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Corrupting Influences. Duterte, Roque, Philippines. – Sison

By [Jose C. Sison](#)

“Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

This is a saying that squarely applies to Philippine politicians and government officials without any exception, including the officials in the present administration of Rodrigo Duterte.

Hence it can be said indeed that Duterte’s much vaunted “war” against corruption is nothing but pure and simple talk, an empty gesture signifying nothing. The best proof as to the truth of this observation is the change in the lifestyle of people he has appointed to high positions in government particularly the members of his Cabinet and his staff in Malacanang.

Obviously they are now living like the “*nouveau riche*” similar to officials in previous administrations. If there is any noticeable change happening now, it is the change in the lifestyle of those who assumed the positions of power at the start of ‘Digong’s’ administration. They are obviously enjoying the power and pelf of the high positions they occupy.

This is the constant change occurring every time a new administration assumes power.



Harry Roque

This observation acquires more validity in the case of Kabayan Party-list Representative Harry Roque, the newly appointed Presidential Spokesman replacing the venerable and more discrete Presidential Spokesman Ernesto Abella who tried his very best in toning down and explaining the belligerent and conflicting utterances of his boss, ‘Tatay Digong’ (Duterte).

Even before assuming office, the heady brew of power has already seeped into the head of Roque. He threatened to throw hollow blocks at people if they criticize (“throw stones”) at Duterte. Of course such a stance is not surprising because Roque has a reputation for being an outspoken lawyer who is quite harsh in his choice of words.





More surprising in his designation as presidential spokesman is the fact that he is a staunch human rights advocate who apparently belongs to minority party in the Lower House. Apparently, he should have been a forefront of the defense against the alleged killings of the poor and defenseless suspected violators of the Dangerous Drugs Act without due process and judicial trial.

So his acceptance of such a position appears to be a complete turn-around from his reputed stand on this burning issue now besetting this administration. He appears to have burned all his bridges in order to cling to a more powerful government post.

Whether his appointment is a change for the better as far as the image of the Duterte administration is concerned, remains to be seen.

Noteworthy in this connection is the fact that he appears to be the exact opposite of Abella who is more sober, calm and composed. Admittedly, he thinks, acts and talks like Duterte and thus may not be an effective spokesman lessening the adverse impacts of Duterte's sudden outburst and intemperate language. In fact he conceded that he and his boss could be an "explosive" tandem.

More alarming in this connection is that he wants more power than that of a presidential spokesman who is just an undersecretary in the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO). He wants to head a new office with a Cabinet rank denominated as the Office of the Presidential Spokesperson (OPS) with a budget of its own. And under the pretext of having a "moderating" force that will mitigate his alleged "explosive" tandem with Duterte, he wants to have at least two undersecretaries and a couple of assistant secretaries. He proposed that one of his deputies should be a lawyer also although exactly his "opposite" because he and Duterte might generate "fireworks" everyday.

With such a proposal to have more power, it is quite clear and almost inevitable that Roque or anyone else who may be appointed to the new

position may be corrupted much more following the adage that “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” This is exactly contrary to Duterte’s avowed “war” against corruption in government.



Another ‘War’

Another ongoing “war” is the war pursued by Duterte supporters against those whom they perceive to be opposing, criticizing and undermining the Duterte administration.

Since Duterte assumed office, these diehard supporters have been imagining and fancying the existence of some groups who are enemies of this administration or biased against Duterte and his government. Even some of the mainstream media have been assailed for supposedly refusing to publish or air events and other news favorable to Duterte.

This kind of attitude has only brought discord and division in our country. Apparently these Duterte backers are too self-righteous and inveterately think that they are always correct and those who disagree with them are wrong.

...get rid of creating and imagining the existence of only pro and anti Duterte people...

Worse in this connection are the underhanded and unfair tactics they use against those who raise some issues contrary and detrimental to Duterte. Instead of squarely facing the issues raised, they personally attack, vilify and shame these people with invectives. Clearly this divisive atmosphere is not good for our country.

It is about time that we must discard and get rid of creating and imagining the existence of pro and anti Duterte people.

The only possible groupings we should have in our country are the pro-Philippines and pro-Filipinos who will wage a war against corruption by electing politicians who will not be corrupted by power-politicians who firmly believe that the power and glory of this world will come to pass (“*Sic transit Gloria mundi*”). - [Jose C. Sison](#)



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*Mr. Sison's commentary was first published in the [Philippines Star](#).
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