

LIBERALISM 101



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PREFACE

The Center for Liberalism and Democracy (CLD) is the think tank of the Liberal Party (LP). Founded in 2017, it replaced the defunct National Institute for Policy Studies (NIPS) which was set up in 1989.

Most political parties in the Philippines revolve around personages rather than ideas. Thus, party members transfer from one party to another on the basis of convenience or due to the tides of political fortune and electoral campaigns tend to emphasize entertainment rather than platforms.

The fact that the LP has had a research and policy institute since 1989 shows that it has tried to be ideologically coherent, with issue briefers, party platforms and a general program of action discussed before, during and after election campaigns.

This reader-friendly handbook is intended for current and prospective LP members, students and the general public. It covers liberalism's basic definitions, values and principles, history, similarities and differences with other political ideologies, and the current challenges liberals and democrats face.

The gestation of liberalism during the Spanish and American colonial periods, its growth and suppression later on are also tackled. The little known fact that Jose Rizal himself was a liberal having been influenced by Spain's Cadiz Constitution of 1812 is mentioned.

Also discussed are political, social and economic issues as well as the values of liberalism – freedom, personal responsibility, individualism, peace, rule of law, tolerance and pluralism, enlightenment and progress, open society, spontaneous order, people empowerment and inclusive development. Also explained is why the majority of LP stalwarts are social liberals.

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GERRY BULATAO

Founding Chairman
Center for Liberalism and Democracy



DEFINING LIBERALISM

There is no single answer to the question, what is liberalism? Even when we limit the term within the parameters of ideology, political thought and social science, “Liberalism is a term employed in a dizzying variety of ways” (Bell, 2014). As Gaus, Courtland, and Schmitz (2020) explained, “Liberalism is more than one thing... (encompassing) a range of related but sometimes competing visions”.

Let us take a look at some of its definitions:

Merriam-Webster (n.d) defines Liberalism as “a political philosophy based on belief in progress, the essential goodness of the human race, and the autonomy of the individual, and standing for the protection of political and civil liberties.”

Harrison and Boyd (2018) argued that “To liberals, society is underpinned by a morality of self-interest and mutual support and respect. While the driving force of the liberal society is enlightened self-interest, this becomes a balance of interests, institutions and, ultimately, political power in society. Thus, both chaos and tyranny are avoided.”

American Professor of Philosophy and Law, Samuel Freeman (2020), explained that “Liberalism in politics is associated with non-authoritarianism, the rule of law, constitutional government with limited powers, and the guarantee of civil and political liberties. A liberal society is tolerant of different religious, philosophical, and ethical doctrines and allows individuals to freely form and express their conscientious convictions and opinions on all matters and live according to their chosen purposes and life paths. In economic terms, liberalism is associated with an unplanned economy with free and competitive markets, as well as private ownership and control of productive resources.”

Classical liberalism is Laissez-Faire, French for “let it be” or “leave it alone”; a term used to describe the political and ideological belief dominant in Britain during the nineteenth century that the state has no active role in running the economy or solving social problems (Harrison & Boyd, 2018).

Protecting and enhancing the freedom of the individual is central in liberalism as a political doctrine (Dagger, n.d.). Dagger (n.d.) stated that, “Liberals typically believe that is necessary to protect individuals from being harmed by others, but they also recognize that government itself can pose a threat to liberty.”

Dr. Julio Teehankee (2005) of De La Salle University-Manila, described liberalism as “an ideology committed to the individual and a society in which individuals can pursue and realize their interests.”

Liberalism comes from the Latin word, liber, meaning free.

One way of understanding liberalism is knowing what it is not or what it is against: authoritarianism, totalitarianism, highly centralized government and economy, human rights abuses and social injustice, chaos and lawlessness.

Harrison and Boyd (2018) identified the key themes of liberalism, as follows: the individual and his/her rights; an optimistic view of human nature; a belief in progress; a commitment to freedom; limited government; and a commitment to internationalism.

These are all interrelated. For example, if one's rights is not protected, a person's freedom cannot be guaranteed. Despite the many variants in its scope and definition, liberalism puts primacy on individual rights and freedom.



