

## **The Philippines and the struggle for democracy**

The second half of the 20th century brought many new countries in Southeast Asia. A majority of these countries began to use western democracies to shape their government. The Philippines is among the newly democratized developing states. The Philippines has been directly influenced by the United States in developing its autonomy as a democracy. Because of continuing corruption and dynastic rule, contradictions in political culture, and semi-authoritarian rule the Philippines is still far from a representative democracy and will take many more years before they do.

Background always forms the backbone of current structure. For this reason it is important to value the history of the influencing ideology just as important as the current structure. Current structure shares an equal importance in predicting the future of a state, along side with its history. The most vital issues that face any country and their chances with democracy lie in the current problems. Not only is it important to recognize these problems but also address possible solutions. Once the issues, historical and current, facing the Philippines are addressed then it becomes apparent why the country not represent a true democracy, but also why it will take much time before it does.

### **Ideological development**

In order to understand the future of the Philippines and democracy, it is important to comprehend what democracy is and what historically has occurred in the country. Democracy even among scholars has formed many shapes. It is very important to consider all the factors and weight them accordingly to grasp the future of a country. But what is democracy?

Democracy has found a blurred definition among the average person with only the understanding that it provides liberty to its people. Although democracy has been around in history for many centuries it now demands several pillars that uphold its purpose. Along with several requirements are many tenants that intend to aid its success. What democracy is and is not is pivotal to comprehending how the ideology will be reflected within Azerbaijan.

Democracy favours small government and personal liberties over a strong government and personal freedom. The voice of a states citizen and their liberties are the most important factor. This is achieved through a representative government. There must be free and fair elections of those who are in representative roles. Elections cannot be rigged or dominated by a single party. Non-elected officials cannot influence elected officials. Although lobby groups help represent special interests, they cannot dominate elected officials. There must be freedom of speech and of association. A citizen must be able to voice his opinion without fear of governmental retribution. Also there must be freedom of the press. Media cannot be influenced or controlled by the government. This eliminates propaganda and allows the media to act as a check against the government by informing the people.

Helpful tenants of democracy are not necessarily required but they help the mission of democracy. It is strongly suggested that there is an open market economy. This promotes entrepreneurship and competition, which creates wealth and the opportunity to gain wealth. A constitution is encouraged, which provides a contract from the people over what the government can and cannot do. Equality is strongly emphasized. Universal suffrage, which allows citizens above a certain age to vote regardless of race or gender, helps achieve equality.

In the 16th century the Philippines where became a colony of the Spanish empire. The Spanish motivation for laying claim to the land was motivated by natural resources. Most of the other Southeast Asian countries became colonies of Western Europe with the exception of Thailand. This occupation of the Spanish ended in June of 1898. Three hundred years of western influence brought new ideologies and religion. Catholicism along with various different sciences and ideas were introduced to the country. In 1898 the Philippines declared its independence in part because Spain pulled out to take a larger interest in the Spanish American War. The Spanish occupation still shapes the Philippines today, as the majority of Filipino's are Catholic.

The Philippines did not become a self-governing common wealth till 1935. Manuel Quezon was elected president and the country had seven years of transitional rule. Then in 1942 the Japanese Empire came and occupied the country. It was only through hard fighting along side the United States did the Philippines become independent again. In 1946 the country became independent not just from Japanese occupation but also from United States occupation as well. The United State occupation was more influential than Japanese occupation. It was then that the U.S. started to show interest in the Philippines and conveyed its thoughts on democracy. The country structured their government on a democratic model. Yet it wasn't till 1992 when the United State closed its last military instillation. The United States and democracy, from the 1950's till the 1990's, were threatened by the spread of communism. Not only did the U.S. guard itself but also so did the developing democracy of the Philippines.

The occupation of both the Spanish and the United States has left a lasting impression on the Philippines. Not only did they introduce western religion but also democracy. The introduction of these ideologies not only brought a way of life but if brought its enemies to the gates of the Philippines. All this and much more have shaped the current state of the Philippines.

### Problems facing the Philippines

The current government continues to face problems with in the Philippines. Corruption and political culture plague the advancement of true democracy. The old structure of government, since its independence, still affects the current structure. Authoritarianism, whether represented by the current president or not, still resounds in the minds of the Filipino people and the political culture. Until these issues are resolved the Philippines will not represent a democracy.

