

Philippine Democracy: Contradictions of Third World Redemocratization

Robert B. Stauffer

"One who would dare to expand democracy will always be a source of tension"

— Rev. Jesse Jackson

It is today scarcely more than four years since the "People Power Revolution" overthrew the Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos. The passionate political carnival that the four days of the EDSA "revolution" provided the world's TV crews marked a first for most American viewers, the chance to passively participate in a vast morality play where in the end, good had triumphed over evil: democracy had been reestablished after the dark days of dictatorship. American viewers must have reveled in this peaceful victory of democracy, especially with the helpful hints the TV newscasters provided about the behind-the-scenes and occasionally express "assistance" that the United States had provided to make

it all possible. Of course, nothing was said about the previous role the United States had played as the bankroller and major supporter of Marcos. And nothing was said about the leaders of the coalition that produced EDSA and what and who they represented. Enough that democracy had won, that redemocratization had begun. That the very event had erupted *within* the occasion of an expectedly "rigged" election gave concreteness to the sense of victory: after all, (to an American) isn't democracy "free" elections? By the end of the four days, they knew that Filipinos had revolted to overthrow a regime that was attempting to subvert the will of the people as expressed in a national presidential election.



Democracy in sight?: Taking a view on top of the barricades of '86.

Redemocratization did not begin in the Philippines, the same with the destruction of democracy by military juntas and strong-man regimes in the 1960s and 1970s in nations (typically Third World) that had had democratic traditions. By the end of the 1970s holdover fascist regimes from pre-World War II years were overthrown in Spain and Portugal, a military junta in Greece was forced out, and the *abertura* (a slight political liberalization) began in Brazil after a year of strikes in 1978-1979. Redemocratization, as applied by American commentators and administration officials, picked up speed in the 1980s with the return of civilian governments in Brazil and Argentina, the holding of elections in Central American countries (with the US engineering the outcomes), the imposition of regimes by US troops in Grenada and more recently in Panama, and the exit of a dictator from Haiti via US military transports, Marcos-style.

In all cases touched on above Americans were encouraged by the Reagan administration to see each national act of redemocratization as a victory for the US, while capitalizing on the lack of political information supplied by the electronic media (and the print, to a lesser extent) to sweep out of sight decades of US support (if not creation) of the authoritarian regimes being overthrown. In the majority of cases, these inversions of political regimes did not pivot around the Cold War poles, although a minority -- all in Central America -- did. For the latter -- El Salvador, for example -- to certify the results of elections as proof of democracy constitutes the pinnacle of Orwellian doublespeak!

Starting in the last years of the 1980s the (re)democratization process vaulted over the Berlin Wall and proceeded to overthrow one-party monopoly throughout the Soviet bloc. This event occurred to the astonishment of Western "professionals" and the masses which they had long instructed to believe in the absoluteness of the control that communist parties had over their people. Further, unlike the earlier moves to redemocratization in southern Europe and the Third World, democratization simultaneously meant a massive assault on every communist state's economic theory and practice. It was this vital dimension that triggered the flush of victory dances in the last several years: the victory of democracy was *also* "The Triumph of Capitalism" (to recall a title

of an important American economist's contribution to the celebration). [2] Even before the denouement marked by the smashing of the Wall and the violent overthrow of the brutal Ceausescu regime in Romania, the deputy director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff wrote an essay that appeared in a Moonie publication. The essay argued that the Hegelian "end of history" had in fact arrived through the defeat of all rival *ideas* of Western thought. The century that is ending is seeing the "unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism." [3] Summarizing his arguments elsewhere, he suggested that "we may... be witnessing... the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the emergence of *Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government*." [4] By the time he wrote on the subject in January 1990, he had refined his thesis further to claim "*liberal democracy as the final form of government*" for the world. [5] This thinking was simplified by the editors of the publication where that claim appeared when in a companion piece to a pair of articles they concluded with these words: "Capitalists of the world, awake! In the new era, the only sure losers will be those who recognize too late that they have a world to gain." [6]

The Uses of "Theory"

Before turning to a serious examination of the democratic project in the Philippines, let me make a brief excursion into the "redemocratization" literature and the political messages it carries. Although the literature is quite substantial [7], and seems assured of a new spurt of growth to deal with the democratic victories within the Soviet bloc, its overwhelming similarity in political perspective and definition of democracy makes it easy to summarize. [8] The literature sets out a definition of democracy that severely constricts its scope. The concept of democracy has been reduced to the most narrow political dimension by the many authors who contributed to the two major projects that have defined the field. It is denied any legitimate role in shaping society or economy, and, in the last analysis, is left with only the political. There it is further restricted to the guarantee of *individual* citizen rights thereby to assure the possibility of carrying on the ultimate test of *political* (also termed *liberal* in this literature) democracy, that of participating periodically in

"free" elections. The more conventional economic connotations of "liberal" sprinkle the literature, from attention to the need to assure the sanctity of private property (which is to say, to guarantee the property rights of the wealthy in the Third World) to warnings that newly redemocratized countries should be careful to do nothing to frighten foreign or domestic business. Similarly, the working classes of these countries are warned not to make excessive demands since their respective countries' political democracy which is just breaking out of authoritarianism is extremely fragile, especially because the position of the military has not changed significantly.

Much more is provided in the dazzling array of descriptions and "analyses" of the redemocratization processes covered in these key studies as well as in the related literature cited. Despite this seeming overkill in empirically grounded "fact," there is much of these facts which is excised by the redemocratization discourse. It does not admit to a colonial age and what this provided to the structuration of mentalities and classes in the world that has to be "redemocratized." Nor does it recognize the contemporary age's global surrogates for the cruder forms of empire of the past. It disdains recognition of the aspirations of the non-elite for a democracy that would privilege them to some hope of breaking out of their powerlessness, and so does not touch on popular mobilization for democracy let alone any of the more radical forms of mass action. Quite the contrary, the redemocratization literature falls heavily in the conservative camp due to its narrow definition of democracy, its warm embrace of market capitalism as the only solution to underdevelopment, its disregard for any contribution to the overthrow of military regimes made by mass political action, and its inability to see its own discourse as part of the US global project (especially under the Reagan and Bush administrations).

