

The Post-Cold War Scholar: Aileen S.P. Baviera at the Turn of the Millennium, 1997–2003

It has been a year since she passed away, but despite and amidst the lingering sadness, enough time has passed to shed some more light on Professor Aileen Baviera's scholarship. So far, assessment of her work has focused on the diversity and multiplicity of her perspectives, her area studies and interdisciplinary backgrounds, her commitment to Philippine interests, and her direct experience of foreign policy-making that gave such insight and nuance to her writings (Nolasco 2020). Others have written on her activist background and development work (Tadem 2020) and on her policy-making contributions (Kraft 2020; Bandong, Bernardo, Garriga 2020).

The five articles reprinted in this issue of *Asian Studies* come from a specific period in Dr. Baviera's professional life. Four appeared in the journal between 1997 and 2003, and one appeared as a chapter in a book published by the UP Asian Center in 2001 (Malay, Jr. 2001). This six-year period allows us to place her early academic career—and that of her generation—in its political and historical context: the immediate aftermath of the end of the Cold War. Her (their) writings respond to this geopolitical shift, and they would find some culmination in her PhD dissertation, "Post-Cold War China-ASEAN Relations: Exploring Worldview Convergence and its Security Implications" (Baviera 2003).

A post-Cold War scholar, she wrote her first essays on China in the early 1990s, and her oeuvre from that time to the early 2000s—as well as beyond—sought to address the implications and complications, especially for the Philippines, of the rise of China, ASEAN, and Southeast Asian states; the collapse of the bipolar order and the emergence of a multipolar

one; and the intensification of territorial disputes between China and the Philippines—exacerbated by UNCLOS taking effect in 1994 and by China’s occupation of Mischief Reef in the Philippines in 1995. The central problem that haunted her work, and that of many others, was how all these players—from states to regional organizations—should relate to each other as sovereign states after the Cold War. They are also bedeviled by a balancing act: between the need to assert and respect state sovereignty (especially of the Philippines) and the imperative for cooperation on the one hand, and between bilateral and multilateral approaches to resolving regional issues on the other (cf: Baviera 2011b; 2013). These and related questions today have become as complex as ever, especially as China has become much more powerful and influential over the past decade or so, and the power asymmetry between Manila and Beijing. Indeed, the rise and ever-increasing power of China over the first two decades of the 21st century would influence the direction of Dr. Baviera’s work after 2003.

The first essay, “Managing Territorial Disputes” (1997) presents an overview of the territorial disputes in the South China Sea, and of the measures taken to address them until 1996. Obviously enough, this fleshing out must be understood partly as a response to the complexities arising from the territorial disputes, not least the increasing securitization of Philippines-China relations from 1994 onwards (Clemente and Shih 2018, 146).

A parallel development here is that the post-Cold War period also saw the breakdown of the bipolar order (United States versus the Soviet Union) and ushered a multipolar system that now includes China, Japan, and the ASEAN states. All three, and others, were urged to come to terms with one another, not least in 1995, when “the first collective, inter-governmental interactions exclusively involving ASEAN, China, Japan and Korea took place, spurred by the need for these countries to coordinate their positions preparatory to the first Asia-Europe Meeting held in 1996” (Baviera 2008, 3). Although written in a different context, “Managing Territorial Disputes” captures this multiplicity somewhat and showcases

Dr. Baviera's grasp of the complex issues. Several years later, in 2002, she would map them again in the article, "The China Challenge to ASEAN Solidarity: The Case of the South China Sea Disputes." It highlights the difficulties of an ASEAN caught between the divergent interests and conflicting approaches of each member state to China and to the resolution of territorial disputes. The "China Challenge" article should be read alongside Dr. Jay Batongbacal's essay in this issue, which provides a behind-the-scenes look at Dr. Baviera's efforts in the early 2000s and at her role in what eventually became the 2002 Declaration on the Code of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (ASEAN 2002). The 2002 Declaration—a statement of ASEAN unity—should in turn be read alongside the complexities and divergences mapped in the "China Challenge" article.

