
SHIFTING PATTERN AND SOPHISTICATION OF THE AMERICAN COLONIAL DOMINATION IN THE PHILIPPINES: FROM COLONIALISM TO TECHNOLOGICAL DOMINATION

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This article aims to demonstrate the shifting pattern and sophistication of the American colonial domination in the Philippines and the way in which this kind of domination has transformed the Philippines into a seemingly conformist society. However, in doing so, it does not claim that the Philippines was better off in the past and that the United States has caused its decline, though it can be observed that an invasion of a society at the “margins” by a power from the “center” can result in, for example, cultural displacement. What this article argues instead is that a meaningful engagement with any relevant issues in postcolonial Philippine society requires an in-depth understanding of how this society has undergone structural changes in the past.

This article is divided into two major parts. The first part demonstrates how the United States as the leading colonial power in the 20th century transformed its technique of controlling the Philippines, that is, from classical colonial to neocolonial forms. This involves a discussion of the four major types of domination inherent in capitalist colonialism, namely: militaristic, economic, political, and cultural domination. The article shows that these four types of domination have contributed to the stagnation of the Philippine economy and the destruction of the body politic, as well as the intensification of violence and social injustice in

modern day Philippines. The second part shows that of all the four types of domination imposed by the United States in the Philippines, technological domination, as a specific feature of cultural domination and which is understood in this study as the deliberate imposition of the American way of life among the Filipinos, plays the most commanding role as it seeps down their consciousness, resulting in what we can observe in the history of domination and resistance in the Philippines as the erosion of Filipino critical consciousness. In other words, technological domination has rendered most Filipinos today impervious to calls for social and political actions. Two major issues that contributed to the emergence of this phenomenon will be explained here, namely: a) the introduction of American-oriented "consumer culture" through the manipulation of the work attitude and consumption habit of the Filipinos; and b) the disappearance of critical media and the sexual objectification of Filipino women in the commercial media.

KEYWORDS: critical consciousness, consumption habit, imperialism, neocolonialism, resistance, work attitude

FROM IMPERIALISTIC TO NEOCOLONIAL DOMINATION

PERHAPS THE BEST way to fully understand the development of American domination in the Philippines is to quote few passages from Senator Albert J. Beveridge's speech before the 56th Congress of the United States in 1900. It reads:

... MR. PRESIDENT, the times call for candor. The Philippines are ours forever, "territory belonging to the United States," as the Constitution calls them. And just beyond the Philippines are China's illimitable markets. We will not retreat from either. We will not repudiate our duty in the archipelago. We will not abandon our opportunity in the Orient. We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustees, under God, of the civilization of the world. We will move forward to our work, not howling our regrets like slaves whipped to their burdens, but with gratitude for a task worthy of our

strength, and thanksgiving to Almighty God that He has marked us as His chosen people, henceforth to lead in the regeneration of the world.

This island empire is the last land left in all the oceans. If it should prove a mistake to abandon it, the blunder once made would be irretrievable. If it proves a mistake to hold it, the error can be corrected when we will. Every other progressive nation stands ready to relieve us.

But to hold it will be no mistake. Our largest trade henceforth must be with Asia. The Pacific is our ocean. More and more Europe will manufacture the most it needs, secure from its colonies the most it consumes. Where shall we turn for consumers for our surplus? Geography answers the question. China is our natural customer. She is nearer to us than England, Germany, or Russia, the commercial powers of the present and the future. They moved closer to China by securing permanent bases on her borders. *The Philippines gives us a base at the door of all the East.*

Lines of navigation from our ports to the Orient and Australia; from Isthmian Canal to Asia; from all Oriental ports to Australia, *converge at and separate from the Philippines.* They are self-supporting, dividend-paying fleet, permanently anchored at a spot selected by the strategy of Providence, commanding the Pacific. *And the Pacific is the ocean of commerce in the future. Most future conflicts will be conflicts for commerce. The power that rules the Pacific, therefore, is the power that rules the world. And, with the Philippines, that power is and will forever be the American Republic....* (Beveridge qtd. in Lane-O'Sullivan 86-87)

The tenor of this speech reflects perfectly the real attitude of the American administration toward the Philippines at the start of the American colonial period. On the one hand, the US wanted to take hold of the Philippines for the double purpose of exploiting its rich natural resources through massive investments and the creation of markets for American surplus. On the other, they wanted to use the Philippines as their access point for the control of commerce in the Pacific Rim (including Australia) and to the rest of Asia, especially China and then [from the second half of the 20th century and onward] the Middle East. Beveridge's

speech also typifies the racist aspect of colonial domination wherein the purported supremacy of Western culture over the non-Western ones justifies the violence committed in the subjugated territories. In the other passage of the same speech, Beveridge (qtd. in Rodriguez 6) says: “[The Filipinos] are not capable of self-government. How could they be? They are not [a] self-governing race. They are Orientals, Malays, instructed by Spaniards in the latter’s worst estate. They know nothing about practical government except as they have witnessed the weak, corrupt, cruel, and capricious rule of Spain.” An analysis of Philippine-American relations, therefore, needs to be viewed in this light, that is, how domination is imposed by a central Western power over a non-Western nation at the periphery, and not from the sugarcoated “Benevolent Assimilation” of President McKinley. This is all the more important to note because, as we shall see later, the erosion of Filipino critical consciousness means an integration and adoption of the values and representations of the American way of life. Given the racist, “white” ideology underlying the US relations to a poorer cousin like the Philippines, by internalizing the American way of life, Filipino consciousness not only internalizes a consumer culture that anesthetizes any critical potential inherited from past struggles against another colonial power, such as Spain, but also a culture that shows deep contempt for it. It produces a form of self-loathing and an inferiority complex that is somehow unknown in the West.

1. Militaristic Domination. The heavily lopsided yet enduring Philippine-American relations that we know today started with American brutalities committed against the Filipinos during the Philippine-American War a century ago. It was in this war of aggression that the Americans slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Filipinos, both insurgents and civilians, who resisted American domination. This bloody event in Philippine history, which has been forgotten by many Filipinos today, is the brutal way in which American culture was imposed upon the native population, and marks the beginning of American capitalism in the country. The primary purpose of militaristic domination was the establishment and protection of American trade in the Philippines.

As history shows, after the Americans barred the Filipino insurgents from entering Manila during the Battle of Manila Bay on 1 May 1898, the latter returned to Kawit, Cavite where Gen.

Emilio Aguinaldo, the leader of the revolutionary forces, resided until his retreat to the mountainous region of Central Luzon to evade the Americans. In Kawit, Gen. Aguinaldo proclaimed the independence of the Philippine Islands from Spanish rule as a result of the defeat of the Spaniards in the Battle of Manila Bay. As is well-known, Spain and the United States did not recognize this proclamation. In December 1898, Spain finally ceded the Philippine Islands to the Americans through the Treaty of Paris which also marked the end of the Spanish-American War. The tension that existed between the American colonialists and the Filipino insurgents eventually resulted in the Filipino-American War as the Filipino insurgents were determined to continue the fight for independence.

At first, the Americans were confident that they could win the war in just a short time because of their superior firepower against Filipino forces who were armed mostly with bolos and few rifles. During their first encounters, the Filipino insurgents who stood bravely against the overwhelming American forces were easily crushed. In one instance, hundreds of Filipino insurgents were killed when the Americans steamed up the Pasig River firing 500-pound shells into Filipino trenches (Francisco 10). After such devastating encounter, the Filipino insurgents retreated to the mountainous region of Central Luzon and were forced to resort to guerilla warfare. This made the war drag on for much longer than what the Americans had expected.

