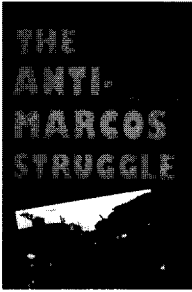


Recent Books

The Anti-Marcos Struggle. BY MARK R THOMPSON. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1996. 258 pp. ISBN 971-10-0992-7.



Mark R Thompson's *The Anti-Marcos Struggle* advances a theoretical framework (the author calls it a conceptualization) of the Marcos regime. Drawing from Max Weber, Thompson conceptualizes the Marcos regime as 'sultanistic', which he contrasts with constitutional authoritarianism and bureaucratic authoritarianism. He defines sultanism as the disregard for a legitimate Constitution, the deprofessionalization of the military and the unbridled plunder of state resources for the sake of family and friends (pp. 3, 50-51). On the other hand, he avers that constitutional authoritarianism is the peaceful handing over of wrested power by the military to a civilian government duly elected after a transition period, as in Pinochet's Chile, while bureaucratic authoritarian regimes are run by the 'the military as government' or the technocrats, as in the Latin

American regimes studied by Guillermo O' Donnell.

According to Thompson, the military and technocrats were subordinate to Ferdinand Marcos who used the technocrats as bargaining chips to gain concessions from multilateral institutions like the IMF-World Bank. Thompson claims that Marcos pursued the IMF-World Bank-recommended policy of export-oriented industrialization (EOI) in a superficial manner even as he protected the interests of his cronies, which was against the thrust of EOI.

In accordance with the Wittgenstenian theory which has heavily influenced British social science, Thompson analyzes Filipino politics as a game with certain informal rules. This approach, Thompson contends, would sharpen the clientelist theory of Filipino politics as propounded by such scholars as Lande, Hollnsteiner and Kimura. The game of Filipino politics is characterized by rules based on the patronage system wherein political bosses (over and above the patron-client ties of town and village) control the political behavior of their wards and operate within a personalistic culture. The personalistic character of Filipino politics is accentuated by a lack of ideology among the contending political parties.

When these unwritten rules of the Filipino political game are violated, as in the cases of Presidents Quirino and Marcos in the elections of 1949 and 1969, respectively, the opposition appeals to the moral sense of the voters to reject the offenders. The players of the game, including the Catholic hierarchy, would launch a moral crusade ignited by the indignation of the Filipino people toward electoral fraud. But for as long as the elite players of the political game do not blatantly break the rules, Filipino democracy, which assures the transfer of power from one elite group to another, will continue in its usual way. Marcos, however, was a wanton violator of the rules of the game; he cheated in the presidential elections of 1969 and had his own Constitution illegally approved in 1973, thereafter imposing a 'sultanistic' regime in the Philippines.

Is Thompson's explanation of the Marcos phenomenon helpful in understanding the dynamics of Filipino politics? Even on the level of description of political realities (which should not be the sole function of political academics), Thompson's conceptualization of the Marcos regime as sultanistic — a supposed violation of the rules of the Filipino political game — is misleading. In fact, the nature of the Filipino political game itself made the Marcos phenomenon possible. Marcos was a seasoned player of the game, using patronage politics to its limit and even building his own faction among the military. The 'deprofessionalization' of the military, which was a vital factor

in Marcos' sultanism, was not a breach of the political game but a logical consequence of it. Marcos surrounded himself with an extensive political clientele, composed of his relatives and friends in the military (Fabian Ver, Fidel Ramos) and the civilian sphere (Imelda and Imee Marcos, the Romualdezes) and effectively plundered state funds to strengthen this little empire. With such oligarchical moves, Marcos appears to have adhered to the rules of the Filipino political game as conceptualized by Thompson.

But when Marcos extensively cheated in the 1969 elections and conducted fake referenda during his dictatorship, he violated one important rule: true competition during elections, which Thompson insists has successfully changed one faction of the oligarchs for another. And yet the use of fraud, violence and vote-buying during elections is also part of the Filipino political game, a fact which Thompson accepts. Marcos simply exploited these informal rules and cannot be said to have departed from such rules, as claimed by Thompson who used oligarchic competition as his criterion. Marcos was also a political turncoat *nonpareil*, defecting from the Liberal Party to the Nationalista Party to secure the 1966 nomination for president.