Much was made of how Dr. Baviera was able to straddle multiple perspectives. While this approach, along with her area studies background, does point to her trademark holistic take on issues, it must be said that the historical and political context demanded precisely such an outlook. Both "Managing Territorial Disputes" and the "China Challenge" articles rise to the challenge; they provide useful overviews of the disputes, and of the various ways it was, can, and should have been addressed, from bilateral to multilateral approaches. Trained in political science and area studies, with direct experience in foreign-policy making, having lived in China, and immersed in people-to-people relations, Dr. Baviera had a formidable intellect and expansive outlook. She was as qualified as any, if not more than most, to examine the post-Cold War security landscape and its implications for the Philippines. The country was fortunate to have her; her insights are sorely missed, and her loss immeasurable in light of Philippines-China relations today.

"Managing Territorial Disputes" and the "China Challenge" belong to Dr. Baviera's broader thrust of critiquing—and helping rethink—Philippine foreign policy in light of post-1990 realities. At that time at least, this meant, among other things, a shift from, but not abandonment of, the Philippines' general dovetailing with the dictates of American foreign policy. It also entailed embracing the multipolar world order. In 1995, she wrote,

It is foolish to continue to rely on the United States to provide security and economic assistance to a region that is enjoying higher growth rates than itself, and to one that disagrees so often and so openly with US objectives.

For the Philippines, after a rude awakening to the harsh realization that there never was a special relationship with the United States after all, the challenge is to craft new terms of relations based on mutual benefit and respect for sovereign interests and grounded on new complex realities of the emerging multipolar world order. (Baviera 1994, 85)

Of course, she was not alone in this “rethinking” enterprise. She was part of a group of scholars who assessed the state and prospects of Philippine politics and economics in the mid-1990s; their work was published as a 1994 issue of *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* (Baviera 1994). A few years earlier, in September 1992, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Philippine Association for Chinese Studies (PACS) had organized a roundtable, “Perspectives on Philippine Policy Towards China.” It sought to “identify[ing] issues to be addressed by Philippine policymakers” vis-à-vis the rise of China and the shifting international order. The papers from this roundtable was later published as an issue of the PACS journal (Cariño and Churchill 1993). Indeed, as a member of PACS, Dr. Baviera was but one among several scholars that sought to understand Philippines-China relations since the late 1980s (cf. Clemente and Shih 2018). Her PACS colleagues focused on various aspects of these ties, as well as studies on the Chinese in the Philippines, while she of course concentrated on Chinese foreign policy and the territorial disputes.

Dr. Baviera wrote “Managing Territorial Disputes” when she was working directly and closely with foreign policy circles. From 1993 to 1998, she was the head of the Center for International Relations and Strategic

Studies of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) of the Department of Foreign Affairs (cf. Baviera 2019a). This experience underpins the informed policy thrusts of the essay (and that of her work as a whole; cf. Nolasco 2020). Reflecting back on her professional life in 2016, she shares,

Back then [in the mid-1990s], DFA, especially Undersecretary Rodolfo Severino, was very supportive of the important role being played by FSI. We were making assessments of the regional developments and coming up with strategies, for instance, on how to respond to a contingency arising from a cross-Strait incident in Taiwan — how to immediately evacuate overseas Filipino workers and the Philippine Representative Office in Taipei. On the occasion of the 1997 Hong Kong handover, we organized a conference aimed at assessing its implications and we invited Hong Kong scholars. We also helped in negotiating the bilateral principles for a Code of Conduct in 1995 (after the Mischief Reef incident). In the course of such work, another FSI colleague and I would join official Philippine delegations to meet our Chinese counterparts. We were given much leeway to work with other relevant government agencies, such as the Office of Strategic Studies of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. We would conduct meetings and consultations with concerned officials and organize simulation exercises. I would sometimes play the role of a Chinese delegate or official in such simulated negotiations and this was good training. I think these activities helped in cultivating appreciation of China Studies for people in the Philippine government. I remember one time in the past, the DFA China Desk received our paper and asked us how come we were able to prepare such work in short notice. In response, I told them that knowledge is cumulative, that we had closely been following the issues and actors over time and this made it easier for us to come up with recommended actions and proposals based on possible scenarios. (Clemente and Shih 2018, 147)