Because the "guerilla warfare" strategy enabled the insurgents to move around so quickly and easily, sporadically but perpetually harassing the Americans, and because the insurgents "had the total support of the Filipino masses" (11), the Americans found it extremely difficult to take hold of the insurgents. Thus, the Americans "began to realize that their major foe was not really the formally constituted, but in many ways ineffectual, Philippine army; rather, it was the Filipino people, who, having gotten rid of the Spanish, were unrelentingly and implacably hostile to American imperialist designs" (11). It was not long before it became obvious to the Americans that the Filipino civilians who faced them in a friendly manner while they were on patrol, were the same people who sheltered the insurgents and provided them with supplies. Gen. Arthur MacArthur who soon replaced Gen. Otis as commander of the American squadron commented that the Filipino insurgents "...depended upon almost complete unity

of action of the entire native population" (11).

The implication of such "unity" was to some extent disastrous to the Filipinos. Faced with the difficulty of identifying the guerillas from the broad population, Gen. Shafter as early as April 1899 declared that the complete subjugation of the Filipino nation may necessarily require killing half of its population (11). This was indeed not an exaggeration as the Americans thereafter declared everyone in the Philippine archipelago an enemy; everyone now was considered as either an active guerilla or a guerilla supporter. This resulted in one of the most brutal and bloodiest persecutions of the native population in the entire history of the Philippines. Villages were burned; civilians were tortured with "water cure" to elicit information about the whereabouts of the guerillas; and village leaders were often forced at bayonet point to lead American patrols (11). Indeed, the most gruesome of all these brutalities was the Samar campaign in September 1901.

Luzviminda Francisco posits that the Samar campaign can no longer be considered as "war" in the strict sense of the word, but rather as utter mass slaughter. She notes that in Samar, "the Americans were simply chasing ragged, poorly armed bands of guerillas and, failing to catch them, were inflicting the severest punishment on those they could catch—the people of the villages and barrios of the theater of operation" (11). Francisco (16) further notes that the Americans even packed some villagers into open wooden pens during the night where they were forced to sleep standing in the rain.

Similar American military brutalities were committed in Batangas, Tayabas (now Quezon province), Cebu, Panay, Mindanao, and other parts of the Philippine Islands. In Batangas alone, the Americans herded together all inhabitants into concentration camps. "Everything lying outside the perimeter of the camps was subject to confiscation or destruction. Anyone found there would automatically be considered an 'insurgent'" (17). According to the statistics compiled by the American Government officials, at least 100,000 people were killed or had died toward the end of the pacification of Batangas (18).

The intensity of American militarization subsided when Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo, after his capture in April 1901, was forced to render allegiance to the Americans and when Gen. Miguel Malvar surrendered in Batangas. Several guerilla leaders also followed suit. President Roosevelt of the United States proclaimed the

Filipino-American War to be over on 4 July 1902. With this, a number of Filipinos gradually acquiesced and tolerated American rule, especially the *illustrados* and other political elites.

However, the capitulation of many leaders of the Revolutionary Government did not put an end to the revolution (McCoy 93).¹ New leaders such as Sakay, Ricarte, Olan, and Balun emerged to continue the fight against American militarism and imperialism. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, insurgency continued to haunt American colonial power in the Philippines.

Although resistance to American domination recurred all throughout the American occupation period, the Americans managed to establish a civil government in the Philippines, which witnessed the weakening of militaristic domination but gave way to the rise of economic domination. This period marked the beginning of the transformation of the United States's brutal technique of controlling the Philippines into a more subtle one: economic domination.

2. Economic Domination. The economy as the fundamental factor driving Western powers to expand their territories abroad and bring the resources of the less developed countries under their control, was always at the center of colonial domination. Unlike militaristic domination which involves direct violence, economic domination works in a more subtle way, by requiring colonized countries to restructure their economy to fit the demands of the colonial regime and serve the interests of the colonizing power. In the Philippines during the American period, this was done through the establishment of unequal treaties and trade agreements such as the ones discussed below.

2.1 The Payne-Aldrich Act of 1909. After the establishment of a civil government in 1901, which gave American companies maximum opportunities for profitable investments in the Philippines, William Howard Taft, then Governor General, facilitated the entry of big American corporations like railroad, construction, transportation and communication, sugar, mining, and other corporations into the Philippines. However, because the Philippines had been trading with Spain and Britain before the American occupation and since Article IV of the Treaty of Paris provided for a ten-year period during which Spain could still engage in trade with the Philippines on the same terms as

the United States, the latter was not yet completely free to carry out its economic policies (Treaty of Peace 125). It had to wait until 1909 to exercise full control of trade in the Philippines. To eliminate competition with Spanish and British traders, the United States enacted tariff laws in favour of the American traders and investors. With a civil government already in place, the US Congress enacted the Tariff Act of 1901 which lowered the tariff rates of some American exports to the Philippines. With the Tariff Act of 1902, the tariff on American goods entering the Philippines was completely removed.

As the restrictive clause of the Treaty of Paris expired, the US Congress enacted the Tariff Act of 1909, also known as the Payne-Aldrich Act, which finally established free trade in the Philippines. Under this law, American products could enter the Philippines absolutely free of duty and in unlimited quantities. Philippine products, on the other hand, could enter the United States also free of duty, but with certain limitations as to the quantities and materials used in their manufacturing. The Tariff Act stipulates that Philippine products should not contain more than 20 percent of foreign materials and their quantity must be limited to the following: 300, 000 long tons of sugar; 150, 000, 000 wrapper tobacco, 3, 000, 000 pounds; and filler tobacco, 1, 000, 000 pounds (Zafra 31).

Through the Payne-Aldrich Act, the Philippines remained largely an agricultural country whose economy depended almost entirely on the export of its raw materials to the United States. According to Rene E. Ofreneo (19), the free trade policy of the United States institutionalized in the Philippines through the enactment of the Payne-Aldrich Act reduced the Philippines into a "colonial appendage of the American economy."

Free trade transformed the Philippines into a colonial appendage of the American economy. The American share in the Philippine trade rose from 16% of the total in 1899 to 40% in 1913 and 75% in 1934.... On the other hand, the composition of the products that the Philippines was trading with the United States shows that the former was consigned to the role of a hewer of wood and carrier of water for the latter. The Philippines was basically an exporter of agricultural and other raw materials and an importer of finished or manufactured products....

In addition to becoming a colonial appendage of the United States, the Philippines became a junkyard of American surplus which in the long run transformed the traditional Philippine society into a “consumer society” and at the same time influenced the consumption habits of the Filipinos and their attitude toward work. The transformation of the consumption habits of the Filipinos and their attitude toward work will be discussed in the latter part of this paper.

