

## **Party and Party System Institutionalization in the Philippines**

**Allen Hicken**

No country in Asia has a longer experience with democracy and democratic institutions than does the Philippines. The first national political party, Partido Federal, was founded in 1900. Direct local elections were held under U.S. colonial auspices in 1906 followed by national legislative elections in 1907. And yet, despite its long history the Philippine party system remains stubbornly under-institutionalized—regardless of how we choose to define and operationalize the concept. The chronic weaknesses of the party system are the source of a variety of ills, according to scholars, including an acute “democratic deficit” (Hutchcroft and Rocomora 2003), a lack of political accountability (Montinola 1999), an under-provision of public goods (Hicken 2008a) and a disillusionment with democracy among Filipino citizens (Hicken 2009b). In short, the party system is one of the biggest obstacles to democratic stability and good governance in the Philippines.

In this chapter I examine characteristics and causal factors related to the Philippine party system. Using Mainwaring and Scully’s institutionalization framework as a departure point I first demonstrate that the Philippines is indeed under-institutionalized (inchoate). I note and discuss apparent changes in the degree of institutionalization over time. Finally, I present an explanation for why the party system has developed as it has in the Philippines, an explanation which also accounts for the changes we observe over time. Specifically, like Hutchcroft and Rocomora (2003) I argue that the development of the Philippine party system is inextricably linked to the manner in which democracy unfolded in the Philippines. Early decisions by colonial administrators and Philippine elite had the unintended consequence of entrenching a particular style of political party which has dominated the Philippines polity ever since. I argue that when the question of institutional reform has arisen in the decades since, the Filipino elite has consistently and sometimes strategically opted for institutions that were inimical to greater party institutionalization.

## Defining Institutionalization: What is it and how do we know it when we see it?

The existing literature defines institutionalization in a variety of ways (see the introduction to this volume in addition to Huntington 1968; Welfing 1973; Panebianco 1988; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Levitsky 1998; Randall and Svasand 2002). One way to bring these disparate definitions together is to think of institutionalization as consisting of an external/systemic dimension and an internal/organizational dimension.<sup>1</sup> Starting with the external/systemic dimension, party systems that are more institutionalized share two characteristics. First, there is stability in the rules and pattern of inter-party competition. Second, political actors view parties as a legitimate and necessary part of the democratic process.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, in weakly institutionalized party systems we see a high degree of instability in the pattern of party competition. There are both high birth and high death rates—new political parties regularly enter the system, while existing parties exit. There is also a high degree of electoral volatility—the fortunes of individual parties vary greatly from election to election. Finally, political actors in weakly institutionalized systems view parties as at best superfluous, and at

---

<sup>1</sup> The discussion of these two dimensions draws on Hicken 2009b.

<sup>2</sup> Some might argue that this second characteristic by necessity limits our analysis of institutionalization to democratic settings—in effect it is a characteristic of modern democracy as much as it is a measure of institutionalization. With the exception of the martial law period this limitation is not a problem for the Philippines. However, this characteristic can also be extended to non-democratic/semi-democratic settings with only slight modification. Even in non-democracies a minimal characteristic of institutionalization would be that the major power centers view the party/parties as a legitimate and necessary party of the political system. If the ruling elite view any party with distrust, even a dominant ruling party, then it seems safe to conclude that institutionalization is low (e.g. Myanmar). Likewise, where the powerful actors accept that parties are a legitimate and necessary part of the political system, even if that system is less than democratic, it is possible that that system is institutionalized (e.g. Singapore). Where a country scores on the other dimensions determine just how institutionalized it is. See chapters XXX in this volume for a discussion of institutionalization in non-democratic contexts. See also Slater 2003, Brownlee 2008, Hicken and Kuhonta forthcoming.

This is not to say that studying institutionalization in non-democratic contexts is unproblematic. As I see it there are two basic challenges. First, how do we weight things in systems where the ruling party is clearly viewed as legitimate and necessary by the ruling elite, but opposition parties are not (e.g. Vietnam and China). Second, and more fundamentally, how do we assess concepts like legitimacy and value infusion in settings where political actors, including voters, lack a choice between two or more *meaningful* alternatives. Where a meaningful choice is absent, whether because of the unequal playing field, voter intimidation, etc, a vote may not be a reflection of a voter's true preference.

worse a threat. It is this external/systemic dimension that corresponds most closely with the concept of *party system* institutionalization.

The second internal/organizational dimension concerns the nature of the party organization itself, and the parties' links with the broader society—what we might term the level of *party* institutionalization. To begin with, where parties are institutionalized they exhibit a high degree of what Livitsky calls value infusion (Livitsky 1998). There are strong links between parties and identifiable societal interests and groups of voters. Parties are 'rooted' in society to the extent that "[m]ost voters identify with a party and vote for it most of the time, and some interest associations are closely linked to parties." (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006, 7) Party membership is valuable in and of itself and not just as a means to an end and we can differentiate one party from another on the basis of its constituency and policy platform. Where parties are not institutionalized, political parties have weak roots in society, voters and politicians have few lasting attachments to particular parties, there are no enduring links between parties and interest groups, and parties have no distinct policy or ideological identities.

A second characteristic falling under the internal/organizational dimension is organizational routinization.<sup>3</sup> Institutionalized parties have entrenched organizations and established patterns of interactions. Parties are relatively cohesive and disciplined and are independent and autonomous from any charismatic leaders or particular financiers (Livitsky 1998). Put simply, parties have developed party organizations that "matter" (Mainwaring and Scully 1995). Where parties are weakly institutionalized parties tend to be thinly organized temporary alliances of convenience and are often extensions of or subservient to powerful party leaders.

---

<sup>3</sup> Compare Livitsky's discussion of behavioral routinization (1998).

**Table 1**  
**Party System Institutionalization**

<b>External/Systemic Dimension</b>
Stable pattern of interparty competition
Parties viewed as legitimate and necessary
<b>Internal/Organizational Dimension</b>
High degree of value infusion
High degree of organizational routinization

So how institutionalized is the Philippine party system? Let's consider each of the dimensions in turn.