Thompson admits that political conflicts among Filipino oligarchs are determined by wealth and violence. He should not, therefore, complain that Filipino 'democracy' was killed when Marcos' sultanistic regime prevailed. Thompson's concept of democracy, as

well as those of many Western thinkers, is that for as long as there is a change of political leaders in Filipino society through elections and for as long as the media is relatively free, then 'democracy' thrives. That such elections are accompanied by fraud and violence and the media controlled by factions of the elite do not matter much. However, when the mask of the electoral process is torn off and Marcos' sultanism appears, Thompson attributes the situation to the breaking of the rules of the political game. Thompson then appears to have painted himself into a corner but refuses to admit that it was his own doing.

The acceptance by some Western intellectuals that the oligarchic conduct of elections in the Philippines and its faction-dominated media are 'democratic' has encouraged Filipino politicians to foist an illusion of democracy before the masses. Yet Thompson, to his credit, has some inkling that all is not well under oligarchic 'democracy' when he writes:

The Philippine political system had become democratic while falling well short of what most observers would consider good government. Continuing human rights violations by the Philippine military is undoubtedly the worst aspect of current politics in the country, although these violations appear to have lessened as the communist insurgency has declined. Such crimes committed in the midst of civil conflict by an otherwise democratic government are not

exceptional, unfortunately. Another major flaw of democratic government in the Philippines is its coexistence with a highly oligarchic social structure. But democratization does not ensure social justice. (p. 184)

A game theory of Filipino politics is a useful conceptual tool that must be applied with rigor, which Thompson failed to do. A full appreciation of the Wittgenstenian theory of life as a game must be accompanied by his notion of *context*. The question must be asked: In what context is a particular game of life played? For instance, language taken as a game must be understood in the context of the culture of a people in which it is being used or played (Wittgenstein 1965). The Filipino political game is conducted within a socioeconomic structure characterized by the vast ownership of lands by a few (i.e. the landlords and the *comprador* bourgeoisie) and a non-autonomous economy controlled by foreign interests. This structure was inherited from the Spanish era and abetted by US colonialism; in fact, tenancy among the nation's agricultural force increased from 18 percent in 1903 to 38 percent in 1948. In 1996, tenancy in the Philippines existed in 35 percent of all farms and in 26 percent of the total farm area (NSO 1996).

Thompson also failed to consider an important factor in the Filipino political game: US intervention in politics. Though Thompson mentions the CIA support of NAMFREL in

the election of Magsaysay and US pressure on Marcos to hold the 1986 snap elections and to step down from power, he does not include these interventions as part of the Filipino political game. It must be noted that Marcos was aware of this aspect of the political game, and religiously abided by it. Contrary to Thompson's allegations, it was during Marcos' term when the EOI policy was faithfully implemented through various economic decrees and the establishment of five export processing zones. It was also during the martial law regime of Marcos when the IMF-World Bank's structural adjustment programs were instituted, thus establishing the export orientation of the industrial, agricultural and financial sectors of the Filipino economy (see *World Bank Country Study* 1980).

Marcos had the full support of the US military-industrial complex for his martial rule for some time, a fact that Thompson recognizes. It was when Marcos became too greedy and encroached on the interests of the US transnational corporations (TNCs) in the late 1970s that he gradually incurred the ire of the US military-industrial complex. Such encroachments by the Filipino dictator on US economic interests in the Philippines signified the true breaking of a major rule of Filipino politics, which is the blessing of US capitalism. As a result of Marcos' political miscalculations, the World Bank came out with the Ascher Report in November 1980. This report considered the continuance of martial law

as a 'liability' to the healthy growth of the business community in the Philippines. Though Marcos did lift martial law the following year, his drive to preserve his economic fiefdom was uncontained and continued to displease his US mentors. The US used the mass protests which erupted after the Aquino assassination and loan politics to pressure Marcos into holding the snap elections of 1986.

In Filipino society, the president who successfully plays the US card has already won half of the political game. Marcos knew the structure of Filipino society, one dominated by political warlords and their US patrons, and played this game with utmost dexterity. This could better explain the rise of what Thompson calls Marcos' sultanistic rule; it was played according to the rules of the Filipino political game, and not in violation of these rules.

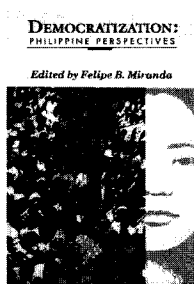
The notion of playing a game within a context, a socioeconomic structure in our case, could also account for the phenomenon of President Joseph Estrada who exploited the personalistic nature of political contests and succeeded in convincing his US mentors that he was a better bet than the other candidates. During the election campaign, Estrada came out with a framework of governance that promised the continuation of all IMF-World Bank programs in the Philippines (backed up by the US) and the ratification of the Visiting Forces Agreement with the US. It could be said that Estrada is no dumb player of the

Filipino political game; he marvelously uses personalism, patronage politics, and the US factor. The US, which introduced and continues to capitalize on the populist nature of Filipino politics, sees in Estrada a new man who will continue to foist the illusion of democracy on the Filipino people. Thus, the Filipino political game continues and the political dynasties of the oligarchs become more entrenched as seen in the results of the 1998 elections.

