

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN DEMOCRATIZATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE PHILIPPINES

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY*

By
SRIVIDYA PRUSTY



**CENTRE FOR SOUTH, CENTRAL, SOUTHEAST ASIA AND
SOUTH WEST PACIFIC STUDIES (CSCSEA WPS)
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI – 110067
INDIA**

2004



Dated: 21/07/2004

CERTIFICATE

Certified that dissertation entitled **“THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN DEMOCRATIZATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE PHILIPPINES.”** Submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university and is my own work.

Shrividya Pandey
Signature of the student

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Uma Singh
Chairperson

Supervisor
SUPERVISOR
 Centre for South, Central, South East
 Asian and South West Pacific Studies
 School of International Studies
 Jawaharlal Nehru University,
 New Delhi-110067

Centre for South, Central, South East
 Asian and South West Pacific Studies
 School of International Studies
 Jawaharlal Nehru University
 New Delhi-110067

**DEDICATED TO MY PARENTS
& BROTHER**

CONTENTS

		PAGE NO.
PREFACE		i-iii
CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION	1-31
CHAPTER 2	PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF DEMOCRACY IN THE PHILIPPINES	32-74
CHAPTER 3	GROWTH OF MEDIA IN THE PHILIPPINES	75-104
CHAPTER 4	ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE PHILIPPINES DEMOCRATIC SET-UP	105-143
CHAPTER 5	CONCLUSION	144-156
BIBLIOGRAPHY		157-166

PREFACE

The Philippines' transition from dictatorship to democracy presents differences from other emerging democracies in Southeast Asia as well as the developing world. The journey towards democracy began much earlier than most countries in the region. And although democracy in the country has been on the long road, it has also gone on a number of detours since its colonial history, the most significant being the extension of the Marcos term into a military rule for life. The authoritarian regime lasted for 14 years, ending only when the pro-democracy forces launched a popular uprising against the regime. The US government's support for the uprising reinvigorated post-war special relations between the two countries.

Nevertheless in democratic Philippines too, the press has experienced intense political pressure to curb any criticism of the government. Although President Corazon Aquino, unlike President Marcos, never instilled fear and used physical intimidation, she was known to use connections with publishers directly or through her press secretary, to discourage stories unflattering to her administration. She was also known to have from time to time openly threatened or suppressed media reports she saw as destabilizing. The same, as has been discussed in Chapter IV, has also been the case with most of the Presidents who succeeded her.

The Philippines is considered to be one of the freest democracies in Southeast Asia and its press one of the most freewheeling, bold and independent in the region. However, perhaps due to a dearth proper research work on the media's role in democratic Philippines, there are conflicting reports available about whether media in Philippines is actually assisting democracy or is being suppressed by the establishment. The very existence of contradictory reports questions the independent character of the media in the country. Because, if the media in Philippines is not free from government interference, the whole picture of Philippines being a representative democracy changes. And if this is the case with the Philippine press, considered to be one of the boldest in Southeast Asia, then the dynamics of the entire region changes. This study has therefore, focused on these primary questions and has attempted to find an answer to them. Chapter I has examined media as an instrument in a democratic set-up and has also cited specific examples on the

Asian and American context. Chapter II has dealt with the problems and prospects of democracy in the Philippines. It has also brought into perspective the different hurdles to the country's democratic set-up and has made an attempt to show the smooth functioning of democracy in future. Chapter III has given a brief history of the growth of media in the Philippines and has shown how the present press in the country has got its very character. Chapter IV has talked about the role of media in the Philippine democratic set-up and discussed, by citing specific instances, if media is actually being used as an instrument in the country's democracy. It also tries to find out whether the democratic set-up in the post Marcos period has indeed witnessed a free media or media is still under siege in the country.

This study is, therefore, an attempt to focus on the growth and development of both the media and democracy, with particular emphasis on press freedom and the role that the free press is playing in strengthening the country's democracy, with an analytical approach. By attempting to study the freedom of the press in democratic Philippines and establishing if the media is actually an instrument to the country's democratic process, the timing of the dissertation gains even more importance in view of the Presidential elections, which is due this year. The elections will demonstrate the case in point and the study may be considered as a relevant and apt material for reference in the context of the oncoming polls.