THE ROOTS OF LIBERALISM

Liberalism in Europe

According to History.com (2009), the English philosopher and political theorist John Locke (1632-1704) laid much of the groundwork for the development of liberalism. He advocated empirical scientific approaches and advocated the theory of the self as a blank page, with knowledge and identity arising only from accumulated experience. His political theory of government is defined by the consent of the governed as a means to protect the three natural rights of “life, liberty and estate”, which deeply influenced the founding fathers of the United States. He favored religious tolerance as an early model for the separation of church and state.

Liberal democracy traces its origins – and its name – to the 18th Century Age of Enlightenment when Europe consisted mostly of monarchies (cs.mcgill.ca, n.d.). Conventional views were challenged by enlightened intellectuals who believed that human affairs should be guided by reason and not by rulers who rule by virtue of noble birth (cs.mcgill.ca). The French Revolution sought the abolition of the ancien regime with its battle cry of liberty, equality and brotherhood that were also reechoed in later movements in France and beyond, including the Philippines.

In the 19th Century, liberalism became the preeminent reform movement in Europe (Girvetz, Dagger, Minogue & Ball, 2020). In

Roman Catholic countries, this movement tended to be anti-clerical which sought to restrict the immense civil authority and political power of the clergy (Girvetz, et al., 2020). Liberalism in 19th Century Spain directly impacted the Reformist Movement in the Philippines, and the subsequent Philippine Revolution.

Democracy as an Asian Heritage

Liberalism and democracy are often viewed as Western concepts and constructs. This became the basis of eminent Asian leaders like Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore who rejected the universality of democracy and argued that not every nation is suitable to democracy, a supposedly Western ideal. Lee, Malaysia's Mahathir Mohammed and others favored Asian values that, among other, led to the rise of Asian economic tigers.

"It's the economy, stupid" was the famous phrase coined by political campaign strategist James Carville in 1992, which aided in the victory of Bill Clinton in that year's presidential elections. It was anchored on the premise that most Americans considered the economy as the main campaign issue which would, in turn, determine the outcome of the elections. Indeed, it is hard to argue with economic success.

However, the late South Korean President Kim Dae Jung labelled Asia's inherently anti-democratic Asian values as a myth. During his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000, Pres. Kim narrated that:

In the decades of my struggle for democracy, I was constantly faced with the refutation that western-style democracy was not suitable for Asia, that Asia lacked the roots. This is far from true.

In Asia, long before the west, the respect for human dignity was written into systems of thought, and intellectual traditions upholding the concept of 'demos' took root... Revere the people, as you would heaven... was the central tenet in the political thoughts of China and Korea as early as three thousand years ago. Five centuries later in India, Buddhism rose to preach the supreme importance of one's dignity and rights as a human being. There were also ruling ideologies and institutions that placed the people first... And this, 2,000 years before John Locke expounded the theory of the social contract and civic sovereignty.

"In China and Korea, feudalism was brought down and replaced with counties and prefectures before the birth of Christ, and civil service exams to recruit government officials are a thousand years-old. The exercise of power by the king and high officials were monitored by robust systems of auditing. In sum, Asia was rich in the intellectual and institutional traditions that would provide fertile grounds for democracy. What Asia did not have was the organizations of representative democracy. The genius of the west was to create the organizations, a remarkable accomplishment that has greatly advanced the history of humankind."

President Kim Dae Jung was one of the founders of the Council of Asian Liberals & Democrats (CALD) together with Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, the late ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan, and former Budget Secretary Florencio "Butch" Abad, among others.

The Filipinos' Deeply Rooted Sense of Right and Justice

The late icon of the democratic struggle against Martial Law, Senator Jose W. Diokno, argued that "Tagalogs, Cebuanos, Ilonggos and Pampangos have a common word for justice: katarungan. The root word of katarungan is tarong, a Visayan word which means straight, upright, appropriate or correct. For Filipinos, therefore, justice is rectitude, doing the morally right act, being upright, or

doing what is appropriate...We also have a common word for right: karapatan. The root word of karapatan – dapat – has a meaning very close to tarong – fitting, correct, appropriate.

