I think many businessmen will be very happy about it. They were supporters of land reform in however mangled form it was finally passed through the legislative mill in the pre-martial law days. The supporters of agrarian reform were precisely like Senator Puyat and other business-minded members of the business elite. It was precisely to their interest to see that there be progressive agrarian legislation.

Tadena: Thank you, Dr. Fernandez. Can we call on Mayor Rivera?

Rivera: According to Dr. Fernandez, a businessman may appropriately

be categorized differently. However, a businessman is an economic elite and a political elite. Being economically well-off, he has the power to buy political power. Even in pre-martial law days, I think the big-time politicians were at the same time the economic elite of the Philippine society, I think it has been known through experience. Well, mine is not a novena in a sense but an approval of my Compañero's paper. Like for instance, he tries to substitute "developing" for "modernizing." In justifying the substitutions, he failed to cite the many drawbacks of modernization. For example, the reason for pollution or traffic jam is incidental to the number of vehicles in a modernizing society. He also made mention of the elite at the local level and he was very kind to include the powers, and of the people who reacted to him, very few admitted. I am one who will admit it. Well then, I only want to put into record that this is a request to the up-coming regional director that I have one parcel of land in Catbalogan, one parcel of land in Dolores and I want the regional director to make orders to his field men to hasten the transfer of these parcels of land to the tenants.

Now I think the reason for the poverty of the people is ignorance or laziness. By their nature since their time of birth they have not been exposed to a kind of society which is modernizing, so to speak. Well, as manager or implementor of policies, this is what I can say. We can band together and manage these resources to help solve our development problems.

Thank you.

Tadena: May those who want to ask questions come forward? We are losing so much time waiting for someone to do so.

Moscusa: Miss Advincula made mention of categorizing the elite, grouping the elite into categories. Some also mentioned qualification of the elite. I would like to know if a foreigner would be considered elite, especially the business foreigners. Now if elite were to be categorized, what would the business foreigners' category be as elites and how do they affect the regional development of the region?

Mr. Alberto Ellema (Graduate student, UP College Tacloban): I would like to make some comments regarding the elite of our society. The ex-senators and ex-congressmen of the defunct Congress of the Republic of the Philippines, if I remember right, have enacted a law known as the anti-carnapping act which among other things penalizes by death any person guilty of carnapping. That was a law influenced by class legislation. Carnapping is an act done against the economic elite of our people. Yet, there was no law passed regarding rustlers, as farmers depend on the animals for livelihood. If Prime Minister Marcos is really sincere in saying that "What good is democracy if it is not for the poor?" he should amend that act. And I challenge the elite of this region to make representations to the assemblymen to make amendments to that act. I was able to read an article in the newspaper that the IBP is considering a proposal to President Marcos to amend the act. I challenge the elite of this region to make that step.

Thank you.

Tadena: This is just a comment. I think the point is that we should not jump to conclusions and accuse people and institutions of a number of crimes under the sun. Because we might not actually know the crime and second that there might be some legal as well as economic constraints which could possibly prevent us from acting in a manner which is desirable to the people. That's the first thing that has to be taken into consideration. I think that we can cover more miles out of the discussion if we try to calm down and not just go joyriding.

Morell: There are many issues that I would like to react to but I would like to share the time with the other participants so I'm down to giving comment to some of the comments. One of them is about minimum wage law. The thrust of our government is equitable distribution of income and wealth. Salary is only one form of income. This is the reason why we are trying to generate more employment, whether employment in terms of employees in processing and manufacturing firms, or self-employment. This is the reason why we are trying to develop and come up with employment-generating projects because increasing the minimum wage law is not the sole anchor to the equitable distribution of wealth. When you increase the minimum wage law, there will be repercussions in the industry, which will pass on the burden of the increase to the consumers. In this never-ending escalation of prices, what is the more practical approach, aside from increasing the minimum wage law? It is by generating more employment opportunities, more income-generating opportunities to our people by self-employment, or other lucrative means of employment so that instead of a family having only one income-earner, there will be more if its members can learn skills and try to employ themselves. There is a need for a resource inventory. Oftentimes, our gold is there but we don't see it. But, if we open our eyes and develop new skills, then more members of the family will be earning income. It may be that the income of the family based on wage is not adequate. But if you have members of that family earning income other than the minimum wage earner, then there is the equitable distribution of wealth. Income is to spread out to the other members of the family. For this is the most logical approach without generating a lot of repercussion on the side of industry. You cannot see wages from only one point, labor. You have to see that the total system has an effect. It is what Dr. Tadena pointed out yesterday. If you make a stress of the economic sector, it has an effect on many other sectors, a response of consequence on all other sectors. To develop then is to create more income-generating opportunities for our people, not necessarily just by increasing minimum wages. Some of our projects that are about to begin lead to this, for instance the Samar project with the Australian government. I would like to point out that I came from Region IX where the PADAP is in operation. What PADAP program in Pagadian, Zamboanga del Sur, of which I had firsthand knowledge because I was the NEDA Director there, do? The people involved open up new roads, link up isolated communities. Is there

