

THE PRESIDENCY: REFORM OR ANTI-REFORM?

An Institutional Perspective



CenPEG SOP 2014



I. CHAIN OF EVENTS & TRENDS UNDER THE PRESIDENCIES 1986-2014



CHALLENGES

- Revolutionary government
- Attempted coups/mutinies
- Insurgencies
- Elections (restored)
- Power crisis
- US military bases (treaty renewal)

OPTIONS TAKEN

- Appointed OICs
- Suppression + reconciliation with ML remnants
- Mailed fist + peace talks
- Violence
- Emergency powers
- All-out support

RESULTS

- Old & new dynasties
- “Marcos without Marcos”
- Militarization, HRVs
- Defeated in Senate

INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE
(e.g., trust rating)

From +70% to +8%



- Insurgencies
- Economy (50% poverty index)
- Corruption
- US military bases
- Cha-Cha

- Peace process, autonomy
- Globalization (liberalization, privatization, deregulation)
- Railroading of VFA
- Proponent (shades of authoritarian rule)

- Fragile peace
- Negative
- Corruption cases involving President
- US forces are back
- Defeated but divisive

From +65 to +20



- Moro rebellion
- Impeachment (plunder & corruption)
- VFA

- Total war
- Censorship threat; defensive
- Ratification

- Militarization; collateral damage like HRVs;
- EDSA II; followed by “EDSA III” & coup threats vs GMA
- Divisive; US military presence firmed up

From +65 to +10



- Survival of presidency (legitimacy challenge); corruption scandals
- 5 impeachment complaints
- “Terrorism” (9/11)
- Election modernization

- “Strong Republic” + threat of emergency powers; Cha-Cha
- Numbers game in Congress
- “Second Front of the war on terror”; anti-terrorism law; new agreements with US; peace process collapses
- Questionable AES

- Weakened presidency + stronger pork barrel
- Survived but fall in credibility
- US support for GMA; permanent US special forces; “terrorist threat” remains
- Compromised “modern” system

From +20 to -50



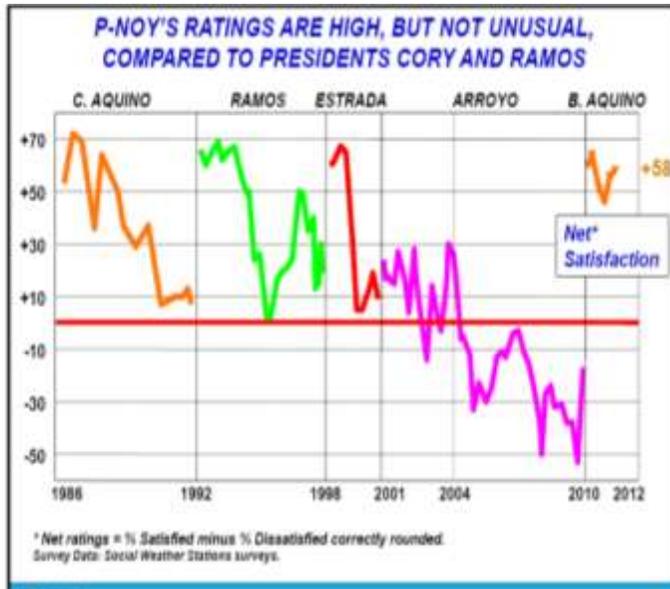
- Corruption
- Moro rebellion
- Territorial disputes
- FOI
- Economy

- Prioritized PDAF + DAP; impeachment of Corona; arrest of GMA; new plunder cases
- CAB with MILF
- EDCA, AFP “modernization”; ITLOS arbitration vs China
- No political will
- CCT, PPP +

- Confrontation with SC; faces impeachment; “Daang Matuwid”?
- (Abangan)
- EDCA under SC
- Promises to prioritize just before he steps down

From +67 to +25 (June 27-30, 2014)

II. WHAT HAPPENED IN 28 YEARS (1986-2014)?



- Every presidency has been hounded by periods of instabilities – political and economic; from major to minor
- Every president begins term with a relatively high rating, ends with a sharp dive
- State: from weak to degenerative /regressive
- Democratic governance is just “procedural” - not “substantive”

THE PRESIDENT AT THE CENTER OF POWER

- “Executive hegemony” with Congress as “rubber stamp”;
- Judiciary (rule of law) under siege;
- “Transparency & accountability” is trivialized by the dominant system of compromise & trade-offs



THE PRESIDENT AT THE CENTER OF POWER



- Transactional or patronage politics: Bred by pork barrel system and other financial incentives
- Family dynasties increase with territorial turf expansion: So far, 2 presidents from 2 family dynasties

THE PRESIDENT AT THE CENTER OF POWER

- **Crony Capitalism** is alive and kicking: A result of elitist, “exclusivist” & corruption-driven politics
- Slim chances of consolidating state institutions: Such as political party “system”, Partylist for the poor
- A compromised election system and administration: Presidential appointees

THE PRESIDENT AT THE CENTER OF POWER

- Unsolved structural faults – internal contradictions - due to recurring political instabilities, “constitutional crisis”
- Reforms: Tokenism, palliative that do not strike at fundamental roots of problems
- Decentralization / devolution of services: Gridlocks posed by oligarchies & corruption

THE PRESIDENT AT THE CENTER OF POWER

- Civil Society alternative to “exclusivist governance”: Exercise of People Power (e.g. people’s initiative, impeachment, & civilian uprising)
proliferation of government watchers
- Cataclysmic scams exposed by “Whistleblowers” in the absence of check and balance, functional rule of law

III. DAMAGED INSTITUTIONS: Prospects of change?

- “Exhaustion” or wearing down of political institutions (“building blocks of social order”) until possible total breakdown or self-destruction
- 2016 presidential election: Is it still a viable option?

CONCLUSION

- “The present system’s lack of responsive social and economic reform as well as the hostility it has shown by using coercion and violence against social advocates who seek sweeping structural reform has forced massive numbers of people to seek change outside the mainstream elitist or bourgeois political processes. At best, the elite’s recourse to defuse or divert those forces that are increasingly embracing other modalities and standing up against the state itself is to peddle token, non-institutional reforms such as the Party-list system or sham land reform and popularize new governance concepts such as transparency, accountability, and performance audit as well as public-private partnerships and electoral reform which in real terms offer no just and lasting solutions to fundamental issues. Such is the resiliency of an elite, oligarchy-dominated society.”

(From my book review of “Chasing the Wind: Assessing Philippine Democracy” 2011)

- The question, however, is: Will it last? Rather, is there an alternative?