Our language, therefore, tells us that for us Filipinos, the concepts of justice and right are intimately related.

The Filipino Reform Movement

The Propaganda Movement was spearheaded by an elite group of Filipino expatriates in Europe, mostly in Spain. These reformists exposed the evils of both the civil and religious authorities in the archipelago. Its mouthpiece was La Solidaridad which was founded by Graciano Lopez Jaena in 1888. Its most famous personality was Dr. Jose Rizal whose execution in 1896 served as a catalyst for the Philippine Revolution against Spain.

As the former Resident Representative of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation-Manila, Dr. Ronald Meinardus (2006) observed, “[In Asia] a powerful conservative phalanx has denigrated liberals with all sorts of negative epithets such as immoral, irresponsible, and foremost, unpatriotic. The Philippines, very fortunately, is different in this regard. For the average Filipino, liberalism has a positive resonance. They associate it with triumphant phases in their history such as the anti-colonial struggles or a fight against domestic tyrants.”

Influence of American Democratic Traditions

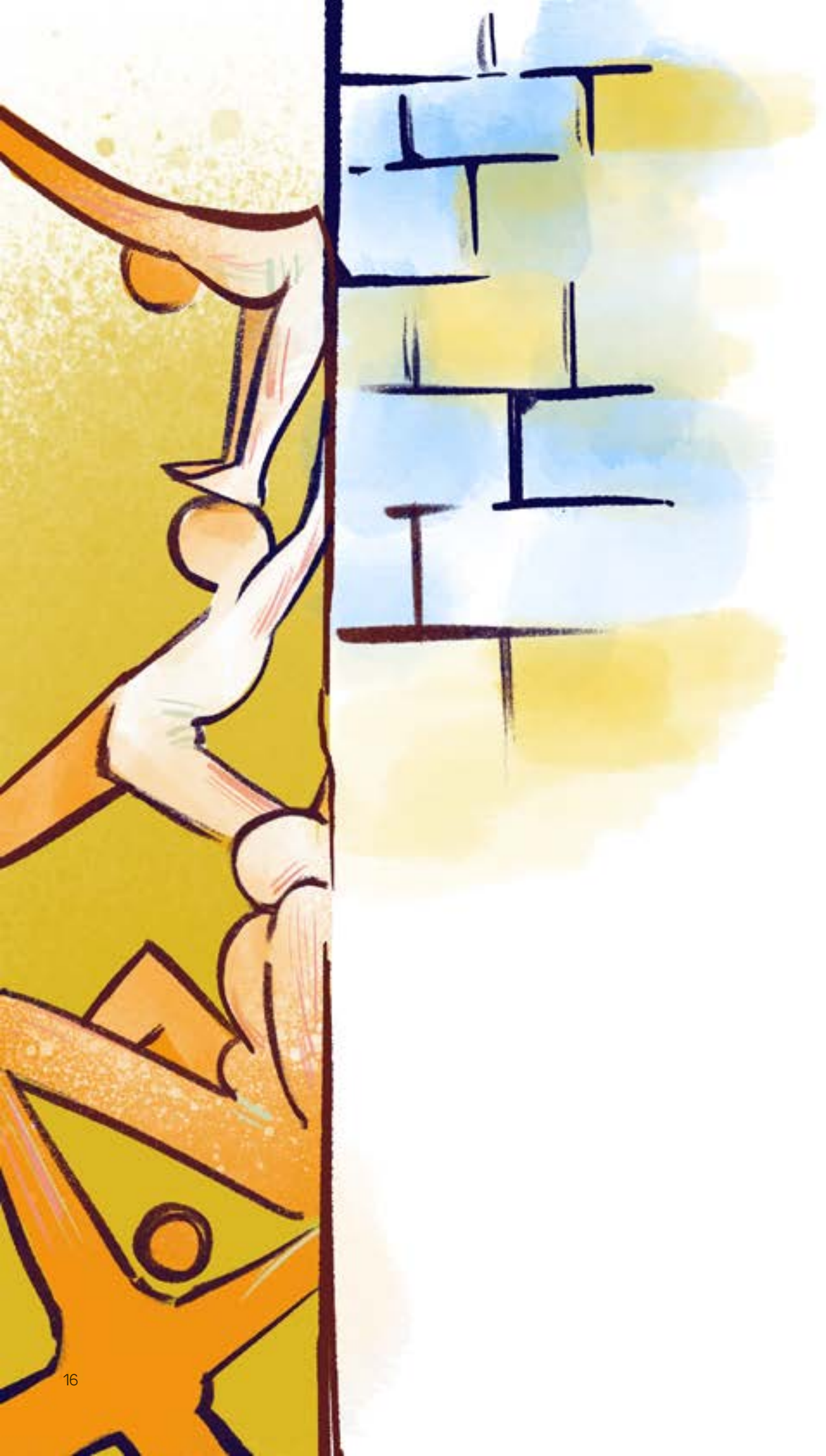
The Philippines became a colony of the United States with an American Governor General from 1901 until the establishment of the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935. The Tydings-McDuffie Act or the Philippine Independence Act is a 1934 federal law that prescribed the process of the archipelago's independence after a 10-year transition period.

