3

MASS PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Consolidation in Progress?

Linda Luz Guerrero and Rollin F. Tusalem

THE PEOPLE POWER UPRISING of 1986 that reinstalled democracy in the Philippines after fourteen years of martial law marked the start of the third wave of democratization in East Asia (Carothers 2002; Lapitan 1989). Among third-wave democracies globally, the Philippines was the first make the transition through mass protest. The Philippine transition was cited as an inspiration for the protest movement in Czechoslovakia that toppled the communist regime and for the 1989 prodemocracy movement in China's Tiananmen Square (Hedman and Sidel 2000).

The Philippines' revolutionary transition to democracy differed from the smooth and stable pacted transitions in Spain and other Southern European and Latin American countries, as well as in some of the new democracies of East Asia. The latter type of transition is thought to facilitate the consolidation of nascent democratic rule (Diamond 1999; Huntington 1991; Linz and Stepan 1996a; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986b; Pereira 1993; Zhang 1994). The revolutionary or "unpacted" path to democratic regime change, however, rejects the gradual liberalization of the previous dictatorship, but risks burdening the new regime with political turmoil, institutional instability, class conflict, and economic underdevelopment. Whether pacted or

unpacted, polities in transition are more likely to experience turmoil and instability than more established ones (Hegre et al. 2001).

In the Filipino case, such predictions are reinforced by the long, turbulent history of democratization, for the post-1986 democratic regime is not a new experiment as in most other third-wave countries, but a second try. The country had already tried to establish democracy during the post–World War II period that transition theorists call the second wave. In 1946, when the Philippines gained independence from the United States, it kept in place a presidential democratic system patterned after the American one, which had been initiated over a decade earlier under the colonial tutelage arrangement called the Philippine Commonwealth. Starting in 1946, the Philippine system was a functioning and apparently stable democracy, with freedom of the press, regular elections, and robust popular legitimacy.

By the late 1960s, however, it became apparent that procedural democracy had not generated social justice and equity. Half of the population remained poor. The regime was challenged on several fronts: by a rural insurgency, a Maoist-oriented political movement, and eventually a massive urban protest movement. In response, President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in 1972 and "constitutional authoritarianism," with the declared intent of increasing the institutionalization of the state.

The 1986 People Power movement that overthrew Marcos marked a new attempt to make democracy work. The 1987 Constitution restored the presidential democratic and unitary system Filipinos had been familiar with before Marcos. At the same time, however, the new system brought back, and even strengthened, key patterns of dynastic elite control of the masses behind the screen of procedural democracy. The deep roots of these patterns of political and social inequality, and popular resignation to their inevitability, may explain the survival of the highly imperfect post-Marcos democratic system through four presidents. The president in office at the time of our survey in 2002, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, had come to power a year earlier after her predecessor, Joseph Estrada, was ousted by People Power. She struggled to maintain normal government operations in the face of constitutional and extraconstitutional challenges to her administration. After nearly two decades of restored democracy, Filipino democracy continued to encounter enormous obstacles to consolidation (Rose and Shin 2001). In the classic Huntingtonian sense, it still suffered from the underinstitutionalization of the state, resulting in persistent challenges to the rule of law and constitutional governance.

How much progress has the Philippines made toward democratic consolidation? This chapter seeks to address this question from the perspective

of ordinary Filipinos who experienced the transition process as part of their daily lives. Almost two decades after the rebirth of Filipino democracy, were the citizens who fought to usher in the new regime still willing to rally to its defense? In the following pages we offer some answers to this question, using data from the East Asia Barometer (EAB) survey conducted in March 2002, with a random sample of twelve hundred voting age citizens drawn from across the country.

We found that Filipinos perceived the least degree of progress toward democracy among all the recent democracies in this study. The perceived level of corruption was the highest among the countries surveyed, and most institutions of the state were distrusted by the public. Although the country is endowed with one of the most vibrant civic cultures in the region, commitment to democratic governance was weak. However, the vast majority of Filipinos remained hopeful that the shortcomings of the current system could be overcome, and by a ratio of five to one envisioned a more democratic future for their country. Although it is a work in progress, democracy is not a project that the Filipino people are ready to abandon.

1. DEMOCRATIC AND AUTHORITARIAN EXPERIMENTS IN PHILIPPINE HISTORY

The Philippines is the only Asian nation that experienced both Spanish and American colonization (Karnow 1989; McCoy and de Jesus 1982). Spanish colonial rule was exercised with a high level of political and social repression principally by way of religious institutions and the monarchy. Dissenters were repressed as both religious heretics and political rebels. American colonial rule over the islands began in 1898 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, which marked the conclusion of the Spanish American War. The Americans established what may be regarded as a form of colonial administration grounded on constitutionalism and the rule of law. Nevertheless, throughout the period of American possession of the Philippines, traditional political elites remained in power. These elites benefited from the democratic institutions established by the Americans in the 1935 Constitution.

After gaining independence in 1946, the Philippines continued to adhere to the principles of the 1935 Constitution, which made a wide range of civil liberties, personal freedoms, and political rights an integral part of the country's embryonic democracy. Until the late 1950s, the country faced the problem of land tenure among the peasants. The peasant struggle was

carried out by the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the Hukbong Bayan or People's Army.

