

# WORKING PAPER

## COVID-19 and the Limits of Economic Growth Models: Case of the Philippines

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### Abstract

Authoritarianism and neoliberalism in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the limits of development theory anchored on economic growth models in a globalized market of unbridled liberalization and privatization. The virus immobilized people and economies already beset by a global trade war and the rise of autocrats. The pandemic, however, has a disproportionate impact on people and countries, exacerbating inequality and poverty within and among countries. Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte rode on the wave of economic growth in a regime of low inflation with the country enjoying the so-called "strong macroeconomic fundamentals." COVID-19, however, radically changed the global landscape and unraveled market failures. For the first time in decades, the economy shrank to its lowest and is now in recession. The country imposed the longest and strictest lockdowns while grappling to contain the coronavirus. In the midst of a crisis, Duterte ramps up repressive measures but was stingy on stimulus spending. Government's response to address the pandemic in political, fiscal, monetary and human development measures would be looked into in this paper.

**Keywords:** Covid-19 pandemic, crisis response, development theory, Duterte administration, economic growth models



Prioritizing economic growth over human life is nothing new, evidenced by the destruction of our environment and austere social spending policies of the government. While crises should be seen as opportunities, these are more often grabbed by corporate and financial interests of the elite. But there is a growing movement among peoples and nations to redirect our goal to sustainable human development as the urgent focus in light of COVID-19's catastrophic impact around the world. The coronavirus crisis poses a "triple conjuncture" of global crises together with climate change and a systemic crisis of neoliberal economic liberalization (Gills, 2020; Villarin, 2020a). This pandemic is complex, cuts across political boundaries, and hits all countries disproportionately.

The COVID-19 pandemic is seen as the biggest crisis since the two world wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From a public health emergency, it morphed into a political, economic, and societal crisis gripping governments worldwide. Major decisions are being taken under conditions of deep uncertainty and high public expectations for governments to deliver. Administrative capacity is a major factor in defining how societies will emerge from this crisis. People can cope and survive with resilience and optimism or wallow in despair and desolation, and it will determine whether their trust in government will increase or decrease. Having autonomous and competent public managers are key elements in developing such administrative capacity (Van der Wal, 2020)

In three months starting late December 2019, the coronavirus that originated from Wuhan, China spread rapidly to the entire world. According to World Health Organization statistics, as of 29 November 2021, there were already 260 million confirmed cases and 5,200,267 deaths worldwide. While the global acceleration in case incidence has slowed down, another looming threat of a new SARS-CoV2 variant called Omicron threatens fragile economies. In the Philippines, the coronavirus claimed the lives of 48,500 people and infected close to three million Filipinos as the government continues to grapple with it with vaccination rate of 40% of the target population.

Prior to the pandemic, the Philippines was already among the top three growth performers in the East Asia Region, with Vietnam and China. The Philippine economy was projected to continue its expansionary path at an annual rate of 6.6% gross domestic product (GDP) growth going to 2020. The country's main growth driver was stronger external demand as exports expanded by 19.2% with consistent high consumption growth for seven years (World Bank, 2018). These "strong macroeconomic fundamentals" became the holy grail for country's economic managers in fiscal housekeeping. The economy before COVID-19 had low and stable inflation even after

a hiccup in 2018 when global oil prices pulled up inflation. It had a strong fiscal position—its highest revenue-to-GDP-effort (16.1%) since 1997, lowest debt-to-GDP rate (39.6%) since 1986, and highest ever sovereign credit rating of between BBB+ to A—and was propelled by almost a decade of high robust growth. While it slightly dipped to 5.9% in 2019, the last quarter saw a 6.7% GDP growth, second only to China even surpassing Vietnam. In mid-March 2020, Bangko Sentral Governor Diokno boldly stated: "The truth is economic fundamentals are on our side. Even under the worst possible scenario, the Philippines can still grow this year and in the medium term by about 6 percent" (Department of Finance, 2020a, "Gov't economic team rolls out P27.1 B package vs COVID-19 pandemic").

The Duterte government had fiscal space when the pandemic hit that enabled it to borrow money immediately and viably float bonds. The recovery and stimulus package was projected to go up to Php2 trillion in the national budget for the economy to go back to its growth trajectory of 6%. While this would increase the country's level of public debt, it was not serious enough to undermine fiscal sustainability. But the inevitable happened. For three quarters in a row, the country's GDP contracted—-0.7% (Q1), -16.3% (Q2), and -11.5% (Q3). With successive typhoons in late October and early November 2020, some Php90 billion was lost in agriculture and infrastructure damage, adding 0.15% reduction in the country's GDP (Talavera, 2020). Already, economists expect the recovery to be slow and fragile for the rest of the year, and growth to accelerate in 2021 on the back of additional fiscal support and an accommodative monetary policy stance. But our economic managers would not spend beyond a conservative debt-GDP ratio of below 10% and even with strong macroeconomic fundamentals (Thomas, 2020).

The word "crisis" comes from the Greek word "*krino*" meant to separate, judge or decide. From it came the nouns "*krites*" or "judge"—from which we get critic, and *kriterion*, a test to judge by. A crisis then is a moment of truth, happening at a juncture, in which a fundamental choice is to be made. In assessing the response to the crisis, questions are put forward on how prepared were the authorities and how they made sense of the unfolding situation in making choices and decisions. From a public administration viewpoint, what insights can be learned from this pandemic? What are the implications of COVID-19 on development models? Does this reversal significantly impact human development and our national development goals? What lessons can be

learned in terms of theory in public administration and governance?

### A Review of Development Theory

Most of the literature on development draws out the emphasis given to economic growth in development studies from the post-war era to the 1960s dubbed as the development decade by the United Nations (UN). From there, a shift to the broader concern on social issues focused on a needs-based approach and later to social justice for a rights-based approach to development emerged. Sustainable development then became a core theme making environment and development as intrinsically linked.

Analytical approaches from structuralist, expanding capital nucleus, neo-Marxist, Maoist, basic needs, neo-classical and the pioneering work on third world development (Brookfield, 1978) provide us with comprehensive guides to development theories. Post-development theory emerged as a school of thought that questions the idea of all national economic development altogether, seeing them as social constructs that have resulted in a hierarchy of developed and underdeveloped nations, of which the latter desire to be like developed nations. While development strategies need to be specific to each country, international cooperation is crucial to ending extreme poverty (Sachs, 2005).

The idea of progress was evolutionary and linear. This idea still persists today and has become dominant in an era of globalization, free trade, and the weakening role of the state. Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and Rostow's stages of growth model are all based on this evolutionary theory of society from primitive to modern. In Rostow's model, economic growth goes through five steps that all countries must pass to develop: (1) traditional society, (2) preconditions to take-off, (3) take-off, (4) drive to maturity and (5) age of high mass consumption. Following this linear, evolutionary growth model, Harrod and Domar said that the main obstacle/constraint to development is the relatively low level of new capital formation in most poor countries. Economic growth is the total output ( $g$ ) that is equal to the savings ratio ( $s$ ) divided by the capital-output ratio ( $k$ ); i.e.,  $g = s/k$  (Karmakar, 1989).

Arthur Lewis, who is considered the father of development economics as a specialized field of study, came up with another variation on the growth model—investments in industrialization will lead to rural flight as an industrial base leads to higher standard of living (Levitt, 2013). Lewis' model served as an argument for government-led industrialization programs in the 1950s and 1960s. Theodore W. Schultz and Lewis formulated a

path to development integrating rapid industrialization and social reforms.