something wrong with that? People of ages had been isolated, so now they are being assisted by the Philippine government in opening roads so that the farmers would be able to raise crops and market them, rather than becoming beasts of burden as they were before. Is there something wrong with that? So that farmers may get better returns for their investment, our government is planning the loan program from different aspects, not only from the economic aspect. When we evolved the whole construction program in PADAP, we even considered the existing value and culture system because in some of these communities, some of them did not even believe in working; they believe in joining the other force that would disturb existing authorities. But when they learned that the roads were opened and then medical services were made available to them, they themselves by their own conclusion, without any influence, decided "Well, this is good for us. While before medical help would not come to us, now this ribbon of congress opened our communities and made accessible governmental services that were never available before." Is this something wrong? So, they themselves who took up arms against the government now safeguard the PADAP employees there. When we started, there were even ambushes. But then, they realized that they even employed the Muslim workers. They thought that workers would be imported from other regions, but they themselves were employed. So, they safeguarded the project because finally they saw the benefits of the project. This what I want to point out; that the governmental is very careful in looking into the different aspects before a loan government is signed. We are not the only government in the world that are inking agreement with the World Bank. There are many other governments. We should feel honored and privileged that we are given the chance because it means the World Bank has trust and confidence in ability to pay. The World Bank is a lending institution. It will never lend money to any government where it can never be assured of payment. And when there is ability and assurance of payment, then it lends. That is an indication of the confidence that it has in our country.

Thank you.

Prof. Daroy: *Gusto ko nga lang pong mag-react sa sinabi ni Prof. Fernandez tungkol sa role ng elite. Ang batayan ko ay ang konkretong nangyari dito sa Samar at Leyte. Sa palagay ko, tama na sa isang stage ng development ng isang lipunan, 'yong sinasabi nating elite ay 'yon ang pinakarebolusyonyong sektor ng lipunan. Gaya ng grupo nina Norberto Romualdez; iyong mga matanda noon, sina Makabenta. . . sila ang pinakarebolusyonyong grupo noong panahong iyon at the turn of the century. They wanted free speech, they wanted free enterprise, they wanted a change—a transfer of political power from the foreigners to the Filipino elite. But they were only interested in the transfer of political power and in developing science and education to the extent that it would benefit their own interest. They were not interested in changing the relationship of society, in rechanging the structure of society so that the transfer of power*

from Spanish to Filipino would achieve a significant result. I think much of the problem that we are concouring now came from this very failure of the Filipino citizens after the transfer has been made possible; their failure to make corresponding changes in society.

Llames: I was expecting that the topic would invite so much comment. But I never thought it would be this provocative. After nearly an hour or so of reactions from the body, I'm afraid we don't have enough time for me to react to all those commentaries. And I do not intend to do so. However, *sa karamihan ng mga* commentaries, some of the earlier reactions were answered by the later ones. I recognize that most, if not all of the comments contain much merit. Insofar as the substantive propositions of the paper is concerned, I think we have no quarrel. Admittedly, the paper is more theoretic rather than empirical. And the comments given by the body will bear me out that the weakness of the paper lies more in its omissions, rather than its commissions.

The omission of empirical data was deliberate. It was not my intention to conduct a survey of the region's elites and come out with, say, an Eastern Visayan version of Mill's *The Power Elite*. Suffice it to say that time is not yet ripe for one to look incisively into the who's, how's, and why's of the elite in the region. I leave it to the serious student of elitism to perhaps make use of the framework presented in the paper, and compile the hard facts of elitism in Region VIII. Let us view the reactions the body gave as an attempt to provide the much needed empirical data. Even then, those reactions which attempted to be empirical were national and international in scope. Little was done by way of providing regional information. For although we admit that the elites are omnipresent in their influence, they are quite elusive and difficult to pinpoint.

I will stand by the propositions presented in my paper, warts and all. Whether we like it or not, many of us here are eligible to be considered members of the elite in the region. The least that we can do is to keep an open mind to the prescriptions contained in the paper, i.e., to transcend and decolonize our "elitist selves" and be one with our people in the real transformation of our society. We are living in revolutionary times. The elites in this region and all over the country cannot continue to ignore or be unaware of the plight of their less fortunate countrymen. For if they choose to be ignorant of the legitimate aspirations of the masses, in the process of consolidating their power and influence, they will be fomenting social instability. In the final analysis, when a new elite one with the people can succeed in bringing about the much dreaded confrontation, it will be the traditional elite who will have everything to lose.

Thank you.