

Land of reforms the philippines and asia history essay



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Land reforms can be used in different ways and it can have different meanings depending on how a person wants to use it. Some have defined it with such broadness that there is the inclusion of all policies relating to the development of the economy of the agricultural sector. The United Nations defined land reform as an incorporated program of measures developed to eliminate hindrances to the development of the economy and society. The definition of land reform can also be narrowed down and once it is narrowed down. It can be taken as provision of land to the landless (Warriner, 1969: xiv).

In this research paper, land reform which can also be called as “ agrarian reform” involves many things such as making changes in the regulations and laws regarding the ownership of land. The term may refer to public programs made by the government. These programs seek to reorganize land relationships with the goal of more equal distribution of income and wealth resulting to a greater productivity in the agricultural sector. There also should be the element of equity present alongside the increasing agricultural productivity.

Why are land reforms important?

Land reform is an important issue since most of the countries located in the region of Asia consider land reform as an important element involving the development of their national policies and laws. There is also the fact that countries located in the Asian region have a great need for the effective implementation of programs of land reform in their own countries for them to have a successful economy in the agricultural section. We must also not

forget that many of the programs involving land reform in Asian countries have not been successfully implemented.

Land reforms still have a big part in the development of most countries in the Asia region. To some people, land reforms can be seen as one of the necessities to smoothen the progress of development and the regeneration of inactive or stagnant economies in Asia. There are a great number of peasants who needs to be provided of relief from the exploitive and unequal nature of land ownership. These poor peasants need to be provided of even a piece of land to work on in order for them to be able to produce more incomes.

To some other people, fair and reasonable distribution of land can be considered as a sign of greater equality and dignity to every man. They view land reforms as one of the basic necessities for the attainment of political democracy. To these people, the most important underlying principle behind land reforms is that of dignity, freedom, and humanity given to the poor peasants who receive land.

Land reform is of crucial importance because agriculture is the largest economic sector in the most countries in the continent of Asia. The people in the rural locations in these countries are the ones who are in great need of equitable land distribution. Thus, whatever reason people have, whether they see land reforms important because of their concerns about equality or productivity, land reform has already become crucial for the development of Asian countries.

Land Reform in the Philippines

In the Philippine economy, agriculture without a doubt is still the most significant sector. Close to three quarters of the national population are in the rural areas and more than sixty-three percent of the Filipino families almost completely depend on agriculture as their source of living. Despite of this, the agriculture in the Philippines is filled with a number of issues involving land reform. The agricultural sector in the Philippines has mainly just provided for the expansion of foreign exchange requirements. This resulted to the country ending up short for the ever growing domestic food demand. Food shortages, rising food prices, and dependence on food importations have become a common situation in the country since the post-independence period.

It is quite observable making it very obvious that the absence of unyielding commitment to reform under a central leadership will not result to a successful implementation of land reform. This gives us the conclusion that the political will and the ability of political leadership to take risks in disturbing the power balance in the society is one of the keys for the successful implementation of land reform programs. Furthermore, the administrative body for reform should possess sufficient authority and power to prevent the influence of personal political interests in destroying the land reform programs. The administration of our country, the Philippines, is assumed to possess this necessary authority and power. But there are still a number of social forces that influence the central administration that oppose the land reforms here.

The other side of the story is sometimes the peasants have the power. They are able to align themselves with the central power and they themselves implement policies for their own benefit. This situation is true in some countries in Asia.

But I think the situation here in the Philippines is the opposite of the previous statements in the previous paragraph. The peasantry in our country is obviously weak. It does not have people organizations efficient enough to express the views of the people. The peasantry here in our country lacks the strength to fight for its rights in the face of the landlords' economic and political strengths.

Peasant mobilization is an essential condition not only for the redistribution of rights in land, but also for a change in the political status and consciousness of the people. Effective political organization and mobilization of the rural poor peasants help them preserve their interests involving land reform.

It is not the case that the abused peasants do not fight for their rights. It is actually the opposite. They fight for their rights and they have been working hard to attain these rights. But the problem is they are still too weak to fight against their landlords or should I say the landlords are still too strong for them and these landlords have no plans to show a little bit of mercy to these poor peasants.