2.2 Free Trade and the Independence Issue. Since the annexation of the Philippines to the United States in 1898, the Filipinos, except for the pro-Americans elites who benefited from the highly profitable import/export business, tenaciously clamored for independence. As already mentioned, the greater bulk of the Filipino nation resisted American domination. They resorted to both violent and non-violent means to achieve their long desired independence from foreign control. These attempts, however, proved futile in the end because they were unable to match the might of the United States. But defeats though overwhelming in many cases did not silence the dissenters. The Filipinos continued to lobby for independence so that every attempt by the Americans to implement their economic policies in the country was received with much reluctance. This attitude endured throughout the entire span of American occupation. Thus, in order to gain support from the local population, the Americans constantly insisted that their decision to take hold of the Philippines was influenced by the principle of “Benevolent Assimilation,” that, as the chosen people of God, according to Senator Beveridge, it was their “manifest destiny” to uplift the plight of the Filipino people. However, as a result of the continuing opposition and demand for independence of the majority of the Filipino population and aware of the fact that the Filipinos wanted a government of their own, the Americans finally yielded by purportedly granting the Philippines its supposed independence. This led to the enactment of the Philippine Independence Act of 1934, also known as the Tydings-McDuffie Act. This Act provided for the establishment of the Commonwealth Government of the Philippines for a ten-year transition period prior to the final grant of independence on 4 July 1946. It apparently intended to grant the Philippines independence, but a careful examination of its provisions reveals

the real motive of the Americans: the Filipinos will run their own government yet the United States should dictate their economy. In other words, the Americans granted the Philippines sham independence in order to satisfy the Filipinos' demand for it and, with this demand satisfied, they could maintain the real purpose of the occupation, namely, their free trade policy that was significantly disadvantageous to the Philippine economy. Let me highlight the salient points of this law in order to show how the Americans pushed their free trade policy in the guise of independence.

The preamble of the Tydings-McDuffie Act is indeed commendable. It states: "An Act to provide for the complete independence to the Philippine Islands, to provide for the adoption of constitution and a form of government for the Philippine Islands, and for other purposes" (Philippines Independence Act 216). But several provisions of this Act are wholly inconsistent with this idea of "complete independence." Section 2, for example, which consisted of 16 Subsections, contains blatant violations of the very purpose of the Act. Subsection No. 2 states:

Every officer of the Commonwealth Government of the Philippine Islands shall, before entering upon the discharge of his duties, take and subscribe an oath of office, declaring among other things, *that he recognizes and accepts the supreme authority of and will maintain true faith and allegiance to the United States* (215).

Subsection No. 10, which states "Foreign affairs shall be under the direct supervision and control of the United States" assured the perpetuation of America's complete control of both the internal and external affairs of the Commonwealth Government of the Philippines (216). Subsection No. 16 also attests to this fact. It states: "Citizens and corporations of the United States shall enjoy in the Commonwealth of the Philippine Islands all the civil rights of the citizens and corporations, respectively, thereof" (216).

Section 6 assured the perpetuation of the free trade policy of the United States already institutionalized through the Payne-Aldrich Act of 1909. American products continued to enter the Philippines free of duty and in unlimited quantities while Philippine exports to the United States were subjected to even tighter restrictions. Unrefined sugar export to the United States was now reduced to

800, 000 long tons, refined sugar to 50, 000 long tons, coconut oil to 200, 000 long tons, and hemp to 3, 000, 000 pounds. Exports in excess of these quotas were subject to full United States duties (217-19).

As a whole, the Philippine Independence Act of 1934 only reaffirms the continued subservience of the Philippines to the United States as the latter, by virtue of the provisions of the Act, was assured of near complete control over the political, economic, and foreign affairs of the Philippines. As Augusto V. de Viana (580) notes, the Philippine Independence Act was “heavily lopsided in favor of the Americans”.

2.3 Bell Trade Act and Philippine-American Relations After Independence. The Philippines finally attained independence on 4 July 1946 as provided for in the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1935, but it was not without some very strong strings attached. It is important to note that during the ten-year transition period (i.e., from 1935 to 1946), also known as the Commonwealth Government of the Philippines, World War II broke out and the Japanese occupied the Philippines for three years. This war destroyed Philippine industries and greatly damaged its economy so that after liberation the Philippines found itself on the verge of bankruptcy. Given this condition, it was difficult for the Philippines to attain economic recovery without aid from the United States in the form of war damage compensation.

The fact that the Philippines owed gratitude to the United States for its liberation from the Japanese and needed reconstruction aid after the War, allowed the United States to sustain the free trade arrangement with the Philippines after the granting of independence. This was done through the enactment of the Bell Trade Act. According to Carl H. Lande (519-20), the Bell Trade Act, which is a precondition for the badly needed reconstruction assistance, was an encroachment on Philippine sovereignty as it required the amendment of the 1935 Philippine Constitution to give Americans the same rights accorded to Filipinos to exploit Philippine natural resources and to operate public utilities and other business enterprises. Section 341 of the Act guaranteed these rights. It states:

The disposition, exploitation, development, and utilization of all agricultural, timber, and mineral lands

of the public domain, waters, minerals, coal, petroleum, and other mineral oils, all forces and sources of potential energy, and other natural resources of the Philippines, and the operation of public utilities, shall, if open to any person, be open to citizens of the United States and to all forms of business enterprises owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by United States citizens (Philippine Trade Act).

In addition to the “parity” provision, as it was called, the Bell Trade Act also contains provisions that are prejudicial to the Philippines. Section 342 (Bell Trade Act), for example, which states “The value of Philippine currency in relation to the United States dollar shall not be changed,² the convertibility of peso into dollars shall not be suspended...,” places the Philippine peso under US dictation. And Section 311 (Bell Trade Act) attests to the fact that the United States was not willing to let go of the Philippines and that it wanted to continue its free trade policy with the Philippines even beyond 1946 by hook or by crook. It reads: “During the period from the day after the date of the enactment of this Act to July 3, 1954, both dates inclusive, United States articles entered, or withdrawn from warehouse in the Philippines for consumption shall be admitted in the Philippines free of ordinary custom duties.”

The United States made sure that war damage compensation should not be paid until the Philippine Congress and the Filipino people accepted the Bell Trade Act leading to the amendment of the 1935 Philippine Constitution, no matter how lopsided it would appear to them. President Manuel Roxas, although reluctant, was forced to sign the Treaty. He had no choice, considering the great need of the Philippines for reconstruction aid to put its economy back on track. As a result, the free trade policy of the United States in the Philippines was prolonged indefinitely.

2.4 Free Trade and Transnational Corporations. After the Second World War, the United States emerged as the leading world superpower. This phenomenon entails greater expansion of American industries which in turn requires a massive importation of cheap raw materials and the building up of foreign markets. Since these cheap raw materials and foreign markets are found mostly in underdeveloped countries, it is therefore understandable that the

United States and other First World countries needed to continue controlling the economies of these underdeveloped countries. Thus, with the beginning of the collapse of colonial empires after the Second World War which had triggered the transformation of former colonies into politically independent nations, “the United States and other capitalist states sought to transform these new nations into neocolonies in the guise of helping them to develop their economies” (Constantino 2). For this purpose, international financial institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) all controlled by Western nations, and the Asian Development Bank, were established. In fact, as Walden Bello (argues, the IMF and the World Bank have progressively assumed control of the Philippine economy in order to perpetuate and maintain the interests of the metropolitan capitalist nations, most notably the United States.

These international financial institutions would offer economic and financial assistance to less developed countries, but on condition that they keep their economies open to foreign trade and investment (Constantino 2). Alejandro Lichauco (54) aptly puts it:

The existence of these institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank, serve as standing invitations which lure the governments of needy nations to apply to them for loans and to rely on outsiders for their internal development. In the process of loan negotiations, the applicants are then maneuvered into accepting a few but strategic conditions which perpetuate the structural basis of their economic weakness, and which open their economy to plunder. In brief, it is through these agencies, which the advanced countries themselves organized and control, that the relationship of exploiter and exploited is institutionalized.

It is also through these institutions that the transnational corporations of the United States, Central and Western Europe, and Japan penetrated the underdeveloped countries. Thus, with these institutions, as Lichauco argues, “financial aid” became an instrument of domination (54).

