

how this situation of uncertainty in Southeast Asia was interwoven with international elements like Japan's invasion in Manchuria in the decision making process of foreign policies among European and American colonial powers. If these points had been developed more carefully, the book would have been able to bring out the more dynamic structural changes in colonial Southeast Asia in the 1920s and 1930s. The continuities and changes in U. S. foreign policy in Southeast Asia after 1945 could have been more logically traced in the conclusion of this book. The above observations notwithstanding, this is a worthwhile work for enriching our knowledge of the history of U.S. diplomatic policy as well as its economic penetration in Southeast Asia.

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Alfred W. McCoy. *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009, xiii + 659p.

In 2008, I was in a packed audience in one of the Ateneo de Manila University's large halls. Along with some other Philippinists, Alfred W. McCoy gave a presentation on what would become one section of *Policing America's Empire*. During the open forum, one Filipino woman stood up and asked if it was true that Quezon collaborated with the Americans as a spy. McCoy answered with an air of confidence that documents amply proved that Quezon had indeed dealt with the Americans behind closed doors and, if I remember right, cited a few more examples of Quezon's nefarious dealings. Somehow, this exchange remained in my mind while reading this book.

*Policing America's Empire* is an exemplary achievement of scholarship. In this work, McCoy's long-standing interests in narcotics, torture and

state violence are woven into Philippine history. Its contents include clandestine operations of police, political threats, assassination plots, narcotics, illegal gambling, and prostitution — incidents and characters of what he calls the “netherworld.” Its seventeen chapters encompass more than one hundred years, from the late Spanish colonial era to the Arroyo administration and are basically arranged chronologically. The first chapter entitled “Capillaries of Empire” sets the stage, where a colony is used as a laboratory of new technologies. Practices of governmentality and new technologies in turn bounce back to the metropolis. In this way, McCoy shows how the democracy of both the metropolis and the colony are corrupted. Part One (Chapters 2–9) deals with the American colonial era and Part Two (Chapters 10–17) with the commonwealth and post-independence periods. In particular, Chapters 9 and 17 make this work an excellent case study of global history. Respectively, he describes the work of surveillance in the United States as a repercussion of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines and the implications of colonial rule for the present-day America's war on terror.

However, more than the sheer length of this book or its varied subject matters, the use of documents is truly impressive. His reading of primary documents is extensive, ranging from the papers of the famous, such as Manuel L. Quezon and Dean C. Worcester, to those of the obscure, like Ralph Van Deman. Findings in primary documents are supported with careful readings of secondary sources and a string of articles from various publications, from the well-known *Philippines Free Press* to the lesser-known *Makinaugalingon*. His writing style is precise and crisp and it is because of this, combined with his expository strategy of placing an eye-catching scene at the start of each chapter, that the book reads like a crime thriller.

Its contributions lie in McCoy's attempt to add to two inter-related topics of scholarly interests. The first contribution is to America's empire and

its policy on the peripheries. Since the early 2000s, "Empire" has been a catchword, and there have appeared a number of works that use "Empire" as a central theme. What distinguishes the present work from most other studies is the denseness of descriptions as well as the nuanced examination of trans-border flows of ideas and people. Chapters are filled with detailed accounts of historical context, U.S. influences and Filipino applications. For instance, in Chapter 1, he delineates the technological advances of the late Victorian era. Along with typewriters and telegraphs, he describes the invention of Decimal Classification and its application in libraries, hospitals and the armed forces. Then, he discusses its evolution into the world's first scientific criminal identification system invented by Alphonse Bertillon. After providing the reader with the background of the Guardia Civil and affiliated paramilitary organizations of the Spanish colonial era, as well as America's colonial war and racial divide in the early part of American colonization, he sets a Spanish mestizo named Rafael Crame as the central figure of Chapter 5. Crame started to use Bertillon's criminal identification system and applied it to the enemies of the American colonial state under the aegis of American constabulary Chief Harry H. Bandholz. In Chapter 9, some thirty years later in California, intelligence officer Ralph Van Deman, who served in the Philippines, used it against the Japanese Americans for spying allegations. And later still, McCoy suggests, this method along with Deman's confidential files would be used against "radical" Hollywood celebrities and would have reverberating effects on California politics. Here, we see that ideas, people and technologies move both ways, from the metropolis to the colony and from the colony to the metropolis.

McCoy's second contribution is to the question of continuity of Philippine political culture. In his descriptions, Philippine history of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has consistently been

filled with gambling, goons and political intrigues. In this regard, the present work shares similar tendencies with other notable studies on Philippine politics by American-trained political scientists. Despite these shared tendencies, here again, McCoy breaks from the previous studies. In the now-classic works on Philippine politics such as John Sidel's study of bossism and McCoy's own edited book on political families, these "dysfunctional" features of Philippine politics were, more than anything else, attributed to Filipino essential cultural traits. In *Policing America's Empire*, McCoy argues that they arose from the Americans' efforts to suppress revolutionary nationalism as well as their double-talk on formal democracy and backdoor coercion, plus their own corruption. He claims that these "dysfunctional" features then became a staple in Philippine politics. Opium consumed mostly by the Chinese around the turn of the century became methamphetamine to which middle-class college students were addicted in the 1960s and which proliferated and turned into a billion-dollar underground industry during the Estrada administration. *Jueteng* as a popular form of gambling, which existed even before the American colonial rule, grew disproportionately and was connected with the national politics in the 1990s. Then, it played the central role in major political scandals of the Estrada and Arroyo administrations. The U.S. Army's pacification efforts were, via anti-communist campaign in the 1950s, repeated in the "salvagings" undertaken by the Marcos dictatorship, Cory Aquino's internal security policy, Ramos's state-endorsed massacres and Arroyo's extra-judicial killings. Similarities and recurrences of these incidents certainly make his argument very persuasive.