The problem of implementation is still present in these land reform programs. There is a greater chance for the implementation of the land reform to be successful if there will be more public participation. This can be <https://assignbuster.com/land-of-reforms-the-philippines-and-asia-history-essay/>

achieved if there will be an equal attention given to land reform by all political leaders whether these leaders are of local or national level.

The way the land reforms are implemented is determined by the strength of rural organizations and institutions. For example, if the local elite are in full control of land reforms, then the social forces with the goal of bringing about change in the rural scene will be greatly resisted.

The success of the land reform program is not only based on the strategies of its implementation. The country's success in the program will also depend upon the characteristics of the administrative system and the local institutions of government or those of the peasantry that may have been made responsible for the implementation of the program.

Our bureaucracy should possess the effectiveness, efficiency and dedication for a successful land reform. We can see that people that came from families with the background of land owners and are appointed to serve the public in the government will only slow down the progression of land reform. I think we can conclude that this is true. It is greatly projected in our country that having leaders that came from the families of land owners will just hinder the land reform. Even our current president himself, President NoyNoy Aquino, has been evading the issues involving land reform since he started his term in the government last year.

Also, the structure of the bureaucracy plays a part for the progression of land reform. The norms and processes in the bureaucracy should be adjusted to the changes the reform will result in. In our country, the aim of the land reform should be for the advantage of the underprivileged peasantry. With <https://assignbuster.com/land-of-reforms-the-philippines-and-asia-history-essay/>

this in mind, the rules for expropriation, rules for evaluation and rules for compensation should possess simplicity and straight forwardness. This is needed in order for the decision makers to act quickly and with certainty.

If the rules proposed projects vagueness then this will only result to several interpretations of the rules. These several interpretations will then result to unnecessary administrative and judicial squabbling which may annihilate the purposes of the reform.

The maintenance of the land and revenue records should also be well monitored because if people will not be able to have access on these records when the situation calls in for these records, then there will be difficulty in the implementation of the land reform laws.

Land reform in the Philippines has been an unfinished issue for a very long time. Philippine land reform policy has progressed over the years, becoming more refined on the matter of goals and implementing procedures. Specific improvements include the increasing focus on the concept of land redistribution; lowered landlord retention limits, more specific provisions for implementation, and shortened schedules towards full tenant-ownership.

A brief history of the land reform in the Philippines:

Before the Spaniards came to colonize our country, land was the main source of wealth of our ancestors. The members of each barangay cultivated the land either as a community or just individually. The ownership of land was actually shared by the members of the barangay. This custom changed when the Spaniards came and our country was colonized by them. The Spaniards introduced a new concept involving the ownership of land. This is the <https://assignbuster.com/land-of-reforms-the-philippines-and-asia-history-essay/>

beginning of private ownership of land. But this new distribution of land was not really for the benefit of the early Filipinos. The Spaniards redistributed the land among themselves. They redistributed the land among the military officials and Spanish friars. This led to the establishment of the encomienda and the hacienda systems in the history of the Philippines.

American Colonial Period (1898 - 1946)

After the Spaniards handed over the Philippines to new colonizers which are the Americans, the American colonial government started the attempts on land reform. The government did try to redistribute the lands but they unfortunately failed. Their attempts to redistribute the lands just led to them being able to minimize the size of land a person can own. Also, some laws that were created by the American colonial government just gave American investors the opportunity to become big time landowners in our country.

Again, just like what happened during the Spanish colonization, the colonizers were the ones who benefitted from the land reform the colonizers also made for our country and in return the Filipinos were the ones to suffer from this inequality. The Filipino elites which were called the ilustrados back then were given high privileges. The American colonizers sought for their assistance on running the government during this period. This resulted to the maintenance of the elites' power. The unfair land redistribution gave birth to more disputes over land ownership and more peasant uprisings.

The Post-Independence Period Before Martial Law (1946 - 1972)

The peasant movements temporarily disappeared during the time of the invasion of the Japanese. The Philippine peasant movement flared into <https://assignbuster.com/land-of-reforms-the-philippines-and-asia-history-essay/>

another open rebellion in 1948. The new republic of the Philippines was then faced to resolve the peasant rebellion and the government thought of resolving it by the means of the use of the military. During this period, President Ramon Magsaysay continued with the use of the traditional agrarian reform as part of his plan to counter the peasant uprisings. In this period also, the Land Reform Act of 1955 was formulated. It is considered as a “breakthrough” for the concept of “nationwide compulsory redistribution of private land.” This new act gave birth to a Land Tenure Administration directly under the Office of the President. It provided for the new possession of landed estates for redistribution by negotiated purchase or by the taking away of estates in excess of three hundred hectares of neighboring areas if owned by individuals or six hundred hectares if owned by corporations.