3. Political Domination. It must be remembered that the Spaniards succeeded in colonizing the native Filipinos in 1565

because they gained the support of the *datus* and *maharlikas*, the ruling classes during this time. Equally, the Spaniards continued to remain in power until 1898 mainly because the *principalia*, the ruling class that emerged after the *barangays* headed by the *datus* were transformed into *pueblos*, cooperated with the Spanish colonialists. In the modern day Philippines, especially after independence, this ruling class was replaced by the bureaucrats and the technocrats. And just like their predecessors, they also cooperated with the new colonialists and became potent instruments of neocolonialism.

3.1 Philippine Presidents and American Neocolonialism.

The first bureaucrat to facilitate American neocolonialism in the Philippines was President Manuel Roxas who reigned from 1946 to 1948. According to Lichauco, it was Roxas who “delivered the infamous Bell Trade Act of 1946 which established the neocolonial pattern of Philippine-American relations after independence” (56). In addition, Roxas, on the day of his inauguration as President of the Philippines, signed the US-RP Treaty of General Agreements which empowered the United States to retain its authority over extensive military bases in the Philippines and guaranteed US corporations and citizens the same property rights accorded to the Filipinos.

President Elpidio Quirino succeeded Roxas and reigned from 1948 to 1953. It was during his presidency that US personnel intruded Philippine bureaucracy through the signing of the Economic and Technical Assistance Agreement of 1951. Among other things, this agreement required the placement of US advisors in key strategic offices of the Philippine government like the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA). Also in 1951, President Quirino signed the US-RP Mutual Defense Treaty which gave the United States the right to meddle not only with the military but with the economic and political affairs of the Philippine government as well. But the worst foreign policy President Quirino signed, from the point of view of Philippine interests, was the Agreement relating to “Entry of US Traders and Investors” in 1953. As the title suggests, this agreement allowed the entry of US capital and technocrats into the Philippines. President Quirino was thus the first in a long line of the political elites that helped maintain the neocolonial status of the Philippines after the war.

In 1954 Ramon Magsaysay became President and remained in office until 1959. Like all his predecessors, Magsaysay upheld the American colonial policy. For example, it was during his presidency that the Bell Trade Act of 1946 was revised, which resulted in the signing of the Laurel-Langley Agreement in 1954. If parity rights under the Bell Trade Act of 1946 was limited to public utilities and the development of natural resources, parity rights under the Laurel-Langley Agreement of 1954 were extended to all types of businesses. Thus, according to Amado Guererro (41), this treaty aggravated the economic dependence of the Philippines on the United States. It was also during the presidency of Magsaysay that the Agricultural Commodities Agreement with the United States was entered into. This agreement, as it required the importation of US agricultural surplus, helped maintain the colonial pattern of Philippine economy, thus making the Philippine industries even more dependent on and subservient to the United States.

The Carlos P. Garcia administration which spanned from 1957 to 1961 was an exceptional case because this period witnessed the rise of "nationalist economics" in the country as a result of the imposition of foreign exchange and import control. Though Garcia's regime did not break the neocolonial status of the country, President Garcia dared to some extent to resist US dictation and favored Filipino businessmen and entrepreneurs. For example, he defied the insistence of the United States to lift the foreign exchange and import control towards the end of the 1950s and instead opted for the strengthening of his "Filipino First" policy.

In 1962, Diosdado Macapagal ascended to the presidency and remained in office until 1965. Macapagal's first major executive decree was the lifting of the foreign exchange and import control, a policy which, according to Lichauco, "delivered the country back to free trade" (58). This policy enabled foreign investors, especially from the United States, to pour capital in almost all industries in the Philippines and draw maximum profit from them. As these big US corporations remit huge profits to the US government, the dollar reserves of the Central Bank of the Philippines was drained. To counter this drawback, the Macapagal administration devalued the Philippine peso from the fixed rate of PHP 2.00 per USD 1.00 to PHD 3.90 per USD 1.00 in 1962. In order to maintain this exchange rate, Macapagal "had to accept the 'onerous' loans from the US banks" (Guererro 41) and other international lending institutions like the World Bank and the IMF. It is reported that

in 1972, ten years after the foreign exchange and import control was lifted, the Philippine foreign debt amounted to USD 2.134 million or PHD 14.45 billion at the exchange rate of PHD 6.77 per USD 1.00. This phenomenon followed an upward trend so that as of September 2009, according to the December 2009 press release of the Bureau of Treasury, the foreign debt of the Philippines amounted to PHP 4.338 trillion.

The succeeding presidents, namely Ferdinand Marcos, who reigned from 1965 to 1986, Corazon Aquino, from 1986 to 1992, Fidel Ramos, from 1992 to 1998, Joseph Estrada, from 1998 to 2001, Gloria Arroyo, from 2001 to 2010, and Benigno Aquino III, from 2010 to the present, continued to promote the free trade policies of their predecessors and accepted American policies as a whole with little reservation. This was due primarily, but not exclusively, to the political and economic favors like "privileged trade relations" and "clientelism" that the Americans extended to the Filipino political elites. As Kathleen Weekley (95) puts it, "Most Filipino political elites stuck to their American allies after independence as they had in the years before it: the 'client' relied on the 'patron' as the source of the funds necessary to attract support and votes at election time". The client, therefore, has to continue to speak the language of the patron, that is, the Filipino political elites had to satisfy the conditions demanded of them by the US government in order to maintain this relationship even if it entails the perpetuation of the marginalization of their constituents. During the 1953 presidential elections, for example, the United States through the Central Intelligence Agency openly supported the presidency of Magsaysay (95). Magsaysay promised his supporters during the campaign that once elected into office, funds from the United States would follow. President Marcos's case was another concrete example. Marcos's dictatorship which lasted for 21 years always enjoyed the consistent backing of the United States. The United States extended enormous funds to the presidency of Marcos because the latter was viewed as a reliable ally who supported US foreign policies and ensured the continuance of huge American military bases in the Philippines (Meimban 238).

In the Philippines at present, political domination can be seen in how the US-led global war on terrorism is used as a pretext to intensify domestic laws in suppressing movements, such as the New People's Army, that fight against imperialism. According

to Sumanta Banerjee (41-88), the US military “has found a convenient excuse for restoring its presence (after its troops were forced to vacate the Subic Bay and Clark Airfield bases...) by linking the Abu Sayyaf bandit group operating in Mindanao region of southern Philippines with Al Quaida”. The target of the US military, Banerjee argues, is not the Abu Sayyaf but those who oppose US hegemony in the Philippines, e.g., the New People’s Army and other socio-political movements advocating democracy and human rights (41-88). How did the United States manage to do this? Once again, the political elites play the crucial role. Banerjee (41-88) writes: “They are too willing to barter off independence in exchange of billions of dollars of US economic aid which will be siphoned off into the coffers of the elites, their touts and hangers-on, who will eventually develop stakes in the continuation of US domination over their country”. We see here how the imposition of political domination in the Philippines as a country at the “periphery” involves the manipulation of the political elites who, upon receiving favors from the colonialists, preach the language of imperialism.

3.2 The Technocrats. Another instrument of neocolonialism highlighted by Lichauco are the technocrats who hold key positions in the strategic offices of the government like the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA). They are mostly trained in the US or US-controlled institutions and are usually recipients of US scholarships. As expected, they soon commit themselves completely to US policies in the country. They design the Philippine economy in accordance with US economic interests and other capitalist countries. This elite group, according to Lichauco (59), has been very influential in the formulation and implementation of policies that are responsible for the continued colonization of the Philippines as they serve as a bridge between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the transnational corporations as well as the IMF and World Bank. Lichauco (67) writes:

Considering the extensiveness with which sensitive policy-making offices of our government are headed or manned by technocrats professionally and intellectually allied with foreign interests, one can understand the unusual facility with which imperialism succeeds in maneuvering

our government to accept the very policies which, either singly or in their cumulative effect, perpetuate the historical colonial status of our republic. Technocracy in the Philippines has come to function as the fifth column of contemporary imperialism, and the technical efficiency of our technocrats, far from serving the ultimate interests of our country, has only contributed to the technical efficiency with which neocolonialism pursues its objectives.

