

# **SECTION 7**

**Ensuring Continuity  
and Relevance**

## PERIODIC REVIEWS OF THE FORESIGHT

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Foresight as a long-term policy instrument merits regular review and updating if it is to remain relevant to the times. Cassingena-Harper (2003) underscores the importance of the foresight review process and the concerns to be addressed:

“The foresight process involves intense iterative phases of open reflection, networking, consultation, and discussion leading to the joint refining of future visions and the common ownership of strategies, with the aim of exploiting long-term opportunities opened up through the impact of science, technology, and innovation (STI) on society... It is the discovery of a common space for open thinking on the future and the incubation of strategic approaches... in this sense the foresight process has no beginning or end, since it builds on previous and ongoing conversations and consultations and sets in motion learning curves and other intangible spin-offs which are not easily captured in short timeframes...”

Three basic tenets for a rigorous evaluation of foresight have been proposed (Georghiou 2003):

- Accountability - efficiency in the conduct of activities and proper accounting of public funds
- Justification - whether the impact justifies the continuing conduct of foresight
- Learning- improvements in the foresight process and scope

## Institutionalizing the Foresight System in Other Countries

Various approaches have been used in the evaluation of national foresight activities as follows (Public Service Foresight Network 2017; Georghiou 2003):

- Singapore: Centre for Strategic Futures in the Prime Minister’s Office Strategy Group
- United Kingdom: Horizon Scanning Program in the Government Office for Science
- Germany: Chancellor’s Office encourages and facilitates dialogue Periodic Reviews of the Foresight 2040 and capacity-building; Futur initiative
- France: Centre strategique in Prime Minister’s Office; several think tanks
- Finland: Prime Minister’s Office conducts foresight studies and coordinates foresight in departments
- Japan: National Institute of Science and Technology Policy (NISTEP)
- Korea: Korea Institute of S&T Evaluation and Planning (KISTEP)
- Australia: CSIRO has a ten-person foresight team
- Denmark: Prime Minister chairs a “Disruption Council” composed of seven ministers and 32 stakeholders
- China: State Council and National Development and Reform Commission

The different approaches are used by governments in the conduct of foresight activities. The extent to which foresight is institutionalized differs presumably due to the unique characteristics of their administrative culture, human, and financial resources.

As discussed in previous sections, foresight is conducted to inform and develop policy and influence the direction of the national innovation system. Cassingena-Harper (2003) contends that the foresight activities involve “the discovery of a common space for open thinking on the future and the incubation of strategic approaches... in this sense the foresight process has no beginning or end...” and therefore is in a continuing process of refinement.

Thus, the institutionalization of foresight must be seriously considered even if such would proceed gradually into full integration in governance. The refinement of vision and strategies is the core function of foresight and the mechanism by which foresight can influence outcomes is by constant review of the issues and concerns that have been anticipated and whether such have

matched the current realities. The discernment of patterns trends, drivers, science and technology frontier areas, uncertainties including the emergence of black swans are vital to the formulation of resilient and agile response modes.

## Institutionalization of the Philippine Foresight

In order for long-range plans like PAGTANAW 2050 to yield the desired results, there must be continuity—this Philippine foresight spans three decades. It must remain relevant and continue to provide both vision and guidance across five Presidencies and the administrations that are part of these changes in leadership.

For this to be possible, there must be STI foresight institute tasked solely with the continuity and relevance of the initiatives detailed in this STI foresight, one that will remain focused on the job despite upheavals in the political environment, as well as in changes in government policies.

Such an STI foresight institute will, essentially, *provide a steady base from which policymakers and government functionaries may build the needed support systems, infrastructure, and policies—as well as adjust the same when needed. Pagtanaw 2050 must also provide a strong representation of all stakeholders in the process of bringing this Foresight from planning to execution and evaluation, and, as necessary, recalibration.*

Each section and operational area of this Foresight deals with different communities of stakeholders in vital areas, such as education, food security, environmental matters, health care delivery, sociopolitical developments, and so forth. Each segment of the STI foresight is inextricably bound to the others— just as we are all, in some way, bound to each other as part of a nation and the society within it.

Creating an institute to ensure the continuity of efforts to take this STI foresight from the drawing board to the physical world will go a long way to making certain that the goals and aspirations set to paper here will become actual realities.

Such an institute will need full time core staff and harness the expertise of the academe— including the scientists who have generously given their time, expertise, and efforts to produce the work included in this Foresight.

An Advisory Committee to provide guidance to the STI foresight activities may be organized with representation from ranks of stakeholders, policymakers, and the communities that each foresight segment will affect, as well as functionaries of government from agencies that will be part of the planning and implementation of the initiatives proposed in this Foresight.