In July 1995, Dr. Baviera gave a presentation at the Third Senate Legislative Workshop, where she summed up the new realities facing Philippine foreign policy and gave policy recommendations, not least the

need to engage ASEAN and China more constructively (Baviera 1995). That she was addressing a Senate workshop hints yet again at the close link between her writing and policy-making. But it also reveals a feature of most of Dr. Baviera's writings in the 1990s (Baviera 1991a, 1991b; 1992; 1995, among others). Published mainly in Philippine journals, they were addressed primarily to a Filipino audience, including and especially the foreign policy establishment. This seems obvious enough, but it's a point that is easy to overlook in light of Dr. Baviera's later professional career, when she was publishing in international journals or foreign presses, or taking part in numerous conferences, forums, and symposia abroad.

But in that 1995 workshop, Dr. Baviera addressed government employees and posed foreign policy challenges arising from regional developments; she spoke, for instance, of how "the emergence of China as an economic powerhouse also presents new questions for Philippine foreign policy" (Baviera 1994, 88). A year earlier, she also wrote that "countries such as the Philippines may wish to emulate these aspects of China's productive diplomacy. More importantly, we need to understand China's diplomacy in order to chart the directions of our policy and our relations with her" (Baviera 1993, 19). And understand it well she did.

In the 1990s, the drive to understand China came from the imperative to improve, and capitalize on, Manila-Beijing relations in light of China's growing economic clout. Her 2000 article, "Philippines-China Relations in the 20th Century: History Versus Strategy" must be seen in this light, but it also had a more immediate, urgent context. Not only did the year 2000 mark the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Manila and Beijing; it was also arguably and partly an attempt to defuse increasing tensions after a heated episode in the territorial disputes. In 1999, China had upgraded its facilities in Mischief Reef (see Batongbacal, this issue). Recapping these close historical ties in the early 2000s sought to help counterbalance the ever-growing escalation of the disputes at that time, dovetailing with both countries' commitment to their peaceful resolution.

This growth of Chinese power, fueled by enhanced nationalism, is again bringing it into potential conflict with the Philippines, in light of competing claims between the Philippines and China over certain islands and waters in the South China Sea. However, despite the acrimony that has come to characterize exchanges between the two sides regarding the disputed territories, both sides continue to persist in a peaceful settlement of the disputes. They have pledged to improve comprehensive cooperation, especially in matters pertaining to economic development, through various bilateral and multilateral mechanisms. (Baviera, this issue)

The “Philippines-China Relations” article also exhibits Dr. Baviera’s historical awareness; she did not see international relations as simply a matter of state interests, hedging, security, balance of power, and the like. For this and other reasons, “Philippines-China Relations in the 20th Century” is a concise, highly readable overview of the subject, including evolution of Philippines-China territorial disputes and efforts to solve them. She would bring this narrative up-to-date for the next two decades (Baviera 2009; APPFI 2018).

Another striking feature of Dr. Baviera’s writings in the post-Cold War era is that a few of them touch on the Chinese in the Philippines. In 1994, her article, “Contemporary Political Attitudes and Behavior of the Chinese in Metro Manila” (Baviera 1995) showcases her competencies in socio-anthropological research. For someone who is known more for foreign policy analysis, this article presents a relatively unknown—or perhaps forgotten—side of Dr. Baviera, one that’s most pronounced in the field work she did in her analysis of the “domestic stakeholders” in the territorial disputes (Baviera 2016). The article republished here, “Individual, Ethnic and National Identity in the Age of Globalization: The Case of the Ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia,” written with Caroline Hau, examines in turn the Chinese in Southeast Asia and makes very perceptive remarks on the connection between capitalist development, ethnicity, and nation-formation. This focus on the Chinese in the Philippines is part of larger

social, and even regional, context that thrust the Chinese in Southeast Asia to greater prominence, which was brought about by Chinese economic growth (Baviera and Hau, this issue). In some ways, one could also argue that Dr. Baviera's attention to the Chinese in the Philippines in the 1990s was part of her appreciation of how domestic politics and concerns affect a nation's foreign policy.

"Contemporary Political Attitudes" and the co-written article with Caroline Hau mark a phase in Dr. Baviera's publication record. Later in her career, of course, Dr. Baviera would focus more on foreign policy, her specialization at any rate. The Asia Pacific Pathways to Progress Foundation, Inc., of which she was President, did come out with a 25-minute video in 2018, "Philippines-China Relations: A Synoptic Review (APPF 2018).