During the Philippine Commonwealth, the president and vice president as well as the members of the legislature were directly elected in a nationwide vote of adult Filipinos. The plebiscite on women's suffrage only occurred in 1937 or two years after the 1935 national elections wherein almost 91 percent of the male voters moved for its approval. The commonwealth also had a strong and functioning judicial system although it must be noted that the Supreme Court was established by the American Insular Government much earlier in 1901.

The 1935 Philippine Constitution, which was ratified in a national plebiscite, was largely modelled after its American template. It favored a republican form of government with a strong bill of rights and the separation of powers into three branches of government.

The commonwealth ended when the Americans finally granted independence on the Fourth of July, in 1946 amidst the rubble of a war-torn nation. Its founding President was Manuel A. Roxas who founded the Liberal Party only a few months earlier on January 19, 1946.

Another legacy of the American occupation was the establishment of political parties. The Nacionalista Party, the oldest political party not only in the country but also in Southeast Asia, was founded in 1907. The Liberal Party was the result of the breakaway of the Liberal Wing of the Nacionalista Party.



LIBERAL DEMOCRACY & THE THREAT OF POPULISM

“Liberal democracy,” according to Harris (2018), “rests on the republican principle, takes constitutional form, and incorporates the civic egalitarianism and majoritarian principles of democracy. At the same time, it accepts and enforces the liberal principle that the legitimate scope of public power is limited.”

According to Faust (2013), the central idea of liberal democracy is the “inclusive participatory rights of all citizens permit contestation for the legislature or executive. Those who govern are thus bound by the preferences of encompassing majorities. Free and fair elections, the freedom of assembly, association, the press as well as the protection of fundamental rights are institutional principles that characterise democratic systems today. After the end of the Cold War, these principles seemed to become accepted as a canon of universal values of legitimate rule.”

Liberal democracies, in particular the United States and Western European countries, have dominated the world’s economic and political life. This was especially so after the Fall of the Berlin Wall with many countries in the former East bloc joining the European Union.

But much has been written about the failure of liberal democracy that recently resulted to the worldwide resurgence of populism that

inflicted even a globally recognized bastion of democracy, the United States of America with the election of Donald Trump and the United Kingdom with the victory of Brexit, both happening in 2016, the year when Rodrigo Duterte was elected as the 16th President of the Philippines.

Tucker (2019) described that “the rise of populism...amounts to an assertion of the will of the people against what they see as a distant elite that has denied peoples in nations the rights to govern themselves.”

“Liberal democracy today, having aligned itself with capitalism, is producing a generalized feeling of weariness and disillusionment with government among the citizenry of many countries,” Frausto, Powell and Vitale (2020) observed. “Because of a decades-long march of globalized capitalism, economic oligarchies have gained oppressive levels of political power, and as a result, the economic needs of many people around the world have been neglected.”