Working with the UN, Lewis later collaborated with Simon Kuznets (GDP measurement), Jan Tinbergen (econometrics), John Kenneth Galbraith ("Affluent Society," 1958) and others, thus paving the discourse on development economics. Kuznets' contribution concerns the effect of economic growth on income distribution (Kuznets curve). In poor countries, economic growth increases the income disparity between rich and poor people, thus, growth is inversely related to achieving equality within the country.

Development economics led to a "welfarist" model and the basic need approach that looked at human beings as beneficiaries of development rather than as active participants. According to the basic needs approach, provision of basic needs like food, water, and shelter was important. In a large sense they did not look at human beings as the goal of development. Accordingly, the purpose of development is to offer people more options (Shah & Alam, 2018).

Neoclassical growth theory is an economic theory that derives outputs from three driving forces—labor, capital, and technology, which determines economic growth. Thus, technology, being boundless, is crucial for poor countries (Dimand & Spencer, 2009). However, Albert Hirschman's unbalanced growth theory argues that investment grows at a higher rate than income, while income grows at a higher rate than consumption. This, however, only happens in the planning stage in developing/least developed countries (LDCs).

Since the early 1970s, the postcolonial developing world has experienced a phenomenal shift in the development strategy, from dependency theory to human development theory. Dependency theory, introduced by Argentine economist Raul Prebisch in late 1950s, is the notion that resources flow from a periphery of poor and underdeveloped states to a core of wealthy states to the detriment of the former while enriching the latter. This system is done through structural adjustment programs imposed on developing countries, thereby forcing them to compete fiercely with each other as their economies were restructured to become ever more export-dependent. At the same time, the increasing volume of cheap labor exports is driving down prices and depressing the real wages and purchasing power of the working classes in industrial and developing countries. Migration was also seen as necessary for development but also created anomalies seen in rising urban unemployment but continued high rates of rural-urban migration (Todaro & Smith, 2015).



The neoliberal theory of economic development, as espoused by F. Hayek and M. Friedman (Bregman, 2015) and considered as the third wave of the linear economic growth model, has provided a new dimension to the notion of development with the philosophy of “one world, one market and one ideology.” Structural reform of the society came about through liberalization and privatization of the economy but leaves market failures for the government to address. Neoliberal economic growth has become the dominant paradigm today under a globalized market.

With the rise of neoliberalism, the 1980s saw the collapse of the command and control economies, fiscal crisis of the welfare states, explosion in humanitarian emergencies, and global corporations taking over trade. But it also brought forward a global movement promoting social justice as integral in the development discourse. Two major declarations—the right to development as a basic human right (1986) and the Brundtland Commission Report (UN-World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987)—define sustainable development as a right under the concept of intergenerational equity. This development thinking shifted the focus of development for the poor and disadvantaged from the lens of justice.

Post-development theory emerged out of the despair felt by many at the apparent failure of development and at the impasse with which development studies seemed to be confronted as laid out in Arturo Escobar’s “Encountering Development” (1995), Esteva and Prakash’s “Grassroots Postmodernism” (1998), and Rahnema and Bawtree’s “Post-development Reader” (1997). The critique by postmodernist theorists is that development thinking has been dominated by the West and is very ethnocentric and promotes unbridled consumerism. These underdeveloped nations desire to go the way of developed nations, shunning their own culture and way of life. Furthermore, post-development theorists adopt a critical stance toward globalization, seeking to defend the local against the global.

Human development theory uses ideas from different origins, such as rising inequality, ecology, sustainable development, feminism and welfare economics. Human rights and human development are interrelated and indivisible and integral to pursuing sustainable human development. The prevailing definitions of development were seen as highly inadequate and advocates argue for a new concept and measures of sustainable human development. Mahbub ul Haq, a Pakistani economist, came up with the human development indicators (HDI) adopted by UN Development Programme (UNDP). Amartya Sen’s welfare economics (*Collective Choice and Social Welfare*, 1970) helped the UN develop measures of

poverty based on application of rational choice theory to microeconomics leading to outcomes, which are defined as capabilities (Anand & Sen, 1994).

### Role of the State and Public Administration

Old public administration started with the politics-administration dichotomy. It later evolved into theories for having centralized control, rigidity in rules and guidelines, distinct functions of policymaking from implementation, and relied heavily on a hierarchical organizational structure (Max Weber; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Weber’s beliefs see organizations as structured, rules-based, and averse to risks, thereby, discouraging creativity and collaboration, opposing flexibility and frowning on risks. This command and control approach to public administration has to be seen in the context of colonization where bureaucratic control of government is important.

Postcolonial states that pursued this old public administration model, however, experienced declining quality of governance and effective public administration as they faced pressures on their political economy. The politics of personality and patronage and their centrality to Philippine politics is again highlighted in this pandemic. The inherent weakness of political institutions under this system saw state resources and public appointments captured by the personal influence of political leaders and their followers (Hutchcroft, 2005; Martini, 2014).

Development administration model of public administration further stimulated academic and political interests when Christopher Hood (1991) coined the term “new public management.” This theory focuses on the transition from the “old” public administration to the “new” public management in 1980s to 1990s. Osborne and Gaebler’s (1992) entrepreneurial government promotes competition both inside and outside government, being results-based, decentralization of authority, and reduction of bureaucracy. For Osborne and Gaebler, the government’s clients are customers who have the ability and capacity to choose among providers of various services, including schools, health plans, and housing options.

With the evolution of development theory, the role of the state is also seen moving from being the main player in society to a key but background role as producer of a policy environment that is enabling and facilitating. The state has not shirked nor retreated from exerting a strong presence in the economy and society without dominating it (Mendoza, 2004). This makes the state play an enabling role by providing the legal and regulatory framework as well as a political order in which firms and organizations can plan acts without being restrictive but providing a





supportive regulatory environment. The state as facilitator makes easier the necessary performance of an action and the attainment of a result by providing facilities for, promoting, or helping forward an action or process. As facilitator, the state assists and provides resources to markets, communities and civil society. What it does is not to take over their tasks but a means to allow its work to flow more smoothly and with lesser problems (Mendoza, 2004).

However, the behavior of bureaucracies has to be taken into account. Graham Allison (1971) sees government actions are but the product of bargaining and compromise among the various organizational elements of the executive branch. Power, and who wields it, cannot be assumed to be always in the hands of the most powerful elected leader but is subject to contestation in the realm of politics and administration. Allison also said the focus of public sector reforms was to reduce public spending, rationalizing the bureaucracy in terms of limiting its role and regulatory functions but did not depart significantly from the Weberian model of a rigid and hierarchical public service. Likewise, liberal democratic values of free speech, expression and choice of leaders are under attack by the rise of authoritarianism and populist autocrats (Wang, 2020).

The advent of globalization in the 1980s saw technological advances that made an impact for theory building on a new public administration. Osborne (2006, as cited by Robinson, 2015, pp. 7-8) sets out what would be the crucial elements of a New Public Management model that can be summarized as follows: (a) culling lessons from private-sector management principles; (b) input and output controls and evaluation as well as performance management and audit; (c) the disaggregation of public services with cost management as primary objective; and (d) the use of markets in promoting competition and institutionalizing contracts for resource allocation and service delivery. However, NPM has its criticisms ranging from its too much focus on private sector management principles and the weakening of democratic accountability due to more adhoc executive agencies, thus their failure to focus on the needs of citizens. Civic organizations are seen to play an important role in provisioning when state provision is limited and the private sector caters to the rich (Minogue et al., 1998). The role of the public administrator is much more complex as he or she cannot simply act as a manager in the business sense by performing cost-benefit analysis (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003).

