

Democratic Systems, Elections, and International Actors

- I. The nature of Democratic Political Systems.
- II. The Logic of Elections in Democratic Systems.
- III. Enduring Features of Philippine Elections and Formal Democracy
- IV. The Role of International Actors in the process of Democratization.

How do we Legitimize Political Rule?

- Legitimation through authoritarian rule: leaders not accountable to the people.
- Legitimation through revolutionary conquest of power. How is political rule legitimized and consolidated after the revolutionary party/class/movement has won power?
- Legitimation through democratic rule. Leaders are chosen and made accountable to the people through predictable political mechanisms. Minimalist vs. maximalist conceptions of democratic rule.

Two Conceptions of Democracy



- A minimalist, procedural definition of democracy: free, competitive elections, and civil liberties.
- A substantive definition that stresses the empowerment of the people in advancing their interests and contesting for power.
- The first argues that predictable procedures are sufficient.
- The second approach argues that not only procedures but actual outcomes (certain socio-economic and political results) are necessary.

Elections in Democratic Systems



- In modern representative democracies, elections have become the main mechanism for legitimizing political rule.
- Electoral procedures and civil liberties must therefore be seen as credible for electoral results to be accepted by both the competing elites and the people.

Enduring Features of our Electoral-Political System



- Longest electoral experience in Asia but procedures deeply flawed: violence-prone, massive vote-buying and cheating.
- Elections dominated by political dynasties and the oligarchy-local warlords.
- Prohibitive costs of campaigning.
- Institutional weakness and incompetence of the COMELEC.

Elections and our Weak State System



- Our tradition of a weak state.
- A weak state vis-à-vis our powerful oligarchy.
- A weak state in terms of the scope and functions of government and the lack of capacity of key state institutions.
- A weak state as shown by a highly politicized bureaucracy and weak institutions of accountability: Ombudsman, Commission on Audit, CHR, CSC.

Peculiarities of our Presidential System of Government



- A weak state with a powerful presidency vis-à-vis Congress and the Judiciary.
- A weak party system.
- Why weak parties: strength of local political clans; presidential term limits; differing electoral cycles for national and local officials; low thresholds for the Party List system; impact of new technologies and mass media.
- Slow economic growth and development: positive correlation between higher GDP per capita and democratic stability.

International Actors and Democratization in Developing Countries

- Is intervention by international actors (states, multilateral institutions, int'l NGOs) to promote democratization desirable and effective?
- Under what conditions may non-military forms of intervention in democratization processes be justified?
- What is the historical record of success or failure in such cases of intervention: Philippines, Japan, Iraq, Afghanistan.
- As a general rule, institutional building and reform is best advanced when there is strong domestic demand for such reforms and an effective coalition/leadership is in place.