“Almost two decades ago Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the victory of liberal democracy. Today he is seeing the system shattered in large part by identity politics,” observed A.L. (2018). “Identity politics (is) when people adopt political positions based on their ethnicity, race, sexuality or religion rather than on broader policies. Though it started on the left, it has been more potent on the right: it fueled Donald Trump's election and Britain's vote to leave the European Union” (A.L., 2018).

Way back in 1999, Cerny predicted that “rather than a new pluralistic global civil society, globalization is more likely to lead to a growth in inequalities, a fragmentation of effective governance structures and the multiplication of quasi-fiefdoms reminiscent of the Middle Ages.”

Liberals worldwide must do some serious soul-searching given the rise of identity politics and demagoguery without necessarily agreeing with the assertion that it is the failure of liberal democracy that precipitated populism.

During the 13th CALD General Assembly (November 2020), Vice President Leni Robredo argued that “This process requires shedding the idea that, armed with our position papers and PhDs, we always know what is best. This gap in humility is in fact what demagogues are so skilled at weaponizing: They make their crass pronouncements and sleep in mosquito nets to signal a sameness with the frustrated... But while populism dresses itself up in cosmetic affinity, the liberal response must be to pursue authentic human engagement. To lean towards the ground and share in the struggle of the people.”

Dinagat Governor, Kaka Bag-ao, in her speech during the 2019 Freedom Night of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (Manila), stated that “The opposite of freedom is poverty... Let us continue breaking apart the Walls, the Doors and the Ceilings that prevent all our people, especially the marginalized and the poor from being truly free!”

If the ghost of Marcos has been resurrected in the present regime of President Duterte, the liberating Spirit of EDSA can once again be an overwhelming presence in our society (Coronel, 2020).

But more than just a renaissance, the resurrection and resurgence of the Spirit of EDSA must be a conscious and deliberate effort to address and complete People Power's many unfulfilled promises, especially in terms of alleviating the living conditions of the poor and disenfranchised; in other words, an EDSA beyond nostalgia (Coronel, 2020).

SOCIAL LIBERALISM

Social liberalism is a variant of liberalism with significant differences from classical liberalism that calls for minimal government and open markets that are free from government regulation. Classical liberalism is anchored on the framework that individuals must be free from unreasonably powerful and potentially abusive governments.

Social liberalism is also known as left liberalism in Germany, new liberalism (not to be confused with neoliberalism) in the United Kingdom, and modern liberalism in the United States.

Classical Liberals and Libertarians jealousy regard the right to property in absolute terms. In contrast, according to Howarth (2009), “rights to property came to be seen by social liberals as instruments of state policy that had to contribute to broader political goals.”

Social liberalism is committed to the fair distribution of wealth (for example through taxation and public services) as well as political power (Howarth, 2009). Aside from a regulated market economy, social liberals favor the expansion of civil and political rights.

Majority of the stalwarts of the Liberal Party of the Philippines tend to be social liberals. Some of the outspoken proponents of social liberalism in LP are Senator Wigberto Tañada, Secretary Butch Abad and the late Senate President Jovito Salonga, all of whom served as party presidents.



Salonga, who was the de facto ideologue of the party for several years, declared during his 1989 lecture on the history and ideology of the Liberal Party that “Apart from the vigorous enforcement of a genuine land reform program, we are in favor of encouraging the establishment of small industries in the countryside even as we strive to build a sound industrial base for the entire nation.

Unless we address seriously the problem of massive poverty, we can never hope to stand on our own feet.

What the founder of the LP said many years ago is still valid today. We must narrow the gap between wealth and poverty by raising the status of the lowly. Our dream is to rebuild a society where the weak shall be strong and the strong shall be just.”

Among his many hats, Tañada is the lead convenor of the Fair Trade Alliance, a national multi-sectoral alliance espousing a comprehensive trade and development agenda reflecting the interests of the broad sectors of our society.

When he was at the helm of the Department of Budget Management, Secretary Abad became the main proponent of the “Bottom-Up” approach wherein budget preparations were “guided by needs identified at the grassroots level; most decidedly be a people-centric budget, aimed not just at the proper allocation of resources, but also at the substantial reduction of poverty” (Department of Budget and Management, 2012). The process engaged 300 to 400 of the poorest municipalities and involved the participation of communities and civil society (Department of Budget and Management, 2012).