But above all, according to William Pomeroy (241), the Filipino technocrats seek to make the Philippines a part of the global division of labor, thus serving to minimize the production costs and maximize the profit of the transnational corporations. Pomeroy believes that like the Philippine presidents, the technocrats are the spokesmen of US imperialism.

4. Cultural Domination. In addition to militaristic, economic, and political forms of domination are the educational system [the organization of the business community] and the mass media as instruments of cultural domination. Some famous scholars argue that the American-oriented Philippine educational system, with English as the official medium of instruction, is one of the instruments of domination used by the American colonialists during the American occupation period because it conditioned the minds of the Filipinos to look to American products and American culture as a whole. Constantino, for example, seeks to demonstrate how the American-oriented educational system helped indoctrinate the Filipinos. Moreover, during the postcolonial period, Lichauco (67) contends, the American-oriented educational system remained an instrument of domination as it facilitates, among other things, American neocolonialism. "It is an educational system", Lichauco (67) writes, "which perpetuates the colonial complex and continues in its idolatry of values, attitudes, and institutions that are the products of a history, civilization, and culture not our own, and forcibly implanted here by colonialism." He further writes: "We have been conditioned, and our youth continue to be conditioned, to look to a foreign culture as something superior to our own" (67).

Lichauco (68) also notes that the presence of imported professors has aggravated the situation. These professors served

to strengthen the colonial status of the country as they, along with their Filipino colleagues, make it a point to [1] ignore imperialism as a factor in our economic problems, [2] propagate the notion that without foreign investment, our economic growth would be hampered..., [3] discredit the value of protectionism, and [4] continue with their apostleship of free enterprise.

Lichauco further observed that the instruments of American neocolonialism do not only include the public sector and the educational institutions, but also the business community and the mass media. Let me highlight succinctly the way the business community and the mass media served the imperialistic interests of the United States in the Philippines before I proceed to the discussion on technological domination.

The business community, especially the export bloc and the commercial bloc, according to Lichauco, has represented the imperialistic interest of the United States and perpetuated the disadvantaged position of the Philippine economy. The export bloc, e.g., at the time in which Lichauco (71-2) was writing, the sugar industry, "is among the loudest and most prominent of those advocating a liberal and generous treatment of foreign investment and the maintenance of a free and open economy" simply because the exportation of sugar, which proved to be immensely lucrative, was made possible through the very workings of a free and open economy. The commercial bloc, on the other hand, cannot afford to sever its alliance with (American) imperialism because its profits are derived mainly from the importation of American and other foreign products in the country. For this reason, a large part of the business community continues to preach imperialism in the country while turning a blind eye to its oppressive character.

Finally, there is the role of the mass media. The mass media can be a potent instrument of political and social education; yet, once tampered, it can easily become an effective instrument of propaganda. For Lichauco, this was what happened in the Philippines when it was granted (sham) independence in 1946. In addition to the other instruments of imperialism mentioned above, the American imperialists also needed the mass media in order to continue capturing the mind of the Filipinos and generating support from the rank and file of the educated class (80). Lichauco (81) notes that during the early part of the second half of the 20th century, the mass media in the Philippines were dominated by foreigners who were successful in "guiding the

public opinion in directions which, if not openly sympathetic to the goals and instruments of imperialism, at least vitiate public recognition of and wrath against these goals and instruments." While the full and free flow of truthful information safeguards individual liberty and at the same time sustains a healthy democratic process, the manipulation of this same information can lead to disastrous ends. Such was the case in the Philippines.

TECHNOLOGICAL DOMINATION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE FILIPINO MIND

The strikingly long history of uninterrupted domination of the Filipinos by colonial powers has produced a society similar to what Frantz Fanon described as "the wretched of the earth." It is a society where people remain stripped off their identity and deprived of their national wealth. Indeed, after more than four centuries of colonial oppression, the vast majority of the Filipino people remain in dire poverty, a poverty that continues to be overwhelming in the social image of the country. In his *Imperialism and the National Situation*, Lichauco (109) explains the impact of neocolonialism on the Philippine society:

The massive and deepening poverty of our people, the rising unemployment, the inflation that has gone beyond control, the infantile state of our military and productive capabilities, the disoriented state of our educational system, the remorseless exploitation to which our economy is being subjected, and the social anarchy which these conditions have bred are all traceable, directly and ultimately, to our status as a neocolony. It is a status which reflects the imperialist phenomenon in this country.

However, it is important to remember that such colonial domination was met with bitter resistance from the native population. As a matter of fact, there were more than two hundred revolts of uneven scope that continually threatened the Spanish colonial regime while a considerable rise of resistance to American domination was observable toward the end of the American occupation period. But during the postcolonial period, when the Philippine society entered the age of "consumerism", mimicking

the economic organization of the advanced industrial nations, resistance has been steadily vitiated and the Filipino people are becoming increasingly complacent. Although remnants of these resistances are observable within Philippine society today, it is undeniable that many Filipinos are becoming uncritical as we can see in their indifference towards social and political issues of national concern. I would argue that technological domination and the deliberate imposition of the American way of life upon Filipino society have contributed largely to this condition. In fact, Mel van Elteren (169), an expert on American influences abroad, contends that technological domination is the ultimate form of domination the Americans have employed in pacifying conquered foreign territories.¹ And contrary to what Jennifer McMahan (209) believes, for whom it is the establishment of political institutions such as the Supreme Court and the military bases that regulated the feelings as well as the conduct of the Filipinos and transformed their culture in general, I believe rather that it is technological domination as a special kind of cultural domination that played the most crucial role, and not the militaristic, the economic, and the political. It is technological domination that finally erodes Filipino critical consciousness, which in turn makes "resistance" to all sorts of domination a remote possibility.

In the Philippines, such technological form of domination is all the more pernicious as it involves an exogenously developed model that is superimposed upon and represses the native cultural resources. The violence of this phenomenon is double: to the violence experienced by populations from the center is added the violence of cultural imposition, the loss of one's soul at the hands of a culture that has not even grown endogenously. Even more tragically, as was said earlier, that imposed alien culture even contains features that can only produce self-loathing and a sense of inferiority in the recipient culture.

1. Technological Domination and the Work Attitude and Consumption Habit of the Contemporary Filipinos. In order to understand the fact that the Philippine society has become "uncritical" especially during the postwar period, it is necessary to take a quick look at how the work attitude of the Filipinos and their consumption habit had been modified by the introduction of "consumerism" at the turn of the twentieth century. This is crucial because the new form of social domination the Americans

imposed upon the Filipinos was intimately associated with a market economy that requires wage laborers and insatiable consumers. I do not intend to give an essentialist view of the work ethic of the Filipinos and their consumption habit. Rather, I simply want to present an overall image of how they approached work and the way they consumed goods and show how these were deliberately modified by the Americans to facilitate the smooth entry of capitalism in the country.