Finally, I acknowledge the support given to me by various people for completing this dissertation. I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Ganganath Jha, who guided me at every stage of this work. But for his keen interest and encouragement, this study would not have been completed. I owe a great deal to a number of eminent scholars like Sheila Coronel, Richard Shafer, John Funston, Peter Eng, John A. Lent, Ron Whittaker and Duncan Watts whose scholarly writings on various aspects of media and democratization in the Philippines provided me with valuable information and insights.

I am also indebted to Prof. Uma Singh, Chairperson, CSCSEASWPS, and to the library staff of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Teen Murty, ICWA, IDSA and IIMC for their cooperation.

I take this opportunity to thank my friends Atanu, Renu, Khushboo, Neha, Rupali, Neelima, Sharmishta, Sameer, Shailendra, Julie, Animesh, Diti and Umakant, and all my

classmates, whose love and inspiration has sustained me in difficult times and without whose support this dissertation would not have been in the present form.

Finally, this dissertation is a gesture of my love, gratitude and respect to my understanding parents and my brother.

Srividya Prusty

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A free press or a press that is independent of government interference is needed everywhere — be it in developing countries or advanced industrial societies having the highest order of democracy. In a country where political institutions and opposition groups do not or have never operated freely, a press able to report and highlight popular discontent with the course of national policy or with the government of the moment, can serve as an important warning. It can identify and isolate early problems that demand solution if political stability is to be maintained and sustained. Far from subverting public order in unstable societies, free and robust media can actually promote conciliation by encouraging the discussion of controversial issues before they reach a volatile or explosive stage.¹

It is generally noticed that all governments, whatever their make-up or wherever in the world they are, share a certain antipathy to the press. In spite of their vows that they are committed to openness, honesty and transparency, government officials seek to prevent the detailed broadcast or debate of issues (in newspapers, magazines and other publications) that are uncomfortable or embarrassing. Such instructive tendency of the state to shroud matters in secrecy — especially in matters related to foreign policy — also tempts the government to use deception as a tool to achieve their political ends. Therefore, it is very important that the media does not permit this to happen and intervene to promote public discussions and debates of

¹ Stanford J. Ungar, "The Role of a Free Press in Strengthening Democracy" in Judith Lichtenberg (ed.), *Democracy and the Mass Media*, Cambridge University Press, USA, 1990, p.369.

problems that may not be adequately handled by the normal processes of the government.

The relationship between media and democratization is, therefore, an important but difficult topic. Fighting for democracy is an ongoing and never-ending process, not a finished product or a settled terrain for it can be won and then lost, if not guarded with vigilance.² For, a democracy implies the existence of certain basic freedoms. Peoples' power in terms of the right to express and listen to opinion is fundamental and central to a working democracy. The media, in a democracy, must therefore, be free so that it is able to reflect a variety of viewpoints. Traditionally, liberal democracy is associated, or rather synonymous, with the idea of a free press. And in recent times, with broadcasting services which function in an environment where journalists and mediamen are free to choose and gather information as is appropriate for their usage. The absence of state control over the media, is therefore, considered to be a litmus test for any country which aspires to be regarded as a democracy.

The centerpiece of a representative democratic system is the process of selection of representatives by the public through elections.³ Elections are intended to be the principal form of political participation on the part of the public.⁴ As Giovanni Sartori in his landmark study of democratic theory writes,

² Chin Chuan Lee, "Beyond Oriental Discourses: Media and Democracy in Asia", *Javnost: The Public*, 2001, pp.7-20.

³ Deane E. Alger, *The Media and Politics*, Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey, USA, 1989, p.5.

⁴ Ibid.