*External/Systemic Dimension: Stability of interparty competition*

One common indicator of the stability or volatility of the party system from election to election is the measure of electoral volatility. Electoral volatility captures the degree to which there is variation in aggregate party vote shares from one election to another. Where there is a stable pattern of inter-party competition we expect to see a low volatility score, indicating that the same set of parties receive consistent levels of support from election to election. High levels of electoral volatility reflect instability in voters' preferences from election to election and/or elite-driven changes to the party system such as the demise of existing parties, the birth of new parties, party mergers, party splits, etc (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007). Electoral volatility is not a perfect measure by any means—tracing party vote shares can prove extremely complicated where there are lots of party mergers or splits, or where a candidate's party affiliation is difficult to assess.<sup>4</sup> The latter is particularly a challenge in the Philippines, where candidates will often claim multiple party affiliations. The very fact that party labels are so fluid in the Philippines is telling, but it makes calculating volatility challenging, so much so that some scholars eschew the attempt all together (Ufen 2008). None-the-less I believe it is possible to come up with reasonable estimates of volatility

---

<sup>4</sup> Where possible I follow Mainwaring and Zoco's rules about how to treat such situations (2007)

using some simple assumptions.<sup>5</sup> It is also important to note that electoral volatility does not allow one to differentiate between the sources of instability—whether fickle voters or ephemeral parties (Hicken and Kuhonta forthcoming).

A final challenge is the lack of the data necessary to calculate volatility for the last 3 elections (2001, 2004, 2007). As discussed below the preferred method of calculating volatility is by using party vote shares. Unfortunately, the Philippines government has been slow to release party vote shares for the last elections, and the scandal concerning vote counting for the 2004 election suggest that even were those vote shares available, we might be concerned with their accuracy. My strategy here is to use vote share data where available, but to supplement those data with information from party seat shares.

Electoral volatility is calculated by taking the sum of the net change in the percentage of votes gained or lost by each party from one election to the next, divided by two.  $(\sum |v_{it} - v_{it+1}|) / 2$ . A score of 100 signifies that the set of parties winning votes is completely different from one election to the next. A score of 0 means the same parties receive exactly the same percentage of votes across two different elections. The higher the volatility score the less stable the pattern of party competition.

Table 2 is taken from the introduction to this volume and displays the volatility scores for the Philippines alongside those of other countries in Asia for comparative purposes. I divide the Philippines into two periods corresponding to the pre and post-martial law eras. The Philippines I covers the seven elections between independence and martial law. The post-Marcos sample

---

<sup>5</sup> Specifically, where candidates claimed multiple party affiliations I use the largest party of which they were a member to calculate volatility. To the extent that the largest parties are those that are likely to be around over several elections, any bias is likely to be in the direction of understating the level of volatility. I also include independents and “other” minor parties as single categories for the purposes of calculating volatility. The average percentage for each category is less than 5 percent in any given election. Excluding the independents and “other” categories from the volatility calculation would have the effect of lowering the volatility score by an average of 2 points per election.

(Philippines II) is more limited since the necessary election return data are available only for the 1992, 1995, and 1998 elections.

**Table 2**  
**Electoral Volatility in Asia (Vote Shares)**

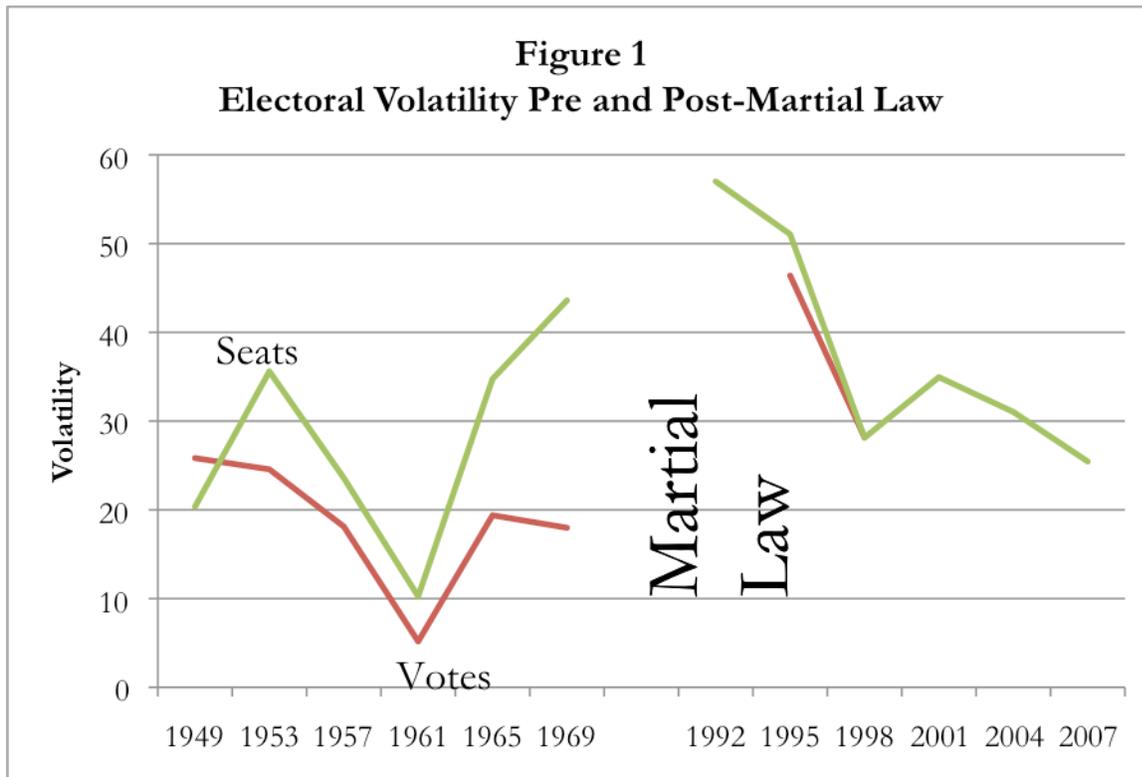
	Years	Number of elections	Volatility: 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> elections	Volatility: Last election	Average Volatility
Malaysia II	1974-2004	8	8.6	14.5	10.7
Singapore	1968-2006	10	24.6	14.3	14.9
Taiwan	1992-2004	5	8.6	10.5	16.2
Japan	1947-2005	22	27.4	8.5	16.6
Sri Lanka	1947-2001	12	27.7	9.0	17.6
<b>Philippines I</b>	<b>1946-1969</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.5</b>
India	1951-2004	14	25.1	13.6	21.3
Cambodia	1993-2003	3	27.9	22.3	25.1
Indonesia	1999-2004	2	26.7	--	26.7
South Korea	1988-2004	5	41.9	24.9	29.1
Malaysia I	1955-1968	4	38.8	36.4	30.6
Thailand II	1992-2005	6	38.1	28.0	35.0
<b>Philippines II</b>	<b>1992-1998</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>46.4</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>37.3</b>
Thailand I	1979-1991	4	40.8	32.1	38.4

Source: Hicken and Kuhonta, forthcoming.