Seen in this light, owing to its strength as a historical study involving the careful use of documents and compilation of incidents, *Policing America's Empire* rests at the apex of studies on Philippine politics. Grounded observations of goons

and politicians in Cavite and Cebu, party-switching and lack of substantial party platforms, family-as-political dynasty, gambling-like political competition among caciques — these issues have been brought up in previous discussions on Philippine politics. However, when they were interpreted as representative features of Philippine politics, these studies were subject to critiques that labeled them as “Orientalism.” McCoy’s work defies interpretation. He presents bare descriptions of massive corruptions in one hundred years of Philippine politics. “Orientalism” or not, he might say, this is what happened and what is happening.

Amidst numerous facts and complex references, McCoy sets a clear logic. Referring to Jürgen Habermas, he claims that “each crisis of legitimacy is best resolved by a widening of political participation” (p. 266). When the Americans controlled the Philippines as colonial masters, Filipino nationalists tried to create political crisis’ to divert power to themselves. For instance, in the 1920s, Quezon tried to raise the ante by using Detective Ray Conley’s corruption case in an effort to delegitimize Leonard Wood’s governorship (Chapter 8). Political developments after the fall of Marcos can also be explained with the same logic. People Power, the ousting of Estrada and the “mob” rallies in support of him are all manifestations of the expansion of political participation at the time of crisis. This thesis is even supported by the legal structure of the Philippine constitution. According to his analysis, the 1987 constitution regards the “people” as a third legislative chamber and legitimizes popular participation in the streets as a means to bring about political change (p. 496).

This book is indispensable reading not only for Philippinists, but also those who are interested in U. S. Empire or in the global history of the twentieth century. It is well-organized, its logic is crystal clear, and its descriptions highly persuasive. Nevertheless, like any other scholarly work, this work is written from a certain perspective. Even

with many revealing facts about the Philippines, this is essentially a work of political history. The tenet that underlies 600-plus pages is the notion of democracy based on transparency and due process. Crimes and social vices are antithetical to this notion and therefore corrupting. The Philippines is described as a place where crimes and social vices overwhelm democracy and its history is presented as a story of “dysfunctional” democracy. Given the purview of different statecrafts and the place of democracy as an unquestionable ideal among them, there is no way to deny the importance of McCoy’s approach. However, history can be more than that.

For instance, why is it that Philippine society as a whole has been so pro-American? After all, the American colonial venture in the Philippines was, as McCoy proves, violent and odious to the people of the colony. Despite all this, U. S. offered something very appealing to the Filipino people. U. S. colonialism is remembered not as a time of rampant political corruptions and social vice, but as a period of tutelage for modern, democratic government. In order to understand this seeming contradiction, it is necessary to see not just what happened and how they happened, but how these incidents were remembered. Certainly, McCoy may argue that, along with the powerful discourse of democratic tutelage, surveillance, censorship, and repression effectively silenced the voices of the radical opposition. But memories must have persisted and, to me, the radical opposition found a way to repeatedly express their grievances in Philippine history.

Related to this point would be an analysis of those under surveillance. In the beginning section of the book, they were the revolutionaries. By the 1930s, they were political rivals, criminals, and bad cops. McCoy clarifies the workings of surveillance and its influence on the politics, but does not really look into how the surveillance affected its subjects other than those who have succeeded in transforming themselves into masterful politicians like

Quezon. In addition to political tutelage and popular education, he proves that actual coercion helped break the thriving revolutionary movement in the early part of U. S. colonial era. If so, what happened to the revolutionaries whose minds were broken by threats? How did these apostasies affect Filipino society? (After all, the political situation and social disturbances of the 1930s such as the Sakdal Uprising suggest that the memories of the revolution and apostasies were not completely suppressed.) What were the long-term effects of this strategy at the societal level other than gambling, crimes and narcotics? These questions seem to be of importance in understanding the Philippines, at least as important as the questions regarding “dysfunctional” democracy.

One more critique I would like to raise here concerns the understanding of violence. In McCoy’s portrayal, the Philippines is a violent place due to both state and non-state actors. In one memorable section, he states that the Cory Aquino administra-

tion equaled, if not surpassed, the Marcos dictatorship in its human rights violations on per-year basis (p. 443). We all remember how Cory was regarded when she died in 2009. She was still the symbol of People Power, not of mass murder. In the final analysis, when dealing with the question of violence, the most important factor may not be the level of violence, but how that violence is interpreted. While I admire McCoy’s careful writings and thorough research, in this respect, his perspective on the Philippines is somewhat simplistic.

Lastly, although the book is already a monumental achievement, I regret that he probably had to cut out some of the sections he had originally intended to include. In his “Acknowledgments,” he refers to the Philippines Constabulary papers at the University of Oregon Library, but nowhere in this voluminous book could I find the reference to these papers.

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