“Since, in order to have democracy we must have, to some degree, a government of the people, let us immediately ask: When do we find a ‘governing people’, in the role or act of governing? The answer is: ...The democratic process is... encapsulated in elections and electing.”⁵

But the fundamental question that arises here is that how do the voters make decisions on what candidates to elect and how do they learn about the candidates so that they can make intelligent choices. It is at this crucial juncture in the process of democratization that the role of a free press comes to fore. At this point it must be remembered that for the vast majority of the general public with their attention focused on personal concerns, there is a great physical and psychological distance from political affairs. Therefore, they rarely have the time or the inclination to seek out detailed, authentic information on candidates’ positions and performance in office, or on the issues themselves. So they rely on the press for such unbiased and detailed reports.

Although the traditional sources of information on candidates have been the political parties themselves and their regional and local organizations, it is generally noticed that there is a substantial decline in the percentage of the public identifying with major political parties. And the rising percentage of independent voters testify to the low level of public reliance on the parties. As a result of this, the general public becomes indifferent to the political proceedings in the country. This lack of public participation is in itself a severe blow to the very character of a representative democracy. In such a situation, the press fills in the vacuum with information and reports on political parties, candidates and even the issues, creating an awareness and ensuring an active participation of the public.

⁵ Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, Vol.1, Chatham, N.J., Chatham House, 1987, p.86.

People increasingly rely on the mass media for information and impressions and even the general trend. Although the final decisions are based mostly on conversations with family and acquaintances and even on the basis of personal experiences, the media is always the indirect source of information for most people. In other words, the distance between the political players and the public is bridged by the communications of the mass media. As Walter Lippmann put it,

“people respond to political matters on the basis of ‘the pictures in (their) heads’ of what the world is like — pictures largely selected and arranged by the media.”⁶

The mass media, therefore, can be considered as the vital connecting link in any political system during present times.

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN A WORKING DEMOCRACY

In a true democracy there are two essential elements. First and foremost is that alternative choices must be available to the public. And the principal form of this is alternative candidates for elections. In fact, it is in the competition among alternatives that the public is made aware of the choices in direction for governance. Choice is at the core of democracy; the absence of choice means that democracy is lessened to one degree or another, depending on the nature of the lost choice.⁷ The second basic element of democracy is that the public must have “in its hands” what it takes to make a political decision on those choices in a meaningful manner — that is, to make such choices, as they relate them to their own values, beliefs and concerns as

⁶ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*; Macmillan, USA, 1922, Chapter 1.

⁷ Dean E. Alger, *The Media and Politics*, Prentice-Hall, Inc. N.J., USA, 1989, p.7.

effectively as they are able to – and to act on them.⁸ If the public is intended to serve as the foundation of the democratic process and hence to indicate basic direction for government through electoral choices and other political participation, the people must have in their “possession” the means of adequately making such decisions, so that they can act on them in an appropriate fashion.⁹

Therefore, to make intelligent electoral as well as other political choices, the public needs sufficient information about the available alternatives. In fact, for a democracy to function, the public needs to have substantial and accurate information basically in five areas in the case of electoral alternatives. First, they need information on the eligibility of the candidates for the particular office or leadership position. Second, the voters need information on the positions taken by the candidate on issues of concern, as well as the candidate’s general political orientations and philosophy. Third, information is needed on the personal characteristics that might present problems in the person’s conduct of the office. Fourth information is needed on the nature of the office involved, including its responsibilities. Fifth information is also needed on the elements of and arguments concerning significant issues.¹⁰

In general, information and full access to it is a cardinal principle of a democratic system.¹¹ This view is supported by Carl J. Friedrich, who observed,

“...Freedom of the press is considered a cornerstone of constitutional democracy. Earlier the will of the people was treated as if unrelated to the information available... Actually the emergence of constitutional government, and in particular the crystallization of the systems of popular representation

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ For details on public participation in democratic process, please see Hanna Pitkin,, *The Concept of Representation*, University of California Press, USA, 1967, Chapter 3

¹⁰ Dean E. Alger, *The Media and Politics*, Prentice-Hall Inc., N.J., USA, 1989, p.7.