Two things stand out in Table 2. First, the party system of post-martial-law Philippines is very fluid. The fortunes of the individual parties tend to vary greatly from election to election. In other words, the results of past elections by and large are not a good predictor of future election results—in the case of the Philippines II, the result of a past election can be used to predict the result of the next election with less than 63 percent accuracy. Second, the Philippine party system appears to be much more volatile after martial law than it was before. Average volatility pre-martial law was 18.5. Post-Marcos the average is 37.3.

It is possible that these data are misleading given that our post-Marcos series ends in 1998. In many systems electoral volatility falls over time as parties cultivate valuable reputations and voters develop attachments to certain parties. To ascertain whether or not this is the case I calculated electoral volatility based on seat shares—which are available for every democratic election since

1946. There are some drawbacks to using these data. Seat shares can differ greatly from vote shares, thus affecting the volatility scores, particularly in single member district systems.<sup>6</sup> One also has to be careful to use the seat shares as they existed immediately after the election, prior to the onslaught of party-switching that occurs after each elections. With these caveats in mind Figure 1 displays the seat volatility scores over time (I've also included the vote volatility scores where available for comparison).



Source: Author's calculations from Hartman et.al. 2001, COMELEC, IPU.

If the argument that voters' ties to political parties develop gradually over time, bringing greater stability to electoral competition is valid, we would expect electoral volatility to improve

<sup>6</sup> To see why, consider the following example. Suppose there are two parties, A and B, and 4 single-seat constituencies. In Election 1 Party A gets 51 percent of the vote in two districts and B gets 51 percent of the vote in the other two districts. Each party is awarded two seats, and each has a 50 percent share of the national vote (assuming an equal number of votes in each district). Now, in Election 2 suppose Party A loses to Party B in all 4 districts, with 49 percent of the votes to 51 percent. The overall distribution of the vote nationally has barely changed from Election 1—Party A now has 49 percent and B has 51 percent for a *vote* volatility score of 1. However, Party B now captures *all* of the seats, for seat volatility score of 50.

(decrease) over time in the Philippines. In pre-martial law elections no clear pattern is evident.

Electoral volatility did decline steadily for the first few post-independence elections, but increased substantially in the two elections prior to martial law. However, since the fall of Marcos there does appear to be a stabilization of the party system underway. After an initial period of high volatility corresponding with the 1992 and 1995 elections the system seems to have stabilized at a volatility score of around 30. Overall the average volatility score for the post-martial law period is higher than before martial law (38 versus 28) but if we look only at the last four relatively stable elections (1998-2007) volatility is close to what we observe prior to martial law (30 versus 28). Note that in comparative terms this is still a relatively high rate of electoral volatility, but it complicates the notion that the post-Marcos system is very different from its democratic predecessor. *Both* systems experience relatively high degrees of instability in the pattern of inter-party competition.

Another indication of the instability of the party system is the high rate at which parties enter and depart the party system. Table 3 displays the birth and death rates alongside the total number of parties for each election, all calculated using the parties that gain seats in the legislature. A birthrate of .33 means that 33% of the parties in a given year did not gain any seats in the prior election. A death rate of .33 means that 33% of the parties that won seats in the last election, did not capture any seats in the given election. Prior to martial law it is clear that the Philippine party system had become a two party system helmed by the Liberal and Nacionalista parties. Combining this information with the volatility information from Figure 3 we observe that the rise in seat volatility in the 1960s was driven entirely by the shifting fortunes of the Nacionalistas and Liberals, and not by party entries and exits from the system.

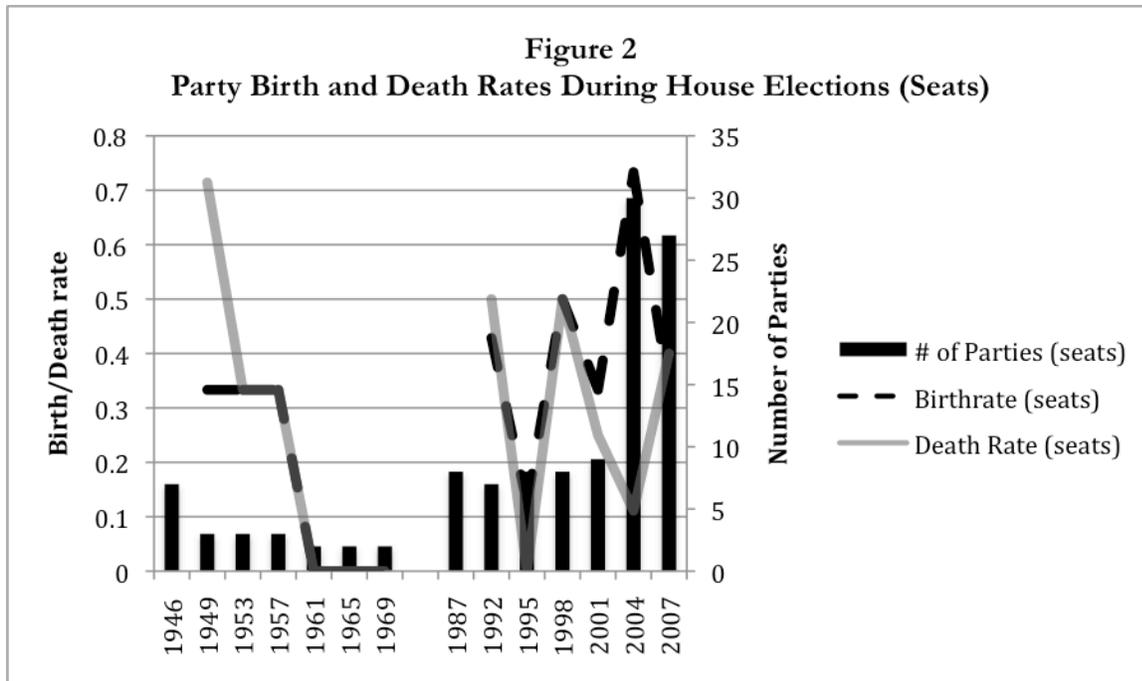
Contrast this with the post-Marcos era. A couple of things are immediately apparent from the table. First, it is clear that martial law marked the demise of the two party system. Unlike the earlier period the party system post-Marcos has not tended towards two. In fact, quite the opposite.