But we must also take note of the fact that the expropriation proceedings could not be initiated if there are no existing petitions for it coming from the majority of the tenants. At this period the landlords who owned small scaled properties took the opportunity to sell their land to the government in exchange of a good price. In expropriation, the landlords get paid in cash by the government. Though it is also notable that the cash in which they are paid were very high since they have the market value of land as a basis for their price setting. The program was soon proven to be financially out of reach for the poor peasants. Considering that they had to make a ten percent down payment on their plot and they also still had to continue paying their rent to the landowners.

The successful component of President Magsaysay’s rural development programs was the resettlement program. It is considered as part of land <https://assignbuster.com/land-of-reforms-the-philippines-and-asia-history-essay/>

reform calling for the distribution of family-size farms through the opening of the public agricultural lands. Resettlement programs started in the Philippines with the introduction of the American homestead programs. These were continued with the establishment of the National Land Resettlement Administration (NLSA) in 1939/ NLSA was then replaced by the Land Settlement and Development Authority (LASEDECO) in 1950. Basically, the program was meant to diffuse unrest by removing tenants from densely populated regions such as the Central Luzon.

Agricultural Land Reform Code of 1963

Under President Diosdado Macapagal, the Agricultural Land Reform Code of 1963 was created. It was said to bear the unmistakable imprint of a group of young economists and intellectuals who were primarily concerned with the failure of existing agricultural development programs to generate sufficiently rapid gains in productivity to match the rapid population growth.

The greater emphasis on enhancing productivity explains the emergence of an incorporated approach to rural development which is a basically sound concept which in this case meant the implementation of land reform as a basic component in a package of reforms which included credit, extension and other services to the agricultural sector. Land reform was aimed at the establishment of owner-cultivator ship and the economic family size farm as the basis of the Philippine agriculture. The President sought for the complete abolishment of the share tenancy system. (Halim, 2006).

Martial Law Period

The previous land reform programs just maintained the land monopoly by landlords. This resulted to poverty and misery in the countryside and this poverty and misery in the country was very hard to describe. The poverty it created did not only cause peasant unrest in the provinces but also triggered massive political protests and instability in the urban areas in the late 1960s and 1970s. Before President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law, he enacted the Code of Agrarian Reform (RA 6389) and the Agrarian Reform Special Account Fund (RA 6390) in 1971 which lead to the creation of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the Agrarian Reform Special Account Fund to accelerate the implementation of government's agrarian reform program.

Under the Martial Law period, President Ferdinand Marcos proclaimed the entire country of the Philippines as a land reform area. Right after that the Presidential Decree No. 27 was issued. This decree mandated the emancipation of tenants from their bondage and transferring them the ownership of the land they till. P. D. No. 27 placed tenanted rice and corn lands under the scope of asset reform. Moreover, Marcos like his predecessors thought that an ambitious and promising agrarian reform program could weaken the communist uprising in the country.

CARP

The Philippines as a nation looks back at a long history of struggle for the land asset reform characterized by a progressive evolution towards what is now known as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). The annals of the land asset reform in the Philippines reflect the gradual

progression of society and the government's recognition of the tillers' right
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over the land at the high cost of much bloodshed and a long drawn period of peasant insurgency. CARP had been the result of a consultative and legislative process that tried to minimize social and class conflicts. It is therefore more benign and less painful on the part of landowners, with attempts to compensate them to some degree of satisfaction. The so called People Power government of President Corazon Aquino embarked on yet another agrarian reform program which is CARP. It supposedly addresses the widespread landlessness and chronic poverty in the Philippine countryside.

During the implementation of CARP, many people from the land owning families contended that a comprehensive agrarian reform program would be communistic, unconstitutional, and anti-developmental. Many insisted that agrarian reform should be limited to the distribution of public lands and the delivery of support services, and that private lands be left untouched.