Governance is integral in an emerging approach in public administration called the New Public Service (NPS) model and seeing it as perhaps the most coherent of these new approaches. The public management focus

of NPS are citizens, communities, and civil society. The public servants' primary role is to be an enabler of citizens to vocalize and solidarily act on their shared interests rather than to control or steer (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003). Public management is premised on the notion of an active and involved citizenry. Public managers need skills that go beyond controlling or steering society. They should help design policy solutions with citizens involving skills on brokering, negotiating, and resolving complex and wicked problems.

In a collaborative governance model, elements for cooperation between the central and local governments, coordination with nongovernmental organizations and major associations, and mobilization of corporate resources to provide basic goods are essential. Despite the inherent mistrust of public management in a democracy, experience shows that once people realize they are in a crisis, collaborative governance can be applied successfully to address a large-scale crisis. But trust can be deceiving if viewed from how society behaves under conditions of fear and misinformation. American psychologist Solomon Asch (1951 as cited by Mcleod, 2018) experimented about how group pressure can cause people to ignore what they can plainly see with their own eyes. In said experiment, Asch showed test subjects three lines on a card and asked them which one was longest. When the other people in the room (all of them Asch's co-workers but unknown to the test subjects) gave the same answer, the subjects of the experiment did too—even when it was plainly and clearly erroneous.

### Assessing the COVID-19 Response

In assessing response to the COVID-19, one has to look into leadership and institutions, state capacity, and social participation and mobilization. In the Philippines where the personality and charisma of leaders matter to their constituents, the top executive of the state and bureaucracy has exhibited a leadership style that resorts to authoritarian policies, a crisis-response invoking national security rather than from the lens of a public health response. President Rodrigo Duterte signed Proclamation No. 929 putting the entire country under a state of calamity effective 16 March 2020 and later extended it until September 2021. This became the legal basis for the government to impose an enhanced community quarantine with the use of the police and military, which many feared was expanding their role and taking on a "martial law" character. Government officials denied this, saying state security forces would only be used to instill peace and order. But true to form, thousands were arrested and briefly detained for breaking quarantine



protocols while top government officials caught breaking the rules were just given leeway and never sanctioned.

The motivation to decisively tackle the crisis was lacking, as seen by the absence of leadership at a time of crisis. The President was at first dismissive of the threat. He then dismissed the senators' call for the resignation of the Health secretary for poor performance. The first months of the pandemic also saw the resignation of the country's chief economic planner (Palatino, 2020). When the first case of COVID-19 was recorded a month before the lockdown, this should have signaled the government to impose travel restrictions and mitigating measures. However, the DOH waited for the first case of local transmission to happen, showing indecisiveness and subsequent failure to immediately contain the spread of the virus. The lack of data gathering for COVID-19 was only addressed in April 2020 by the Department of Health (DOH, 2020). On 26 May 2020, a World Health Organization (WHO) representative in the Philippines warned the Duterte government that its lackluster contact tracing methods are hampering the country's efforts to curb the spread of the pandemic (Schwarz & Estiller, 2020).

In the organizational process paradigm, the government relies on routines rather than going through a rational cost-benefit analysis. The protocols for addressing the pandemic like mass testing, contact tracing, and isolating positive cases were based on established international epidemiological protocols. Yet the idea of mass testing was scoffed at as too costly and unrealistic. Contact tracing and isolation was another area where delays were observed by the WHO (Yee, 2020). The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) guidelines (2020) provided for varying degrees of community quarantines and was decided by a collegial body and informed by science, thus it should not be subject to political bargaining in the course of implementation. The different degrees and magnitudes of community quarantine decided by the IATF was a 'political resultant' that already considered several dilemmas—from saving lives vs. saving jobs, health of citizens vs. the health of the economy, and data privacy vs. right to information during emergencies. Local governments stepped up during the pandemic but initially were seen as competitors by some national level bureaucrats (Rappler.com, 2020).

When a major crisis strikes, it also strikes at the core of democracy and governance. Hence, it constitutes challenges not just the capacity for governance but legitimacy and trust. Two core questions arise in connection with organizing for societal security and crisis management (Christensen, et al., 2016)—the question of

governance capacity and governance legitimacy. The former is about preparedness and delivery capacity, while the latter deals with citizens' trust and matters of accountability. The issue of autonomy and decentralized decision-making within a whole-of-government approach is about having flexibility and encouraging innovation. When an action is already decided, the task of implementing that decision is given to others who must decide based on the principle of subsidiarity.

For this paper, we briefly would take a look at two countries that have effectively handled the coronavirus crisis. Compared with many other countries, Norway and Taiwan have performed well in handling the crisis. It is to be noted that both countries ranked high in global healthcare systems while 57 countries have a health workforce crisis in this pandemic (Global Health Security Index, n.d.). While situated in two different poles, both countries were able to develop an effective crisis response. Thus, crisis management is an important policy area for political leaders, administrative executives, and public administration in general (Boin et al., 2017).

Norway has developed a strong public sector, a functioning welfare state, and an open and transparent government. It is also a high-trust society reposed by its citizens to the government regardless of who is in power. In fact, mutual trust relations between citizens and government authorities in Norway are higher than in many other countries (OECD, 2017). Norway has also a strong economy based on oil and gas revenues and a social wealth fund that ensures responsible and long-term management of their resources (Christensen & Lægveid, 2020). The Norwegian government managed to control the pandemic by adopting briefly draconian measures for three weeks, followed by a control strategy, based on a collaborative and pragmatic decision-making, successful communication with the public, a lot of resources, and a high level of citizen's trust. The Norwegian success story is about an effective organization of societal security and crisis management capacity and legitimacy. Crisis management is seen to be most successful when it combines democratic legitimacy with government capacity. This is in contrast to the relaxed Swedish approach to its public health responses and soft mitigation strategy as well as the United States' dysfunctional response and people's lack of trust in government.

From an effective public administration viewpoint, we can look at Taiwan's efforts to block and eliminate an invisible enemy as a successful anomaly amid the global pandemic. The island-state's systems and organizations helped streamline a task force (command center) and implemented responses in a timely manner. Strict regulations and soft guidelines were combined