Although an advanced form of labor class began to emerge toward the end of the nineteenth century, still the general attitude of the Filipinos regarding work, at least during the first decade of the twentieth century, was specifically geared toward the procurement of their basic needs and for the advancement of the entire community. Most of the time, the Filipinos worked on the familial level to obtain the necessities of living, but also did extra-familial work such as the construction of roads, bridges, and churches. Work was viewed here as “cooperative work”, notably in the *bayanihan* system, where people in the community or at the sub-community level such as the *barangay* labored voluntarily for public improvements and for mutual benefits. In this type of work relations, large part of performed labor was not paid in money. Labor was not yet considered a commodity exchanged in the market against a wage. Instead, labor was “rendered on the expectation that it would be returned in kind at a later date” (Bankoff 62). Of course, there were some exceptions. Qualified forms of wage labor existed in some parts of the archipelago such as the tobacco industry in Cagayan Valley, the British-owned railway, and the Manila docks (66). Yet, as Greg Bankoff noted, it was an extremely limited labor market, which was restricted to only a few relatively urbanized areas. Thus, when the Americans came with the attempt to establish a specifically American-style colonial society, they were faced with a fundamental problem inherent in the “cooperative” nature of labor relations in the native population: the absence of competent wage laborers and insatiable consumers upon which a market economy depends for its foundation.

It was therefore necessary for the Americans to integrate the Filipinos into the wage-labor market and train them to become both competent laborers and insatiable consumers. To all intents and purposes, of course, this is what every consumer society aims to achieve. As Douglas Kellner (147) puts it, “One of the main

functions of the culture industries is to shape the needs, attitudes and behavior of the individuals so as to integrate them into the consumer society." However, the deep-seated traditional attitude of the Filipinos toward work upset the Americans. The Filipinos were not willing to sell their labor in the market. While some of them responded to the Americans' aggressive recruitment for wage laborers, they turned out to be poor laborers. According to Bankoff (78), the Americans viewed the Filipino workers "to be slow, shiftless, and often absent, to lack of initiative and require direction, to be without discipline, persistence, or a sense of responsibility, like 'capricious schoolboys.'" Furthermore, the Americans thought the Filipinos "could seldom be induced to spend long periods away from home without compulsion, as their 'whole life interest is local and embodied from childhood in habitual personal intercourse with a small group of people'".⁴ In some cases, those who worked with the Americans, for example in the construction of the Benguet road, most often worked for only two days in one week simply because their income for two days was more than enough for the rest of the week (78). This made the Americans devise techniques to lure the Filipinos to join the labor market.

According to Bankoff, the first stratagem the Americans devised was to offer higher wages. This was done with the expectation that with higher wages, the Filipinos would be encouraged to sell their labor in the market. Yet, as it turned out, the Filipinos remained unresponsive. One obvious reason to this could be the nature of production existing at this time. Because production was mainly need-based, money was of less value as there was practically nothing to buy except food and other basic supplies.⁵ The Filipinos did not see the necessity of spending time in the labor market (Murray 775).⁶ This compelled the Americans to devise another stratagem which proved to be very effective so that until today it continues to serve as the foundation of an American-oriented consumer society in the Philippines: the creation of "wants." This technique resulted in the complete domination of the Filipino workers and the consumers, on the one hand, and the putting to work of the entire country, on the other, for the benefit of the capitalist machine.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the first appearance of such "wants" was clearly not as sophisticated as those in modern societies. But at least with the establishment of the

Payne-Aldrich Act in 1909, cheap American goods from food and beverages down to clothing, household gadgets, shampoos, bath soaps, detergents, and the likes rained down on shops and stores, giving the Filipinos for the first time in history enormous choices of consumer goods. Not long after, techniques of controlling “desire” such as commercial advertisements were introduced. Billboards and commercial ads in magazines and newspapers supplemented the stores and shops in contriving the desire of the Filipinos for consumer goods. The introduction of Coca Cola in 1927 was a concrete example. In one of its video commercials, traditional Filipino cultures such as the folk dance *tinikling* and the typically Filipino way of working cooperatively in the rice paddies were used in promoting its product. The Filipino farmers who in the olden times used to relish the freshness of the locally produced coconut juice during breaks in the farm were made to believe that grabbing a drizzling bottle of iced cold coke is the best way to refresh the body from gruelling work.

The technical control of the work attitude and consumption habit of the Filipinos through the creation of wants proved quite successful in addressing the problem of labor shortage. This can be illustrated by the proliferation and diaspora of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in recent years. It can be observed that a century later, the same Filipinos who were infamous for their lack of discipline and aversion to wage labor are now transformed into “workaholic” individuals, not to mention of course that they need to work abroad for a decent living. Since the late 1970s to date, millions of OFWs have been sent around the world to work in the Middle East, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe. Many studies dedicated to the phenomenon of overseas Filipino workers agree that the latter are exemplary for their industry and strong motivation to work (Villegas 163). In fact, it is very common for Filipino workers in Canada and the United States to have two or three jobs, working between fifteen to eighteen hours a day, a phenomenon that could hardly be imagined during the first decade of the twentieth century. And today, the remittances of these OFWs have become the number one source of revenues of the Philippine government. In 1978 alone, the Philippine government dispatched 45, 000 Filipino laborers to 103 countries as part of its program to export labor force (Philippines Repression and Resistance 102). According to the 26 September 1980 issue of the *Far Eastern Review*, these OFWs brought foreign

exchange remittances of about one billion US dollars in 1979 (103). This was surpassed by .3 billion US dollars in just the first two months of 2009. From January to February 2009, while the global financial crunch was still reeling, the OFWs remitted 1.3 billion dollars (Overseas Filipino Workers). This prompted the government to declare the OFWs as Bagong Bayaning Republicang Pilipinas (New Heroes of the Republic of the Philippines), perhaps in an attempt to conceal the psychological sufferings these OFWs bear in foreign countries and to encourage more Filipinos to sell their labor power abroad. But despite the government's adulation on these OFWs, no words can alleviate the profound sufferings they experience. The humiliating discrimination and the yearning for the loved ones left behind are plainly indomitable. However, because the work ethic imposed by the Americanization of society has already penetrated the psyche of the Filipinos, coupled with grinding poverty, no amount of flattery is needed today to incite the Filipinos to go and work abroad.

The creation of new wants did not only serve the Americans well in addressing the problem of insufficient labor. In line with their goal of conditioning the Filipinos' taste for and appreciation of American culture and products, the Americans also effectively changed the consumption habit of the former via the destruction of the "cooperative" nature of labor relations, thus producing "insatiable consumers" (Apilado 31).⁷ The influx of cheap American goods in the country embedded the Filipinos' taste for imported goods which in the long run contributed to the intensification of one of the age-old problems in the Philippines: "colonial mentality". With this, consumerism has finally become a way of life for the Filipinos—they behave, consume, and even relax the American way. They themselves have become the steering gear that propels the smooth functioning of capitalism in their country even though so many of them continue to directly suffer from it. And as they have now identified themselves with American consumer goods, they no longer see the necessity of ridding themselves from long and hard labor, of rejecting American culture, of resisting domination. Constantino (1978: 172) believes that this was how the Filipinos had become few decades after the establishment of the American colonial society in the Philippines. He writes:

We are a nation of consumers; we are a people whose sense

of purpose has been distorted by the dream of acquiring more and more of the “goodies” of life, of owning most of the things that proliferate in the world of commodities. We are a people who have been made to believe that these are the real goals of life and we therefore devote all our energies to the acquisition of more consumer goods.