Lastly, the article, "Southeast Asian Perspectives on the War Against Terror," exemplifies Dr. Baviera's grasp of regional geopolitics at a crucial historical juncture—even if it departs from the usual foci of her scholarship—as well as the expansive range of her thinking and approach. Even if she worked on ASEAN-China relations and the territorial disputes, she always kept abreast of regional and global developments, especially if and when they impinge on Southeast Asia.

The five articles reprinted in this issue represent only but a snapshot of Dr. Baviera's writings at the turn of the millennium. By no means do they capture the breadth of her scholarship, even in these early stages of her academic career. Throughout the 1990s, she was also involved in development work and wrote "Agricultural Modernization in China" (Baviera 2020[2001]), food security (Baviera, Shaolian and Militante 1999) and poverty alleviation in rural Asia (Baviera and Militante 2000), among a few others.

Written over 20 years ago, the articles are already dated, but they do foreground the larger sociopolitical context to which Dr. Baviera was responding and which informed her scholarship and the problems it sought to address. Of course, her later work would evolve alongside the major developments of the times, including the rapprochement with Beijing during the administration of President Arroyo, China's Belt and Road

Initiative, the Scarborough Shoal standoff in 2012, the arbitration award in 2016, and President Duterte's pivot to China. But these turn-of-the-millennium writings arguably form a/the key matrix from which her later work would evolve. As such, these articles also help us understand a specific era in ASEAN-China-Philippines relations—1997 to 2003—one that can help us put the present configuration in a historical perspective. They preserve the sentiments, voices, and frames of analysis—not just Dr. Baviera's—of the time, helping us see if, how, and to what extent things have (not) changed. Furthermore, these early publications allow us to read the continuities and divergences in her work, analysis, and approach, if not in the issues themselves. For instance, in her 1995 address to the Third Senate Legislative Workshop, she included social and economic development—for non-state actors, i.e. the Filipino public—as a key consideration in foreign policy shifts (Baviera 1995). This would find expression in her lifelong efforts at people-to-people exchanges, and in her article on the “domestic stakeholders” of the territorial disputes, where she speaks of “development diplomacy,” which was of course a core project of the Ramos administration (Morales 2006, 523).¹ Aligning with the Philippine government's initiative, Dr. Baviera advised,

development diplomacy based on domestic stakeholders' interests and needs should be placed front and center of the next stage of Philippine statecraft on the West Philippine Sea issue, whether through bilateral negotiations with China or regional cooperation or both. Law and diplomacy will remain instruments rather than ends in themselves, and the objectives of our foreign policy will remain security of the state, welfare of the people, peace in the region. (Baviera 2016, 13)

Dr. Baviera would build on the “Managing Territorial Disputes” and the “China Challenge” article to chart later developments—mapping out the issues and players—on disputes and regional developments, including US-China competition in the 21st century (Baviera 2008; 2011a; 2011b; 2013; 2015). Lastly, one can glimpse at how Philippines-China relations has turned out since the 1990s from her 2019 essay. In the 1990s, she “had some sleepless nights while preparing for talks with China. The

lessons about Chinese foreign policy and negotiating behavior during those years were priceless. Sadly, 20 years hence and with so much engagement having taken place, we seem to be worse off now than when we started as far as territorial tensions are concerned” (Baviera 2019b).

This issue of *Asian Studies* represents the first attempt to gather in one volume the writings of Dr. Baviera. I can only hope that there will be more to come, not least because many of her writings, including the recent ones, are not readily available to the (Filipino) public. These include what to me represents one of her best, if not the best, work, “Domestic Mediations of China’s Influence in the Philippines” (Baviera 2016a). For the moment, we are pleased to present these articles—in a modern layout—to the public; it is, I hope, a fitting tribute to a scholar who always kept the Filipino people in mind in her scholarship. May they also serve as a guide to our foreign policy challenges, not least the territorial disputes in the West Philippines.

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NOTE

1 The notion of development diplomacy receives extensive treatment in Manglapus 1989.

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