In 1965 Ferdinand Marcos was elected president amid accusations of electoral fraud and corruption on both sides. In the succeeding years, the government was confronted with several challenges, notably an insurgency led by the reestablished Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA). The situation in the southern Philippines worsened with the founding of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). As Marcos approached the end of his second term, after which he could not run again under the 1935 Constitution, he declared martial law in 1972 ostensibly to address these threats (Grossholtz 1973; Overholt 1986; Thompson 1995).

Under martial law the Philippines was transformed from an elitist democracy into a "constitutional authoritarian" system (Landé 1965; Hernandez 1985). Marcos's rule (1965–1986) was of the personalist type. His friends and associates monopolized major industries, and cronyism and patron-client relations became a regular part of the governing process (Hawes 1987; Hutchcroft 1991; Manapat 1991; Kerkvliet and Mojares 1992).

The year 1986 marked a turning point for Filipino democracy. After the assassination of his political opponent, Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, which led to mounting questions about the legitimacy of his regime, Marcos called a snap election marked by fraud, and then declared victory. In response, approximately one million citizens packed the streets of Manila to demand that Marcos step down. This huge gathering was apparently triggered by an attempted power grab on the part of Marcos's defense minister, Juan Ponce Enrile, and a former chief of staff, General Fidel Ramos (later to become president himself). Marcos was forced to flee the country. Corazon Aquino, widow of Ninoy and considered to be the real winner in the snap election, replaced him as president. The new regime promulgated a constitution restoring most of the civil liberties and political rights abrogated by Marcos in 1972.

Aquino's tenure was marked by a string of attempted coups by disgruntled military factions, the growth of the communist insurgency, and chronic economic underdevelopment (Danguilan-Vitug 1990; Thompson 1992). Political stability was gradually restored under the leadership of Fidel Ramos, who succeeded Aquino as president in 1992. Relying on his long experience in the military, Ramos was able to bring the military factions to heel and reach settlements with the Moro secessionists in the south and the communists in the rural areas. He did not, however, make much headway in redressing the nation's economic disparities, even though his term was char-

acterized by unprecedented economic growth, the regional financial crisis of 1997 and 1998 notwithstanding.

Ramos finished his term in 1998. The presidency passed to Joseph Estrada, a former actor who was elected on a populist platform promising to deliver the country's masses from economic hardship. Although Estrada won a convincing victory, his campaign polarized the nation between the so-called haves and have-nots. When Estrada was implicated in a series of corruption scandals early in his tenure, pressure began mounting for his removal. Opponents of the embattled president were usually identified with the middle classes and other elite segments of society, while many lower class Filipinos continued to support him and launched a counteroffensive complete with its own People Power uprising, which failed. Before long, the military and members of the cabinet withdrew their support from Estrada, and the Supreme Court appointed Vice President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo as the new president. Arroyo was the daughter of a former president, Diosdado Macapagal, who ran against Marcos in 1965 (Leroy 2003). Estrada supporters bitterly denounced the turn of events as a "judicial coup d'état" and an "untamed mobocracy of the rich and connected."

The conflict-ridden power handover inflicted considerable damage to the political fabric of the nation. Critics charged that Estrada's ouster was mostly a middle- and upper-class revolt, and that the lower classes, which make up over two-thirds of the population, did not support the overthrow. In their view, Estrada's ouster signified a major setback to the process of democratic consolidation in that a legitimately elected president was cast out by a vocal minority through rebellion in the streets. After taking office in January 2001, Arroyo had to contend with two abortive coups against her administration, a renewal of the Islamist and communist insurgencies, and a crushing devaluation of the peso, which lost half its value against the dollar in three years. Corruption and poverty continued to fester. Arroyo was nonetheless reelected to the presidency in May 2004 after opposition charges of massive vote fraud and a dramatic all-night session of the Filipino Congress.

At the time of our survey in the spring of 2002, Filipino democracy had achieved much in the nearly two decades since the fall of the Marcos dictatorship, yet a great deal more remained to be done. On the positive side, the country scored highly on the Freedom House indices of political rights and civil liberties.[1] The vibrancy of Filipino civil society was the envy of Southeast Asia (Silliman and Noble 1998). National and local elections were regularly held and were generally considered free even though they were

often marred by vote-buying and violence (Putzel 1995). Although power alternated among parties, the party system was characterized by a lack of programmatic coherence and a predominance of personalities. New parties and alliances took shape with dizzying regularity (Magno 1992).

In the midst of this complex evolution, we examine the views of ordinary citizens whose lives have been directly touched by the country's political system.

2. CONCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY

About three-quarters of our respondents were able to offer at least one answer to the open-ended question, "What does democracy mean to you?" (see chapter 1, table 1.3). Nearly half associated democracy with freedom and liberty. This was the most popular answer not only in the Philippines but in all but one of the other countries in the EAB survey. Only a few respondents, totaling no more than 5%, were able to associate democracy with specific institutions and procedures, the lowest percentage in the study. The emphasis on freedom over institutions may have provided a permissive context for the practice of People Power in the Philippine system, as in the case of the fall of Estrada.

Also noteworthy was that only 4% of respondents associated democracy with substantive notions of social justice, again the lowest level among the countries surveyed. As we will suggest in the next section, the lack of association of democracy with social justice may help explain the democratic regime's weak performance in this area.