During the last two elections we have seen a large increase in the number of parties winning seats. This jump is driven largely by an increase in the number of small parties taking advantage of the peculiar party list system used in the Philippines. This system will be discussed in more detail below. Second, the party birth and death rates start high in the post-Marcos era, and stay that way. Not only do we not see stabilization around 2 parties, we don't observe stabilization of any sort. A substantial number of parties continue to enter and exit the system each election, and it is these births and deaths that are the main drivers of electoral volatility. Figure 2 charts the birth and death rates along with the number of parties over time. The greater instability in the post-martial law era is clearly evident.

**Table 3**  
**Party Birth and Death Rates During House Elections (Seats)**

	Birth Rate	Death Rate	# of Parties
1946	NA	NA	7
1949	0.33	0.71	3
1953	0.33	0.33	3
1957	0.33	0.33	3
1961	0	0	2
1965	0	0	2
1969	0	0	2
<b>MARTIAL LAW</b>			
1987	NA	NA	8
1992	0.43	0.50	7
1995	0.13	0	8
1998	0.50	0.50	8
2001	0.33	0.25	9
2004	0.73	0.11	30
2007	0.33	0.40	27

Source: Author's calculations from Source: Author's calculations from Hartman et.al. 2001, COMELEC, IPU.



*External/Systemic Dimension: Legitimacy*

One of the most telling indications of a lack of institutionalization is the lingering doubt about whether the major actors view political parties as a legitimate and necessary part of political life. The disconnect between the ideal of democracy and the reality of Filipino democracy comes out again and again in surveys. In a 2001 World Values Survey, for example, 82 percent of respondents expressed support for democracy—a number comparable to what we observe in established democracies. However, a majority of Filipinos (55 percent) also report being dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their country, compared to an average of only 24 percent in established democracies (WVS 2001, Hicken 2009b). That dissatisfaction is strongly correlated with a distrust of the country’s political parties. Only 45 percent of respondents report some confidence in Filipino political parties (*ibid.*).

Clearly parties are viewed with some suspicion by the masses, but what about other major political actors? Do other major power centers see party government as the only legitimate means to political power? Unfortunately, military intervention and coup threats continue to be a prominent

feature of Filipino politics, with regular rumors of coup plots and actual military interventions in 1986 and 2000 to resolve political stalemates.

*Internal/Organizational Dimension: value infusion and organizational routinization*

How deeply rooted and organizationally strong are parties in the Philippines? One indication of the weak links between parties and cohesive societal interests in the Philippines is the high volatility scores discussed previously. Another indication of the low degree of value infusion within most parties is the lack of party loyalty manifest by large numbers of voters, even within a single election. Filipino voters frequently split their votes between candidates from different parties. For example, Filipino voters cast two separate votes, one for a presidential candidate and one for a vice-presidential candidate. These votes need not be for candidates from the same political party. Taking advantage of this rule, voters frequently split their votes between two different parties. As a result, both the 1992 and 1998 presidential elections returned a president and vice-president from different political parties. In 1992 and again in 2004 the average difference between the top presidential contenders and their running-mates was 10 percentage points. In the 1998 election the vote shares of the top presidential and vice-presidential running mates differed by an average of 26 percentage points.

Voter behavior during Senate elections is another indicator of the weakness of party labels. The Philippines uses a block vote (or MNTV) system to elect Senators. 12 of the 24 senators are elected every three years to six-year terms. Voters can cast up to 12 votes but are limited to one vote per candidate. The top 12 vote-getters are awarded the seats. To the extent voters are motivated by party considerations we would expect to see candidates from the same party receiving roughly the same number of votes. Large differences between candidates are an indication that voters have weak ties to particular parties.

In the 2007 Senate election there were two large multi-party alliances: TEAM<sup>7</sup> Unity, a coalition of supporters of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and Genuine Opposition (GO), made up of anti-Arroyo politicians. During this election the division between the pro and anti-Arroyo forces was arguably the most prominent division in the electorate. And yet, when it came to their Senate vote, voters readily crossed alliance lines and/or failed to cast all of their available votes. GO candidates collectively received 50.9 percent of the total votes and 7 of the 12 seats, while TEAM Unity received 36.8 percent of the votes and 3 seats. (Had voters been primarily motivated by party loyalty we would expect one party alliance to sweep the Senate as each voter would simply vote a straight party ticket). Within each alliance the difference between the largest and smallest vote-getters was wide. For the GO alliance the candidate with the most votes received three-and-a-half times the number of votes as the last-place GO candidate. Within TEAM Unity the gap was even larger, with the strongest candidate receiving more than five times the number of votes as the weakest candidate.

Perhaps it was the case that voters felt very little attachment to these alliances—created solely for the purpose of this election. Did they exhibit more loyalty to parties within that coalition? The answer is no. The two largest parties in the 2007 election, in terms of seats in the House of Representatives, were Lakas-CMD and the NPC. The gap between the largest and smallest vote-getters for each party in the Senate elections was 2.5 times and 4.4 times the number of votes respectively. The numbers are similar for past Senate elections, as displayed in Table 4. For each election I've listed the vote differentials between the largest and smallest vote-getters for the two largest party alliances and for the two largest parties (according to seats in the House) which ran more than two candidates in the Senate election. Similar to presidential contests voters once again exhibit very little attachment to a particular party.

---

<sup>77</sup> Together Everyone Achieves More.

**Table 4**  
**Vote Differentials between First and Last place Candidates**

	1992	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007
Party Alliance 1	NA	1.9	4.1	2.4	6.9	3.5
Party Alliance 2	NA	3.9	NA	4.6	6.1	5.1
Largest Party	3.3	1.4	3.4	1.7	5.6	2.5
2 <sup>nd</sup> Largest party	2.2	3.5	4.1	3.1	1.8	4.2

Source: Authors calculations from election returns. The party alliances are as follows. 1995: Lakas-Laban and NPC; 1998: LAMMP; 2001: PPC and PnM, 2004: K-4 and KNP; 2007: Genuine Opposition, and Team Unity. The parties are as follows. 1992: LDP and Lakas-NUCD; 1995: Lakas-NUCD and NPC. 1998: Lakas-NUCD and LDP; 2001: Lakas-NUCD and LDP<sup>8</sup>; 2004: Lakas-CMD and the Liberal Party<sup>9</sup>; 2007: Lakas-CMD and NPC.<sup>10</sup>

Another indication of the degree of value inclusion is politicians' loyalty to their party. Like voters, politicians in the Philippines are politically promiscuous. Party switching is a common occurrence and politicians often claim affiliation with multiple parties simultaneously. This party switching, or turncoatism, as it is called in the Philippines, occurs at all levels of elected office from president (Magsaysay, Marcos and Ramos each switched parties prior to winning the presidency) to local officials. Below the level of president and vice president the vast majority of turncoats switch from the opposition to the presidents party in an effort to secure some of the many resources and favors the president possesses. In fact, within the House of Representatives enough party switching can occur to change the status of the president's party from the minority to the majority party, as happened after the election of President's Macapagal, Marcos, Aquino, and Ramos (Liang 1970; Banlaoi and Carlos 1996; Hicken 2009a; Landé 1996).