Without trying to tease out cause and effect, the central studies in the field came to fruition during those years; were intermingled in the think tanks that produced the studies which led to the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy in the early 1980s; enjoyed US-funded and/or "private" foundation grants; and produced some of the language that has reappeared at the end of the decade as part of the triumph-of-democracy celebration.

While I would draw back from labelling the whole literature as purely ideological, I share with the small band of critics [9] the points made above. In addition, I would point out that the redemocratization literature has given the conservative right in the US a powerful tool to legitimize regimes that it favors and to do this within a minimalist definition of democracy. Further, the work of the redemocratization school has made it possible for conservatives to shift the meaning of democracy even further away from any concern over the failure of capitalism in most of the "developing" countries and to push it further into a ritualized formalism concerned chiefly with elections. Ironically, this attempt to globalize the conservative's idealized definition of (US) "democracy" takes place at the very time when this reality reflected in this definition is producing ever high levels of political alienation among its own citizens.

While political alienation in the US is non-threatening -- traditionally taking the form of boycotting the electoral process (non-voting) -- and regressively dominating, such is not always the case in the peripheral countries. There alienation takes all the forms readily recognized in the US. But these forms in addition give rise to armed challenge to the regime, and when not pushed to that level they consistently produce demands on the system that are viewed as dangerously threatening to the elites in control. The "contradictions" of "democracy" appear from the tension between the limited version of democracy that has gained currency with the elites of the Third World and the conditions in which the great majority of their peoples live. These tensions appear as well in the US and other "First World" nations but are more easily suppressed because they are contained within radically ghetto-ized communities, percentages "marginalized" are smaller, and "safety nets" help stave off revolt. In addition, all counter-hegemonic projects have been defeated or destroyed before they had a chance to take off, and the hegemonic project of the dominant elite controls the essential media (which means pretty much everything in an age of TV).

The "contradictions" that seem likely to exist between redemocratization, constraints imposed by its definition of democracy, and "actually existing political economies" in the Third World would help us problematize the

redemocratization process and understand the Philippine case better. These are:

- 1) the general contradiction between the narrow vision contained in the US-based academic model of democratization and the vastly wider vision carried along in the baggage of the term duly propagated as part of the US message to the world (which is an especially cruel sleight-of-hand trick to play on the Third World);
- 2) the gap between the model's attempt to limit democracy to individual rights and narrow forms of citizen electoral participation and the wide acceptance of the urgent need for major changes in the social and economic structure;
- 3) the contradiction between the actual existence of established movements demanding alternative versions of democracy and the limits of the "democracy" proffered by American academics plus the current promulgation of a parallel model globally by the administration's agencies (The previously mentioned National Endowment for Democracy has given the US considerably increased "muscle" to do this than the clandestine manipulation of elections in the Third World and elsewhere via civil and military "intelligence" work, the State Department, etc. [10]); and
- 4) the major contradiction between what is held to be the proper form of nation-stateness -- of nationalism -- and what might well be desired on the part of the inhabitants of a nation. (Many among the national elite elude this contradiction by opting for a global cosmopolitan stance while voicing a national rhetoric. For the great majority who do not share the wealth that underpins cosmopolitanism, there will constantly re-emerge the determination to attempt to use politics to alter economics. Typically this is done under liberal democracy in the interests of capital and, as noted earlier, the model warns non-elites not to ask to be cut in for fear of causing the elites to revert to authoritarianism. One might anticipate that acceptance of such a one-sided tradeoff will not last long.)

In addition to these general contradictions that seem to adhere between the US academic model on the one hand and the public model of democracy that is being propagated in the world on the other, there are those that are country specific. In the case of the Philippines, these include the claim of a "special relationship" between it and the US; the history of

US intervention in Philippine politics since its independence; the type of political model that the US imposed on the Philippines during the colonial era; and the US success in convincing most Americans (and Filipinos?) that the model it imposed constituted "democracy." The same carries on, although certainly large numbers of Filipinos recognize that what is still largely praised as democracy by the media is a badly flawed version open primarily to a narrow elite that uses the institutions to defend their class interests.

Philippine Elite Democracy: The Colonial Base

While it is true that all current forms of democracy are dominated by "elites," the use of the adjective in the Philippine case is generally seen as specially justified historically. By its use is meant control over access to high electoral office by a small class that concentrates political and economic power in its hands and uses public office to perpetuate itself.

What is stunning about the Philippine case is how the "oligarchic" elite has used democracy to prevent change, to resist needed reform, to use government to further personal and familial aggrandizement and how it has done all these in the face of recurrent revolutionary responses. The linkages between the perpetuation of oligarchy, the role of elections in gaining control over government, the useful mystifying power of the ideology of democracy, and the continued sponsorship of the package by the US have frequently been noted. A recent publication about how the linkages were set in place in the first instance and then subsequently refined advances our understanding of Philippine elite democracy.

The study *Philippine Colonial Democracy* is the work of four historians whose individually authored chapters cover the period from the final decade of Spanish control through the Commonwealth years of the US. The essays share a common concern, namely, the "problematic nature" of Philippine "colonial democracy." [11] In well-focused case studies, the authors present the rich data upon which they individually contribute to the conclusion that the colonial powers used elections from the time they were first introduced by the Spanish at the municipal level to "impose order and control over a spirited rivalry for local dominance - a rivalry that almost imme-

diately began to be played out in the new arena ... to which it rapidly gave form, an emerging electoral style of dexterous *manipulation*." [12] Spain retained the right to deny office to a "winner" since elections only produced a "short list" from which the colonial authorities selected the person upon whom to confer office. The Americans deleted this aspect of the electoral system and over time extended the scope and levels of office open to election and provided "pork barrel" benefits through personal *patronage* which adapted well to indigenous clientelist patterns.