But if one wants to play a different political game, the context or the structure in which the game is being conducted must be changed. And only those who are adversely affected by the dirty game of Filipino politics — the masses — could be expected to accomplish this task.

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Democratization: Philippine Perspectives.



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MIRANDA (ed).
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University of the
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971-542-138-5.

The inclusion of a woman's face as a major element in the cover of *Democratization: Philippine Perspectives* bade me welcome. I eagerly scanned the authors who are included in the book, but discovered with disbelief

that — although Laura Samson is acknowledged by editor Felipe Miranda for preliminary editing and Joy, Mia, Lucy, and Zeny for 'diligently, quietly toil(ing)' for the conference from which the papers were drawn — no woman contributed a paper. And although Miranda in his Introduction cites gender differences as among the societal divisions addressed by democratization, there is no paper on women's engagement in democratization or the gender dynamics of this process in the Philippines. Future volumes on democratization must correct this if they are to consistently reflect, not partially reverse, the popular empowerment which they document and analyze.

Transcending this disorienting gap, nonetheless, a woman peace activist will find much to reflect on in this wide-ranging book. *Democratization: Philippine Perspectives* traverses democratization at various angles: as the formal political processes at both the local and national levels, without and within government, pursued by civil society or through armed struggle; as a process enhanced or undermined by economic developments and reform initiatives; and as the subject of academic research. If democratization had also been discussed as a cultural or ethical evolution of mature citizens committed to enlightened governance and self-mobilization, this book would have made for more enriching reading.

Many of the authors refer to the peace process, including the peace negotiations, in their discussions of democratization. Borrowing from the

stated mission of the Coalition for Peace and the Gaston Z Ortigas Peace Institute, a peace process may be defined as the search for, invention of, and insistence on all means of ceasing armed conflicts while continually building a constituency committed to the social justice agenda. One may add here the generation and practice of a culture of peace. In a post-dictatorship society, a peace process comes into dynamic interplay with democratization, or, as Jose Abueva defines it in this book, the struggle for and establishment of a democratic state, a state which practices democracy in its procedural as well as substantive meanings.

A peace process may be an arena in which reforms are instituted to restore the credibility of elections prostituted by traditional politics during the dictatorship. It may reaffirm fundamental freedoms and the human rights of the disenfranchised violated by the regime. It may build the capability of both the government and the governed to pass what Abueva calls the test of policy performance. In short, a peace process may track the process of dismantling the vestiges of the authoritarian dictatorship, of rectifying the injustices perpetrated, and of moving into the process of healing and reconciliation to reconstruct or create a national community — all through people's participation. The resumption of the peace talks between government and the National Democratic Front (NDF) bear watching. It will be interesting to see if the talks will help defend the democratic gains posted since the EDSA Revolution under an

administration bedevilled by its affiliation with Marcos cronies.

In his exhaustive listing of important issues of democratization during the Aquino administration, Abueva includes the release of political prisoners which accompanied the initiation of peace talks with the NDF; the autonomous regions, including the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) which was created to meet the demands of — and yet repudiated by — the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF); and the role of the church in the issuance of pastoral letters and statements on peace. He makes the very important point that in the resolution of some of the issues, notably on the punishment of the coup leaders and collaborators of the Marcos dictatorship, concessions were given ostensibly to consolidate the post-dictatorship regime but which in the long-term put into question the requirements of procedural democracy, the commitment to justice for the victims of the regime, and, ironically, the stability of the young democracy. I wish there had also been a paper on the issues, trends, and prospects of peace as observed during the Ramos administration. In any case, some of the other papers span that period as well.

For example, in 'Democratic Transitions and Armed Social Movements', Temario Rivera utilizes the key tools of Sidney Tarrow's concept of the 'political opportunity structure' (POS) to account for the conduct of peace negotiations between the post-Marcos governments (of Aquino and Ramos)

and the NDF and MNLF. Rivera also makes use of Dominique Caouette's three-level analysis to explain the progress (or lack of it) in these negotiations. In his analysis are found three factors: (a) the exogenous macro-level factor, i.e. the support of international actors for the negotiations, (b) the endogenous meso-level factor, i.e. openings in the political opportunity structure at the national level, and (b) the endogenous micro-level factor, i.e. the internal dynamics of the armed social movements.