3. EVALUATING THE TRANSITION

At the time of our survey, almost two decades had passed since People Power overthrew the Marcos dictatorship. Our data suggest that while most Filipinos recognized some degree of democratic progress, a significant minority—the largest of any third-wave democracy in the survey—perceived no progress, or even perceived regression toward authoritarianism since the Marcos era. In evaluating regime performance, Filipinos also registered the lowest level of perceived improvements in the political domain among the countries in our survey that underwent recent democratization. However, the new democratic regime was perceived as having avoided deterioration in the policy domain.

3.1. RECOGNITION OF DEMOCRATIC REGIME CHANGE

The EAB survey included an item asking respondents to rate the current and past regimes on a 10-point scale (from 1, "most dictatorial," to 10, "most democratic"). The results for the Philippines are summarized in table 3.1. Seven out of ten Filipinos rated the current regime as democratic. An even larger percentage (73%) rated the Marcos regime as dictatorial. While the average rating for the current regime was 6.7, the average for the past regime was 4.1. Clearly, despite whatever misgivings they may have had, the majority of Filipinos regarded their political system as a democracy while perceiving the past regime as a dictatorship.

Yet, close to one-third (30%) of Filipinos perceived their political system under the Arroyo presidency (in power at the time of our survey) as authoritarian, a high percentage in the region. Figure 3.1 shows a wide range of views on the nature of change from Marcos to Arroyo. Although most of our respondents recognized some democratic progress, 11% perceived no progress at all (a zero score) and 16.8% perceived authoritarian retrogression (negative scores). These scores are by far the most negative for any

TABLE 3.1 PERCEPTIONS OF PAST AND CURRENT REGIMES: THE PHILIPPINES

(Percent of respondents)

REGIME TYPES	PAST REGIME	CURRENT REGIME
Very dictatorial (1–2)	33.8	4.6
Somewhat dictatorial (3–5)	38.9	25.6
Somewhat democratic (6–8)	18.7	47.2
Very democratic (9–10)	8.0	22.4
DK/NA	0.6	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0
Mean on a 10-point scale	4.1	6.7

Notes: Regime types are based on the respondent's ranking of the regime on a scale from 1, "complete dictatorship," to 10, "complete democracy." Scores of 5 and below are degrees of dictatorship and scores of 6 and above are degrees of democracy.

N = 1200.

DK/NA = Don't know/no answer.

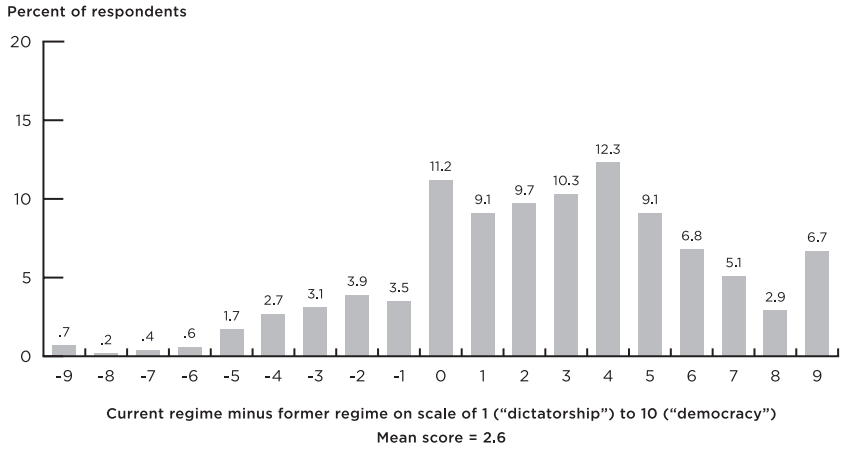

FIGURE 3.1 Perceived Regime Change: The Philippines

recent democracy in our survey and are second in negative magnitude only to Hong Kong's. Even with the invigoration of civil society and the restoration of political rights and civil liberties, many Filipinos evidently remained deeply disaffected with the new regime.

The polarizing conflict that surrounded Arroyo's ascension to the presidency was most likely a major contributing factor to this pattern. In addition, after Arroyo took office, she cracked down on pro-Estrada demonstrations using the military and the police, leading to a number of deaths and injuries. In fact, Arroyo initially held Estrada inside a military detention facility before later transferring him to his house in the outskirts of Manila. Critics accused the government of relying on autocratic methods to compensate for its wobbly popular support, a charge Arroyo supporters denied.[2] Many respondents seem to have believed that Arroyo was repressing dissenters, especially those close to the former president, who was seen as a populist leader.

3.2. COMPARING THE PAST AND PRESENT REGIMES

Especially in transitional democracies, citizens are conscious of the effects of regime change on the quality of their lives and their country's situation (Colton 2000). Table 3.2 shows that Filipinos perceived appreciable improvements in all five items of democratic performance that our survey asked

TABLE 3.2 **PERCEIVED PERFORMANCE OF CURRENT AND PAST REGIMES: THE PHILIPPINES**

	MEAN[a]	SD[a]	NEGATIVE CHANGE[b]	POSITIVE CHANGE[b]	NO CHANGE[b]	PDI[c]	VALID %[d]
Democratic performance							
Freedom of speech	0.62	1.11	16.9	58.7	24.4	41.8	99.8
Freedom of association	0.47	1.02	13.7	49.5	36.8	35.8	99.6
Equal treatment	0.28	0.99	18.1	40.0	41.9	21.9	99.8
Popular influence	0.27	0.96	17.6	39.0	43.4	21.4	99.6
Independent judiciary	0.13	1.03	23.2	36.1	40.7	12.9	99.6
Average	0.35	1.02	17.9	44.7	37.4	26.8	99.7
Policy performance							
Anticorruption	-0.02	1.05	28.1	29.5	42.4	1.4	99.7
Law and order	0.08	1.10	27.1	35.9	37.0	8.9	99.7
Economic development	0.00	1.12	30.6	34.2	35.2	3.6	99.7
Economic equality	-0.05	0.99	25.8	26.5	47.7	21.9	99.8
Average	0.00	1.07	27.9	31.5	40.6	8.9	99.7

Notes: N = 1200.