There are other indications that party labels mean little to candidates. For example, a significant number of candidates regularly run as independents. Other candidates accept guest candidatures—an offer to run under a party's banner without formally switching parties. Still others

---

<sup>8</sup> The LDP was actually the 4th largest party but the second and third largest parties, ran only one or two Senate candidates in 2004.

<sup>9</sup> The Liberal Party was actually the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest party but the second largest party, the NPC, ran only one Senate candidate in 2004.

<sup>10</sup> The NPC was actually the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest party but the second largest party, KAMPI, ran only one Senate candidate in 2007.

run under more than one party banner—sometimes opting to run as a standard carrier for both the government *and* one of the opposition parties (Hicken 2009a).

Another indicator of value infusion is the extent to which political parties are clearly associated with particular societal interests. Two questions are especially germane. To what extent do parties rely on different/distinct constituencies? Can we differentiate one party from another on the basis of its policy platform? Traditionally, the ties between Philippine parties and identifiable societal interests and voter groups have been very weak. Very few voters, for example, identify with any political party. In a recent survey two-thirds of respondents reported that no party truly promoted their welfare (SWS 2006). The broadest support any one party receives in the survey is eight percent. Philippine parties are generally ephemeral alliances of locally-focused politicians, as opposed to cohesive political parties with distinct policy visions. In fact, one of the defining characteristics of the party system is the enduring lack of policy or ideological vision among most political parties (Hicken 2009b). When asked to describe the difference between political parties a Filipino high school student tellingly quipped, “I do not believe one species of mud can be very different from another.” (Sicat 1973)

There are, of course, some exceptions to this pattern. There are a few parties on the Left as well as parties that run for party list seats that tend to have clearer ties to identifiable constituencies and party platforms that are programmatically distinct. However, these parties have performed poorly at the polls (in the case of the Left) or are constitutionally prohibited from having more than three seats in the House (in the case of party list parties).

In terms of organizational routinization parties in the Philippines have yet to develop party organizations that “matter” (Mainwaring and Scully 1995). Parties function almost entirely as electoral vehicles for powerful individuals. Parties are highly factionalized and noticeably devoid of

any lasting autonomous organizational structures. In between elections parties cease to operate for all intents and purposes, with very little in the way of active connections to party “members.” The internal governance structure of parties is also notoriously weak. Members who deviate from the party line (when there is one) are rarely sanctioned. Finally, responsibility for and control of financing is very decentralized, usually completely bypassing the formal party organization (de Castro Jr. 1992; Carlos 1997). Philippines scholar Nathan Quimpo summarizes the state of Philippine parties in this way:

Far from being stable, programmatic organizations, the country’s main political parties are nebulous entities that can be set up, merged with others, split, resurrected, regurgitated, reconstituted, renamed, repackaged, recycled or flushed down the toilet anytime. (Quimpo 2005)

In short, by virtually every measure political parties and the party system exhibit low levels of institutionalization. On the external/systemic dimension the pattern of interparty competition remains fluid while it is not at all clear that the major actors in society, including voters, accept parties as legitimate and necessary. On the internal/organizational dimension there is little evidence of value infusion—parties are not strongly rooted in society and do not have well defined and distinct party platforms. Organizationally parties tend to be feeble, factionalized, and fleeting.

## **Explaining Institutionalization<sup>11</sup>**

### *Socio-Historical Roots*

There is a growing body of work that examines how the political system in the Philippines (including the party system) was shaped by the manner in which democracy unfolded. This is consistent with Mainwaring and Zoco’s emphasis on the link between the timing of democratic transition and institutionalization (2007) As discussed in the introduction to this volume they argue

---

<sup>11</sup> This section draws on chapter 5 of Hicken 2009a.

that there is a distinct difference between early and late democratizers. In early democratizers, political parties were mobilizing institutions—incorporating new citizens into the political system and pushing for an expansion of suffrage and other rights for those citizens. This helped forge strong links between parties and the citizens they helped to mobilize. By contrast, in later democratizers the move to competitive elections and the formation of new parties formation was preceded by, or occurred in conjunction with, the adoption of universal suffrage. As a result, parties did not have to become mobilizing institutions and consequently the kinds of links and networks that characterized early democratizers never developed (ibid).

On the surface one might expect the Philippines to bear characteristics of an early democratizer. After all, democratic elections were introduced as early as 1906. However, the manner in which those elections were introduced is crucial. Elections were not the result of a victory of newly mobilized social forces over entrenched elite, nor did they reflect a compromise between social forces and the elite. In either scenario mobilization in pursuit of democracy might have laid the groundwork for institutionalized parties. Instead, democratic elections with universal male suffrage were imposed by the American colonial administration after it had defeated an indigenous independence movement and prior to the development of other mass mobilization efforts. In addition, early elections, the relatively benign colonial administration, and the promise of independence combined to undermine the development of a strong independence movement that might have formed the basis for strong, institutionalized political parties. So, despite the early arrival elections the Philippines looks a lot like a late democratizer—democratic elections being introduced prior to the development of the tradition or institutions of mass politics.

Several of the U.S. colonial government's decisions had the unintended consequence of hampering the development of a more institutionalized, cohesive, nationally-oriented party system (Hutchcroft and Rocamora 2003). First, while the U.S. installed democratic institutions in the

Philippines, it did very little to build up a strong central administrative bureaucracy (Hutchcroft 2000). As a result, political and economic power remained spread among the various large land-owning elite throughout the country. This land-owning elite, known as the oligarchs, became the patrons atop numerous patron-client networks spread throughout the Philippines (Tancango 1996).

Second, the early introduction of elections in the Philippines reproduced the decentralized and fragmented nature of political life at the national level via (Hutchcroft and Rocamora 2003). As the political system was thrown open to electoral competition those in the best position to compete for elected office were the oligarchs. Oligarchs were able to use elections as a means of acquiring and strengthening political power, first locally, then nationally via congressional elections (Landé 1965; Anderson 1988; Wurfel 1988; Hutchcroft and Rocamora 2003). Political parties and Congress quickly became the domain of these powerful locally-based interests, rather than a forum in which mass interests could be articulated and national policies debated.<sup>12</sup> In sum, the parties that came to dominate the political system were not cohesive parties with national constituencies, but internally mobilized (Shefter 1994), highly fragmented parties with narrow, particularistic constituencies.

