

## THE CRISIS OF REDEMOCRATIZATION

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Although many of us prefer to imagine the dawning of democratic processes in the immediate term, the hard facts that underlie Filipino political life militate against that possibility being the most likely outcome of an expectedly tumultuous process of post-Marcos transition.

Prior to the imposition of martial rule, Filipino politics was loosely described as "democratic". This elite-dominated "democratic" political mode was built on a political patronage system cultivated by means of the "pork barrel" — public funds apportioned to the local and national politicians-in-place to be spent at their discretion.

The main avenue for political mobility was the electoral process. Held regularly throughout the life of the Republic (1946-72), the electoral process was the main arena for elite intramurals. The mode of politics that pervaded during the period of the Republic simultaneously achieved the mobilization of the people at the grassroots for electoral participation and their effective demobilization for political action outside the electoral process, e.g., direct and massive popular action exerting pressure and intervening into policy outcomes.

Even before martial rule's rude interruption, the "stability" of the elite-controlled two-party system had begun to confront an emergent political tendency inclined towards politicizing the people on the basis of far-ranging issues and organizing them for direct intervention into the policy-making process. This emergent political tendency expressed itself initially in a number of peripheral "third forces" that tried vainly to insert themselves into the electoral arena. This political tendency eventually evolved into widespread mass organizing gradually distilling revolutionary political programmes.

Twelve years of political autocracy irreversibly dismantled the system of political patronage based on the local elites and replaced it with a system of political patronage centralized at the executive branch of government. Thus, while autocracy appeared to be a new development in the Filipino political mode, its basis of political mobilization and legitimization was old. Its ability to sustain popular support on the basis of centralized patronage over the long term is doubtful.

The emerging dialectic between elite politics built on patronage and depoliticization and popular democratic tendencies built on mass organization and popular political self-consciousness began to take deep root by the late sixties. With the imposition of martial rule, this dialectic transposed into the dynamic of opposition between the regime and anti-regime forces, propelling the political polarization that is today most evident.

The regime consolidated around a command bureaucracy featuring a loyal technocratic corps that kept the policy-

formulation process confined to a small clique of experts and highly insulated from popular political intervention. It drew into the vortex of centralized patronage, the military establishment and rendered the electoral process a barren exercise that could in no way threaten the political monopoly of the faction-in-place.

The mass movements that characteristically develop around grave issues and long visions gradually found their collective center of gravity in the clandestine revolutionary resistance. Confronted by the repressive intransigence of the regime, they have cultivated a strategic perspective aimed at the absolute rejection of the regime-in-place.

The deepening economic crisis now plaguing Philippine society further compounds the agonies of political polarization. It has drastically reduced the ability of the regime to sustain the centralized political patronage system and forced a sharp drop in the regime's legitimacy. Having paralyzed the electoral process of recruitment to the governing elite, the regime confronts a crisis of succession. Having reconstructed the national economy around a command bureaucracy dependent on state-generated capital, the regime has created a structural necessity for authoritarianism, a necessity that cannot be dissolved overnight regardless of the turns taken by political fortunes. This combination of crises heightens the role of the military establishment as a stabilizing factor in any process of regime maintenance as well as in recycling the dominant political and ideological disposition.

On the other hand, the various popular movements animated by the vision of redemocratization find themselves in no immediate disposition to realize democratic institutions and structures in the immediate term. The fragmented national economy requires a predominating political structure either for its maintenance or for its coherent reformation. The democratic resistance is nowhere near the uncontested seizure of state power that it requires as a precondition for the rehabilitation of democratic political structures warped by more than a decade of autocracy. An adequate political formula that shall cause a firm consensus to be forged among the various organizational and ideological tendencies within the anti-dictatorship front is still to be formulated.

As it is, the most likely scenario in the immediate post-Marcos period shall consist of minor autocracies of military and technocratic content occurring in quick succession. Each failing to consolidate the sufficient volume of consensus required to approximate the political decisiveness of the Marcos regime in the few years succeeding 1972; each forced to rely on political repression that proves self-destructive as such rapidly erodes legitimacy; each captive to factional turmoil as it tries to consolidate in the midst of massive economic dislocation and great popular impatience.