## Responsibilities of the STI foresight institute

The institute would be responsible for, but not be limited to, the following:

- Providing timely anticipatory “intelligence” on the developments in STI that are taking place locally and globally, the future challenges and options as inputs to decision-making, policy formulation and budget planning and implementation.
- Collaborating with foresight institutions in the Philippines and abroad to gain awareness of trends and drivers of change
- Providing representation of the STI stakeholders, and strong two way communication linkages between the committee and the communities they represent.
- Developing ways and means—including existing ones—to engage the people in public consultations, such as town hall discussions, of the proposed initiatives in this STI Foresight.
- Studying how specific STI stakeholders (i.e., local government units, schools, private sector establishments and organizations, government agencies, government owned and controlled corporations) can contribute to the projects and initiatives of the institute.
- Setting timelines for short-, medium-, and long-term goals like the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals that will serve as benchmarks for progress of this Foresight and its resulting programs, initiatives, and advocacies that will be designed based on it.
- Maintaining continuous documentation and record-keeping of processes, initiatives, policies, and legislation that results from this Foresight, as well as keep records of the implementation of the same for public reference.
- Convening regularly to check the benchmarks for progress of the public consultations on, implementation of and the results of initiatives proposed under this Foresight.
- Engaging policymakers from government and the private sector in a continuing conversation about STI foresight, its proposals, benchmarks, and results so that the foresight initiatives will remain steadily on track across the foresight timeline.
- Providing regular reports on the progress of this Foresight to the public through media, social media, and other means at its disposal.
- Being available to all stakeholders so it may address any concerns over the policymaking and implementation processes of STI foresight.

For continuity to be possible, the proposed STI foresight institute must be insulated from the political upheavals that have disrupted the continuity of other efforts by the government in the past. There can be no short-term political agendas, nor big business manipulations of the institute for continuity.

Rather, the STI foresight institute must be the bedrock upon which this Foresight will stand, that it might last the 30 years it projects. Instead of being influenced by the erstwhile politics that will undoubtedly surround it, the STI foresight should provide a strong framework into which efforts by government at all levels, the private sector, industry, and communities can be integrated.

The STI foresight institute will have set tenures for its core staff, and ensuring their inclusion on the basis of their track records in their respective fields of endeavor, to serve the best interests of the Filipino—and not any one group of persons or organizations alone. There is much work to be done if we are to take this Foresight and create the best possible benefit for our people, and our nation. The institute that will oversee this work must be made up of the best minds available and have both the drive and the integrity to see the work through.

### **Foresight Lessons from Great Minds**

Dr. Jose P. Rizal (1889) has observed that “[R]eforms which have a palliative character are not only ineffectual but even prejudicial, when the government is confronted with evils that must be cured radically. And were we not convinced of the honesty and rectitude of some governors, we would be tempted to say that all the partial reforms are only plasters and salves of a physician who, not knowing how to cure the cancer, and not daring to root it out, tries in this way to alleviate the patient’s sufferings or to temporize with the cowardice of the timid and ignorant.”

The changes that must be made across this Foresight would rank among the radical ideas that Rizal wrote about. This Foresight seeks more than “plasters and salves” for the many things that ail our country that can be addressed with science and technology—and any institution that will ensure the continuity of the proposals recorded in this Foresight must have the “honesty and rectitude” Rizal demanded then, for the work before it will be no less difficult than that of a physician seeking to cure cancer in his or her patient.

The STI foresight institute and advisory committee must also be capable of transcending the changes in the country’s political landscape and must be impervious to the influence peddling those with vested interests can bring to bear, should those vested interests clash with the interests of the nation and its people.

As the National Artist for Literature Nick Joaquin (1966) points out: “An honest reading of our history should rather force us to admit that it was the colonial years that pushed us toward the larger effort. There was actually an advance in freedom, for the unification of the land, the organization of towns and provinces, and the influx of new ideas, started our liberation from the rule of the petty, whether of clan, locality or custom.” Not everything learned from centuries of existence as a colony is to be dismissed out of hand. Rather, if one is to take the lessons of history objectively, then one stands to learn clearer and more useful lessons.

Joaquin underscores the need for better and stronger social organizations, with more worthy goals than those common in the small tyrannical fiefdoms our country has been engaged in for much too long. In both the manner of writing this essay, and its content, Joaquin asks us to take a long, objective look at the cultural and historical points he makes so that we can surpass the heritage of smallness he sets down on paper.