¹¹ Robert Lineberry, *Government in America*, Second Edition, Little Brown, USA, 1983, p.42.

as we know them, are inextricably interwoven with the growth of the modern press. Without it constitutional government is unimaginable.”¹²

In fact, there is more to the concept of a democracy than just the restraint of excess and arbitrary governmental power and the preservation of individual freedoms. Another basic function of a democratic system is the affirmative side of the popular basis of governance, namely, the role of the public in positively indicating policy directions for government by political choice and action, especially in and through elections.

Therefore, the media’s role of providing adequate information to enable the public to realize the intent of a democratic process is crucial and more so during present times. This is because in today’s world, we have a far more mobile and less rooted society. And the economies of most of the countries in the world are dominated by national and international corporations leading to a multitude of job transfers and national job searches. In such a scenario, the public does not have the experience of long-term, stable social networks which help share information on political matters and assist in its interpretation. This encourages more dependence on the mass media for information and perspectives.

However, as discussed earlier, it is important to note that the societies of the more developed nations, with their full evolution of industrialization and urbanization, are increasingly becoming mass societies – the key elements of which are high mobility, rootlessness and an ‘atomized’ individual condition. As William Kornhauser expresses,

¹² Carl J. Friedrich, *Constitutional Government and Democracy*, 4th Edition, Blaisdell, Massachusetts 1968, p.502

“People are divorced from their community and work and they are free to unite in new ways. Furthermore, those who do not possess a variety of relations with their fellows are disposed to seek new and often remote sources of attachment and allegiance, where proximate concerns are gratification from remote symbols.”¹³

In fact, with such a loss of long-term ties to community and social networks, it is feared, comes a loss of capacity to interpret happenings in the world in a stable fashion. And as a consequence, there is little or no insulation between the ruling elites and the masses. So, this becomes a recipe for the effective use of propaganda, a high level of manipulation of the public, and for instability in general. In this context, Friedrich provides some enlightening thoughts — both on the above-mentioned danger and on the positive potentials:

“Broadcasting: new medium of political influence. The possibility of broadcasting the spoken word and projecting visual materials to the four corners of the globe has profoundly altered the realities of modern politics. Whether political leadership is contested, as in the democracies, or imposed, as in the dictatorships, the opportunity of reaching millions in the direct, personal way which only the spoken word and the actual view of the speaker often has turned the modern community into a market place. Their potentialities (of the new means of mass communication) have been further reinforced by the development of communication satellites. Inevitably, therefore, the issue of who shall control this channel of communication presents political problems of decisive importance, at least in a constitutional democracy.”¹⁴

FUNCTIONS OF THE PRESS AND DEMOCRATIC EXPECTATIONS OF MEDIA PERFORMANCE

The principal democratic role of the media, according to traditional liberal theory, is to act as a check on the state. The media should monitor the full range of state activity, and fearlessly expose abuses of official authority.¹⁵ In fact, this ‘watchdog’ function of the media, according to the traditional liberal theory, is said to override in importance all its other functions. It dictates the form in which the media

¹³ William Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society*, Free Press, New York, 1959 p.60.

¹⁴ Friedrich, *Constitutional Government and Democracy*, 4th Edition, Blaisdell, Massachusetts 1968, pp.520-21.

¹⁵ James Curran, *Media and Power*, St. Edmundsbury Press, Great Britain, 2002, p.217.

system should be organized. According to this view, only by hitching the media to the free market, is it possible to ensure the media's complete independence from government. Because, once the media becomes subject to state regulation, it will lose its bite as watchdogs and may be transformed into just snarling dogs in the service of the state.

Apart from the watchdog perspective of the media, according to the liberal theory, the media is also viewed in a more expansive way as an agency of information, debates and discussions which facilitate the smooth functioning of a democracy. In this view, free media briefs the electorate and assists voters to make an intelligent and informed choice during elections. Independent media also provide a channel of communication between the government and the governed. Above all, the media provides a forum of debate in which the public can identify problems, propose solutions, reach agreements and guide the direction of society, making way for good judgment and wise governance.