The late Naga City Mayor and Local Government Secretary Jesse Robredo has always been synonymous with good governance. His leadership style has been hailed here and abroad as worthy of

emulation. His emphasis on meritocracy (hiring and promotion based on competence and not by birth or connection), the involvement of civil society and grassroots in government programs, the active participation of the poor and marginalized in social amelioration projects where they are not condescending considered as mere beneficiaries but as partners, and third-party assessment of government bureaucracy reflect the classical liberal principle of free competition and the social liberal principle of equitable sharing of resources and political power.

Vice President Robredo’s call for preferential treatment for the laylayan (the marginalized and disenfranchised) may be viewed as being anathema to key tenets of classical liberalism including the absoluteness of property rights and free competition.

Social Democrats favor the equitable distribution of wealth. Classical Liberals and Libertarians believe that wealth creation is a better solution and although the control and ownership of enterprises, especially of major corporations, are limited to a minority, the “trickle down” benefits could eventually and as a matter of natural course, reach the majority.

Social liberalism is a synthesis of these two opposing forces. “In a free and fair society, social mobility is ...more important than the distribution of wealth; and equality of opportunity trumps equality of outcomes,” as Kluth (2020) wrote for Bloomberg.

A Liberal believes that all men are created equal. But s/he also recognizes that people have different talents and capacities and that people are born in a society characterized by wide social and economic divides. A Liberal, therefore, believes that the opportunities for development must be made available to a person, regardless of the circumstances of his/her birth. Education, and social services such as health care are some of these social equalizers.

Social Liberals recognize the need for the state to institutionalize regulatory safety nets to cushion the impact of capitalism, and the social and economic inequalities that come with it.

Liberalism is rooted in Liber (free), and freedom is and remains the foundation for both Classical and Social Liberals. However, for Social Liberals, freedom must be tempered with fairness; thus, the market economy must be both free and fair. Classical Liberals tend to consider free trade as being inherently fair.

With climate change and global warming emerging as the most serious global concerns, Social Liberals are once again convinced of the need for sensible state intervention, not just within nations but more importantly, among them.

President Aquino supported the COP 21 Paris Accord of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). His environmental agenda included the alternative, inclusive urban development where people of varying income levels are integrated in productive, healthy and safe communities; and, the sustainable use of resources to benefit the present and future generations.

Aquino's Presidential Adviser for Environmental Protection was Dr. Neric Acosta who, during his three terms as Representative of Bukidnon, authored the groundbreaking Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Solid Waste Management Act, and the Biodiversity Protection Act.

Secretary Abad and his late wife, Henedina, a former Deputy Speaker, both served as representatives of Batanes. They promoted and supported the extensive use of alternative energy such as wind and solar power in their district that consisted of several far flung islands.

IDEOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

Philippine politics is patronage based and highly personalistic. It is not, therefore, surprising that the country has a weak political party system.

Quimpo (2007) asserted that “Dominated by the country’s politico-economic elite, (political parties) are built around personalities... ideologies and platforms are just adornments.”

Candidates’ campaign promises are often no more than soundbytes with the electorate seldom demanding more detailed explanation of how such promises could actually be implemented.

Campaign rallies have been described as having a fiesta atmosphere with celebrities and entertainers to attract crowds. In many of these events, the candidates themselves would render song and dance numbers.

A 1995 study by the Institute for Political and Electoral Reform “identified four determinants in which the Filipino voter chooses a candidate. The primary factor in choosing was based on the candidate’s popularity. Findings show that the voters tend to easily identify with the candidate’s popularity and public image. The next factor is the endorsement of traditional networks and organizations,



which includes the family, church and ward leaders. The third factor... is the characteristics that can be of benefit to the voter. The least consideration for the voters is the party program" (Institute for Political and Electoral Reform, 2012).