2. Technological Domination, Disappearance of Critical Media, and the Sexual Objectification of Filipino Women. The above discussion shows how the American colonial power has successfully transformed the work attitude and consumption habit of the Filipinos through the creation of “wants” that reproduced labor power, provided the condition for the continuation of material necessity, and intensified consumption. It also initially explains how the Philippine society has become uncritical despite the need for social action. But the whole process of technological domination cannot be seen only in the creation of “wants”, in producing more commodities and delivering these commodities to satisfy the desires of the Filipinos. Technological domination is also evident in the displacement of much of the critical media that flourished toward the end of the Spanish regime with those that portray the eroticization of consumer goods as well as the commodification of the “body,” especially the sexual objectification of Filipino women. In what follows, I will present succinctly the development of critical media in the Philippines and try to show how it was displaced by American-oriented media such the Hollywood-patterned Philippine cinema, entertainment radios, televisions, magazines, tabloids, and other print media.

2.1. Development of Critical Media in the Philippines. Tomas Pinpin, the father of Filipino printing, established the first newspaper in the Philippines in 1637 called *Successos Felices*. This 14-page newspaper was devoted to the raids of the Muslim pirates in the archipelago. *Successos Felices* was followed by *Aviso Al Publico*, a paper distributed for mass readership which acted as the town criers of Spain in the Philippines. In August 1811, the Spanish colonial government put out the *Del Superior Gobierno*, the first regularly issued newspaper giving news about the Napoleonic invasion of Spain which also served as powerful weapon in fighting for emancipation. Several important

newspapers followed such as the *El Ramillete Patriotico* published on 25 March 1821, *El Noticioso Filipino* on 29 July 1821, *La Filantropia* on 1 September 1821, *El Filantropo* and the *Noticias Compiladas de los Papeles Publicos de la Peninsula* both in 1824, *Registro Mercantil de Manila* in 1824, *El Noticiero* in 1838, *Semanario Filipino* in 1843, *La Estrella* in 1846, and *Diariong Tagalog* in December 1889 (Haban). These newspapers, except *El Ramillete Patriotico* which was liberal and sometimes sarcastic and unbridled in speech, and *Diariong Tagalog* which adopted a nationalistic tone, were mostly uncritical of the Spanish colonial government. It was not until the publication of *La Solidaridad* on 15 February 1889 that Filipino scholars boldly challenged the abuses of the Spanish friars and officials in the Philippines as well as lobby for independence.

La Solidaridad was the official publication of the Propaganda Movement whose contributors included Jose Rizal, Mariano Ponce, Marcelo H. del Pilar, Graciano Lopez-Jaena, and other scholars who would soon become some of the most important leaders of the 1896 Revolution. The newspaper's aim was to promote democracy and liberalism, to expose the real plight of the country, and to work peacefully for economic and social reforms. Due to financial difficulties, *La Solidaridad* ceased publication in Madrid, Spain on 15 November 1895. However, two months and three days later, on 18 January 1896, with the founding of the Kataastaasang Kagalang-galangang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan (Highest and Most Respectable Society of the Sons of the People), *Ang Kalayaan* (Freedom/Liberty) was published. As the official newspaper of the Katipunan, *Ang Kalayaan* was the first revolutionary newspaper in the Philippines that informed the Filipino people of the aims and activities of the secret association. It also reflected the ultimate political ideal of the 1896 Revolution, that is, complete separation of the Philippines from Spain the motherland.

Although the first issue of *Ang Kalayaan* had never been followed, it contributed largely to the development of Filipino critical consciousness. In fact, from its founding on 7 July 1892 to 1 January 1896, the Katipunan had less than 300 members; but with the appearance of *Ang Kalayaan*, its membership grew to as many as 30, 000 by the outbreak of the Revolution on 30 August 1896. "The publication and distribution of *Ang Kalayaan* immediately influenced the thinking and feeling of the masses. It awakened the people and encouraged them to join Katipunan. The people

became aware of their rights and duties to their country and had prepared them to shoulder the risks demanded of them.”

During the American period, newspapers with a nationalistic tone were suppressed and only those that paid lip service to American colonial policies were allowed, like *La Democracia*, the first Filipino newspaper that recognized American sovereignty in the Philippines. *La Patria*, which openly called for freedom and independence and directly challenged *La Democracia*, was closed by Gen. Arthur McArthur. Its unfazed publisher, Pablo Ocampo, put out *La Libertad* and continued the fight for freedom and independence. As expected, the American authorities banned the newspaper and exiled Ocampo to Guam for two years. Meanwhile, Rafael Palma, the editor of *La Patria*, founded *El Nuevo*, which bitterly criticized American military rule in the country. Other newspapers like *El Grito de Pueblo*, *Kapatid ng Bayan*, *El Filipino Libre* which also demanded freedom and independence and criticized American military rule, were also established. But unlike *La Patria* and *La Libertad*, these newspapers were not closed by the American authorities though they were severely censored.

Perhaps the fiercest paper that denounced American rule in the Philippines during the first half of the twentieth century was the *Sakdal*, a weekly tabloid published in Tagalog. It tackled issues such as “corruption and mismanagement under the American-sponsored Nacionalista administration, immediate independence for the Philippines, and the land reform problem” (Sakdalista). Like *Ang Kalayaan*, *Sakdal* proved once again to be a very potent vehicle for the promotion of critical consciousness among the masses. *Sakdal* became very popular with many sectors in the Philippines, especially the peasants, providing them with an important avenue to express their grievances. As a matter of fact, it was reported that about 60,000 organized peasants called Sakdalistas from San Ildefonso, Bulacan, Tanza, Caridad, Cavite, Cabuyao, San Jose, Laguna, and Rizal revolted against the government on 2 May 1935 (Davis 36).

2.2. Disappearance of Critical Media and the Sexual Objectification of Filipino Women. Throughout the Japanese occupation period, several newspapers continued to demand for independence despite the threat of imprisonment or even death. But when the Americans returned to the Philippines after World War II, a dramatic decline of critical newspapers took

place. It was not because the American authorities or the Japanese Imperial Government were successful in putting out the ardent desire of the Filipinos for independence. In fact, the more the colonizers used force to pacify the desperate yet determined Filipino revolutionaries, the more critical and unrelenting they had become. It was the introduction of American-oriented mass media that promote the eroticization of consumer goods and the sexual objectification of Filipino women that washed out critical media in the Philippines. Indeed, the postwar period witnessed a dramatic shift of the function of Philippine media from an advocate of freedom from colonial powers into a potent weapon of the consumer culture tying commodities to sexuality. Consider, for example, how Globe Tattoo Broadband is advertised by a sexy lady in bikini. This should make us question the logical connection between the broadband and sexuality.

When one observes the Philippine media landscape today, from print to broadcast, one is forced to conclude it has been reduced into a form of entertainment. Its purpose is the glorification of the commodity, whose appeal is systematically tied to the promise of sexual gratification. It is replete with provocative images of women, with massive display of billboards carrying obscene images situated on strategic places in the streets and the rooftops of buildings. The public, upon seeing these lusciously displayed women's bodies, are thrust all at once into the sphere of business that transforms their thoughts into fluids lubricating the commercial engine of mass media. This is troubling on several fronts. First, because the woman's body is used in order to sell. Secondly, since this appeals to the promise of sexual gratification, it anesthetizes the suffering the broad masses of Filipinos bore for such a long time and flattens the fledgling critical consciousness, which had developed to such an extent at the turn of the twentieth century. Magazines such as *FHM Philippines*, *YES!*, *Cosmopolitan* and sexual tabloids like *Remate*, *Tiktik*, *Abante*, and *Bulgar* are concrete examples.⁸ These media deliver to the masses a kind of entertainment that taps into their deep sexual impulses and by doing so turns them into compliant individuals. The famous members of the first generation of the Frankfurt School critical theorists, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, already saw this sexualized dimension of the culture industry coming, from their perfect vantage point of view being immersed in American culture in their American exile in the middle of the 20th century.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they write:

Pleasure always means not to think about anything, to forget suffering even where it is shown. Basically it is helplessness. It is flight; not as is asserted, flight from a wretched reality, but from the last remaining thought of resistance. The liberation which amusement promises is freedom from thought and from negation (Adorno and Horkheimer 138).