The bedrock of colonial control remained

tween form and substance in Philippine colonial democracy leads to the conclusion that "[t]his paradox was the reality of Philippine politics. Cloaked in the democratic rhetoric of American administrators, it was still quite visible to Filipino politicians." [15]

The dialectics of the colonial relationship fostered a shared exaggeration of the achievements of Philippine colonial democracy on the part of the Americans and the Philippine elite: both could point to the election of a Filipino president of the transition Commonwealth government as proof of the claim. Both colluded in not talking about the failures,

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Rethinking links of the past: The bases negotiations.

solid, however, throughout the two regimes. "[S]ince the colonial state retains a monopoly of power,... elected leaders can only exercise real authority with the colonizer's consent.... Indeed it is government by consent, but not of the governed." [13] Further, "[u]nder Spanish rule, the leaders of Philippine communities had learned not how to serve government, but how to use it." [14] Since the same power relations in the Spanish era held during the American era (e. g., elected officials without final authority), the basic contradiction continued to reproduce the same patterns of manipulative irresponsibility on the part of politicians. Moreover, the yawning gap be-

the lack of substance in that democracy, and especially the many signs of authoritarianism which were appearing in Quezon's Commonwealth administration. [16] They also did not touch on the close clientelist ties between the US and the Philippines that continued unaltered despite the new status of the Philippines.

"Philippine-American interactions, even at the highest levels, were integral to Filipino domestic politics. Indeed, politics at the provincial, national, and colonial levels were elements in a single, interacting system." [17] The authors of the book see clientelism as the central mechanism of Philippine politics and

how it encouraged a purely manipulative attitude in the political process, a perfectly rational approach to take in a structure of power in which the elected officials are denied ultimate responsibility for their acts.

What needs to be stressed is that this deeply flawed model of democracy -- if only on the basis of the impossibility of joining colonial control *and* democracy -- was aggressively sold in the Philippines and the US as a faithful reproduction of the best of all democracies, that of the US. Without entering into the very problematic question of on what grounds could the US be seen as having achieved democracy, the US model -- while narrowly limited to formal electoral and representative institutions -- could not also escape carrying along the heavy resonance of meanings associated with the concept of democracy. While the elite politicians manipulated the constricted political domain allowed them within the colonial system, broader sections of the population were freer to respond to the more generous and visionary promises carried in the democratic discourse.

To a degree, responses to the Japanese conquest in World War II are illustrative of these differences. Large numbers of the Commonwealth elite made their peace with the new colonial masters, thereby confirming their utilitarian relationship to "democracy." Large numbers - e.g., those in the military -- remained "loyal" to the US/Commonwealth system. Fairly sizeable numbers of rank and file Filipinos also took up guerilla warfare for much the same reasons as the former which must also have included that of possessing a political vision broader than the narrow definition of democracy that the Americans had institutionalized during the colonial period. By World War II, the basic contradiction between a narrow, institutionalized form of colonial "democracy" for the elite and the wider promises of democracy were set in place. The conditions under which the US reestablished "democracy" following the "liberation" of the Philippines and the subsequent defeat of Japan reaffirmed the colonial model of democracy in the very process of presiding over the granting of independence to the Philippines.

Philippine Elite Democracy: 1944-1972

Although many in the Philippines and the US look back on this period as the golden era of Philippine democracy as contrasted from the elite democracy established under colonial control, little substantively separates its practices, class composition, skewed distribution of benefits, formalism, and continued acceptance of -- even reliance on -- US participation in Philippine politics (if now a bit more clandestinely). Some illustrative cases to support this argument of continuity in Philippine elite democracy follow. But first, it must be said that the reestablishment of elite democracy following liberation required the rehabilitation or hasty replacement of the overwhelming number of the Commonwealth elite who had actively collaborated with the Japanese. To do the latter could have triggered challenges to the oligarchy's continued dominance; to do the former would have compromised promises of removing collaborators from public office.

General Douglas MacArthur's successful fight within the World War II US military strategic planning community for the "military" liberation of the Philippines (as against bypassing it in favor of Taiwan then Japan) determined which choice would be made on Philippine collaborators. MacArthur's military strategy meant that well before the end of the war in the Pacific the US must be in the position to regain effective control over the Philippines so it can be in a position to influence the transition to independence. As has long been recognized, MacArthur used liberation to give a particular twist to the reestablished Commonwealth. Rather than prosecute collaborators, he brazenly brought them back to power (calling the legislature back in April 1945 when nearly all its members had worked with the Laurel puppet government) and shortly later freed five thousand prisoners charged with collaboration, many of whom had been government officials. As a recent retelling of this story concludes, MacArthur "aborted change in the Philippines by reinstalling the traditional dynasties whose primary aim was to protect their vested interests." [18] His most egregious act was to confer his blessing on Manuel Roxas -- a highly visible collaborator -- by declaring that he had been "one of the prime factors in the guerilla movement" and a source of "vital information"

[19] thereby effectively backing him for the presidential election the following year (1946) where Roxas defeated the incumbent Osmena.

Without spinning out a counterfactual case (although there were clearly strong forces in the Philippines at the time strenuously pushing for the structural change and the repudiation of elite democracy upon which such a case could be argued), what MacArthur accomplished politically with his war strategy was stunning. He gave himself essentially a free hand in reconstructing the exclusionary Philippine political economy that he had known and benefitted from in the Commonwealth era. And central to the self-reproduction of that order was control of politics by the oligarchy. Elite democracy as it had been constituted served most effectively this purpose since it combined the concentration of power in a few hands with the promise that the hegemonic concept of democracy conveyed. This he pushed on Filipinos once again with the active support of the Filipino collaborators, relying on the appeal that democracy held forth, and the powerful American material and psychological weapons he controlled at that time. These he and his successors used to fashion a maze of neocolonial agencies and agreements that were to give additional assurance, at least for an extended period of time, to the continuance of the "special relationship," the US right to be involved in Philippine politics, and the provision of assistance to the elite if their world were challenged by those whom they did not share it with. While the US has increased its levels of support of elite democracy (and later of the Marcos-imposed authoritarian form) over the more than four decades of Philippine independence, that support has not been sufficient to reverse its self-destructing trajectory. Midway through the first decade of independence the first major challenge to the democracy of privilege was mounted by the peasants of Central Luzon. There seems little disagreement with the proposition that without US political, material, psychological, and military equipment and strategic intervention beginning with the selection of a Filipino leader to back (Ramon Magsaysay), the Huk Rebellion would in all likelihood have forced changes that would have significantly altered the neocolonial system. With success in the field, the US-backed anti-Huk leader was then elevated to the presidency in what a recent

study calls a "manipulated election," [20] a conclusion that the authors apply to all elections in the Philippines since independence.