Paul D. Hutchcroft and Joel Rocamora published their essay “Strong Demands and Weak Institutions: The Origins and Evolution of the Democratic Deficit in the Philippines” in the *Journal of East Asian Economics* (Hutchcroft and Rocamora 2003). That piece unpacks the systematic problems that explain weaknesses in the country’s governance systems that must be seen and addressed: “Over more than a century—from the representational structures of the Malolos republic of 1898 to the political tutelage of American colonial rule, from the cacique democracy of the postwar republic to the restoration of democracy in the People Power uprising of 1986—Filipinos know both the promise of democracy and the problems of making democratic structures work for the benefit of all. Some 100 years after the introduction of national-level democratic institutions to the Philippines, the sense of frustration over the character of the country’s democracy is arguably more apparent than ever before.”

In their essay, Hutchcroft and Rocamora (2003) also wrote of the “capacity of many elements of civil society to demand accountability and fairness from their leaders” even as they pointed out “the continuing failure of democratic structures to respond to the needs of the poor and excluded. Philippine democracy is, indeed, in a state of crisis.”

Hutchcroft and Rocamora write that “[w]hen we speak of a ‘crisis’ of Philippine democracy, it is important to emphasize that the fundamental values of democracy continue to command broad respect from all sectors of Philippine society. The crisis is manifested, rather, in a deepening frustration over the inability of democratic institutions to deliver the goods, specifically goods of a public character.”

The matters raised by Rizal, Joaquin, and Hutchcroft and Rocamora are all things we must still take stock of as this Foresight’s proposals are considered and put into practice, for they are still definite areas of concern in the society where this Foresight will be put to use. We must go beyond simply being hurt by the observations these four authors have made—we need to understand exactly what they are saying so that these can guide us as we take action on these weaknesses in our societal and governmental systems. That way, we can make the changes that are necessary for the continuity of growth for our country and our people using this Foresight.

The proposed institute for continuity, and our policymakers in whose hands this Foresight sits, must consider the painfully sharp observations made in these three essays as they decide how to move forward with this Foresight.

## FORESIGHTING EXERCISES WITH ASEAN AND BEYOND

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While each country benefits individually from foresight exercises within their states and national borders, we live in a world where international cooperation offers opportunities to accelerate growth and progress.

Harnessing science, technology and innovation on a regional level, such as across the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), would facilitate such work immensely. This would call for a good framework in diplomacy, as well as science and technology, and in communications within and between each member-state in the region. Such an effort especially by the proposed STI foresight institute will take a multi-disciplinary approach that offers benefit to all.

O'Doherty and others (2020) explain that such a process would:

- Inform policymaking so that key actors are more aware of longerterm scenarios, are more prepared for different possibilities, and able to recognize an emerging scenario and its wider implications.
- Help build networks among the people centrally involved with shaping the future. Bringing people together – perhaps virtually – will facilitate collective sharing of visions and assessments of the future, help understand challenges and opportunities, and provide a basis for formulating strategies and objectives.
- Develop capabilities that shape a ‘foresight culture’. This should enable individuals and groups to define and embark upon more detailed foresight activities and to forge their own foresight networks.

## Vital Partnerships

The United Nations holds a similar view of international and regional cooperation, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic: “Few countries alone will be able to achieve the SDGs with business as usual” (UN IATT 2020). In that guidebook, it is noted that “many countries are going to fall far short of other goals as well,” and goes on to recommend that the “effective use of STI may change the trajectory and accelerate progress toward the future we want, particularly if developing countries are able to benefit more from international partnerships.”

Pooled resources and shared burdens make the work of creating progress and prosperity easier—especially among nations that share common topographical, geographical and seasonal features, as well as cultural aspects that help encourage cooperation. Shared interests—including but not limited to regional security, food security, resource and environmental preservation, the promotion of public health initiatives and educational initiatives—can be given the manpower, resources and support they require if a healthy exchange of expertise, learning, experiences, and understanding of these things can be achieved within the ASEAN region.

## Challenges

According to the guidebook, there are “a large number of both existing and emerging technologies that present not only many opportunities but also many challenges for developing countries,” including digital technologies (such as the internet, artificial intelligence, robotics, remote sensing, big data analytics, blockchain, 3-D printing), nanotechnology, new materials, and biotechnology.”

Thus, the need for regular regional foresighting exercises among the ASEAN member-states—exercises that will link the individual STI foresights of these nations together along pathways that will help these member-states work together so they can achieve their goals, individually and regionally, through international cooperation and through linkages across their industries and private sector groups.