Past regime is defined as pre-1986.

[a] Scale ranges from -2 (much worse) to +2 (much better).

[b] Percent of valid sample.

[c] PDI (percentage difference index) = percent seeing positive change minus percent seeing negative change.

[d] Percent of sample giving a valid answer to this question.

about—especially in the area of civil liberties—but little improvement in the domain of socioeconomic policy performance. This is consistent with the earlier discussion of the conception of democracy as being associated with freedom and liberties in the minds of Filipinos. The democratic domain averages a numerical score of 0.35 and a PDI score of 26.8, modest compared to the country's third-wave neighbors, but a clear improvement nevertheless. The policy domain, however, registers no improvement on the numerical scale and a PDI of only 8.9. Considering the disastrous policy performance of the Marcos regime, the barely positive PDI score is hardly a surprise.

These results reveal that while democratization was perceived as having delivered greater freedom and more popular participation in government, it did little to improve the quality of life in the eyes of the Filipino public. It is ironic that economic equality received the lowest rating given that surging economic inequality was one of the social ills that led to Marcos's downfall. Twenty-two years of Marcos's rule had left the Philippines with a two-tier class system, composed of a large lower class mired in poverty and a small upper class that controlled most of the nation's wealth (Doronila 1992). Yet almost two decades after the transition to democracy, the new regime had done little to reduce poverty or to create a healthy middle class. The government's perceived ineffectuality in closing the income gap may prove an obstacle to democratic consolidation.

4. ASSESSMENTS OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

In this section, we examine self-perceived political efficacy, perceptions of corruption in government, and popular trust in political and social institutions. Compared to many of their neighbors, Filipinos were more confident of their participatory capacities and were especially conscious of the power of popular collective action. Nongovernmental institutions of Filipino society enjoyed robust levels of public confidence. But respondents believed the country was saddled with one of the most corrupt political elites in East Asia, especially at the highest levels of government. Most institutions of the state were distrusted by the public.

4.1. POLITICAL EFFICACY

The EAB survey used two questions to assess whether Filipinos believe that they have the capacity to understand and influence the political process

(see chapter 1, table 1.3). While 13% of the Filipino public felt capable of both, nearly three times as many (38%) felt incapable of either. In addition, 32% believed that they could understand the complexities of politics but lacked confidence in their ability to participate, whereas another 18% chose not to let their perceived lack of understanding get in the way of active participation. Overall, the Filipino numbers compare favorably with most of the country's neighbors in terms of citizens' perceived political efficacy.

The tradition of People Power appears to have made an impact on how the efficacy of popular participation is understood. When asked to evaluate the statement, "The nation is run by a powerful few and ordinary citizens cannot do much about it," 46% of Filipinos disagreed. When asked to evaluate the proposition "People like me don't have any influence over what the government does," 52% disagreed. These disagreement ratios are the highest of any country in our survey. The triumphs of People Power may have convinced the Filipino public of their collective strength, even if many citizens remain diffident about their abilities as individuals. These figures suggest the existence of an untapped participatory potential in Filipino society, a potential currently restrained by barriers to participation for many individuals.

4.2. PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION

According to a report by the World Bank, corruption in the Philippines costs the government some $47 million a year, contributing to a growing fiscal deficit. Moreover, corruption has led to continual abuse of the rule of law, erosion of the moral fabric of Philippine society, and chronic economic underdevelopment. The report concludes with the grim appraisal that "corruption in the public and private sectors in the Philippines is pervasive and deep-rooted, touching even the judiciary and the media" (World Bank 2003b). The low rankings the Philippines received on the Global Corruption Perceptions Index corroborate the bank's conclusions.[3] On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the least corrupt, the Philippines averaged an annual ranking of 2.6 from 1995 to 2005, a score that compares poorly to those of its East Asian neighbors.

The EAB survey examined corruption from the perspective of the public, with a pair of questions concerning the extent to which local and national governmental officials were perceived to be corrupt. The results are presented in table 3.3. At the national level of government, close to

TABLE 3.3 PERCEPTION OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION AT NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS: THE PHILIPPINES

(Percent of respondents)

	NATIONAL GOVERNMENT					
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	Hardly anyone is involved	Not a lot of officials are involved	Most officials are corrupt	Almost everyone is corrupt	DK/NA	Total
Hardly anyone is involved	4.2	3.0	2.4	1.5	—	**11.1**
Not a lot of officials are involved	1.1	**16.5**	**13.7**	5.5	—	**36.8**
Most officials are corrupt	0.7	6.7	**22.9**	6.2	—	**36.4**
Almost everyone is corrupt	0.4	1.7	2.0	**11.1**	—	**15.2**
Don't know/ no answer	—	0.1	0.1	—	0.3	0.5
Total	6.3	**27.9**	**41.1**	**24.4**	0.3	**100.0**