The interaction of the Philippines social structure, colonial administration and early elections made the early institutionalization unlikely. However, this cannot completely explain why key features of the party system have endured in the Philippines for more than a century. Much has changed in the intervening hundred years and many of these changes would seemingly auger well for the emergence of a more institutionalized party system. For example, by the 1960s traditional patron-client networks were breaking down, beginning first in and around Manila and then spreading to other areas of the Philippines (Wurfel 1988). Likewise, a new class of business elite had emerged to challenge the power of the oligarchs. This business elite (largely Manila-based) had interests that were very different from the traditional landed-elite (Hawes 1992).

---

<sup>12</sup> For an analysis of the policy consequences of this arrangement see Sidel (1996) and Hutchcroft (1998).

One could argue that path dependence might account for the stickiness of the party system in the face of these and other changes. However, given the political, economic and social upheaval of the Marcos era it is not difficult to imagine that new paths were at least possible following his fall from power. First, under Marcos the relative decline of the oligarchs accelerated as he sought to centralize political and economic authority while empowering a new class of cronies (ibid.).<sup>13</sup> Second, in their attempt to oust Marcos opposition political parties joined together to back Corazon Aquino for President. They were supported by a large, mobilized segment of the Filipino populace. Yet this mass mobilization and relative decline of the oligarchs did not lead to the creation of large, mass-based parties after the fall. Nor did the coming together of different opposition groups to overthrow Marcos translate into more cohesive parties post-Marcos. Instead, as discussed above, the party system that emerged was similar in most respects to the pre-1972 party system. One explanation for the continuity of the party system, despite the significant changes that occurred before and during the Marcos era, is the continuity of key features of the Philippine institutional environment, along with the strategic use of institutional reforms designed to keep the level of institutionalization low.<sup>14</sup>

### *Institutional Obstacles--Continuities*

Alongside the historical and sociological factors discussed above, certain features of the Philippines electoral environment have discouraged the development of greater institutionalization.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> For an opposing view (i.e. that the reports of oligarchs' deaths were highly exaggerated) see Putzel 1993.

<sup>14</sup> The unwillingness of Aquino to capitalize on her popularity to form her own political party or take over the leadership of an existing party also likely contributed to the return of an under-institutionalized party system.

<sup>15</sup> There are a number of Philippines scholars who blame the state of the party system on the establishment of a strong president (see for example Grossholtz 1964; Wurfel 1988; Banlaoi and Carlos 1996). A powerful presidency, so the argument goes, undermines party cohesiveness, frees legislators and parties to focus on particularistic concerns (leaving national policies in the hands of the president), and generally discourages the development of an institutionalized party system. This observation is not unique to the Philippines—presidentialism is often associated with weak and non-cohesive legislative parties (Lijphart et. al. 1993, 322). However, I discount a powerful president as a significant causal variable for two reasons. First, Mainwaring and Zoco (2007) find no relationship between presidentialism and institutionalization, once they control for

This environment has remained relatively constant across the pre- and post-authoritarian periods and reinforced, and in some cases amplified, the effects of sociological and historical factors. Specifically, the electoral systems for both the House and Senate give voters a strong incentives to place person before party and candidates an incentive to pursue a personal strategy while discounting the value of party label. I've already discussed the method for electing the Senate. This method encourages Senatorial candidates to eschew party strategies in favor of personal strategies. Senate elections are first and foremost personality contests and Senators generally possess little in the way of party loyalty. Multiple votes allow voters to split their votes between Senatorial candidates from different parties—something we that Filipino voters frequently take advantage of.

Elections for the House of Representatives are only slightly better. In House elections, single-seat districts—by themselves often associated with weak parties—are combined with a system that gives party leaders very little control over their members' behavior and even who runs under the party banner. For example, candidates are not required to obtain the nomination or endorsement of a political party in order to run for office. Candidates may run as independents or run under the banner of more than one party.<sup>16</sup> Party officials often lack strong control over nomination and endorsement within their own party. Strong candidates can usually run under the label of their choosing. In some cases strong/wealthy candidates will use a party's label with or without the party's official endorsement (Wurfel 1988, 96). Some districts even feature multiple candidates each claiming to represent the same party, giving rise to intra-party competition (Kasuya 2001). Finally, candidates and politicians are free to switch parties at virtually any time without penalty. All in all the

---

other factors. Second, if there is a relationship there is some uncertainty about which way the arrows run. A strong presidency may hinder the rise of an institutionalized party system, but it may also be employed as an institutional antidote in polities with under-institutionalized party systems (Shugart 1999). In fact, the effort of the Philippines' first President, Manuel Quezon, to guarantee a powerful presidency was in part a reaction to the perceived shortcomings of the party system (Quezon 1940).

<sup>16</sup> See the earlier discussion of guest and joint candidacies.

system is one in which there are very few payoffs to either voters or candidates for investing in, or even paying attention to, political parties.

### *Institutional Obstacles--Interventions*

In addition to the unfavorable electoral incentives—a constant throughout the democratic periods--there have been a few key institutional interventions that had the effect of arresting any incipient institutionalization. Two of these interventions were not direct attempts to shape the party system and institutionalization, but the consequences were none-the-less profound. Two other interventions *were* strategically calculated to prevent the development of a stronger party system, and they have been fairly successful at doing so.

The first two interventions which indirectly affected the party system were Marcos' actions under martial law, and the introduction of a single term limit for the president after the fall of Marcos. As discussed in the introduction to this volume, we know that the types of strategies adopted by dictators during authoritarian interludes have important consequences for post-authoritarian party system (Geddes and Franz 2007). Had Marcos simply banned or repressed the Liberal and Nacionalista parties during his rule, experience elsewhere in the world suggests that voter loyalties would have remained more or less intact and the Liberals and Nacionalistas would have reemerged when democratic elections returned. Instead, Marcos eventually coupled the banning of existing parties with the creation of his own electoral vehicle—Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL). Past experience predicts that such parties will tend to attract supporters and candidates at the expense of the traditional parties, but once democratic elections return the party system then tends to fragment as the artificially-created new party falls apart. Indeed, this is precisely what happened in the Philippines. Upon the fall of Marcos the former two-party system fragmented, the Liberals and Nacionalistas never regained their former strength, and the KBL quickly lost most of its support.