## Addressing Inequalities

To most effectively map out and engage in Foresighting with other nations, especially our ASEAN neighbors, we need to understand the nature of the inequalities that hamper our progress.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report (2020) stated that “rapid economic growth in emerging economies has fueled the rise of a global middle class. Nevertheless, there is persistent poverty, and rising inequality. Wealth is highly concentrated, and there are also

large disparities in income-earning opportunities, as well as in standards of education and health. These imbalances constrain economic growth and human development while heightening vulnerability, whether to pandemics, or economic crises or climate change — and can soon destabilize societies.”

The matter of inequality, according to the UNCTAD report, “is also affected by technological revolutions. Technological changes combine with financial capital to create new techno-economic paradigms — the cluster of technologies, products, industries, infrastructure and institutions that characterize a technological revolution.”

A regional cooperation to enter into Foresighting exercises will go a long way toward addressing such inequalities, and it will provide a better pool of resources for the implementation of initiatives taken from their national foresight exercises, as well as a regional foresight.

There is much common ground from which we can build a stronger region by sharing resources and efforts to create the progress each nation needs. Working together on a regional foresight endeavor would make good use of these strategic advantages our nations enjoy. From there, we can build up to making use of our learnings and experiences to building foresight exercises with other nations and regional.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

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Progress towards a Prosperous, Archipelagic, Maritime Nation should not remain a dream for the Philippines, with its rich natural and human resources. However, such growth has stayed in that realm of wishful thinking for the lack of continuity in government's efforts for generations, as well as the lack of systems that would enable—and encourage—Filipinos to participate effectively and fully in such efforts.

Perhaps an explanation for this can be found in the work of National Artist for Literature Nick Joaquin, who penned an essay titled “A Heritage of Smallness” in 1966 under the nom de plume Quijano de Manila, where he made several painful observations about the ways Filipinos put obstacles in their own way (Joaquin 1966).

This excerpt from the essay Joaquin is apt, if hard to acknowledge: “The barangays that came to the Philippines were small both in scope and size. A barangay with a hundred households would already be enormous; some barangays had only 30 families, or less. These, however, could have been the seed of a great society if there had not been in that a fatal aversion to synthesis. The barangay settlements already displayed a Philippine characteristic: the tendency to petrify in isolation instead of consolidating, or to split smaller instead of growing.”

Joaquin also wrote: “The depressing fact in Philippine history is what seems to be our native aversion to the large venture, the big risk, the bold extensive enterprise.”

In his essay, Joaquin noted: “We would deliberately limit ourselves to the small performance. This attitude, an immemorial one, explains why we're finding it so hard to become a nation, and why our pagan forefathers could not even imagine the task.”

This is a long-standing mindset among our people that must change if we are to succeed in a world that is constantly disrupted by rapid technological changes that provide fresh opportunities for growth.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

Why quote a National Artist for Literature in this Foresight if all he has to say is critical of both the people we seek to serve and the government?

The keen eye of the journalist and writer Joaquin offers in his 1966 essay provides us with valuable insights: “Our cultural history, rather than a cumulative development, seems mostly a series of dead ends. One reason is a fear of moving on to a more complex phase; another reason is a fear of tools. Native pottery, for instance, somehow never got far enough to grasp the principle of the wheel. Neither did native agriculture ever reach the point of discovering the plow for itself, or even the idea of the draft animal, though the carabao was handy. Wheel and plow had to come from outside because we always stopped short of technology.”

This three-decade Foresight is one of those bold enterprises our esteemed National Artist for Literature Nick Joaquin wrote about, and, while we may hope to be able to answer Joaquin’s criticisms with it, we must ensure that this large venture succeeds, and continues to do so, across its’ set timeframe.

Such is also a recurring fate of many initiatives of government that have lost steam—across agencies, administrations, and at all levels from the barangay to the Palace. Just as science and technology permeates daily life, so, too, do media and the arts—and the insights of our journalists, authors, and artists often provides valuable social commentary that has direct and strong bearing on the state of our nation at any given point in time. What this Foresight must take into account is that it will be implemented in the physical and political reality of a nation that has always had the potential for great growth but has not yet fulfilled that potential. Painful truths only hurt until they are addressed, which is why we need to read and comprehend such truths, then act on them accordingly.

To answer Joaquin’s criticisms, we need to do more than spew angry, defensive retorts. He did not simply mean to rile his readers with his essay. He penned this as a call to action, by speaking truths that should be taken as a complex challenge, rather than as a set of put-downs. Joaquin was mapping the societal and political landscape to show his readers where the pitfalls have always lain. It is up to us to learn the lessons he has sought for decades to teach.