The Liberal Party is the exception to the rule. Being content with qualitative results measured solely in terms of the number of elected officials and senior government posts is for traditional politics (Coronel, 2013). Success indicators beyond numbers are important to assess if LP is to live up to its reputation as having the most cohesive platform and as being the most ideologically defined amongst the mainstream political parties (Coronel, 2013).

A provision in its party constitution describes LP as "a responsive, accountable and broad-based political party, unleashing the potential of an empowered citizenry through the Party's liberal democratic ideals, cohesive membership and courageous, principled leadership."

LP is a traditional mainstream political party having been the party in power during the Roxas, Quirino, Macapagal and Aquino presidencies. Yet, it has made concrete moves towards ideological integrity, programmatic reform and platform-based campaigns.

Two indicators are the presence of a strong research and policy institute; and its active engagement with international liberal alliances.

The party's first thinktank, the now defunct National Institute for Policy Studies (NIPS) was founded in 1989 and served as the principal political institute that undertook programs for the promotion of liberalism and democracy in the Philippines. As an Institute committed to liberal politics, it necessarily worked closely with the LP and other liberal groups and organizations; however, it was registered under Philippine laws as an independent organization.

NIPS provided opportunities, facilities and services for the systematic study, development and promotion of liberal politics in the Philippines primarily through public advocacy and political education programs for liberal political leaders and their supporters.

Three NIPS executive directors who are all lawyers would eventually occupy important positions in government: Al Agra, former Justice Secretary; Jose Luis "Chito" Gascon, current Chair of the Commission on Human Rights; and, Butuan Representative, Lawrence Fortune who is now on his third consecutive term.

The Center for Liberalism and Democracy (CLD) which was founded in 2018 now fills the gap created with the dissolution of NIPS. It serves as the nexus of liberal principles of the Liberal Party of the Philippines, primarily focusing on freedom, democracy, and inclusive development in the Philippines. It advocates the liberal principles of freedom and democracy; justice, social equity and human rights; and inclusive and sustainable development. Its main focuses are the formulation and review of policies, strengthening institutions and people empowerment.

A relatively young organization, it continues a long tradition; its chair and president were former trustees of NIPS. CLD has hosted several events attended by government officials, the private sector, civil society, media and academia covering a wide range of topics. CLD was instrumental in setting up the Liberal Caucus of Congressional Staff (LCCS) and has provided training workshops for their members including in strategic communications. With the LCCS, CLD is able to collate and discuss the legislative priorities of Liberal senators and congressmen.

In December 2019, it launched Plaza Miranda Magazine, CLD's quarterly policy and opinion publication which can be downloaded by anyone free of charge from its website and Facebook page. Edited by the CLD President, John Coronel, the four issues so far have tackled a variety of relevant topics including rice tariffication,

alternative energy, biodiversity friendly enterprises, smart cities, the CIVIC-19 pandemic, and the draconian Anti-Terror Bill. The magazine also serves as a repository of important speeches and statements of the Liberal Party and its key figures including Vice-President Leni Robredo; Senators Francis Pangilinan and Leila de Lima; and Representatives Kit Belmonte, and Stella Quimbo.

NIPS and CLD have published several books. CLD's 2021 publications include 75 Years of Philippine Freedom and Democracy: Anthology of Great Liberal Speeches (1946-2021) to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of the Liberal Party, and Radikal na Pagmamamahala, a visually stimulating Philippine adaptation of the Turkish book, Radical Love which chronicled the "path that opposition parties might take to defuse polarized environments and avoid playing into the political traps set by populists in power" (Wuthrich & Ingleby, 2020).

Chaired by former Agrarian Reform Undersecretary Gerry Bulatao, its board includes chiefs of staff from both houses of congress and a representative from the Office of the Vice President.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Liberals are Internationalists. In 1989 during the Paris Congress, the Liberal Party became the first Asian member of Liberal International, the London-based world federation of liberal and progressive democratic political parties.

In 2011, the Liberal Party hosted the first LI Congress in Asia which was formally opened in Malacanang Palace with President Aquino as keynote speaker.