Representing people to authority is, in liberal theory, the third key democratic function of the media. This function is often regarded as the culmination of the media's 'mission'. Because after having briefed the people about issues, and staged a debate, the media relays the public consensus that results from this debate to the government. In this manner, the government is supervised by the people between elections. As Thomas Carlyle had proclaimed:

"The press is a power, a branch of government with an inalienable weight in law-making derived from the will of the people."¹⁶

¹⁶ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, Chapman & Hall, Great Britain, 1907, p.164.

Although the introduction of opinion polls had taken out some of the wind out of this 'voice of the people' argument, the general assumption is that the media speaks for the people and represents their views and interests in the public domain because the broad shape and nature of the press is ultimately determined by its audiences. As a consequence, the privately owned media speaks up for the people.

The democratic system is also a highly exacting creed in its expectations of the mass media. A true democracy requires that the media perform and provide a number of functions and services for the political system. First, there should be surveillance of the socio-political environment, reporting developments likely to impinge, positively or negatively, on the welfare of the citizens. Second, there should be meaningful agenda setting, identifying the key issues of the day, including the forces that have formed them and the solutions that may resolve them. Third, media should serve as a platform for an intelligible and illuminating advocacy by politicians and spokespersons of other causes and interest groups. Fourth, there should be dialogue across a diverse range of views as well as between power holders (actual and prospective) and mass publics. Fifth, the press should serve as a mechanism for holding officials to account for how they have exercised power. Sixth, the media should provide incentives for citizens to learn, choose and become involved in the political proceedings rather than just follow the political processes. Seventh, there should be a principal resistance to the efforts of forces outside the media to subvert their independence, integrity and ability to serve the audience. And finally, there

should be a sense of respect for the audience member, as potentially concerned and able to make sense of his or her political environment.¹⁷

However, it is not easy for media to achieve and serve these goals. There are at least four kinds of obstacles that hinder their attainment. First and foremost is that the conflicts among democratic values themselves may necessitate compromises in the organization and performance of the media. There may be friction between the principle of editorial autonomy and the ideal of offering individuals and groups wide-ranging access to the media. The aim of serving the public by catering to its immediate tastes and interests is likely to conflict with the aim of providing what the public needs to know. Also, at times, media organizations are confronted by the conflict between a majoritarian concentration on mainstream opinions and interests and the rights of dissident and marginal views to be heard.¹⁸ Second, political communicators often appear to exist in an elite world of their own, distanced from the ground realities and perspectives of ordinary people. In fact, political communication can virtually be defined as the transmission of messages and pressures to and from individuals who are visibly unequal — the highly informed and the ignorant, the highly powerful and powerless, the highly involved and the blissfully indifferent. Therefore, the very structure of political communication involves a division between movers and shakers at the top and bystanders below, imposing limits on the participatory energy the system can generate.¹⁹

¹⁷ Michael Gurevitch and Jay G. Blumler, "Political Communication Systems and Democratic Values", Judith Lichtenberg (Ed.), *Democracy and the Mass Media*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.270.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Third, unlike the general assumption, not everyone in the audience for political communication is interested in political proceedings or is a 'political animal', nor is obliged to be. On the one hand, a viable democracy assumes or presupposes that all the citizens be engaged or at least participate in the political proceedings in the country. While on the other hand, one of the basic freedom that a member of a democratic society enjoys is the freedom to define for themselves their stance towards the political system, including the right to be politically apathetic. As a result of this, political messages are doubly vulnerable. This is because, for one thing, political messages must jostle and compete for limited time and space with other (at times more entertaining) kinds of messages. So, they are not guaranteed a favoured share of our attention. For another, its ultimate dependence on winning and holding the attention of a heterogeneous audience can inhibit the media from committing themselves wholeheartedly to the democratic task.