The farmers on the other hand saw the pending agrarian reform legislative measures in Congress at the time as the avenue attaining their age-old aspirations of owning the lands they tilled, and with equal vigor, clamored for an even more radical agrarian reform program. Their efforts were a follow through of their cause for a comprehensive agrarian reform program that tragically resulted in what we know as the Mendiola Massacre in January 1987.

CARP gave out positive and negative results. There were changes in tenurial relations. There was a great increase in owner-cultivator ship and there were significant declines in share tenancy, lease holding, and incidence of owner non-cultivators between 1989 and 1999. These are consistent with the land-

to-the-tiller emphasis reform program and targets. CARP also resulted to better perception of economic and social conditions and more optimism. The increased security in land tenure and clearer property rights provide strong subjective and psychological improvement in one's perception of life. This psychological and emotional feeling may be an important factor that has been underestimated by the more economic approach to agrarian reform and rural development.

CARP also lead to the introduction of higher value-added crops. Many family cultivated farms benefited with the contract growing arrangements with large corporate buyers of high value-added crops. CARP contributed to the reduction of social conflicts and increased peace and order in particular areas. Agrarian reform has always been linked to the reduction of peasant unrest and reducing revolutionary pressures from the countryside. These are of course more likely in areas where agrarian reform has been implemented successfully without strong landlords' resistance and delays.

However let us not forget the fact that that many landlords showed resistance to CARP. The landlords' resistance and lack of cooperation in agrarian reform processes, including not presenting the necessary documents, legally combating the processes, using connections in the upper hierarchy of government, and attempting to circumvent the law made it difficult to process land valuation. This stalled the acquisition of secure land rights for many potential beneficiaries.

Many farmers complained of a shift from unequal landlord-tenant relations to unequal trader-farmer relations. The unequal aspects of the latter's

relationship is the farmers' lack of access to credit, input markets, output markets, transportation, post harvest and storage facilities, which traders usually have. This resulted to the farmers tending to sell their products to the traders at lower than market prices and incur interlinked credit-output-input market relationships with them.

The mechanism to partially reduce this marketing-credit problem of the farmer cultivator is usually the promotion of farmers' cooperatives which start out usually as credit cooperatives but with possibilities to branch out into marketing and processing cooperatives for the output and input markets. Repayment problems arise due to the lack of income of farmers as well as a general attitude that government funds need not be repaid since it is the government's role to help the people.

Other problems involve the lack of capital, the existence of pests and diseases, and lack of access to facilities including storage, processing, transportation, irrigation, and roads. All of these lie within the framework of support services and beneficiaries development, which the fiscal study shows is obtaining a lower-than-targeted share of funding so far, especially in recent years. But there is also an aspect of these problems that lie in the macro, regional, and local levels of agricultural policies, credit policies, and infrastructure programs by the national and local governments with corresponding roles for the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Agriculture (DA), National Irrigation Authority (NIA), Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

In general, CARP generated positive impact in rural areas at the household level. There were significant positive changes in the broader social qualitative indications of welfare. The peace and order situation in the countryside had improved significantly. The number of respondents that perceived an improvement in their over-all socio-economic well-being as well saw a brighter perspective of the future increased. There were no significant changes in the quantitative indicators like distribution of landholdings and income. Income is not a very good indicator to assess the impact of CARP considering that there were only two data points considered between the ten-year periods from 1990 to 2000. Other qualitative indicators should be looked into, like value of assets. For land distribution, while a considerable proportion of the total scope of the program had already been distributed, these areas were not critical. Based on official statistics, private agricultural lands were barely touched. Hence, the problem of inequality was not addressed.

Despite various agrarian reform and land distribution programs of the national government, landlessness among Filipino farmers remains the most fundamental problem of the predominantly agricultural and backward Philippine economy.

Land Reform in other Asian Countries

Now that I have pointed out the points of importance involving the land reform in the Philippines, it is now time to look at the land reforms in other countries, specifically other countries in Asia. I have already said in the first part of this paper that the agricultural sector is the most prominent sector in

most economies in the continent of Asia. This implies that agriculture is a really significant matter to most countries in Asia.