Notes: N = 1200.
Blank cell means no cases.
Percentages above 10 are in boldface.

two-thirds of our respondents perceived corruption in almost all (24.4%) or most (41.1%) officials. Corruption among local officials was felt to be somewhat less widespread, amounting to 15.2% for "almost everyone" and 36.4% for "most." More than 42% of the public perceived widespread corruption in both national and local governments, whereas only about a quarter did not believe corruption to be common at either level. If, as some Filipino scholars have argued (e.g., Magno 1992), political corruption in the Philippines is driven primarily by the country's electoral financing system, then the perceived difference between the two levels may be attributed to the greater financial demands and higher stakes involved in national politics.

4.3. INSTITUTIONAL TRUST

Public trust in democratic institutions constitutes an essential foundation for democratic consolidation. In the EAB survey, respondents were asked to indicate their level of trust in twelve key institutions of state and society. The results are presented in figure 3.2. The average trust level for societal institutions (newspaper, television, and NGOs), was highest at 57%, followed by governmental institutions (the civil service, military, courts, and election commission) at 51%, and political institutions (national and local government, political parties, and parliament), at 46%. In other words, the institutions of representative democracy were the least trusted among the Filipino people.

However, within each category there was considerable variation. Local governments were tied with the civil service as the second most trusted of all institutions (58%). This high level of trust may be due to the responsive performance of the Local Governmental Units (LGUs), which have gained prominence since the end of the Marcos dictatorship. These subsidiary organizations of municipal governments have been instrumental in assisting infrastructure development in urban and rural areas, channeling state resources for the support of urban and rural renewal projects, supporting local cottage industries, promoting environmental protection efforts, and providing emergency financial assistance to the poor.[4]

Nevertheless, political parties were the least-trusted institutions in the survey. As mentioned previously, Filipino political parties generally do not have consistent programmatic identities but are instead vehicles for the fluctuating mass appeals of individual politicians (Magno 1992; Rocamora 1999). Parties are as numerous as they are ephemeral, and partisan defections occur regularly. Their representative and aggregating potential have been offset by their elitist leaderships.

Among governmental institutions, the civil service and the military received favorable ratings from more than half of the Filipinos surveyed. The confidence Filipinos placed in the civil service may be an indication that the post-Marcos administrative reforms were bearing fruit and that meritocracy was perceived to be taking the place of nepotism (Thompson 1996). The high level of trust enjoyed by the military, however, may be a result of its perceived successes in counterinsurgency campaigns as well as public sympathy for soldiers' grievances, such as inadequate pension benefits. Although the military was the source of much political instability under the Aquino presidency (Danguilan-Vitug 1990), it largely maintained political neutrality during the Ramos and Estrada eras. Even renewed rumblings of

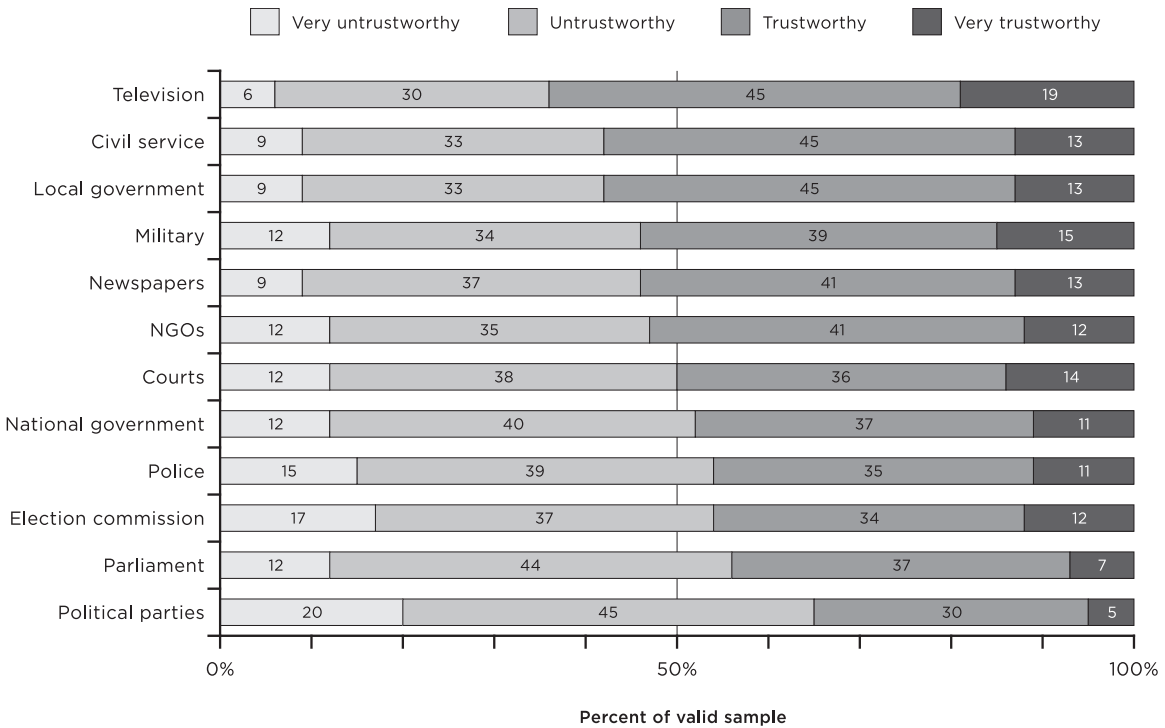

FIGURE 3.2 Trust in Institutions: The Philippines

coup conspiracies under the Arroyo administration probably did not impair the military's prestige, as these merely mirrored the restive mood of the public.