Fourth, the media can pursue democratic values only in ways that are compatible with the sociopolitical and economic environment in which they function. Political communication follows the contours of and derives its resources from the larger society of which, ultimately, it is a part. Even when the media is formally 'declared' autonomous in a democratic setup, and is protected by sacrosanct constitutional guarantees, it is a part and parcel of the larger social system, performing functions for the society and impelled to respond to predominant drives within it. An example can be given of the United States, a country considered to be an example of the highest order of democracy, where media organizations are large business enterprises and they must survive and prosper in a highly competitive

marketplace. As a result, their pursuit of their democratic role is inexorably shaped by this overriding economic goal. Politically, too, media institutions are linked inextricably to the governing institutions of society, not least because of their mutual dependence as suppliers of raw materials (government to media) and channels of publicity (media to government).²⁰ In fact, a central issue in the current research on the “agenda setting” role of the mass media is the degree to which it exercises a discretionary power to highlight certain issues for public attention, as against the degree to which they depend on the policy initiatives of the big power battalions whose activities and statements they report.²¹

THE INFLUENCE AND EFFECTS OF MASS MEDIA

Although the effects of the mass media on popular attitudes are difficult to assess, there is a general tendency to attribute much of that happens in the society to the power of the media. Even if it seems evident that media has a large and diverse audience and so it must be a very powerful force in shaping our attitudes and behaviours, it is quite difficult to pinpoint what its effect might be and how it may vary from people to people. A viewer may spend hours watching television or reading a newspaper, but this does not necessarily mean that either or both are his/her main source of information. People belong to a society in which there are many possible ways of obtaining knowledge, and it is difficult to separate from where it has been derived. In developing their political attitudes, people might have been influenced by

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Phillip Tichenor, “Agenda-Setting: Media as Political King Makers?”, *Journalism Quarterly* 59, No.3, 1982

television, radio, newspapers, magazines, journals, or even from an eye-catching poster giving out a message, or even from conversations and personal experience at the workplace or elsewhere.

However many surveys have found that people do find the media more useful than other sources of information. And their overall judgment, whether as a means of providing issue-based information, leader-information or vote-guidance came down clearly in favour of the television rather than the print media. People found that the media's role was better as an information provider than as an aid to help them decide how to vote.

The Effect of the Media on Elections: With the advent of the television, the age of great open-air meetings during elections are passé. Nowadays, the media, especially the television, largely determines the form of the campaign and as such has replaced political meetings in importance. The large meetings addressed by leading figures in the party are now relayed on television. The campaign is staged for television and each news bulletin accords coverage of the activities of the main politicians. During present times, there may be local encounters where the candidate addresses a small group of voters in a town hall or from a makeshift platform, but the main meetings are made-for-the-television occasions, in which stage-managed proceedings are timed for maximum television coverage and sound bytes are delivered to grab headlines. As Bowler and Farrell observe, "it is now television which is everywhere the main tool in election campaigning", and quote the comment of Sundborg and Hognabba that

“free elections in a modern democracy would easily collapse if the mass media... were to ignore election campaigning.”²²

In connection with the conduct of elections, the media has also another role to play — it helps to set the agenda for the campaign. Journalists decide on what they consider to be the key issues that are worthy of investigation and follow-up reporting. And on the basis of this, certain issues are kept at the forefront in the different stages of campaigning.

The Agenda-Setting Effect of the Media: The agenda-setting hypothesis suggests that the news media may not directly affect how the public thinks about political matters, but it does affect what subjects people think about — in short, it sets the agenda for what political matters people think about. Many studies have shown positive evidence for an agenda-setting effect.²³ Most of the studies have consisted of data showing a correlation between the amount and importance of attention one or more news media have given to certain issues and how significant the public considers the given issues to be. The cumulative effect of media coverage of an issue over time, not surprisingly, seems to have the greatest effect.

Impact of the Media on Policy: According to a study conducted by Martin Linsky and colleagues at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, that the new media does have an impact on the policy process, and depending on various conditions, the policy impact can be substantial.²⁴

²² W. Miller, *Media and Voters*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, England, 1991, p.116.

²³ Dean E. Alger, *The Media and Politics*, Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey, USA, 1989, p.126.

²⁴ Ibid.

Two types of impact on the policy process were most notable in the findings. First is that substantial news coverage speeds up the decision-making process. Prominent coverage places an issue actively in the public arena and creates pressure on officials to take swift action, lest they be perceived as incompetent, or insensitive towards the public, or both. Another aspect of the impact is that an administration that might have sought to sweep a problem under the rug, may be forced to deal with it due to media coverage.