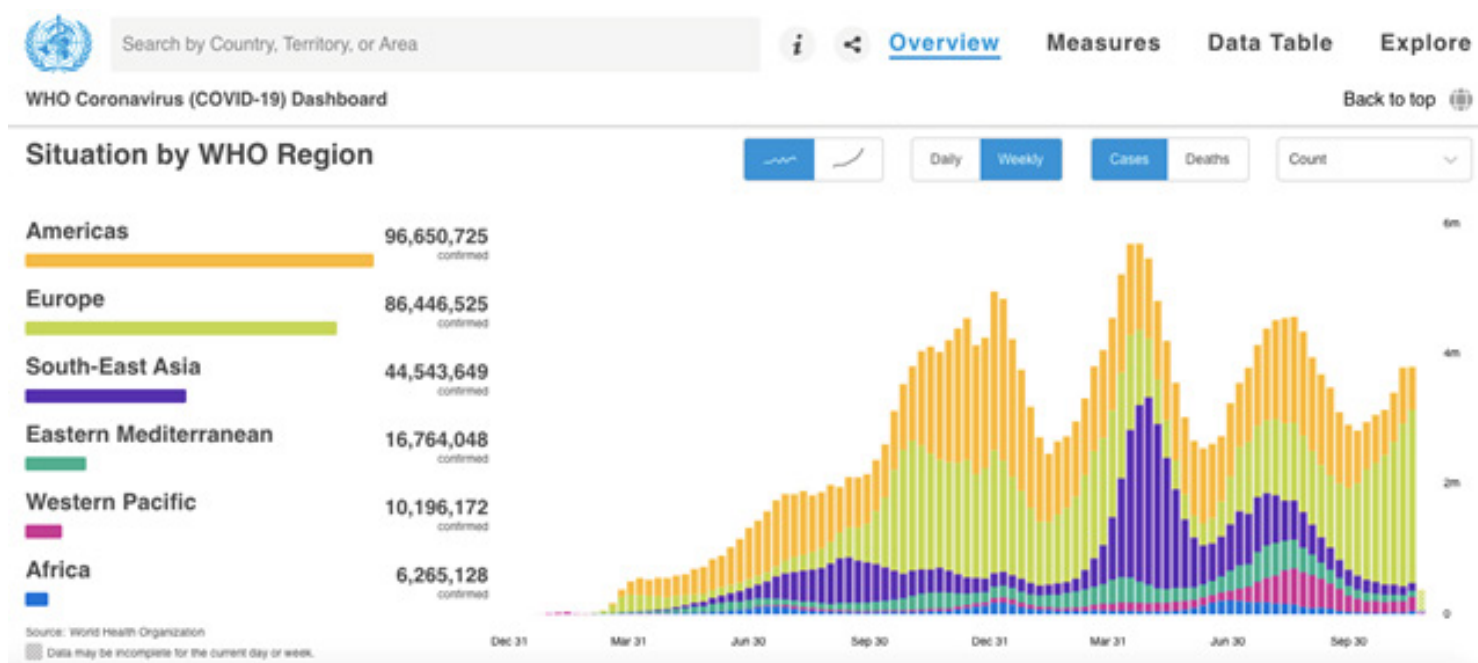
as the command structure launched related initiatives, mobilized the public, and engaged private resources to implement strategies and policies. Also, the SARS outbreak of 2003 affecting most East Asian countries was both a warning and a rehearsal to test these countries' public health capacities and reactions (Huang, 2020). In 2003, hundreds contracted the virus and at least 73 died in Taiwan, which then recorded the world's third-highest infection rate. Later, pandemics like bird flu and influenza H1N1 hit the island-state. Residents are acutely aware that habits like washing of hands and face mask-wearing are important. Thus, Taiwan was prepared with a better structure for a command center and developed some protocols to deal with possible future epidemics. Information about the epidemic is critical and it can be used or abused, governments can be trusted or opposed, all at the same time. In such a crisis, panics and missteps happen that can lead to uneasiness and uncertainty (Huang, 2020).

What is surprising in tackling COVID-19 is the case of Africa (see Figure 1) where the WHO praised their governments that quickly implemented restrictions on movement and gathering and this created a window of opportunity to keep their COVID-19 positives low, and enhance public health capacities. Policy played a vital role in African countries to keep updating data and information in implementing the key public health tools of surveillance, testing, isolation and contact tracing (Forku, 2020; Pilling, 2020). The latest WHO data showed that over 80% of coronavirus cases in the African continent

are asymptomatic and health facilities have not been overwhelmed by severe COVID-19 cases. The continent, which makes up 17% of the global population, had recorded 6,265,128 cases of 260 million cases or just 2.5% percent of the global Covid-19 cases by end November 2021. However, only around 10 percent of people in Africa have received one dose of a vaccine, compared with 64 percent in North America and 62 percent in Europe. With a new Covid-19 variant detected, Africa needs to ramp up its vaccination drive (New York Times, 2021).

COVID-19 has highlighted the role of digital technologies in responding to global pandemics and of the vulnerabilities posed by lack of digital access. Before the pandemic, countries like Vietnam and Thailand had installed critical digital infrastructure, allowing effective use of digital technologies in combating cluster outbreaks and quickly sharing credible information. While the Philippines experienced the longest and most stringent lockdowns around the world, countries such as Vietnam, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and China did not apply these extremely strict containment measures (Djalante et al., 2020). In a research study conducted by the World Bank (Demirguc-Kunt et al., 2020), countries that implemented mobility restrictions (non-pharmaceutical interventions) in the early stages of the pandemic appear to have better short-term economic outcomes and lower cumulative mortality than compared to countries that imposed it later. Full national lockdowns have indeed been associated with a 10% decline in early economic activity among countries in Europe and Central Asia. The capacity

**Figure 1: COVID-19 Global Infection Rates, WHO (as of November 2021)**



Source: WHO, 2021 November 29

of actors to commit and their willingness to cooperate and coordinate to achieve these goals (governance) are what matter for effectiveness and, consequently, their impact on development outcomes.

President Duterte's long history of violence provides a glimpse how he deals with those kinds of conflicts, literally involving violence, force, coercion, among others (Ranada, 2018). While stingy with stimulus funding, the autocratic Duterte used the period of the pandemic to impose draconian measures and whip people to submission (Villarin, 2020b). It struck fear among many especially the poor who have to scrounge for a living and expose themselves to the virus. While the government provided for a two-month social assistance subsidy to some 18 million households, this came late and has not cushioned the impact of economic contraction and rising poverty.

Adhocracy was routinely used to organize responses to be led by officials already doing the same functions leading to organizational dysfunctions (Ranada, 2020). An adhocracy is an organizational philosophy (Britannica, n.d.) to anticipate technological changes and its impact on organizations wherein traditional hierarchical structure is not maintained supposedly to stimulate creative thinking. These temporary bodies make their own agendas, assess blunders, and even operate like regular agencies. The growth of adhocracy is a symptom of failure of the regular government and presents dangers of inadequacy, lack of accountability, and threats to democracy (Rourke & Schulman, 1989). Adhocracy is no less a coherent configuration compared to the four other dimensions of organizations in Mintzberg's model (see Table 1 below). Akin to the professional bureaucracy, adhocracy also gets trained and specialized experts to do the work. These experts though have to work together to do new things rather than working apart to do what they have been doing individually and expertly (Mintzberg, 1981).

Aside from adhocism in COVID-19 response, the country was already reeling from a weak healthcare system beset by structural and budget issues. While several social protection laws were in place that targeted the poor and vulnerable, there were challenges in its implementing mechanisms, including the lack of financial inclusion of the poor. The issue of autonomy and decentralized decision-making within a whole-of-government approach is about flexibility and innovation. When an action is already decided, the task of implementing that decision is given to others who must decide on specific courses of action to take based on the principle of subsidiarity. Positive perceptions as to transparency and authority are even more critical in soliciting public support during a pandemic. Distrust is focused on the politicians and not on service delivery. And distrust during a crisis can go deeper than it used to be because of politicians doing a bad job (Buntin, 2016)

### Models of Economic Growth and Crisis Response

In macroeconomic theory, the central idea of Keynes's economics is the management of the business cycle—how to fight recessions and ensure that people who want work can get it. Unlike other 20<sup>th</sup> century economic theories, Keynesian economics provides for a large role of the state in fighting recession and raising aggregate demand. What emerged was the dominance of monetarist policies that focus on fighting inflation by constraining the money supply, even though it also produced a recession and rising unemployment. Then, the coronavirus hit. Supply chains and production have been disrupted. The bigger impact of the pandemic, however, has been on the demand side, thus causing expectations for future inflation to rise while the interest rates are falling further. But so far, rich countries have not held back spending, with unemployment benefits making up a big chunk of fiscal stimulus worth some USD3.3 trillion, enough to take their deficits to 7.5% of GDP (Organisation for Economic

**Table 1. Dimensions of organizational configurations**

Dimensions	<b>Simple structure</b>	<b>Machine bureaucracy</b>	<b>Professional bureaucracy</b>	<b>Divisionalized form</b>	<b>Adhocracy</b>
Environment	Simple and dynamic	Simple and stable	Complex and stable	Relatively, simple and stable	Complex and dynamic; disparate
Power	Chief executive control	Technocratic, external control	Professional, operator control	Middle-line control	Expert control

Source: Mintzberg, 1981, "Exhibit 5"



Co-operation and Development, 2020), while around the world central bank balance sheets have grown by 23% of GDP (Central Banking Newsdesk, 2020).