Finally, institutions in the societal category were the most highly trusted. As in Mongolia and Thailand, television was trusted by more Filipinos (64%) than any other institution. Newspapers (54%) and NGOs (53%) were both trusted by more than half of the respondents. Free from censorship and government regulations, the media's prestige has been enhanced by respected independent news agencies such as the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism,[5] which produced documentaries shown on national television exposing corruption among top politicians in all branches of government. On the other hand, the high regard for NGOs may emanate from their prominence in advocacy on behalf of the rural and urban poor. Proliferating after the end of the Marcos dictatorship, NGOs provided industrial training, financial support, and legal assistance to include farmers, factory workers, indigenous groups, women, teachers, rural nurses, doctors, and local entrepreneurs (Silliman and Noble 1998).

In recent years NGOs have become significant players in electoral politics, assuming a role as channels of interest aggregation when the mainstream political parties were slow to respond to the policy demands of the electorate. The participation of NGOs in elections is made possible by a party list system that allows up to one-fifth of the seats in the House of Representatives (up to fifty seats depending on the number of votes received by the party lists above the minimum threshold) to be filled from party lists elected nationally. The other members of the House run as individuals in electoral districts. The House of Representatives is one of two houses of Congress, the other being the Senate, whose members are elected individually and at large. NGOs have formed coalitions in areas such as environmental preservation, human rights protection, and promotion of local cottage industries to offer party lists to the voters. In doing so, they have played an important role not only in redressing social inequalities, but also in facilitating democratic citizenship.

5. SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

In this section, we explore the extent to which Filipinos have embraced democracy and dissociated themselves from the authoritarian practices of the past.

5.1. ATTACHMENT TO DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

Filipinos were asked to assess the desirability, suitability, efficacy, preferability, and priority of democracy (see chapter 1, table 1.8). Eighty-eight percent articulated a clear desire for democracy by choosing a score 6 or above on a 10-point scale, with some 40% selecting the maximum score of 10. As with desirability, a large majority of Filipinos (80%) believed that democracy is suitable for their nation, choosing a score of 6 or higher on a 10-point scale. Such results are consistent with one another. Only a relatively small minority of 20% rated democracy to be unsuitable.

In addition to desirability and suitability, the level of efficacy citizens assign to democratic governance is often a test of the depth of their democratic attachment. Despite widespread corruption and the absence of a healthy party system, we found that a majority of Filipinos (61%) agreed with the statement, "Democracy is capable of solving the problems of our society."

Finally, the EAB asked two questions that measured citizen support for democracy in practice. Nearly two-thirds (64%) expressed unconditional support for democracy, agreeing with the statement, "Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government." The question on the priority of democracy as a policy goal vis-à-vis economic development produced the lowest level of prodemocratic response in all eight societies surveyed, and the Philippines were no exception. In the Philippines, only about one-fifth (21.8%) replied that democracy is of greater or equal importance.

On our 6-point index of overall attachment to democracy, Filipinos averaged 3.3, which is on the low end of the third-wave democracies surveyed (see figure 3.3). Only about 7% responded affirmatively to all five questions, with an additional 37% responding affirmatively to four out of five questions. But these numbers are again lower than those of most of the new democracies in the survey. In short, Filipino citizens, like their neighbors in the rest of East Asia, are enthusiastic supporters of democracy in principle, but their enthusiasm tends to recede when faced with the realities of democracy in practice.

5.2. DETACHMENT FROM AUTHORITARIANISM

Between 1986 and 1992, the Aquino-led Philippine government faced a series of coup attempts launched by elements of the armed forces. All of these

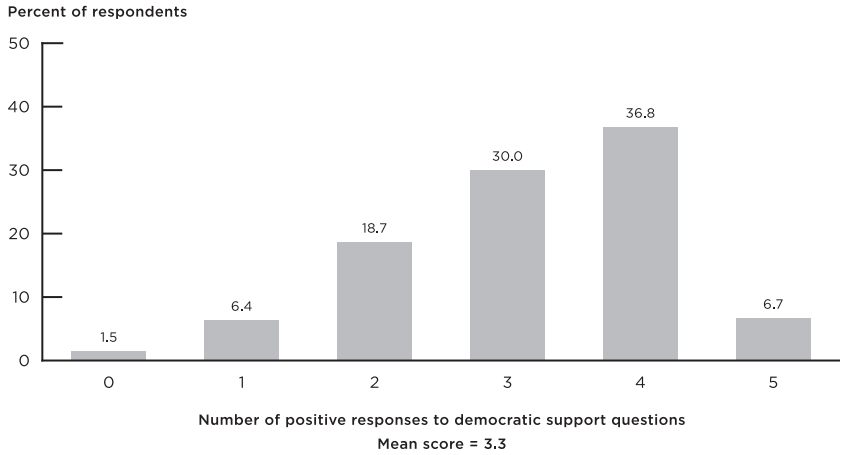

FIGURE 3.3 Democratic Support: The Philippines

attempts failed due to lack of popular support. Given the problems of the democratic regime in subsequent years, we asked how Filipinos would feel about antidemocratic alternatives at the time of our survey.