The Liberal Party is a founding member of the Council of Asian Liberals & Democrats (CALD), with members from a dozen political parties in 11 countries including the ruling parties of Indonesia, Taiwan and Myanmar. The current Chair of CALD is LP President, Senator Francis Pangilinan. Senate President Franklin Drilon, Secretary Florencio Abad and Deputy Speaker Raul Daza have served as CALD Chairs before. Cavite Representative Francis "Blue" Abaya is the incumbent CALD Secretary General, a position previously held by Secretary Neric Acosta, Abad and President Aquino when he was still a congressman.

In 1999, Manila became the headquarters of the CALD Secretariat, six years after the organization's founding in Bangkok. CALD's first executive director was John Coronel, CALD's founding president. For more than a decade now, Celito Arlegue has been running the day to day operations of CALD as its executive director.

The Liberal Party has hosted several CALD conferences, workshops and other gatherings including joint meetings with the Alliance for Liberals & Democrats for Europe (ALDE). But aside from hosting events, LP has been instrumental in championing the causes of democratic activists like Nobel Laureate, Aung San Syu Kyi especially during her house arrest; Cambodian opposition leaders Sam Rainsy and Khim Sokha; and Jose Ramos Horta when East Timor was seeking independence.



PRESIDENT AQUINO'S SOCIAL CONTRACT WITH THE FILIPINO PEOPLE

Anchored on the premise that the absence of integrity, humility and trustworthiness in government has contributed to wide scale poverty, misery and despair. President Benigno Aquino's Social Contract set out its vision for a country with a re-awakened sense of right and wrong, through the living examples of our highest leaders; an organized and widely-shared rapid expansion of our economy through a government dedicated to honing and mobilizing our people's skills and energies as well as the responsible harnessing of our natural resources; a collective belief that doing the right thing does not only make sense morally, but translates into economic value as well; and, public institutions rebuilt on the strong solidarity of our society and its communities.

Its economic provisions have a social liberal orientation: impartial and decisive economic policies free from the influences of well-connected private interest; rural economy geared towards achieving food security, sustained productivity, and equitable economic growth to benefit farmers and countryside enterprises; creation of conducive conditions for growth and competitiveness of small, medium and big enterprises; and in consideration of the social costs of overseas employment, export of manpower must eventually be a choice rather than a matter of necessity or the absence of local employment.

THE LIBERAL PARTY GENERAL PROGRAM OF ACTION

Culled from several documents, two of the most recent being the Aquino Social Contract with the Filipino People, and the campaign platforms of the Roxas-Robredo Ticket during the 2016 elections, the Liberal Party's agenda and program of action were subjected to various evaluation, feedback and revision mechanisms not just among the leadership and elected officials but also with allied organizations (including CLD) and representatives from the grassroots level among the party's general membership, volunteers and supporters.

The Liberal Party is committed to an inclusive society characterized by meaningful political participation, justice and human rights for all, equality of economic opportunities, quality education, gender equality, and a healthy environment for its citizenry. Throughout its history, the Liberal Party has stood for the rule of law, protection of human rights, fair, free, and competitive elections, economic development and social justice.

The imperatives of inclusive development demand gains in health, better education outcomes, justice, and improved well-being of the people.

The emphasis on inclusivity, equitability and fairness is indicative of the party's social liberal leanings.

While the party recognized that there was economic growth especially during the Aquino administration, there remains much need to address the socio-economic inequalities that exist in Philippine society.

In terms of political development and democratic consolidation, there are several democratic deficits. This is manifested in the underrepresentation of stakeholders, inadequate consultation between the citizens and government and weak administrative capacity to effectively govern.

Elections remain the primary mechanism by which citizens exercise of sovereignty. Unfortunately, most of the major political parties become active only during the campaign and elections season. This is what separates LP from the rest. The LP is committed to enhancing citizen participation in governance -- the processes and institutions, both formal and informal, that guide and temper activities in the pursuit of collective interests.

As can be seen in previous sections of this book, LP initiates and enhances other avenues to engage citizens in governance in particular, and nation building in general.

The pursuit of a socially inclusive Philippines begins with deepening democracy.

Liberal Party's principles, policies and processes makes the LP the only mainstream political party that is truly ideologically coherent, reformist and progressive.

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