Saved by US intervention from having to make any but cosmetic adaptations to rising demands for change in the early 1950s, elite democracy seemed to be "working" in the period that followed. Elections took place, presidents succeeded one another in proper manner, heated "political" debate took place in Congress and the newspapers, and, in the economic field, some industrialization was occurring. By the second half of the 1960s, however, the temper of the times had changed, partly in response to the loss of dynamic growth in the economy -- and the growing awareness of falling behind in the race to "develop" -- and partly because of the sharp rise in urban protest against the conditions brought about by the multiple contradictions underlying Philippine independence and the continuing dependent-like "special relationship" the US forced on the nation. The multiple streams of urban protest reached their peak when they merged together in a huge demonstration centered on Congress in early January 1970. The focus of the mass protest against the "system" could not have been more symbolically perfect: the timing chosen was when Marcos was to arrive at Congress to deliver the annual State of the Nation address. This was his first following reelection as President a few months earlier in what many consider as the most corrupt and manipulated election since independence on which he spent such huge amounts that he did significant damage to the national economy. [21]

The emerging urban repudiation of elite democracy seen in these events continued to grow over the next two years and were joined by rising rural protest against the mounting misery that would not be listened to by the ruling class. Natural calamities -- unusually severe floods in Central Luzon and typhoons -- during the summer of 1972 contributed to the sense of decay and collapse. Marcos capitalized on the existential mood and the reality that produced it to overthrow the political institutions of elite democracy -- Congress, elections as they had been institutionalized, etc. -- by imposing martial law.

Authoritarian Democracy: 1972-1986

Although Marcos frequently labeled his

regime "constitutional authoritarian," he maintained that his "revolution" would "strengthen our democratic institutions" and that "democracy is the revolution." [22] In every sense, Marcos was the paradigmatic spokesperson for "elite democracy": more than any previous national leader he brazenly proclaimed that his "New Society" had achieved democracy, as he simultaneously moved to stamp out every visible sign of political opposition. Similarly, he went well beyond previous use of the rhetoric of nationalism while placing the Philippines further in a position of dependency on outside development funding, military supplies, ideological direction, and strategies for economic growth. The "special relationship" with the US became stronger than ever once Marcos demonstrated that the nationalist rhetoric was harmless and that he could stage sufficiently "real" elections to satisfy the Americans. We all remember Vice President Bush's 1981 toast to Marcos while in Manila to represent the US at Marcos's latest presidential inauguration: "We stand with you, sir. We love your adherence to democratic principles and to the democratic processes, and we will not leave you in isolation." [23]

All might have continued smoothly in this intimate alliance to rape democracy -- to honor the success of the new version of elite democracy that Marcos had established in the Philippines -- had it not been for the intrusion of two events intertwined in their timing: the rapid deterioration of the aging dictator's health and the Aquino assassination. Concurrently they destroyed the class backing Marcos had long enjoyed, released previous constraints over mass protest against the dictatorship, and even began to erode US dedication to its "man in Manila."

The subsequent story is well known. Within two years internal opposition -- largely led by upper class fractions that had ceased to support Marcos and which were widely supported by church activists and other movements (but boycotted by the organized left -- the National Democratic Front and its allied organizations) -- was joined by US pressure to force Marcos to call a "snap" presidential election (November 3, 1985) for February 7, 1986.

The latter dimension in the struggle to overthrow Marcos has yet to be given the scholarly attention it richly deserves. This will

not be the occasion to begin that study, but some preliminary suggestions can be advanced.

With the growing evidence that the Marcos regime was in irreversible decline (a conclusion that the perceptive could easily have reached even before the triggering event of Aquino's assassination) key US agencies in the Philippines moved to establish firm contacts with a variety of possible successor leaders [24] among opposition politicians, the Makati business community, the Philippine military [25], and church and cause-oriented groups opposing the regime. As the process of forcing a presidential election came closer to realization, US intrusions became active, involving pressure to structure the emerging political party of the opposition coalition and its selection of a candidate -- concern being only on having a single candidate, not necessarily on who that candidate was to be.

Once Cory Aquino became the designated opposition candidate, more assistance came to her from the US, though cleverly camouflaged. In what is the best available preliminary account of US support in the election, Karnow claims that the famous golf course designer Robert Trent Jones -- who had become acquainted with the Aquinos as the designer of "golf courses on their estate" -- hired a New York public relations firm to help manage Cory's image, and that he did so at his own expense. [26] The PR agency sent the Englishman Mark Malloch Brown to work with her, the same "tenacious political consultant" who in 1990 was the chief consultant to Vargas Llosa in his campaign for the presidency of Peru. He still works for Cory, according to one report. [27] Karnow correctly notes, however, that the relationship between the US and Cory was not a repeat of that between the US and Magsaysay since "no American was that close to Cory."

Unfortunately for what is otherwise a useful overview, this interpretation is sorely flawed. What is important is to see how US "intervention" has been made enormously more sophisticated, complex, and multilateralized: intervention nowadays would never rest simply on close personal relationships between a top US official and a Third World leader. Karnow points out but does not recognize this new age: he sees the rich American banker who worked with the rich Filipino gold miner

Jaime Ongpin to raise money for Cory's campaign; he sees how US money was channeled through AID to fund Radio Veritas (the communications network used by the Church opposition that did so much during the crisis days of EDSA to make possible the assembling of the hundreds of thousands who made up "People Power"); he knew that the National Committee for Free Elections (NAMFREL)



On the road to democracy?: The Aquino campaign in 1986.