We asked respondents if they would support the return to a strongman dictatorship or oligarchic rule in some other form. The results were clearly negative. A compelling majority (69%) of Filipinos were against the dictatorial rule of a strong leader, while 63% were against military rule. A one-party dictatorship was likewise rejected (70%), and more than three-quarters (78%) were opposed to rule by technocratic experts (see chapter 1, table 1.9). The distaste for the last alternative may be explained by the current prominence of "business politicians"—skilled political entrepreneurs with connections in the public and private spheres. Many citizens consider them to be influential peddlers mediating between corporations and the agencies of the state (Kang 2002).

To measure the overall level of detachment from authoritarianism, we counted the number of antiauthoritarian responses, using them to construct a 5-point index ranging from 0 to 4. The mean score was 2.8, indicating that the average Filipino was still willing to contemplate one or another form of authoritarian alternative despite the overall rejection of dictatorial rule. Figure 3.4 shows that fewer than 36% of our respondents were fully detached from authoritarianism, whereas a slightly larger number remained open to at least two types of nondemocratic rule.

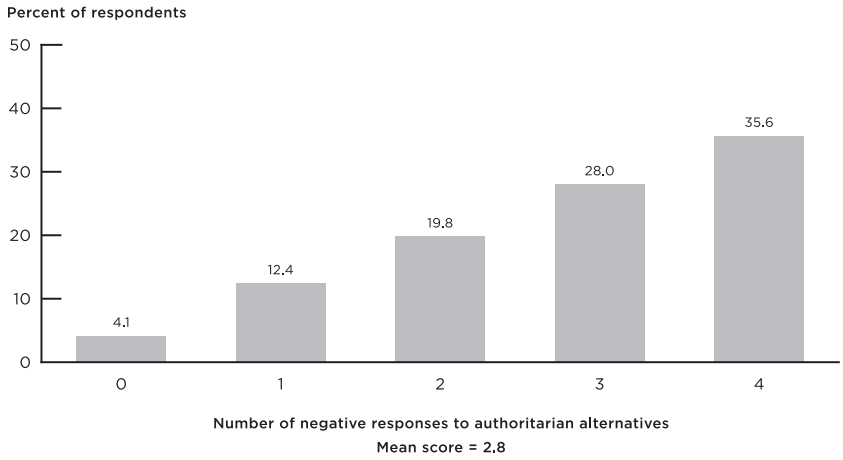

FIGURE 3.4 **Authoritarian Detachment: The Philippines**

5.3. OVERALL COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY

Taking into account both the depth of democratic support as well as the completeness of authoritarian detachment, we identified seven patterns of regime orientation. The results for the Philippines are presented in figure 3.5. The analysis shows the nuances in perceptions and attitudes toward democratic institutions and processes. The single largest segment, at 28%, consists of those with mixed regime orientations and skeptical supporters. Together, moderate to strong supporters of democracy amount to only about two-thirds (62%) of the electorate, one of the lowest proportions in the countries surveyed. If the benchmark of democratic consolidation is majority acceptance of democracy as the only game in town, then it may be said that the Philippines is still in the midst of a long, complicated, and thorny process of democratic consolidation.

6. EXPECTATIONS OF PHILIPPINE DEMOCRACY

In 1986, the Philippine nation brimmed with optimism that democracy would promote economic prosperity and restore the political rights and freedoms that the Marcos dictatorship took away. Sixteen tumultuous years and four presidencies later, how much of that optimism remained? To gauge

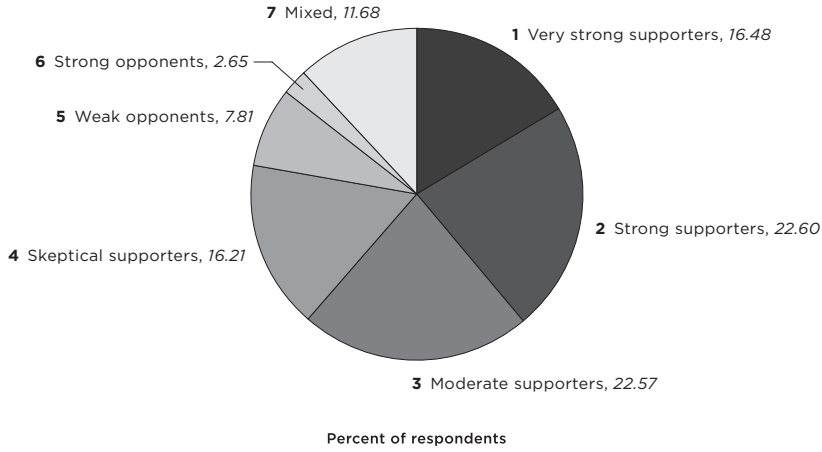

FIGURE 3.5 Patterns of Commitment to Democracy: The Philippines

popular expectations for the future of democracy, we asked respondents to indicate where they expected the country's political system to stand on a 10-point scale five years into the future.