The second type of impact is that substantial coverage, especially negative, of administration actions, tends to push decision-making up the bureaucracy to higher levels of officials, often to the highest governing office in a democratic set-up. Thus, forcing it to preserve its 'public prestige' and to maintain the general influence, exercise damage control.

Depending on the circumstances and the issue involved, substantial media coverage can either narrow the options effectively available or it can, at times, effectively force an increase in the options that policy-makers consider — especially if a policy decision has already been made but comes under challenge in a barrage of media attention. Evidently, the principal impact in the policy realm is on the process of policy-making. Policy content is also affected rather directly, at times. Also, administration and officials' actions and decision process are affected by the constant awareness of what impact the media can have.

Media's Effect on the Voters or the Masses: A person's background and environment greatly affects his/her judgment. Parental attitudes, school friends and associates all help would and temper a person's views as well as the media. Some

voters are healthily skeptical of what they see and are very resistant to politicians who may be misleading them. They think that all politicians simply attack and contradict one another and so believe none.

Three broad models of political influence have been advanced in the study of the impact of the media.²⁵

The Manipulative Theory: According to this theory, the voter is seen as an easy 'prey' to manipulation. He/she absorbs what they see, and if the media is biased to the left or right, then this will shape attitudes. This is also known as the hypodermic-syringe model which sees television as injecting the audience with a syringe, and it reacts to this injection just as a patient does when injected with an antibiotic. A modern version of this theory is that which stresses the importance of agenda setting.

The Reinforcement Theory: This theory also known as the 'minimum effects' theory has been expounded by post-war researcher, Paul Lazarsfeld, who looked for evidence of the propagandist impact of the media in a liberal democracy. This theory recognizes that attitudes may crystallize in a campaign, but that voting behaviour itself was little influenced by the media. As Miller puts it, listeners and viewers 'can filter out and suppress unwelcome messages while playing particular attention to those they like.'²⁶ In this theory, Lazarsfeld stressed that there was no uniform response. In the face of so many possible influences, it was difficult to isolate any one of them. People already have their own ideas and attitudes before they view the programme of their choice. When they see or hear information which does not accord

²⁵ Duncan Watts, *Political Communication Today*, Manchester University Press, USA, 1997, pp.75-80.

²⁶ W. Miller, *Media and Voters*, Clarendon Press, England, 1991, p.2.

with their pre-conceived judgment, they have to find a way of handling it. According to this view they do so by a psychological process referred to as 'cognitive dissonance'.²⁷ The central idea of the cognitive dissonance theory is that when an individual becomes aware of two cognitions or perceptions which are not consistent with each other, this induces a state of psychological unease or tension. His/her own beliefs are at odds with the facts which have become available, and this 'dissonance' has to be handled. As per this theory the individual does this by three psychological processes:

Selective exposure: People are selective in their choice of programme or newspaper and avoid those that give rise to conflict situations.

Selective perception: People tend to perceive information which fits existing expectations. They see different things from each other, for they individually choose those aspects which coincide with their preconceived notions.

Selective retention: People tend to retain information that supports existing attitudes and ignore the ones which presents conflicting views. Thus, the inconvenient material is ignored. Therefore, with the help of these three devices, the viewer or listener filters out what he/she does not wish to see or hear or read, the result is that any dissonant facts which get in the way of the interpretation are either ignored or made to fit in with existing attitude.

The independent effect theory: This theory suggests that the media has an effect on public attitudes, even if those effects are difficult to monitor and variable in their impact. It may even be a negative one, e.g. by ignoring certain political parties, the

²⁷ Duncan Watts, *Political Communication Today*, Manchester University Press, USA, 1997, p.77

media makes people believe that they are not important or do not exist. It may also be small-scale and short-term influence.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE MEDIA

The first and foremost biggest advantage of the media is that symbolically, journalism reflects the influence of democratic values. For example, the news media provides a lot of political disagreement and conflict. In that way, whatever appears in the news can be termed as a refutation of the anti-democratic notion that there is some single group that is entitled to monopolise power because it alone knows what that purpose is and how best to realize it. In addition to this, the existence of a free press enshrines the democratic concept of the political accountability of power holders to the ordinary citizens. Whatever the press reports in political affairs can be thought of as designed to encourage audiences to judge how what the government has been doing relates to their interests, problems and concern. Similarly, a free press can also be said to embody the notion of citizen autonomy. It stands for the assumption that readers, viewers and listeners are offered material on the basis of which they can make up their own minds about who the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys' in politics are.