People Power

that was so central to challenging Marcos' claim to electoral victory had been funded by the US; and he was aware of the veritable army of outsiders -- officials and private individuals -- who descended on Manila in early February to "watch" the election, to, in effect, make it such a publicly conducted political event so that Marcos's plan to steal it would be subverted. This "army" was not "planned" by the US, although many in it were sent by Washington. More were sent by the media from a variety of nations, by cause-oriented and church groups, etc.

This high degree of outside "watchfulness" did not, however, deter Marcos from proceeding to attempt to carry out theft of the election. But it did help provide vivid TV evidence and radio accounts of government fraud in the electoral process to all Filipinos. What appeared to be an emerging standoff between the two camps as a consequence of the widening gap between the votes each of the two candidates claimed was made irrelevant as a consequence of the transfer of the struggle from the ballot box to the street where it was to be continued in the four days

of EDSA. This time, the standoff was between forces loyal to Marcos, on the one hand, and civilian masses constituting the fluid coalition that temporarily came together in the "People Power Revolution" and leaders of a preemptive military coup (led by factions loyal to Enrile/Ramos) on the other.

The Cory Era: Reestablishing Elite Democracy

The high drama of EDSA with its moral fervor obscured the deep tensions and, simultaneously, the deep-seated structural continuities that came together for that brief event. While a national, populist, democracy seemed in that shining moment to be the goal of Cory and the People Power activists, many of its key leadership fractions had deep roots in another vision of the future -- one more attuned to full membership in transnational capitalism, to joint ventures, to development via export-oriented industrialization, to "privatization" rather than the expansion of government intervention in the economy. Similarly, the "gift" of an anti-Marcos military coup seemed like divine intervention on

Cory's behalf. Rather, with the wisdom of hindsight, we know that it was a hastily contrived defensive maneuver to rescue leaders who were afraid that their more comprehensive coup plan had been discovered and that they were about to be arrested by Marcos. We know -- after six coup attempts since 1986 -- that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) was deeply politicized during the Marcos dictatorship, and that many elements in it seek direct control of government; we know also that those who stay "loyal" to the Constitution do so with the knowledge that the Cory administration has abdicated vast areas of public policy to the generals. [28] And we know that Ramos, one of the EDSA military leaders, has maintained extremely close ties with the US, and that the Enrile-RAM camp had, at the time, some US ties as well even if over the years those seem to have died on the vine.

The American hand in the outcome of EDSA surfaced for all to see in the order to Marcos not to use force to fight off the coup attempt and the People Power demonstration, and, ultimately, in its "rescue" of the Marcos entourage from Malacanang in Air Force helicopters to Clark Field and transport plane to exile in Hawaii. The US gave the order to "step down" after Reagan gave in to the US State Department and related agencies: the message was relayed to Marcos by Senator Paul Laxalt via telephone.

Once again the US had prevailed in preventing Filipinos from fighting out their own political future. By aborting any showdown between Marcos (and a number of his most notorious "cronies" who were also "rescued") and the Filipinos, by rapidly ending the "revolution" and thereby preventing any deepening of that populist event in to a more radical direction, and by backing all those forces seeking a return to pre-Marcos normalcy, the US insinuated its agenda on the Philippines. Certainly, none of this could have happened without it being powerfully advocated by those in leading positions of the odd coalition of forces that was EDSA. But the vast majority of those leaders were more an existential part of this US-oriented "cosmopolitanism" and its special brand of democratic politics than they were of the more open -- and hence, more threatening -- ideas partially unleashed by the opposition movements in the final years of the anti-dic-

tatorship struggle.

The remainder of the account of the re-establishment of elite democracy in the Philippines -- the return to the intra-elite politics of the pre-1972 era -- can be brief. [29] Cory's overarching commitment to "democratization" as the centerpiece of her project [30] set the stage since her version of what the term means is precisely that discussed in the earlier portion of this paper, the US model for the politics of the Third World. Her deviations from some hidden agendas in that model -- such as her tendency in the early days of the new era to take civil rights seriously and act accordingly (freeing political prisoners, for example) and to agree to a ceasefire with the New People's Army (NPA)/NDF for political negotiations to the civil war -- were rapidly expunged as she "unleashed the sword of war" against the NPA. As she has moved -- been pushed by the military and by her Makati allies (now many in open opposition) and their US links -- to the right, she is left with the consequences of and unproblematized faith in "redemocratization," at least in the Philippine context. There it has meant a return to a set of political relationships guaranteed to prevent urgently needed reform, basic stalemate, and continuing foreign (US and multilateral) intervention, and, in turn, elite reliance on such timely intervention to save itself when its policies fail. Aquino rapidly achieved her version of the democratization goal: beginning a year after the presidential elections she presided over a series of national elections to fill seats in Congress, and to elect local officials. In the process she also facilitated the near complete reconstitution of electoral party politics of the pre-martial law Philippines [31] and ended once and for all any thoughts of building on People Power to create elements of "popular democracy." [32]

A recent book on Peru, a country similarly facing an armed revolutionary challenge, advocates the adaptation of a radical rightist program of revolution (similar to some of the policies advanced by the presidential candidate Mario Vargas Llosa) to solve its problems. In its foreword Mario Vargas Llosa writes:

Whenever a Third World nation returns to democracy, it holds more or less honest elections and permits freedom of the press. Political life takes shape and is carried on without too many impediments.

But behind that facade, and particularly with regard to legal and economic life, democratic

practices are conspicuously absent. The reality behind the facade is a discriminating, elitist system run by the smallest of minorities. [33]

Although the parallels between Peru and the Philippines may include being among the last of the Third World nations with a radical guerilla movement challenging the state, unyielding class dominance, and elite democracy, another probable parallel is the fact of having ruling elites searching for a conservative alternative to revolution. The same author's answer for Peru is a "... programme with a social project which... requires a transformation no less radical than the one demanded by the Shining Path." [34]

There is no need at this late date to recapitulate how under the cover of redemocratization all the old forms of mass economic exploitation -- now modernized as a result of the "development" policies Marcos and the multilateral development community had set in

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The militarization of politics: Aquino with her soldiers

place -- denied once again positive change from the large mass of Filipinos. The incremental steps by which Cory sacrificed the promises of EDSA and capitulated on one commitment after another that she had given to the people -- to workers, to peasants, to the landless -- has been recounted by many observers. [35]