According to the mean ratings reported in table 3.4, the Filipino people as a whole anticipated improvement in the democratic level of their political system. On the 10-point scale, they expected their system to progress toward greater democracy by 1 point from 6.7 to 7.7 in the next five years. Forty percent believed that five years from now they would live in a complete democracy, nearly double the 22% who considered the current regime to be in the same category. Conversely, although nearly one-third (30%) of respondents considered the current regime to be at least somewhat dictatorial, only 17% expected their government to remain so five years from now. Given these anticipated shifts across regime categories, more than eight out of ten Filipinos believed that in five years they would live in a democracy of at least a limited sort by their own standards. This level may not represent a strong sense of optimism, but it is still characterized by a sense of hopefulness that the future will be better than the past or the present.

What specific patterns of regime transformations did the Filipino people expect in the near future? We identified seven patterns based on the respondents' current regime ratings and expected future ratings (see chapter 1, table 1.12). A large majority (62%) of Filipino citizens expected democratic persistence over the next five years, although just under half

TABLE 3.4 CURRENT AND EXPECTED FUTURE REGIME TYPE: THE PHILIPPINES

(Percent of respondents)

RATING	CURRENT REGIME	FUTURE REGIME	CHANGE[a]
Very dictatorial (1–2)	4.6	3.2	-1.4
Somewhat dictatorial (3–5)	25.6	14.1	-11.4
Somewhat democratic (6–8)	47.2	40.4	-6.7
Very democratic (9–10)	22.4	40.3	17.9
DK/NA	0.2	1.9	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0	
Mean on a 10-point scale	6.7	7.7	1.0

Notes: N = 1200.

Scale runs from 1, "complete dictatorship," to 10, "complete democracy."

Future regime is five years from time of survey.

[a] Change in percent of respondents rating the regime at the given level when the object of evaluation shifts from the current to the future regime.

of this group expected their government to remain only a limited democracy. Even among those Filipinos who considered the current regime to be authoritarian, the majority expected significant progress toward greater democracy in the near future. Eleven percent expected the transition to a limited democracy and 9% expected the transition to an advanced democracy. Only about 10% of the respondents expected their political system to remain authoritarian in the next five years, in addition to a small number (8%) who foresaw authoritarian retrogression. In short, those who anticipated significant democratic progress outnumbered those who anticipated authoritarian reversal by a ratio of nearly five to one (38% versus 8%). On the basis of this finding, the Filipino people's confidence in the ensuing democratic consolidation process appears unshaken.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The 2002 survey provides only a snapshot of the post-Marcos democratic regime. And this at perhaps one of its most legitimacy-challenged moments, when the Arroyo administration had recently emerged out of the

intense factionalism that attended the ouster of President Estrada. A survey during the Ramos administration, for example, might have shown significantly different results, and the interadministration comparisons would have been interesting.

With that caveat, our data nonetheless suggest that the reestablished democratic institutions were unable to overcome traditions of corruption and elitist politics, nor were they able to harness effectively the dramatic increase in civil society participation to buttress their legitimacy. The EAB results show a high degree of civic activism through NGOs and LGUs, and these institutions received the highest trust ratings among those we looked at. Civil society institutions are a dynamic force for channeling the people's participation in politics and governance. As it is, the institutions of the new regime pale by comparison; they are neither responsive nor effective enough for ordinary citizens to consider them trustworthy.

The current regime in the Philippines is characterized by persistent challenges to the constitutional order emanating, ironically, from the same institutions that led to the demise of the old order under Marcos—People Power. Until Filipinos forge an acceptable and peaceful process for the settlement of political conflicts, politics will remain open to challenges by nonconstitutional means.

The Philippines has the highest incidence of poverty in the region, with a middle class still in the formative stages (World Bank 2003a, 2003b). The failure of the democratic regime to deliver economic prosperity may be one reason why the Philippines is characterized by one of the lowest levels of popular commitment to democracy in our survey. Such support as democracy commands is apparently due to its effectiveness in bringing about some political freedom, but not to any achievements it can claim in promoting prosperity or equity. In a society where economic deprivation is widely and urgently felt, this condition does not augur well for democratic consolidation.

The present situation as can be discerned from the survey may not be completely promising, but it does indicate the pitfalls and obstacles facing a polity in transition. This is a reality that has striking similarities, as well as dissimilarities, to other polities within the region and beyond. Philippine democracy, now on its second phase, continues to be a work in progress.

NOTES

1. Since achieving democratic transition in 1986, the Philippines has consistently scored an average of 2.43 for political rights and a 3.06 for civil liberties. Its

democratic status has alternated between partly free and free. Data for the Philippines accessed from www.freedomhouse.org.

2. For a full journalistic account of the mass rebellion that occurred shortly after Arroyo became president, refer to *Focus on the Global South: A Program of Development Policy Research, Analysis, and Action.* Accessed at: http://www.focusweb.org/publications/Bulletins/Fop/2001/FOP20.htm.
3. Every year, Transparency International conducts a global survey of corruption perceptions based on a "Corruption Perceptions Index" or CPI score. This CPI score pertains to perceptions of the degree of political corruption assessed by industrialists, risk analysts, and academics. For more specifics refer to Transparency International's database accessed at: http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi.
4. Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2001. "Indicators of Good Governance: Developing an Index of Governance Quality at the LGU level." Accessed at http://serpp.pids.gov.ph/details.php3?tid=635.
5. For a more detailed description of the PCIJ's policy goals and objectives, refer to its website: http://www.pcij.org.