The presence of these lifestyle, fashion magazines and tabloids, and other media such as the Internet, television, and radio that associate sexuality with commodities have had profound effects on Filipino women, especially the vernal population. Even if some empirical researchers question the actual effectiveness of this technique of associating sexuality and commodities in advertisements (Stern and Handel 284), the point to consider is the subliminal overall effect it has on the consumers. Consumers seldom take into consideration the product being advertised, especially if it is far beyond their economic capacity, but the aura of the advertisement per se subliminally forces them to mimic the model or, to be precise, obey what the message of the advertisement commands. Let us take for example their impact on the notion of physical attractiveness and self-improvement. For centuries, at least during the Spanish colonial period, decency and being refined typified the notion of "attractiveness" of Filipino women. They were supposed to possess the characteristics of a "Maria Clara," the main female character in Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* which symbolized Filipino women's virtue and nobility. My point here is not to romanticize the past, but simply to show how the introduction of American-oriented consumerism radically changed these virtues by teaching Filipino women that being attractive means being sexually desirable. And to be "sexually desirable" implies many things which the American culture industry defines in terms of criteria and is only too happy to provide for in terms of commodities to purchase, such as being thin and well-shaped, wearing cosmetics and erotic dress, etc. Put simply, the mass media that was introduced in the Philippines with the US invasion taught the Filipino women that to be attractive means to be able to inflame the sexual desire of men. On the other hand, Filipino women in the past, again, at least

during the Spanish colonial period, focused on becoming more well-mannered as a way of improving themselves. The pursuit of higher education in later years can be added to this. But the Hollywood-oriented regimen imposed upon the Filipino women seems to have taught them that self-improvement has something to do with the improvement of their "bodies." Thus, we see Filipino women today undergoing breast implant, liposuction, plastic surgery, and the like as a way of improving their personality. This is the kind of personality American culture has projected in the Philippines. Against the background of the ideals of the 1896 Revolution, as reflected in the critical media of the prewar period, which projected an image of an individual freed from the shackles of colonial oppression and American capitalism, we can see the amount of cultural regression that has occurred as a result of a century of colonial and neocolonial domination. This is only one concrete example of how the American mass media has contributed to narrowing down the capacity for critical thinking in the Philippines.

Servando Halili (168) argues precisely in this sense, showing that the use of female body has directly helped advance American imperial policy in the Philippines during the early period of the American occupation. I wish to add that in the postwar period, the sexual objectification of Filipino women became one of the leading factors that facilitated the entry and sustenance thenceforth of American capitalism and neocolonialism in the country. I would even claim that the power of diversion wielded by the modern media, resulting from the massive emotional and intellectual investment it is able to extract from the consumer-watchers through its refined techniques of manipulating the instincts, in fact has done much to divert attention away from American brutalities and to conceal the anomalies of economic and military treaties entered into between the Philippines and the United States. The massive portrayal of eroticized consumer goods through advertisements in magazines, tabloids, newspapers, and televisions has enabled American capitalists not only to sell more and profit from the Filipino masses, but has been a direct instrument in making the Filipino masses indifferent to pressing the social and political issues. It has produced a psycho-social condition that inhibits the Filipino masses from militating against a society that breeds massive poverty amidst abundance. Even when poverty and social suffering are in fact represented,

this occurs through the lens of the canons of culture industry that totally depoliticizes the issues. As Eva Illouz (240-41) has shown very well, this form of mass culture turns the spectacle of suffering into sheer entertainment and at the same time makes people morally callous.

CONCLUSION

The discussion above shows that the four types of domination that the American colonisers employed in order to repress the Filipino revolutionaries have contributed largely to the stagnation of the Philippine economy and the destruction of the body politic, as well as the intensification of violence and social injustice in modern day Philippines. As a matter of fact, the Philippines today is facing enormous social problems and forms of injustice, like abject poverty, massive unemployment, corruption, military oppression, extra-judicial killings, various forms of human rights violations, gross and rising inequality between rich and poor. Although there are several significant factors that caused the existence of these problems, it can be argued that these problems have been compounded and entrenched by the invasion of the country by capitalistic forces relayed and aided by local elites and local institutions.

It also shows that the American colonizers employed technological domination in a variety of ways to overcome the challenges that stand on their way in pacifying the recalcitrant Filipinos, which has eventually concealed the brutalities they committed during the early phase of their stint in the Philippines. One might well wonder whether it was done consciously or unconsciously. However, this does not discount the fact that technological domination has substantially eroded Filipino critical consciousness that developed toward the end of the Spanish colonial period. Again, the disappearance of critical media aimed at exposing the insidiousness of the American colonial government during the first half of the 20th century is a concrete example. This is indeed the American moment in Philippine history, the one for which Filipinos should not be oblivious to so they may meaningfully make sense of the present.

NOTES

1. Despite what Alfred W. McCoy claims, for whom the Philippine Insurrection was over a year after the surrender of Aguinaldo and other leaders of the Revolution.
2. Which is PhP2 : US\$1 under the Tydings-McDuffie Act.
3. Mel van Elteren uses the terms “cultural imperialism” and “culture of consumerism” interchangeably to refer to “technological domination.”
4. However, Bankoff notes that the Filipinos could not be held responsible for their lack of work ethics. He writes: “The mantle of over 300 years of benighted Spanish ‘repression,’ particularly the enforced labor of its population and the ‘restrictions’ on commercial activity, had stifled any hope of upward social mobility and reinforced the notion that manual labor was both degrading and unrewarding.” Bernardo M. Villegas, however, argues that the perceived laziness of the native population is a misinterpretation of the work attitude of the Filipinos. The Filipino workers, especially the rice farmers, usually spent more time idling only after a particular hard work is done, like planting and harvesting. The grueling work in the paddies forces the farmers to develop the habit of “*dolce farmiente*” or sweetly doing nothing. Villegas writes: “The rice farmers cannot be accurately described as lazy. By force of circumstances, they generally cultivate a certain taste for “do-nothing” activities after a limited period of hard work.”
5. This was probably one of the reasons why the Spaniards imposed forced labor on the Filipinos during the Spanish colonial period.
6. It should be noted that the Spaniards experienced the same problem during the Spanish colonial period. In order to address this problem, and believing that sufficient supply of wage labor is one of the keys to economic growth, the Spanish colonial government in the Philippines changed their policy in the mid-nineteenth century to encourage the Chinese wage laborers to immigrate in the country.
7. Apilado notes that the technique of manipulating the Filipinos’ desire for American culture and consumer goods was successful. Eventually, as it was hoped, the Filipinos did not want to do away with American rule.
8. Central to *FHM Philippines* is its intent to please its readers by featuring sexy and sweltering women that almost range from cover to cover. *YES!* delivers to the masses what is new about Filipino celebrities, especially women. It specifically features what these celebrities possess like their luxurious homes, cars, gadgets, dresses, jewelries, including even a half million pesos worth of Chanel purse. Of course, these accessories reinforce the American standard of being “beautiful” introduced in the Philippines. Candy, magazine for the teenagers, teaches teen girls how to make the most of their teen years but in a manner that tends to unleash their sexuality.

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