After the excesses of the Marcos years it is not surprising that reformers put in place a number of constitutional provisions designed to limit the power of future presidents and would-be dictators. Key among these reforms was the introduction of a ban on re-election.<sup>17</sup> This had two (unintended) effects on the party system (Hicken 2009a). First, it undermined the incentives of sitting presidents to invest in party-building. Why build an organization you are not going to be able to directly benefit from? Second, it led to an increase in the number of presidential candidates and a corresponding increase in the number, birthrate and death rate of political parties. Prior to martial law the presence of a presidential incumbent with control of government resources encouraged the coalescence around two large parties. Would-be challengers from within the government ranks had incentives to stay put while the opposition faced strong incentives to back a single challenger in order maximize their chances of defeating the incumbent. With the end of presidential incumbency the incentives have greatly diminished and this has contributed to less party discipline, more factionalism, and to a larger number of short-lived parties, as demonstrated earlier.

Finally, there are two reforms that seem to have been specifically designed to thwart progress towards greater institutionalization. Shortly after independence the election code was revised to allow for party voting. Rather than writing individual candidates names, as had been the norm in the past, voters could write in the name of a party and the ballot would be “deemed as a vote for each and every one of the official candidates of such party for the respective offices.” (Revised Election Code of 1947, Article XI, Section 149, No. 19.) Had this option remained in effect it is intriguing to consider whether voters might have developed stronger ties to particular parties, and whether parties might not have increased their efforts to win those “party” votes. However, politicians quickly acted to return to the status quo, amending the Election Code in 1951 to eliminate the party voting option (Wurfel 1988, 94). Voters were once again required to write in the

---

<sup>17</sup> Prior to martial law presidents were limited to two terms.

name of each of their chosen candidates for every elected office. Given that local and national elections are synchronized this can mean that voters must write-in up to 40 names on election day.<sup>18</sup> This cumbersome ballot structure provides voters with ample opportunities to split their votes between many different parties, thus undermining the value of party label.

Finally, the adoption of a mixed-member system, ostensibly to provide for better representation of marginalized and stronger ties between parties and their supporters, has arguably arrested progress towards greater institutionalization. A provision for a mixed-member system was included in the 1987 Constitution. This was in part a response to the unprecedented level of mass mobilization and civil society activity in the wake of the People Power revolution. Reformers proposed the adoption of a German-style mixed-member system which would allow new interests to be heard in the House of Representatives (cite). However, the law fully implementing the measure was not passed until 1995 and not used in an election until 1998. In the intervening ten years much of the mass/civil society fervor had understandably waned.

In addition, opponents of the reforms were able to water down the provision substantially and minimize the impact on the existing party system. Rather than a German-style legislature with one half of the seats allocated on the basis of party lists using proportional representation, the Philippines reserves only 20% of the total House seats for the party list. Both political parties and sectoral organizations can compete for the seats. However, the five largest parties from the previous election are barred from competing. To obtain a seat parties (or sectoral organizations) must receive at least 2 percent of the PR votes. For every 2 percent of the vote a party is awarded a seat. No party or group can receive more than three seats via the list tier. The limit on the number of seats and the

---

<sup>18</sup> For this reason the distribution of sample ballots to voters becomes extremely important. Prior to elections most candidates distribute sample ballots containing their name and the names of candidates for other offices. Tellingly, it is not uncommon for these sample ballots to contain the names of candidates from more than one party. Candidates often include popular candidates from other parties running in other races on their sample ballot in a bid to bolster their own electoral prospects.

ban on mainstream parties competing has effectively kept the impact of these changes to a minimum. While the party list provision has probably resulted in more diverse interests being elected to Congress, it has also partially ghettoized those interests. Mainstream political parties and politicians seem largely content to leave programmatic campaigning and the representation of marginalized interests to party list groups. At the same time, the low 2 percent threshold and 3-seat limit as led to an explosion of new, small parties in recent years.

## **Conclusion**

One of the things I set out to do in this chapter was to demonstrate the Philippines party system is relatively under-institutionalized. The data assembled here all point in the same direction—towards a low level of institutionalization. What is harder to do, particularly in the context of a single case, is to parse out the reasons for the lack of institutionalization. I've argued that the introduction of early elections in an environment rich in oligarchic elite but lacking a mobilized citizenry or mass organizations, hindered institutionalization. The adoption of a particular set of electoral institutions reinforced this tendency. And finally a few institutional interventions at key times undermined incentives towards further institutionalization. Three of these interventions, namely the creation of the KBL, the ban on presidential reelection, and the peculiarities of the party list system, also help explain why the pre- and post-martial law party systems differ in some respects.

So, in conclusion, why should we care about the level of institutionalization? We can observe differences in the level of institutionalization from country to country, but does it really matter for things we ultimately care about? Elsewhere I have argued that the level of institutionalization might affect democratic governance (Hicken 2008, 2009a). Specifically, I argue that under-institutionalized party systems are generally a hindrance to democratic consolidation and good governance in at least three ways (ibid). First, where parties and party systems are under-institutionalized politicians will tend to have narrow constituencies and short time horizons—both of which are problematic for the

provision of needed public goods. Second, a lack of party system institutionalization undermines the ability of voters to hold politicians individually and collectively accountable (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). Finally, where party institutionalization is low, the disillusionment with the extant system might eventually produce ambivalence among some voters about the relative merits of the democratic status quo versus strong, decisive, albeit less democratic, leadership. This ambivalence, combined with weak party loyalties, may provide opportunities for anti-democratic/anti-party politicians to rise to power (e.g. Thaksin and Marcos) (ibid).

