Chasing the Wind: Assessing Philippine Democracy

Jointly authored by a group of prominent Filipino political scientists (three former presidents of the Philippine Political Science Association and one long-time editor of the Philippine Political Science Journal), this book challenges the conventional wisdom that the Philippines is a democracy. Going beyond the traditional approaches to understanding democracy, the authors offer a reconceptualization of democracy anchored on three essential elements: an expanded notion of public accountability, a sensitivity to regime outcomes particularly on key indicators of human development, and a definite period for assessing the effectiveness of these practices and outcomes. To substantiate their claims, the authors provide a rigorous rethinking of the concept of democracy backed up by systematic studies on the country's electoral practices and party system, the accountability mechanisms among the major agencies of government, and the impact of civil society and the decentralization process. While critical of the failed democratization process in the country, the authors do affirm the urgency of collectively struggling for a truly democratic order.

Excerpts from the book:

"Much of the current confusion in classifying a regime as democratic stems from an overly liberal analytical bias that permits non-democratic and even anti-democratic regimes to pass themselves off as some species of democracy albeit clearly saddled with critical deficiencies in terms of popular sovereignty, rule of law, free and competitive elections, public accountability and other bona fides of any functional democracy. Historically, this bias has benefited corrupt, anti-democratic, oligarchic ruling elites that lean on paper constitutions even as they violate these constitutions' democratic provisions with much impunity." *Felipe B. Miranda, University of the Philippines*

"We have not had any successful transition to a democratic regime. We have failed to meet even the minimum conditions of a procedural democracy: free and fair elections. How can we even refer to our system as a "democracy" when much of its electoral contests continue to be perverted by outright violence and coercion. Moreover, powerful political clans have consistently dominated various national and local positions in the country, foreclosing the prospects of wider electoral competition and political participation." *Temario C. Rivera, International Christian University (Tokyo)*

"The actual practice of the presidential form of government in the Philippines deviates from the principle of separation of powers and system of checks and balances aimed at preventing the abuse of power to protect the rights of the people. The vast powers of the presidency has resulted in an executive hegemony which has weakened the legislature, judiciary, and constitutional bodies and has stalled the democratization of our country." *Malaya C. Ronas, University of the Philippines*

"Bruited about as "democratizers", civil society and the decentralization process have not really propelled democratization in the country as both arenas continue to suffer from innate systemic limits and institutional and organizational weaknesses." *Ronald D. Holmes, De La Salle University, Manila*

ISBN 978-971-93106-4-8

Cover Design by Fidel de la Torre

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