The havoc these policies have produced -- as seen in the continued polarization of society, the militarization of politics and vast areas of the countryside, and the continuing military factionalism now intimately tied with civilian elites seeking to ride into power via a coup -- was brutally dramatized in the coup attempt of early December 1989. And in keeping with one of the basic themes of this analysis, the US once again performed its elite-saving role in the Philippines: two F-4 Phan-

tom jets from Clark Air Base performed a "persuasion" flight over Manila when it appeared that Honasan's RAM coup would be victorious. It was all that was needed to demonstrate to all parties concerned that the US remained loyal to Cory because of the central role she played in reconstituting the past, and because the US had not yet found an acceptable alternate which could advance US interests more effectively than she was doing. The December 1989 coup attempt revealed the serious defection of sectors of the top economic elite to the radical right represented by the coup leaders [36], and the further elaboration and expansion of a program that the Honasan group claimed it would imple-

ment (under the overall slogan "Movement for a Better Philippines"). [37] The vote of confidence given by the US, however reluctant it may have been, was of course produced by the very policies that had been long the bargain lived by in the US-RP transnational regime of "special relations."

The sad truth of the hallowness of it all was demonstrated during the coup: people poured out into the streets not to back Cory but to watch the spectacle as passive urbanites watching a live TV drama, an event that at least provided a bit of excitement to their humdrum lives. [38] The same had been demonstrated a few months after when the Cory administration called for a massive People Power demonstration to commemorate the fourth anniversary of EDSA. Despite powerful appeals to turn out in the hundreds of thousands, only a few tens of thousands showed up, largely those who were required to attend by their government agencies or private corporations and entities dependent on government support. [39]

There has been a backlash from the US F-4 intervention in the coup in the form of an increase in the appeal to nationalism in

politics. [40] Political leaders who held back from pushing an anti-American line -- especially on the bases -- have shifted, as has Honasan and, apparently, his faction in the military. The latter has triggered reports of feelers between the NDF and that group: other suggestions for what appear as strange realignments can be expected in answer to a regime and its foreign supporters who cannot reform a system that works so consistently to deny opportunity to so many, especially the rural population. [41]

The long struggle that began with a small number of Filipinos demanding the right to control their own national agenda has made dramatic gains in recent years. That struggle, summarized as the military bases issue, was given a final target as set in the bases agreement that provided September 1991 as the deadline either for its renewal or termination. [42] That Filipinos have been so successful as to have spokespeople for the US state -- that the US has accepted the inevitable necessity of leaving the bases and is even prepared, if no transition arrangement can be negotiated, to pull out on the expiration of the existing agreement -- is stunning. No greater victory over US hegemony has ever been accomplished. This is said taking into account that the US position contains a great deal of camouflage and bargaining ploys. The bottom-line remains, however, that a majority of the Philippine Senate's twenty-three senators have made the decision to challenge the US, regardless of the question of whether or not all will hold to that position as negotiations proceed. Similarly, mass opinion among Filipinos in the urban areas is clearly switching to an anti-bases stance, though less rapidly among those in the rural areas. [43]

One has only to compare this broad picture with what a US National Security Study Directive in 1985 outlined as basic US interests in the Philippines to grasp what a watershed has been crossed already. In that "directive," US *interests* demanded that the Philippines "must be a stable, democratically-oriented ally. A radicalized Philippines would destabilize the whole region." To help attain that goal, the US wanted "unhampered access to *our* bases at Subic and Clark... because of the expanded Soviet and Vietnamese threat in the region..." [44] Except for die-hard military figures who claim, for example, that the Soviet Navy in the Pacific is *more* threatening today under

perestroika than before [45], most people recognize that the Cold War has ended in its classic form and, consequently, that its bipolar geopolitical logic no longer holds. The historic events taking place in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are contributing to the possibility of dramatic changes in the relationship between the US and the Philippines. [46] This in no way is meant to downplay the vital role being played by the ever larger number of Filipinos who reject the traditional view that the "special relationship" with the US is a positive good to be nourished and maintained. Happily, US hegemony is widely being contested today in the Philippines, at least in its more narrow political dimension if not yet in its cultural.

Unfortunately, the same is not true in the US, if only because Americans so far lack the ability to see their nation as having imposed and maintained such a relationship with another people. Even the spokespeople for the "liberal" camp in the US have not reached that level of maturity. In one case after another, the best and brightest of those capable of reaching more than a miniscule group of academics write books that richly document the grave damage that *past* US intervention under the cover of "special relationship" has done to the Philippines, both during the colonial era and since. But then, when talking about the immediate present and future, they shift their liberalism to its other guise -- its international interventionist form -- and call for continued, and even greater, US "help" to the Philippines. [47] Only on the fringes in the US are to be found people who challenge this hegemony, both for how it was created and now maintained, and for the vast damage it does the majority of people in countries such as the Philippines who live under its domination.

Conclusion

The basic argument of this paper is that the American-based model of "democracy" that has been made to prevail in the Philippines from the early days after US conquest is urgently in need of critical reexamination. In the larger context, the same is intended to apply to the theoretical literature on "redemocratization" that has sprung up in the aftermath of the overthrow of a number of military regimes and dictatorships in Latin America, as well as



in the Philippines. The collapse of the Eastern European one-party states will certainly swell that literature, much of which is self-serving of US narrow definitions of democracy. These definitions have permitted it to bestow that label on the most outrageously repressive of regimes so long as they hold "elections" and remain loyal allies.

In the Philippine case, democracy became defined by the US during the colonial era as that form of intra-elite competition for public office via elections and under conditions where elected officials were given a great deal of symbolic public space but with real power remaining firmly anchored in US hands. This pattern of elite democracy generated irresponsibility in the elite, and demonstrated the willingness of the US to protect the elected elite from populist rebellions and other challenges generated by the policies guiding the "special relationship."