Corruption still haunts the Philippines. During the presidency of Marcos corruption became widely used as a political tool. Marcos was in office for 21 years. He was elected only through manipulation through corruption of the common people. It was only through a 'people movement' that Marcos was pulled out of office. The use of corruption was not only used by the highest office, but also by the governor's. The country is a patrimonial state in which its politicians relied on their connection to a majority of the common people for their vote in exchange for service, money, or safety. This is not a representative form of government for an elected official should not be bribing his/her constituents. Since the people, to insure their needs, relied on elected official, often the successors were the offspring. This presents more of a dynastic form of government. The problem has not gone away since as of 2005 no fewer than 61% of the representatives in Congress had relatives in some other elected office. Most often these now wealthy families that continue to dominate the political structure gained their wealth because of their level of position. Those in power funnel their official money toward their supporters and also use their position to give favour to their supporters for employment. An elected official should never be influenced by a non-elected official even if it from your family.

In the north province a light of hope has streamed through the cloud of darkness. For forty-one years the Dy family has monopolized the office of governor. In 2005 Grace Padaca broke the rule of the Dy family by being elected into office. She accounts her success to her popularity as a radio commentator, and to the lack of seriousness the competitor gave her. Although the victory was sweet she has found it difficult. After taking office she has noticed that most of the civil servants remain loyal to the Dy family. The former governor, Faustino Dy, left the province in serious debt also making it difficult for her. This monopolization of public office through corruption has crippled the Philippines in the hopes for true democracy. For them to be a representative government and to adhere to the tenants of democracy there need to be more success stories such as Grace Padaca.

Problems that have continually faced the Philippines rest in its leadership. Samuel Huntington once said 'democratic development occurs when political leaders believe that they have an interest in promoting it or a duty is achieving it'. The interest of the first Filipino president, Marcos, represented more of an authoritarian development. A successful transition to a functioning democracy is largely the result of quality of leadership. The next president was Aquino who introduced more democratic reform than the previous president. Aquino first began with the constitution and reshaping its bill of rights. He emphasized the rights of workers through this reform. This caught the attention of foreign investment since they didn't want to pay more for labour in the Philippines. They threatened to remove over \$2 billion U.S. dollars of foreign investments if this continued. Rather than address this issue in a healthy manor Aquino circumvented legislation and exerted his own authority over the matter to keep the foreign investors in country. This is not the first or the last time a president of the Philippines has acted in more of an authoritarian way. President Ramos and President Estrada both used more authoritarian tactics in regulating the mining industry in the

Philippines. The authoritarian style exhibited by the executive branch deviates from the democratic system. By not using the legislative branch, who are suppose to represent the people, to address these matters the executive branch becomes more authoritarian than democratic. It under minds the principles of democracy under representative government. Until the government relies on all of its branches the Philippines will not be a true democracy.

Scholars agree that political culture plays a vital role in the growth of democracy. Political culture is defined as the mind set of the people towards politics. Democracy cannot take its true form until the political culture is in complete support of its tenants and democracy doesn't alienate the political culture. The importance of reviewing the history of ideological development, as done before, helps understand where the political culture came from. An element not discussed in the ideological development section was the 'pre-colony' era. A majority of Southeast Asian countries were dominated by the Confucian worldview before the 'colony' era. Confucianism has always stressed the patron-client relationship. This has allowed the already mentioned, corruption to continue as well as the authoritarian style of rule. Do the Filipino people still hold true to the Confucian worldview in the political culture? If they answered yes then they would prefer authoritarian rule, but if they said no then they are more in favour of a democratic rule. But the answer is not black and white. Of the scholars that agree political culture plays a key role in the democracy 'most of them agree that authoritarian habits and mindsets among the citizenry must give way to democratic ones in order for democracy to be consolidated'. The desire for an authoritarian regime over a democratic one has subsided. But when it comes to 'norms and processes' many still revert to the authoritarian system. The political culture has not left the authoritarian mindset behind. Because of this the potential for authoritarian style of rule will continue, which will detract from democracy.

In conclusion, democracy does not require many tenants, but those tenants are important. Elections of politicians are of the most critical of the tenants. It is also very important for elected officials not to be influenced by non-elected officials. Government must be small and allow the liberties of its people and political culture must play an important role in strengthening democracy. The Philippines still has a lot of work to be done in all of these areas. Corruption and dynastic problems that were introduced by the first president still plague progress toward democracy. It has been more than forty years since Marcos began his reign. The progress since his presidency has required more than 15 years. To think that it will take less than five years for the change required to bring the Philippines closer to democracy is foolish.

Not only is corruption an issue but also the tendency toward authoritarian practice by the executive. Political culture continues to allow authoritarian rule. With the culmination of these three issues the Philippines has a long way to go before representing a true democracy. Indicators of this are found through the over exertion of executive power to undercut liberties of workers to maintain foreign investment. Coupled with the

public's mentality to allow such practices undercut the major themes of democracy. Until corruption, authoritarian rule, and political culture issues are resolved the country of the Philippines will not be a true democracy.