

We are a narco-state

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WHEN your chief of the national police breaks down publicly uttering, “who can I trust?”, the enormity of the situation stares at you hard. When the president of the country cries foul and cusses left and right and wonders why we are in this state, we stare into space and ask, what has become of my country? When politicians fight, and propagate schemes to suit a desired outcome despite the state of things, we wonder, is being a narco-state just a happenstance for you? That it is not real? Are you high or on the take? Please pray tell us. For trust is earned and we can abandon you, if need be.

When a spurious individual the likes of a Matobato is presented to the public and two senators act as handlers without vetting and all, what has become of the Senate? And when Matobato spoke half-truths and proffered an incredulous testimony, we collectively suffered because it is our hard-earned taxes that they splurge like there’s no tomorrow. And what do you get out of a Matobato, unraveled in the Senate, now the complainant before the Ombudsman against PRRD? Is there no more self-restraint among senators? Is being responsible outside their capability? Is using the Senate as a platform for political assassination and personal aggrandizement the daily fare for the once mighty Senate that was responsible, circumspect, accountable and where ideas proliferate for honest to goodness debate? What has Congress become?

So let us call a spade a spade. We are a narco-state, no quibbling there. Those in denial may probably want to embrace the “EJK” argument. I won’t because no state sanctions what is deemed extra-judicial. But I do recognize that there are killings from police operations and that is murder (if there is intent) or homicide. Both crimes are in our Revised Penal Code. If there is a country waging a fight against illegal drugs and has an immaculate slate in terms of number of persons killed, please let us know. That model

can be studied and probably implemented in our country, if only to stress the obvious that there is none.

Yes, we do cry for the dead but the living matters most, right? No one has a monopoly of despair. Yes, a public cry makes you one with the rest but a private shedding of tears to unknown persons matter most because it is not for the gallery to see. It is personal and private, as deaths are.

Oppositors to the conduct of PRRD in his fight against illegal drugs fail to understand certain things: 1) possession of illegal drugs is a crime in our country under Republic Act 9165. It is a health issue in the United States. Clearly, there are differences. So, to those who readily shout, “EJK”, would you rather we decriminalize and legalize the use of illegal drugs? Would this solve the killings? 2) No country will be crazy enough to declare itself a narco-state because it would cause the economy to crash, look at the US. 3) This is not just a war of and by Duterte. It is a war where all the three branches need to move and complement each other. There are the five pillars of the criminal justice system of the country: law enforcement, prosecution, courts, corrections and community. The silence of the judiciary on this matter is deafening. Instead of pursuing reform, creating a 24/7 court so it could dispense justice for those wrongly accused, acting on transfer of venues efficiently, among others, the judiciary merely watches and waits.

A narco-state or narco-capitalism or narco-economy is a “political and economic term applied to states where policies are seen to collude and cooperate with the illegal drug trade.” Mexico is a narco-state. Afghanistan has the makings of a narco-state. Tajikistan in the 2000s qualified as a narco-state. Guinea-Bissau in Africa is a transshipment point of cocaine out of Latin America into Europe, and so much more. And so, we ask, are we a narco-state?

Certainly no right-thinking politician would want to run for president knowing the drug menace is one serious issue you would need to confront. Who among Binay, Santiago, Poe, Duterte knew the gravity of the situation? Again, unlike the US, since we do not have primaries, not all candidates get a national security briefing. In the US, once you enter the general election phase, candidates get security details and receive daily briefings. In our case, it is more of a leap of faith. In the famous reply of Roxas then, “bahala si Batman.” Such is the state of our politics that candidates make a go of it (and it is really a huge sacrifice because they hit you left and right with all issues, manufactured or not, without really knowing what am I enlisting for). We have to ask: what happened in the last six years of Aquino? Why is the drug menace so ingrained? At what point did it seize our institutions? Who allowed it to thrive? Who benefited from it? To have several drug laboratories and state-of-the-art facilities, some of which are near military camps, are not mere coincidences. Who allowed it to flourish? And that is why I left Roxas’ name in the list. He was DILG.

We need to establish answers to these questions in order for all to understand the kind of narco-politics we have. Imagine removing a duly elected president because money from the drug lords are now intermingling with money to oust Duterte? Would the Loidas of

the world know that they are aiding and abetting drug lords in the process? And the Loidas talk about a campaign promise made by Duterte as if that is the only thing important to look into. Ever reviewed what Noy promised and failed to deliver in six years? Try it and then you will see how the six months of Duterte compares with Noy's six years. Fair.

That Duterte was not able to nip the drug menace so he has to go, is a US citizen finding umbrage with her place of birth. A single, foreign-based Fil-Am has the temerity to say to the 16 million voters (it was reportedly 20 million but had to be surgically removed electronically) who voted for Duterte that she is better than them and that she can singlehandedly call out the duly elected president in favor of the vice president, asserting further that the vice president "can do the job." So, using such logic, if Ms Robredo takes over as president from Mr. Duterte, we will not be in a rut? Can we hold you to that? And if given six months as president and Ms Robredo fails to eradicate illegal drugs, who will be your next champion? The Loidas would probably want Frank? Why don't you come home? Help Sorsogon, fight the menace and throw tantrums here instead of in your cozy Fifth Avenue abode? A Fil-Am insults 55 million Filipino voters, amazing! She probably thinks the 110 million are all idiots! And certain duly elected representatives and senators can't talk sense to their padron?

To the Loidas of the world, remember Euripides. Let me refresh your mind and black heart: "When one with honeyed words but evil mind persuades the mob, great woes befall the state." You may be moneyed, powerful and all but we are Filipinos and despite the heartaches, we chose our Philippines. We will defend it.