This enormous stimulus has so far calmed markets, halted the collapse of businesses, and importantly protected household incomes from further deteriorating. This has made central banks the enablers of fiscal stimulus, making sure that even longer-term public borrowing is cheap while budget deficits have soared. As a result of COVID-19, a club of central bankers raised the alarm that “the fine line between monetary policy and government-debt management has become blurred” (Bank of International Settlements [BIS], 2020, “Looking ahead,” para. 10; The Economist, 2020a). Accordingly, central banks can continue to finance governments so long as inflation remains low, because it is ultimately the prospect of inflation that forces policymakers to raise rates to levels which make debt costly. When interest rates are zero, distinctions are blurred between debt issuances, now incurring zero interest costs, and printing money. This scenario resembles modern monetary theory, considered as heterodox economics that calls for countries to just print their own currency, ignore debt-to-GDP ratios, and just use their central banks to absorb the public debt, and continue with deficit spending of the government while bringing down unemployment and inflation.

The primary tool of economic management was the raising and lowering of short-term interest rates by independent central banks. The job of fiscal policy was to keep public debts low and to redistribute income to the degree and in the way that politicians saw fit. The belief in the redistributive power of a booming economy built around low interest rates has never materialized. This economic growth paradigm has been the subject of continuing social and ecological criticism, ranging from the Limits to Growth models (Meadows et al., 1972), small is beautiful (Schumacher, 1973), unbalanced growth (Hirsch, 1976), and GDP as a problematic indicator of human development (Stiglitz, 2009).

Classical economists are saying that even with all the stimulus measures, this situation eventually would create more inequality. They warned that rising public sector debts leave economies more indebted as the government has run now on deficit. Both public and private indebtedness transfer income to rich investors who own the debt, thereby depressing demand and interest rates fall further. Other theorists suggest that rising inequality, higher debt-to-GDP ratios and lower interest rates have reinforced one another pushing down further workers’ income (The Economist, 2020b). Thus, structural inequities in workers’ share in income while corporate incomes rise as well as their savings have to be addressed (Jones,

2020). Prior to COVID-19, economic growth policies have disempowered workers and impacted heavily on the labor market and lowering aggregate demand. With the pandemic, there now exists a growing consensus that tight labor markets could give workers more bargaining power but without the need for expanding the scope of asset redistribution (Stansbury & Summers, 2020).

Even with much fiscal elbowroom, the Philippine government’s economic response for recovery was stingy and lacked focus on human development priorities, relying on consumption-led economic recovery policies based on wrong assumptions that the global economy will recover quickly. The Philippines allocated an estimated USD21.65 billion, or equivalent to Php1.2 trillion or 5.9% of GDP, for fiscal and monetary response measures for Covid-19. Other ASEAN countries spent between 10% to 25% of their GDP leaving no doubt that the crisis is a formidable foe and needs a strong response. Malaysia, whose economic contraction was almost similar to the Philippines in the second quarter, spent 22.73% of GDP to bring down their economic contraction from -17.1% in the second quarter to just -2.7% in the third quarter. While the Philippines and Indonesia have seen their coronavirus cases rising to half a million infected, Indonesia has a lower positivity percentage per population. Its economic contraction was also not as steep as the Philippines (see Table 2).

For the first half of 2020, the Philippine economy shrank to its lowest since our country first recorded GDP as an indicator of economic growth. A third of micro-, small-, medium-enterprises (MSMEs) closed shop as business losses continue to mount affected by lockdowns and mobility issues. Social Weather Station self-rated poverty surveys in September 2020 showed it went up, higher than compared five years ago. It also showed that involuntary hunger experienced by 7.6 million households or a staggering 30.9% of Filipinos. Some 27.3 million adult Filipinos, or almost half of the country’s labor force, found themselves unemployed as well as 90% of workers directly affected by the lockdowns (NEDA, 2020).

GDP contracted 11.5% in the third quarter of 2020, slightly milder than the 16.9% contraction in the second quarter but still the second sharpest decline on record. Household spending was down at a softer pace of 9.3% year-on-year in Q3, following the 15.3% contraction in Q2, hit by elevated unemployment and restrictions. New capital acquisitions declined at a quicker rate of 37.1% in Q3, following the 36.5% decrease recorded in the previous quarter. Public consumption growth slowed to +5.8% (Q2: +21.8% year-on-year) as stingy government spending prevailed amid concerns over the fiscal deficit. Our exports also fell 14.7% on an annual basis in Q3, which was moderately above the second quarter’s 35.8%

Table 2. ASEAN COVID-19 cases and economic stimulus response

	GDP (Q2-2020) %	GDP (Q3-2020) %	COVID-19 cases / deaths (as of Dec 2020)	Stimulus response (\$ Billion)	% of GDP	Population (millions)
<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>-5.32</b>	<b>-3.49</b>	563,680 / 17,479	115.78	10.94	274.4
<b>Thailand</b>	<b>-12.1</b>	<b>-6.4</b>	4,091 / 60	84.09	15.96	69.9
<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>-17.1</b>	<b>-2.7</b>	70,236 / 376	80.78	22.73	32.5
<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>2.62</b>	1,361 / 35	26.50	10.12	97.6
<b>Philippines</b>	<b>-16.3</b>	<b>-11.5</b>	436,345 / 8,509	21.65	5.88	109.2
<b>Singapore</b>	<b>-13.2</b>	<b>-5.8</b>	58,242 / 29	89.14	25.35	5.9
Myanmar	2.0	2.0	96,520 / 2,059	-	-	54.6
Cambodia	-4.1	-2.1	345 / NA	2.3	3.2	16.7
Laos	-2.5	0.8	39 / NA	1.5	4.2	7.3
Brunei	2.8	-	151 / 3	0.337	3.2	.4

Source: ADB, 2020b; Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2020; Djalante et al., 2020

contraction. Further, the imports of goods and services dropped though at a more moderate rate of -21.7% in Q3 (Q2: -37.9% yoy). The decline in imports is indicative of depressed domestic demand (NEDA, 2020).

Other economists have warned that a failure to contain the virus, restrictions on mobility, inadequate policy support for recovery to align the economy with clear health protocols, and social protection measures can put the Philippines among the slowest recoveries in the region. Likewise, the closure of the biggest TV and broadcast network at the height of the pandemic affected investor confidence, already low prior to the pandemic. In a report by Rappler.com (Rivas, 2020), World Bank economist Rong Qian stated that the threshold for borrowing can go up to sixty percent to test the limits. She however noted there is no magic number to determine what is the comfortable level for multilateral lenders.