## References

- Anderson, Benedict. 1988. "Cacique Democracy in the Philippines: Origins and Dreams." *New Left Review* 169: 3-33.
- Banlaoi and Carlos. 1996. *Political Parties in the Philippines: From 1900 to the Present*. Makati: Konrad Adenauer Foundation.
- Brownlee, Jason. 2008. "Bound to Rule: Party Institutions and Regime Trajectories in Malaysia and the Philippines." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 8(1): 89-118.
- Carlos, Clarita R. 1997. *Dynamics of Political Parties in the Philippines*. Makati: Konrad Adenauer Foundation.
- Commission on Elections (COMELEC). 1992. *Report of the Commission on Elections to the President and Congress of the Republic of the Philippines on the Conduct of the Synchronized National and Local Elections of May 11, 1992*. Manila: Commission on Elections.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1995. *Report of the Commission on Elections to His Excellency President Fidel V. Ramos and to Congress of the Republic of the Philippines on the Conduct of the National and Local Elections of May 8, 1992*. Manila: Commission on Elections.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1998. Election results from the 1998 National and Local Elections. Data on Diskette. Manila: Commission on Elections.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2001. Election results from the 2001 National and Local Elections. [http://www.comelec.gov.ph/results\\_main.html](http://www.comelec.gov.ph/results_main.html).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. Election results from the 2004 National and Local Elections. [http://www.comelec.gov.ph/results\\_main.html](http://www.comelec.gov.ph/results_main.html)
- de Castro Jr., Isagani. 1992. "Money and Moguls: Oiling the Campaign Machinery." In Lornal Kalaw-Tirol and Sheila S, Colonel, eds. *1992 & Beyond: Forces and Issues in Philippine Elections*. Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism and Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs.
- Geddes, Barbara and Erica Frantz. 2007. "The Effect of Dictatorships on Party Systems in Latin America", unpublished manuscript, UCLA.
- Grossholtz, Jean. 1964. *Politics in the Philippines: A Country Study*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Hartmann, Christof, Graham Hassall and Soliman M. Santos Jr. 2001. "Philippines." In Nohlen, Dieter et. al., eds. *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook. Volume II South East Asia, East*
- Hawes, Gary. 1992. "Marcos, His Cronies and the Philippines Failure to Develop." In Ruth McVey, ed. *Southeast Asian Capitalists*. Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program.
- Hicken, Allen. 2008a. "The Politics of Economic Recovery in Thailand and the Philippines." In *Crisis as Catalyst Asia's Dynamic Political Economy*. Andrew MacIntyre, T.J. Pempel, John Ravenhill, eds. Ithaca: Cornell University. Pp. 206-230.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2008b. "Political Engineering and Party Regulation in Southeast Asia." In *Political Parties in Conflict-Prone Societies: Regulation, Engineering and Democratic Development*. Benjamin Reilly et. al. eds. United Nations University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009a. *Building Party Systems in Developing Democracies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009b. "Political Parties and Party Systems in Southeast Asia." In *Challenges and Prospects of Democratic Governance in Southeast Asia*. Aurel Croissant and Marco Bunte, eds.
- Hicken, Allen and Erik Kuhonta. Forthcoming. "Reexamining Party Institutionalization Through Asian Lenses." *Comparative Political Studies*.
- Huntington, Samuel P. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press,
- Hutchcroft, Paul D. 1998. *Booty Capitalism: The Politics of Banking in the Philippines*. Cornell University Press.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Colonial Masters, National Politicos, and Provincial Lords: Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the American Philippines, 1900-1913," *Journal of Asian Studies* 59 (2) (May 2000): 277-306.
- Hutchcroft, Paul and Joel Rocamora. 2003. "Strong Demands and Weak Institutions: The Origins and Evolution of the Democratic Deficit in the Philippines." *Journal of East Asian Studies*. 3 (2) (May-August 2003): 259-292.
- IPU. Parline Database. <http://www.ipu.org>.
- Kasuya, Yuko. 2001. "Presidential Connection: Parties and Party Systems in the Philippines." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, March 23-25, 2001.
- Landé, Carl H. 1965. *Leaders, Factions and Parties*. New Haven: Southeast Asian Studies, Yale University.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1996. *Post-Marcos Politics: A Geographic and Statistical Analysis of the 1992 Philippine Elections*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Levitsky 1998
- Liang, Dapen. 1970. *Philippine Parties and Politics: A Historical Study of National Experience in Democracy*. San Francisco: The Gladstone Company.
- Lijphart, Arend, Ronald Rogowski and Kent Weaver. 1993. "Separation of Powers and Cleavage Management." In R. Kent Weaver and Bert A. Rockman, eds. *Do Institutions Matter: Government in the United States and Abroad*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution.
- Mainwaring, Scott and Timothy Scully. 1995. "Introduction." In *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America*. Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully, eds. Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press.
- Mainwaring, Scott and Mariano Torcal. 2006. "Party System Institutionalization and Party System Theory after the Third Wave of Democratization." In *Handbook of Political Parties*, ed. Richard S. Katz and William Crotty. London: Sage Publications, 204-227.
- Mainwaring, Scott and Eburne Zoco. 2007. "Historical Sequences and the Stabilization of Interparty Competition: Electoral Volatility in Old and New Democracies." *Party Politics* 13 (2) (March).
- Montinola, Gabriella. 1999. "Parties and Accountability in the Philippines." *Journal of Democracy* 10(1): 126-40.
- Panbianco, Angelo. 1988. *Political Parties: Organization and Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Putzel, James. 1993. "Democratization and Clan Politics: The 1992 Philippine Elections." Mimeo.
- Quezon, Manuel L. 1940. *Addresses of His Excellency Manuel L. Quezon on the Theory of a Partyless Democracy*. Manila: Bureau of Print.
- Quimpo, Nathan Gilbert. 2005. "Yellow Pad: Trapo Parties and Corruption." *BusinessWorld*. October 10, 2005.
- Randall, Vicky and Lars Svasand. 2002 "Party Institutionalization in New Democracies." *Party Politics* 8 (1).
- Revised Election Code of 1947, Article XI, Section 149, No. 19.
- Shefter, Martin. 1994. *Political Parties and the State: The American Historical Experience*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Shugart, Matthew Soberg. 1999. "Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Provision of Public Goods in Less-Developed Countries." *Constitutional Political Economy* 10:1, 53-88.
- Sicat, Loreta M. "The 'Fair Hope of the Fatherland,'" *Philippine Journal of Public Administration* 17 (October 1973): 437.
- Sidel, John T. 1996. *Capital Coercion and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Slater, Dan. 2003. "Iron Cage in an Iron Fist: Authoritarian Institutions and the Personalization of Power in Malaysia" *Comparative Politics* 36(1).
- SWS. 2006. *Attitudes Towards Political Parties in the Philippines*. A joint production of Social Weather Stations, Ateneo School of Government, with the Support of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. Available from [www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_10415-544-2-30.pdf](http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_10415-544-2-30.pdf).
- Tancangco, Luzviminda. 1992. *The Anatomy of Electoral Fraud*. Manila: MLAGM.
- Ufen, Andreas. 2008. "Political Party and Party System Institutionalization in Southeast Asia: Lessons for Democratic Consolidation in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand." *The Pacific Review* 21(3): 327-350.
- Welfling, Mary B. 1973. *Political Institutionalization: Comparative Analyses of African Party Systems*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications,
- Wurfel, David. 1988. *Filipino Politics: Development and Decay*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- WVS (World Values Survey). 2001. <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>.