I can say that land reform is one of the undying issues in our country the Philippines but this is also true in one of our neighboring countries that is none other than Vietnam. The issue of land reform has been a dominant issue for this Asian country for years. The Vietnamese struggled to achieve their independence from the country of France. This left the people to realize the great need for a more fair distribution of land ownership as well as an alleviation of injustice inherent in prevailing land renting practices. The non-communist government in South Vietnam had found land reform as a very important subject for the country and had exerted great effort to pursue a good land reform. It is the opposite for the communist governments. The land redistribution under these governments had been marked by anarchy. The Communists employ land reform as a means to political power and wish to eliminate not only landlordism but also all private property with collectivized agriculture as an end result.

The non-communist government wants to use effectively all the incentives of private enterprise in agriculture and has the problem of improving landlord-tenant relationships as well as the problem of extending ownership to greater numbers of landless farmers. The non-communist government wanted to maintain a system in which both the landlord and the tenants are essential to achieving a highly productive and modernized agricultural sector. An additional difference between the non-communist and communist objectives is that the non-communist government requires expropriation and

redistribution to be carried out with due regard for land identification, records, and legal procedures.

The Communist government follows no clear set of rules. The basic method is simply to confiscate property without regard for proper identification, records, and transfers of ownership and to assign land for the purpose of increasing political control rather than giving formal recognition of ownership. The Communist leaders' land reform created a division of classes where in those landowners who had supported the Resistance and has previously been accepted were liquidated. An increase in the number of landlords also happened.

In the evolution of land reform in Vietnam, their National Liberation Front (NLF) or better known as the " Viet Cong" also had a part in land reform. The peak of the goals of the Viet Cong's land reform is to create a Communist society based on a dictatorship of the proletariat. The terminal acts of the Communist land reform are the collectivization of land and the final elimination of private ownership as a social incentive.

The present Constitution of Vietnam advocates certain objectives such as making the people property owners, giving special support to those elements of society which have a low standard of living and raising the standard of living of rural citizens and especially helping farmers to have their own farmland.

Considering the points stated above involving the land reform in Vietnam, I think that the implementation of land reform is more successful in South

Vietnam where in the non-communist leaders' advocated equity. The <https://assignbuster.com/land-of-reforms-the-philippines-and-asia-history-essay/>

Communist leaders were more focused on political control and this just led to the farmers rebelling against their unfair terms in their land reform.

Comparing the situation in the Philippines to Vietnam, I can say that colonialism affected both countries negatively.

To lengthen the discussion on land reforms in Asia, I decided to choose a more of an industrial country instead of an agricultural one and I have thought of Japan. The country of Japan suffered greatly after the long years of war back then. The people suffered from food shortages and the economy was really down. This is when the government thought that land reform was necessary to prevent the tenant farmers who were disoriented with the oppressive tenancy system from creating a hotbed of radicalism. The first land reform was then created and this resulted to a fatality. The right of compulsory transfer was not to be exercised unless a tenant farmer indicated his willingness or desire to purchase land. In consequence of this, there existed the danger that landlords unwilling to part with their land would put pressure on their tenants to give up the rights to the land, and not only would sham owner-farmer establishments be created, but land would be secretly transferred at preposterous prices. The second land reform took a step forward in the establishing of cultivation rights. It was made illegal for a landlord to cancel or refuse to renew a lease on farm land without the permission of the prefectural governor. In 1950, the establishment of the owner-farmer system had been completed.

After the land reform, the ownership of land in Japan has been generally stabilized. Most farmers have become owner-farmers. Ownership of farm has

become virtually synonymous with management, and for the first time in this country's history, peasants have become proprietors.

Now comparing the events that happened in the Philippines, Vietnam and Japan, I can conclude that the idea that the farmers who are the cultivators of the land should also be the owners of the land they cultivate is present in all the land reforms in these three different countries. This showed fairness and equity. But I can also say that even though that there is the fact that this concept is present in the objectives in the land reforms in these countries, it is not true or rather it is not achieved in the implementation of the land reforms in all countries.

Japan might have been successful on its implementation considering how their government managed to successfully establish the owner-farmer system. And through observation, I guess anyone can say that Japan has really prospered through the years not just in the industrial sector but also in the agricultural sector since they are able to develop new technology for cultivating their farm lands in a more efficient way.