In Table 3, Philippine Statistics Authority data in 2018 (as cited in Albert et al., 2020) showed that three out of 20 Filipinos (or 17.7 million) are poor; a third of

these poor Filipinos (5.5 million) are extremely poor. 12.1% of Filipino families (or 2.9 million families) are poor in 2018. This is a reduction of one-third of the rate, i.e., 17.9%, in 2015. Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao has the highest poverty incidence at 61.8%; the National Capital Region (NCR) has the lowest at 2.2%. Those less with >50% poverty rate are: Isabela City, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, and Sulu. Provinces with >5% poverty rate are: NCR, Pampanga, Laguna, Rizal, La Union, and Ilocos Norte. More than one million are poor in Camarines Sur, Leyte, Negros Occidental, Maguindanao, Sulu, Cebu, and Lanao del Sur (Albert et al., 2020). In the rural areas: low-income but not poor is highest (43.3%), followed by the poor (24.6%) among income groups. In the urban areas: lower middle class are highest (36.0%), followed by low income but not poor (33.8%). These income groups make up 69.8% of the population in the urban areas. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA, 2020), income poverty (and subsistence poverty) was reduced in 2018

from 2015 figures. Improved welfare conditions from 2015 to 2018 have likely expanded the middle class (but by how much and with a large share of the middle class persisting in lower middle income groups). With COVID-19, improvement in living standards may be wiped out among lower middle income groups and those living in extreme poverty will increase.

The impact of a drop in overseas remittances on poverty was also looked into. Previous studies on selected economies in South Asia and Southeast Asia suggests that

a 10% increase in remittance inflows leads to a three to four-percent rise in real GDP per capita (Vargas-Silva et al., 2009). The share of remittances to the country's GDP is at 10% and this is projected to drop to eight percent of GDP due to the pandemic (Takenaka et al., 2020). In the same PIDS study Albert et al. (2020), out of 23.7 million families in 2018, 29.7% depended on overseas remittances. Average remittances was about Php100,000 (over a fourth of total family income). Over half of families

**Table 3. Income Classes (and Clusters), Income Thresholds and Sizes of Income Classes (& Clusters), 2018**

Income class	Income cluster	Definition: per capita income	Indicative range of monthly family incomes (for a family size of 5 members) at 2018 prices	Estimated size in thousands (and percent in total)	
				Families (millions)	Persons (millions)
Low Income	Poor	Per capita income less than official poverty threshold	Less than P10,957 per month	2.9	17.7
	Low income (but not poor)	Per capita income between the poverty line and twice the poverty line	Between P10,957 to P21,914 per month	8.4	40.7
Middle Income	Lower middle income	Per capita income between twice the poverty line and four times the poverty line	Between P21,914 to P43,828 per month	7.6	31.0
	Middle middle income	Per capita income between four times the poverty line and seven times the poverty line	Between P43,828 to P76,699 per month	3.1	11.2
	Upper middle income	Per capita income between seven times the poverty line and 12 times the poverty line	Between P76,699 to P131,483 per month	1.2	3.8
High Income	Upper income (but not rich)	Per capita income between 12 times the poverty line and 20 times the poverty line	Between P131,483 to P219,140 per month	0.358	1.0
	Rich	Per capita income at least equal to 20 times the poverty line	At least P219,140 per month	0.143	0.360

Source: Albert et al., 2020, p. 2

with remittances are from lower middle-income (37.2%) or low income but not poor (27.0%). Among families with remittances, one in 20 (5.7%) is poor. Lower middle-income families dependent on remittances receive on average Php80,000—double those of low income but not poor, and four times average remittance of the poor. Half of lower middle and low income but not poor families who are dependent on remittances are residing in NCR, Region IV-A & Central Luzon.

Using the United Nations WIDER Working Paper of Sumner et al. (2020), the PIDS conducted a simulation of how economic contractions affect poverty and the importance of social assistance measures during a crisis. In the table below, it shows what are low (5%), medium (10%), and high (20%) contractions of the entire income distribution to estimate impact of COVID-19 on income poverty in the Philippines. It also incorporated income transfers from government social protection programs such as the Social Amelioration Program or SAP (Php5,000–8,000 cash transfer for 2 months to targeted 18 million households, or 75% of entire Filipino households). Wage subsidies for small businesses similar to the SAP for 3.4 million workers in the formal sector were likewise given under the Bayanihan 1 Law.

In Albert et al.'s study (2020) shown in Table 4, it is observed that

the proportion of extremely poor Filipinos can increase by 1.1 percentage point from 5.3%, with an income contraction of 5 percent across the income distribution, or it can even double to 11.4 % if incomes decrease by 20%. The social protection programs, if well-targeted, can also further reduce extreme poverty, i.e. subsistence poverty, but only if income contractions are five percent. The middle scenario of a contraction of 10 percent in incomes, coupled with counter-effects of the SAP and SBWS, can manage the change in poverty incidence rates to an increase of 1.4 percentage points from the baseline figure of 16.8% (thereby increasing the number of poor Filipinos by 1.5 million), but the worst of the three scenarios can worsen poverty to roughly the poverty incidence in the 2006–2012 period when poverty stood at around a quarter of the population. (p. 30)

What the simulation showed is that social protection measures do matter during a pandemic when it comes to addressing poverty and income declines.

**Table 4. Effects on poverty under different scenarios of economic contraction**

Scenario	Poverty incidence (in percent)		Number of poor (in millions)	
	Using food poverty line as threshold	With total poverty line as threshold	Income below food poverty line	Income below total poverty line
<b>Status quo (baseline 2018)</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>17.7</b>
A0: income contraction of 5%	6.4	19.2	6.7	20.3
<b>A1: Income contraction of 5% with SAP and wage subsidy</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>16.4</b>
B0: Income contraction of 10%	7.7	21.9	8.2	23.2
<b>B1: Income contraction of 10% with SAP and wage subsidy</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>19.2</b>
C0: Income contraction of 20%	11.4	28.0	12.0	29.7
<b>C1: Income contraction of 20% with SAP and wage subsidy</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>24.2</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>25.6</b>

Source: Albert et al., 2020, pp. 29–30





Senior economist and credit ratings watcher Nicholas Mapa (as cited by Reynolds, 2020) has a grim outlook:

Household consumption, which accounts for the bulk of economic activity, will be muted in the months ahead. The labor market is challenging... bank lending has slowed to single digit growth, signaling a parallel slowdown in investment momentum... The persistent threat of the virus will sap consumption appetite and keep investment at bay. (para. 6)

In Amartya Sen's (1986) work on famines, market capitalism diverts essentials away from those who needed it most to those with the most money. Therefore, it is logical that a fundamental requirement for an ethically-guided government regulation be in place for the market system, because there is no inherent capacity for social benefit or good in such a system for the majority. Exclusion, capture, and clientelism are manifestations of power asymmetries that usually lead to failures to achieve growth with equity. The inequity and inefficiency in meeting the needs of all are normally of no concern to capitalists because the vast majority does not suffer enough to create the needed political change. Thus, fighting poverty and inequality should primarily be in the agenda of government.

Government spending, however, has been in trickles. What Duterte and his economic managers are doing is running the risk of sacrificing the private sector's financial stability to survive this crisis, just so as to stick to a dogma of good fiscal housekeeping. On the other hand, some lawmakers, civil society, and even businesses want a stronger and more encompassing fiscal stimulus. While the Bangko Sentral infused liquidity and lowered interest rates to near zero, private sector investment did not rise as well as consumption. Absent large current account surpluses and without significant fiscal support, the private sector will shift into deficit and deepen the recession. The stingy response of the state and bureaucracy mainly serves to prop the power and pursues the interests of their favored political elites. This action is also not oriented towards economic and social development of the nation (Lim, 2020; Villarin, 2020c; Robinson, 2015).