Rivera does not add the meso/micro-level factor of citizens' peace initiatives and interventions at the national and local levels; yet it is these initiatives that have cumulatively influenced national political developments and interplayed with the internal dynamics of armed opposition groups. Rivera also mentions third party mediation, but only by international actors and not by organizations of Filipino peace activists. Like women in democratization, organized citizens must be made visible in the documentation of peace processes.

In identifying the political opportunities for peace between government and the MNLF, Rivera includes the expansion of the existing ARMM to include other provinces with a dominant Muslim population, a proposal that shall also be the subject of a plebiscite scheduled for 1999. Rivera highlights the role of the Organization of Islamic Conference, and Indonesia in particular, in the peace negotiations. But for any settlement in Mindanao to

have long-term durability, the inter-faith relationships among Muslims, Christians, and the indigenous *lumad* peoples who have to live with this negotiated peace between the government and the MNLF must be taken into account.

In 'The Military and Philippine Democratization', Renato de Castro recalls former Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lisandro Abadia's vision of a military assuming an external defense stance and reorganizing itself into a conventional army within a post-counterinsurgency context. This vision came up squarely against (and was eventually stalled in its realization partially by) then Senate Defense Committee Chairman Orlando Mercado who had a precondition for the passage of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) modernization bill: that the AFP's acquisition program should be oriented toward building its capability for ecological defense. Mercado is now the Estrada administration's secretary of defense and the modernization of the AFP has been postponed anew due to budgetary constraints. A discussion by de Castro on models of alternative defense, such as government's Human and Ecological Security concept and those being conceptualized by peace advocate formations, could have illuminated some future options for the military in a democratizing society.

In 'Local Governments in a Democratizing Polity', Alex Brillantes Jr discusses some of the winners of the *Galing Pook* Award for best practices in

local governance. Local government units are located on that cusp of government and grassroots communities, and the awards illustrate both the advantages and the risks of that location.

For example, Brillantes includes the project, Taking Care of People and Environment in Negros Oriental and Energizing the Purok in Sampaloc, Quezon, which involved the building of a community primary hospital and the community-based resource management of the fishing environment. This was the province's approach to counterinsurgency and required the community's participation from the *purok* level to the municipal council. Certainly, local governments are necessarily committed to the government's counterinsurgency efforts. But there are problems: (a) government-led or -supported community programs are subsumed within the rubric of counterinsurgency, thus resulting in the militarization of governance, and (b) government's response to the insurgency is subsumed in the military approach, or at least under the AFP's leadership in local areas, thus resulting in the undermining of civilian supremacy. At times, the interpretation of a peace-building strategy as a counterinsurgency tactic has also been a problem. Brillantes could have drawn up some implications that can shed more light on local governance in conflict areas and on the national appreciation of peacebuilding initiatives at the local level.

In 'Democratization and Political Science', Ronald Holmes identifies

multi-level research questions that are relevant to an understanding of the democratization process, particularly in the transition from a dictatorship to a post-dictatorship society. At the state/regime level, he cites the following research questions: How did the regime respond to challenges, armed or unarmed, to its dominance and legitimacy? What has resulted from the regime's peace initiatives? Holmes' inclusion of unarmed challenges in the first question reinforces the perception that civil society advocacies such as the Social Reform Agenda affect the regime's own agenda, particularly on economic reform. It also underscores the need for government to recognize that its responses to such initiatives lie within the scope of a comprehensive peace process and are parallel to the progress of peace negotiations.

In the closing section of his essay, Abueva outlines Tatu Vanhanen's strategies of democratization/consolidation, namely the strategies of social and institutional engineering, and the strategies of political action. Included in the objects of strategies of institutional engineering are the military and police; the political institutions concerned with human rights and law and order; and an autonomous region in Moro Mindanao. Civil society formations remain as key 'institutional' actors and are themselves subjects in the implementation of these strategies. Among the strategies of social engineering is the Equity Reform Agenda, especially in the context of the economic crisis and the evolution of a culture and ethic of democratization.

Political action strategies can be used both by civil society formations and, in the longer-term, by a more activist government or sections of government in the resolution of various issues. One hopes that the seeds of change are taking root in Congress through the party-list representation and in key government agencies concerned with equity reform.

Democratization and peacebuilding occupy the minds of a significant number of Filipinos. This book, *Democrati-*

zation: Philippine Perspectives, affords the reader, a member of that *demos*, many empowering moments in which to cast her mind's eye on offered facts and opinions on these gut-wrenching issues. And what the eye can perceive and appreciate, there the feet may follow. May these critical times elicit more democratic, democratizing, and peacebuilding action from Filipinos.

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