Elite democracy became the domestic linchpin in the hegemonic project that became internalized in the Philippines during the US colonial era. US "liberation" in the final year of World War II and the rapid rehabilitation of the "collaborator" political elite by MacArthur managed to patch together again the old pre-war "pact of domination" and launch it anew under the banner of "democracy," the same old elite democracy of the colonial period. Early on after gaining independence, the holders of office in this democracy rejected duly-elected legislators who repre-

sented a set of interests opposed to the elite. When access was denied, the Huk rebellion broke out, to be put down only after a great deal of intervention in that campaign to save the elite from its own blunders.

Marcos seemed to have provided a safe breathing spell for the Americans after he imposed martial law: he ended the turmoil of the constant

demonstrations against the visible signs of US intervention that had become commonplace and increasingly threatening. And he seemed "reasonable" in his authoritarianism, willing to hold "elections" that in time fully satisfied the State Department of his "democratic practices." Aging and guilty of permitting the unforgivable blunder that was the Aquino assassination, he had to go. The Americans shifted sides adroitly and largely kept a low public profile until the last moment when it was safe and popular to intervene in the struggle to oust Marcos by siding with the opposition. Once again the US was in a position to back a coalition that would proceed rather rapidly to reestablish elite democracy; and to do it in a manner that seemed to offer hope for real change, for a shift to something a lot more than elite democracy, to expand democracy in ways that would meet the aspirations of all the non-elite people who supported People Power for a more emancipatory politics, for popular democracy. The price of that support -- even though Filipinos had many times repaid with compound interest any debt they might have owed for the "dubious" gift of elite democracy -- was levied once again, this time by imposing upon the reestablished political elite the US-defined strategy for dealing with the NPA-CPP-NDF, on the one hand, and with the problems of the economy, on the other. This latter has produced new forms of dependency via the multilateralization of the guidance system for the Philippine economy under the Philippine

Assistance Program (PAP), with no evidence that the pathology of the economy will change. The former has militarized the Philippines more than ever before and produced levels of violence and repression worse than those under Marcos.

abandon that project should the 1991 deadline on the military bases be insisted on by Philippine negotiators (which is increasingly unlikely) remains to be seen. What does not require waiting is the recognition that elite democracy in the Philippines has never been purged of its colonial connections and its hegemonic role



People Power

The continuation of pre-EDSA challenges to elite democracy from the NPA/NDF have more recently been joined by a wide variety of other groups. It appears as if the cycles -- marked by significant increases in US intervention to rescue elite democracy -- in the "special relationship" come more rapidly than in the past. Already the US is deeply involved in helping fight the NPA. Whether it will largely

as the central legitimizing myth which hides the linkages between the failed development of the Philippines and its "special relationship" with the US. This is not to denigrate democracy: it merely wishes to encourage a closer look at a set of symbols, institutions, and relationships that have long been manipulated to the advantage of the few, and the denial of human potential from the many. [48]

Notes

1. Robin Toner, "Jackson Losing Special Place on Edge of History, Some Say," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 10 April 1990, p. A-7.
2. Robert Heilbroner, "The Triumph of Capitalism," *New Yorker*, January 23, 1989.
3. Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, Summer 1989.
4. _____, "Are We Witnessing the End of History?" *The Sunday Star-Bulletin & Advertiser*, Honolulu, September 17, 1989, B-3, emphasis added.
5. _____, "Are We at the End of History?" *Fortune*, January 15, 1990, p. 75.
6. "The Era of Possibilities," *Fortune*, January 15, 1990, p. 43.
7. The most important studies in the field are those included in two multi-volume series. These are: Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Lawrence Whitehead (eds.) **Transitions from Authoritarian Rule:**

Prospects for Democracy, four volumes: **Southern Europe; Latin America; Comparative Perspectives; and Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies** (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1986), and Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.) **Democracy in Developing Countries**, four volumes: **Persistence, Failure, and Renewal; Africa; Asia; and Latin America** (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1987-199-). The first volume listed is still forthcoming. An expanding literature has been produced dealing with individual countries, and review articles, two of the best of which are: Riordan Roett, "The Transition to Democratic Government in Brazil," *World Politics* (January 1986), and Arthur McEwan, "Transitions from Authoritarian Rule," *Latin American Perspectives* 15: 3 (Summer 1988). On the left, see (in addition to McEwan) Edward S. Herman and James F. Petras, "Resurgent Democracy": Rhetoric and Reality," *New Left Review*, No. 154 (November/December 1985) and, in reply, Paul Cammack, "Resurgent Democracy: Threat and Promise," *New Left Review*, No. 157 (May/June 1986). Note also Edward S. Herman and Frank Brod-

head, **Demonstration Elections. U.S.-Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and El Salvador** (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

8. I will base this summary largely on the work in the two sets of studies mentioned above.

9. Those mentioned in the literature just cited that fall, loosely, on the left.

10. See *Resource Center Bulletin* No. 19, Winter 1990, (Albuquerque, New Mexico) for a comprehensive description of the complex web of agencies (public and private) that have been built around the National Endowment for Democracy. The article contains a most useful flow chart showing at what levels the two national political parties are plugged in, the linkages to conservative think tanks, the role of trade union and free enterprise organizations as transmission belts, etc.

11. Ruby R. Paredes, in **Philippine Colonial Democracy**, edited by Ruby R. Paredes (Metro Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1989), p. 7. Emphasis added.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. Glenn A. May, "Civic Ritual and Political Reality: Municipal Elections in the Late Nineteenth Century," in Paredes, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

15. Paredes, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

16. Alfred W. McCoy, "Quezon's Commonwealth: the Emergence of Philippine Authoritarianism," in Paredes, *op. cit.*

17. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

18. See Stanley Karnow, in **Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines** (New York: Random House, 1989) for a highly readable retelling of this story: p. 325.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 327-328.

20. Eleanor E. Nicolas, "Manipulation in Pre-Martial Law Elections: The 1953 National Election," in Ma. Aurora Carbonell-Catilo, Josie H. De Leon, and Eleanor E. Nicolas, **Manipulated Elections** (no place; no publisher; December 26, 1985), pp. 25-37. Also see Jose V. Abueva, Ramon Magsaysay, **A Political Biography** (Manila: Solidaridad, 1971). The Carbonell-Catilo, et al., work also covers the 1949 and 1969 elections as well as those under martial law and after. It concludes with an analysis of the campaign of the presidential election of February 1986 up to the date of publication.