### COVID-19 Impacts on Human Development

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are set of development outcomes within and among countries, for the world's future, through 2030. Backed up by a set of 169 detailed targets for government as well as non-state actors, civil society, business, among others, with obligations stipulated among stakeholders. The SDG 2030 Agenda puts priority on eradicating poverty in all its forms, recognized as the greatest

global challenge for sustainable development and an indispensable requirement for all nations to address. From Agenda 21 (1992) to 'Future We Want,' poverty is a complex multidimensional problem with origins in both the national and international domains (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020). The deep and complex issue of poverty endangers the social fabric, undermines economic development, puts extreme pressure on the environment, and threatens political stability in many countries.

In the UNDP Human Development Perspectives 2020 report, the pandemic unleashed a human development crisis that impacts on women and girls. It acknowledged that the crisis has made gender equality unreachable by 2030. Low inequality in human development can only be achieved by reducing gender inequality. Investing in women's equality especially now and lifting both their living standards and empowering them are central to the human development agenda. The pandemic's unprecedented effects on human development will impact heavily on people's wellbeing as the relentless pressure on nature and the planet takes its toll in pandemics and climate change. The pandemic has also cast light on how our interconnected societies face vulnerabilities and magnified existing inequalities within and among nations. These vulnerabilities and rising inequality cuts deep and reveals gaping cleavages in societies set to become more worrying as we continue to face the threats of rising sea levels due to climate change and biodiversity loss.

In a virtual conference of the United Nations General Assembly in early December 2020, the appeal was for a global stimulus package worth at least 10% of global GDP and debt relief for all States badly needing it. World leaders also called for guarantees for an equitable distribution of a vaccine while building a greener, fairer world. The post-pandemic recovery has to address pre-existing conditions, from gaps in basic services to the climate emergency action as countries face mounting public debts. As of late, the economic statistics show a global contraction of 5 percent, with five countries having defaulted already, 20 are facing severe food insecurity as 300 million jobs were lost, and close to 100 million additional people now in extreme poverty (United Nations, 2020).

The Philippines' contribution to the SDGs was its own development program called Ambisyon 2040. Ambisyon 2040 is an aspiration for a middle class society in 2040 to be attained by sustained economic growth at six percent (National Economic and Development Authority, 2015). Given the likely drop in incomes (and expenditures) of households



as well as businesses in the wake of COVID-19, it is expected that the Philippine economy to grow at a slower pace this year and to worsen as regards poverty conditions. Analysts pointed out that it might take at least a year and a half or until the second half of 2022 before the economy could return to the pre-pandemic growth level of six percent. The Philippines spent around 5.9% of the GDP, lower than what other countries in the region spent. Half of the total stimulus package, or Php523 billion (48.8%), was spent to support the income of households, businesses, and assistance to local governments. The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) simulation results suggest that income contractions in the wake of COVID-19 can increase poverty but can be mitigated with targeted social protection. The lack of it will likely delay, if not derail, the vision of a predominantly middle class society by 2040 (Albert et al., 2020).

The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2020 (UNDESA, 2020b) warns of high economic risks aggravated by deepening political polarization and rising doubts about the benefits of multilateralism. These risks inflict severe and irreparable damage on development prospects especially for developing and least developed countries. These economic risks also create responses that encourage a further rise in inward-looking policies, at a point when global cooperation and solidarity is needed. The slightest drop in global growth has an exponential effect on poor countries already suffering from poverty, conflict, and climate change impacts. Overall, a one percent lower growth in the world economy would translate into an increase in the global extreme poverty rate of between 1.6% and three percent of the world population, or equivalent to 14–22 million people, based on a research by the International Food Policy Research Institute (Vos et al., 2020). In the Philippines, this leads to three to six percent increase in extreme poverty rates (about 270,000 – 600,000 more Filipinos with income less than USD1.90/day). This scenario could materialize if the pandemic were to aggravate existing weaknesses for developing countries like rising public sector debt, business failures and bankruptcies, lack of fiscal space, weak health and educational systems, and lack of social protection. All these could lead to long-term stagnation of productivity growth.

### To Rise or Fall: Lessons of the COVID-19 Crisis

In public administration, attempts to capture how the state and the bureaucracy responds to the

pandemic have been put forward especially when this pandemic is unlike anything many of us have experienced. Likewise, responses have to be time-sensitive given the drastic impact it has on people and economies. Maher et al. (2020) devised a model that aims to assist administrators in addressing the crisis brought about by the pandemic, with focus on response stages but going beyond and moving forward to a recovery phase. Maher et al. propose organizational actions that can be categorized into four stages of the RISE (resilience, intention, sustain, endurance) model, which was based from the organizational perspective of the open systems framework.

In Maher et al.'s (2020) RISE model, resilience serves as the first stage, which highlights organizational flexibility, financial capacity and political commitment to react to the external shock and provide stability. The second stage—intention—deals with tangible and relevant actions to mitigate financial impacts and declining human and organizational resources, and overall wellbeing of citizens. The third stage—sustain—emphasizes urgent operational and financial actions to be able to stabilize the situation in between budget cycles. As the external shock surfaced the bureaucracy's weaknesses, it also provided opportunities for it to adjust and adapt. In endurance, the fourth stage, leaders are encouraged to rethink and improve strategies, take advantage of new opportunities, and discard what's not working.

The pandemic revealed serious weakness in health diagnostics and infrastructure, thus the leadership has to exercise flexibility while increasing its financial capacity needed to provide stability in its response. While the Philippines has a formal science advisory system (Vallejo & Ong, 2020), the President relied mostly on retired generals in his Cabinet. While most science advice in crisis situations is informal and unsolicited, its effectiveness depends on how they are taken by the leadership and bureaucracy. The intention as expressed in budgetary allocations should be seen from the lens both of operations and financial statements. In both lenses, the government failed to allocate resources effectively. We have severe underspending in our healthcare system even if we have the second highest population in the region next to Indonesia. Among ASEAN countries and even Asia, the Philippines stimulus response is lowest (Cahiles-Magkilat, 2020).

A preliminary analysis of the Asian Development Bank (2020) indicates that no significant statistical relation between stimulus packages per capita and as a percentage of GDP with the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in a country. Likewise, the stimulus response per capita and as a percentage of GDP are also unrelated to growth forecasts. However, both variables are



statistically related to income per capita; a one percent increase in GDP per capita leads to a 1.5% increase in the package per capita of a country. In fighting COVID-19, rich countries are spending disproportionately more than developing countries, which are facing fiscal constraints and poor governance.

The Philippine government's choice and deployment of containment measures are also reflective of how organized and prepared public health institutions were for pandemics. Rather than looking at the timing, intensity or length of the country's lockdown per se, it can be said that inadequate core capacities to detect and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic significantly accounts in the country delivering poor economic outcomes compared to its ASEAN neighbors (Monsod & Gochoco-Bautista, 2020). Some developing countries are using fiscal policies beyond the usual government borrowings but expanded it to reduce corporate taxes as a stimulus for attracting investments like what the Philippines is doing (Department of Finance, 2020b).

To sustain its interventions, the Philippine government should provide an economic stimulus package that would ensure that people's jobs and enterprises' viability are not being sacrificed. For its capacity building to sustain resilience and building back better, more resources are needed for data-driven public health emergency response. This program should start at the local level to facilitate mandated data collection and analysis (e.g., Republic Act 11055 or the Philippine ID System Act and Republic Act 11315 or the Community-Based Monitoring System Act) to ensure that provision of social assistance would be easier.

The endurance phase is about leadership and collaborative governance that ensure mechanisms are put in place to enable different agencies to share information. Through such kind of governance and leadership, strategies and programs that enhance national resilience are widely institutionalized. Populism has to be replaced with data-driven, evidence-based policy making to improve policy and program formulation and evaluation that underpins national plans to bolster resilience of institutional responses (e.g., distance education and blended learning in schools, work from home arrangements, telemedicine, green infrastructure, and other similar initiatives).

There are lessons to be learned from this pandemic about economic growth models applied in the Philippine setting. The first lesson in this COVID-19 pandemic is that this is not just a public health emergency crisis but also a bigger crisis of market-based economic models. The logic of a rational individual—one that maximizes utility for its own self-interest—stops when forces outside its

control threaten its very own survival. Individualism will no longer work, constrained both by the external shock and incapacity to provide for subsistence, becoming risk averse which in the end will not redound to the benefit of society.

Keynesian economics is a de facto crisis response model by neoliberals but see it as unnecessary when markets return to normal. Neoliberalism's vilification of the state and its worship of market infallibility has been debunked when crises hit. After the global financial crash, austerity measures and cutbacks in social spending have not reversed consistent low levels of investments in developed economies and increased extreme poverty in developing economies. Greater efficiency and consumer choices, as promised by policies promoting liberalization, deregulation, and privatization of public services to increase market competition, have not materialized (Villarin, 2020d). In reality, there is state capture (Martini, 2014) resulting in little competition and rise of oligopolies that endangered democracy itself.

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered graver impacts on social and environmental problems besetting the country. Loss of natural resources, including irreversible damage to marine and aquatic life in the West Philippine Sea, unabated illegal export of minerals, overfishing in municipal waters, and sovereign guarantees in large dam and water projects at the expense of indigenous peoples communities. What is made worse is the fact that the Philippines became the world's deadliest country for environmental defenders and advocates (Dulce, 2020). The Philippines, over the years, has shown progress in the design and delivery of social protection programs with the adoption of a social protection strategy and framework to consolidate efforts and better target programs. However, this is now being set aside as unaffordable in the face of an economic crisis. Social protection measures in crisis response were muted. Instead, market instruments were considered to drive up consumption and designed as an economic triage to sort out populations whether they are essential or not.

Secondly, political democracy has become a reductionist tool under neoliberalism and is being hijacked by authoritarian leaders. Constitutional mechanisms and the rule of law are prioritized over debate and participation. Far-right nationalism and authoritarianism have rode on economic and social exclusion by markets to stoke anger and heighten fear as political currencies for authoritarian governments' electoral victories. The pandemic is now used as a smokescreen to impose harsh migration policies and harass migrants already residing in their adopted countries. It is also being used to escape from accountability as emergency public procurement



policies and spending not following audit protocols. Values such as individual freedoms and choice, respect for human dignity, and promoting and protecting human rights are being attacked by right-wing populism. Instead of addressing these needs, authoritarian governments are ramping up passage of vague anti-terror laws to instill fear against activists now seen as 'terror threats' (Sobel, 2020).

The pandemic is being addressed through a national security response rather than a human rights-based response. A heavy-handed focus on countering national security threats and illegal drugs has resulted in serious human rights violations in the Philippines (UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner 2020). Duterte's populist crisis management style has been bedeviled by a toxic combination of erratic leadership and authoritarian excess (Heyderian, 2020). Populist authoritarian leaders used pandemic response measures to jail critics, curtail free speech to limit free flow of accurate information, imposed restrictions on the media including closing them down, and using the law to crackdown on dissent or lawfare (Falk, 2020). The pandemic has likewise spawned increased patriarchy and gender oppression and violence. Reports of surge in domestic violence and online sexual exploitation of children were noted despite women unable to leave their homes. Loss of jobs and livelihoods, especially for women, pushes households to experience involuntary hunger and be mired in debts (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2020).

The core institutions of liberal democracy are the nation-state, multilateral institutions, and civil society bound by a social contract. Citizens bind themselves and agree to live along moral and political rules of behavior embodied in an operating system called a constitution. This constitution is usually founded on justice, human rights, and rule of law. Multilateral institutions were established to protect, promote, and fulfill human rights and human development through progressive realization by nation-states. They are committed to uphold human rights through international treaty obligations. However, these institutions like the World Health Organization and the UN are now under attack and being weakened, as they are seen as being captured by global corporations (ESCR-net, 2019).

Autocratic regimes have quickly adapted to limit the impact of social media in this digital age and economy. Many of the tools that they use for this purpose are familiar censorship strategies—devised long ago offline, but now deployed online—that are meant to silence opposition to authoritarianism. Because of fear and intimidation, people will conform for two reasons: they want to fit in with the group (normative influence) and that they believe the group is better informed than they

are (informational influence) but considered disastrous if the flow of information is manipulated. These new tactics are designed to exploit the many-to-many nature of the Internet in ways that amplify the regime's messages while muffling the opposition (Gunitsky, 2015).

The third lesson is that the environmental crisis has far graver in impact than this pandemic. Overproduction and consumption patterns have to be disrupted as we need to change models and paradigms on how, when and what to eat and dispose of our waste. While the scientific community has no direct evidence that climate change is influencing the spread of COVID-19, many of the root causes of climate change also increase the risk of pandemics. Deforestation, which occurs mostly for agricultural purposes, is the largest cause of habitat loss worldwide and increases risks of emerging infectious diseases.

The rise of living standards over the past century resulted in severe degradation of the world's natural resources—an economic model that is simply not sustainable. The pandemic teaches us that to live in shared prosperity; we have to live within the capacity of our planet to support us. A move away from carbon- and resource-intensive industries, materials, and value chains has to be undertaken now and prioritize sustainable consumption and production—a way of life that enables economic growth, while ensuring planetary protection.

Carbon emissions from human activities must be reduced to near zero. The two-degree increase in global average surface temperature dating back to pre-industrial era (1880–1900) may seem insignificant, but it means a significant increase in global warming. This should lead to a complete structural transformation of land use, tourism, energy, transport, manufacturing, and industrial systems. This is where the needed investments should be directed. This mutation of neoliberalism with authoritarianism cannot be reversed by higher economic growth at the expense of democracy.

## Concluding Remarks

From this paper, the attempts by the Philippine government to respond to COVID-19 closely followed the path of a classic market-driven economic recovery. It viewed the crisis as a temporary setback for aggregate demand and not a systemic market failure. The pandemic has again exposed the failure of economic growth development models. With no stable global economic outlook seen in the immediate future, focus on human development should be made a priority as nations need to flatten the curves of infections and towering inequalities.

The government's non-resort to more borrowings but instead to rely solely on the arrival of a vaccine to revive



the flagging economy, now beset further by disastrous typhoons in the last quarter of 2020, contributed largely to our poor economic performance. For the Philippines, it is estimated that up to 3.6 percentage points was lost in GDP growth for 2020 if the strong economic fundamentals were matched by good governance. A dearth in health system capacity should be prioritized over and above any other type of spending, including traditional stimulus (e.g., large-scale infrastructure) spending. But the government instead wants a fiscal stimulus package for reducing corporate taxes in the hopes of attracting businesses to reinvest, create jobs and increase aggregate demand.

Democratic backsliding, on the other hand, has restrained participation and collaboration from other actors and stakeholders. Exclusionary societies hold back the ability of entire nations to develop their full potential. Bureaucratic politics and the rational actor paradigms limit the response of leaders and the bureaucracy. A deadly mix of autocratic leadership and adhocracy in the bureaucracy contributed to poor governance in this COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic became a double-edged sword that struck at the core tenets of democracy and governance. Operationally, this autocratic style of governing constitutes a challenge not just to the capacity for governance but that of legitimacy and trust in government.

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