21. See H. A. Averch, F. H. Denton and J. E. Koehler, **A Crisis of Ambiguity: Political and Economic Development in the Philippines** (Santa Monica, Calif.: The Rand Corporation, 1970) on the economic costs of that election, and Carbonell-Catilo, et al. on the high levels of corruption and electoral manipulation.

22. Ferdinand E. Marcos, **Notes on the New Society of the Philippines** (Manila: no publisher, 1973), p. 1.

23. Fred Poole and Max Varzi, **Revolution in the Philippines: The United States in A Hall of Cracked Mirrors** (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984), p. 63.

24. Robert B. Stauffer, **The Philippines Under Marcos:**

Failure of Transnational Developmentalism (Sydney University of Sydney, Transnational Corporations Research Project, 1986), pp. 180ff.

25. Links with the "Reform the Armed Forces Movement" (RAM) are frequently mentioned, but much remains to be researched on the subject.

26. Karnow, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

27. Guy Martin, writing about the Vargas Llosa campaign in Peru, notes that "...they have hired the tenacious political consultant Mark Malloch Brown of Sawyer/Miller, in New York, whose clients include Cory Aquino and Shimon Peres. They're flying Malloch Brown in about every three weeks." In "Vargas Llosa rewrites Peru," *Esquire*, April 1990, p. 112.

28. Robert B. Stauffer, "Structural Continuities in Philippine Development: The International Context and the Aquino Administration's Response," *Pilipinas* no. 12 (Spring 1989).

29. *Ibid.*, for a more detailed account.

30. The most important essay on this is A. E. Lapitan, "The Re-democratization of the Philippines: Old Wine in a New Bottle," *Asian Profile*, 17:3 (June 1989). Also see Walden Bello, "U. S.- Philippine Relations in the Aquino Era," *World Policy Journal*, V:4 (Fall 1988), especially the section on "Democratization: The Latest Phase of 'Special Relations.'"

31. See Emmanuel C. Lallana, "From Burlesque to Popular Participation: Realities and Prospects of Philippine Elections," *Diliman Review*, Issue No. 5 & 6, 1986, for an analysis of this return as well as a broader discussion of the powerful hold elections have despite the fact that they have "traditionally been an ineffectual institution of popular participation" (p. 5). Also see Gary Hawes, "Aquino and Her Administration: A View from the Countryside," *Pacific Affairs* (Spring 1989). For a continuation of certain of these themes, see Emmanuel C. Lallana, "Cory Aquino, the Military and Philippine Democracy." Paper read at a Center for Philippine Studies Colloquium, University of Hawaii, March 2, 1990.

32. Randolph S. David discusses what he sees as the meaning of Popular Democracy in "The Cory Presidency: The Limits and Possibilities to Reform," in Randolph S. David, Alexander R. Magno, Leonora C. Angeles, Francisco A. Magno, **Constraints to Reform: Four Papers on the Two years of Liberal Democracy in the Philippines** (Bangkok, Jakarta, Manila, Penang, Singapore: South-east Asia Forum for Development Alternatives, 1988). Also see Alexander R. Magno, "Popular Democracy and the Politics of Transition," *Kasarinlan* 2: 2 (4th Quarter 1986).

33. In Hernando de Soto, **The Other Path. The Invisible Revolution in the Third World** (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), p. xvi. Emphasis added.

34. *Ibid.*, p. xx. The revolutionary model is to force everyone to live by market forces.

35. Stauffer (1988) for additional details.

36. An analysis of the December coup attempt appeared with the sub-title: "Mad War of the Elite," *Correspondence*, December 1989-January 1990. This is a KMU publication. Walden Bello provided a fine instan-

taneous analysis in a Pacific News Service release titled 'Mutineers Take Advantage of Growing Discontent in the Philippines.' December 4, 1989.

37. A Honasan 'statement' and his 24-point program are printed in the December 20, 1989 edition of *Foreign Broadcast Information Service-EAS-89-243*, 'Southeast Asia,' pp. 53-54.

38. 'The Current Philippine Political and Economic Situation,' public address, Center for Philippine Studies, University of Hawaii, April 10, 1990.

39. *Correspondence*, March 1990, 'Four Years After EDSA,' for an account of this attempt. As it concludes, '...the pathetic crowd which responded to her call has registered a grave warning to her administration. Her appeal for power from the people was turned down by the people themselves' (p. 4).

40. In addition to the wide discussion of this in the Manila press, it has been recognized as well by American columnists. In addition, rightist groups in the Philippines have shifted ground to be more identified with nationalism. See the series of articles in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* under the general heading 'US Bases in the Philippines,' April 12, 1990.

41. See Gary Hawes, 'Theories of Peasant Revolution: A Critique and Contribution from the Philippines,' *World Politics* (January 1990).

42. The existing treaty on the bases stipulated that a

one year notice must be given by the September date if non-renewal is the decision, in effect postponing the exit date until September 1992. The new Philippine Constitution, on the other hand, sets September 1991 for exit if no new agreement has been reached and ratified by the process set forth by that date.

43. 'US Bases in the Philippines,' op. cit.

44. Printed in *Kasarinlan*, 1:1 (3rd Quarter 1985), supplied by the Philippine Support Committee, and released March 12, 1985.

45. Rear Admiral Thomas A. Brooks, Director of Naval Intelligence. 'Soviet Naval Power and Perestroika: Some Prognostications,' *Asia-Pacific Defense Forum* (Fall 1989). The periodical is published by Commander-in-Chief of the United States Pacific Command, Pearl Harbor, Honolulu, Hawaii.

46. Hence, all the scurrying to find new 'roles' for the military to play, from leading the foreign dimension of the 'drug war' to providing global defense against 'threats' from the Third World.

47. Raymond Bonner (*Waiting With a Dictator* [New York: Times Books, 1987]), Stanley Karnow (op. cit.), and Richard J. Kessler (*Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989]) represent examples of this genre.

48. And certainly, not least in the United States. Democratization might well begin at home.

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