The second advantage of the media is that the press in a democratic society can be seen as performing an indispensable bridging function in democratic politics. An enormous gulf exists between the political world and ordinary people's perceptions of it. Although political decisions may affect people's lives in many ways, from their perspective, the political world may often seem remote, confusing

and boring. Therefore, the press performs an important function by bringing such developments, seemingly, in this distant arena, within the reach of the average person, in terms of what he or she can understand. Certain features of political reporting may be regarded as enticements to the public to become involved in political questions or ways of interesting the public in affairs for which they might be little enthusiastic. So, the crowd-pulling appeal of journalism, the tendency to dramatize, the projection of hard-hitting conflict, may all be regarded as inducements for the public to become involved, interested and aware of political matters in the country.

The third advantage is that the media allows the public to become better informed about the issues of the day and helps to disseminate ideas and information, organize debates and take up issues of public concern, thereby enhancing the democratic set-up. Often, at times, the government prefers to keep many information to itself or to some privileged elites. As governments tend to shroud certain issues or embarrassing revelations in secrecy, the journalists find out what the public might like to know and place the information in the public domain. In defending public liberties and in exposing sleaze, unearthing scandals and embarrassing information, the press can be especially and effectively vigilant. In this way, ministers and other higher officials in the administration are kept on their toes and open to public scrutiny, and are made aware of public anxiety about the effects of their actions or inactions.

In spite of these advantages, there are several disadvantages. Journalism can easily become sensational in the interests of increasing circulation or winning the ratings war. And investigations into the private lives often have little to do with the

way in which public figures conduct their professional roles. In the process, people often keep looking in vain for serious, in-depth, unbiased and balanced coverage of issues. Also, often interviewers on television seek to dramatize situations, going for lively confrontation and personalizing issues between rival sides in an argument or debate.

Media critics, who adopt the manipulative model as a means of understanding the media see it as a way via which members of the ruling elite can perpetuate their position and influence. They see the media as a conservative force in society. They argue that in various ways the media is a threat to democracy in that they are controlled and operated by a narrow range of people, who, non-elected as they are, have the power to control the dissemination of information and opinion, and thereby manipulate or at least influence the electorate.²⁸ At times, because of this, the views expressed in the media are not diverse enough or do not represent the entire society and the ideas of those who wish to question the functioning of the society, receive inadequate coverage. And often they are presented and portrayed as extremists. More than often it is the voice of the most powerful groups in society which is regularly aired in the media. In fact it is the journalists who choose what is to be reported and how it is presented. In this way, the mediemen are not merely a mirror of popular opinions but they also help to mould the thought process and reactions of the public. People's opinions are mainly derived from what they see, read and hear and much of their information comes from the media. So the power of the media is immense, and

²⁸ Duncan Watts, *Political Communication Today*, Manchester University Press, UK, 1997, p.200.

at times, may be even manipulated by those in power to actually become a potential threat to democracy.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO MEDIA

On the basis of the interrelationship between ownership, control and output and the influence which each of these have on the public mind, three main theories, have been put forward by studies.

The pluralist model: This model conforms to the principles of a liberal-democratic society with a market economy. According to this model, the audience is paramount. The owners of media organizations compete for readers, listeners or viewers and therefore respond to market demand. But the consumer or the public influences the end-product, because the owners need to impress the people, if they are to sell their goods, gain a good market share and make a worthwhile profit.

Owners and producers decide on the content of the news on a professional basis. They exclude the illegal and the unsellable, but otherwise choose information on the basis of its suitability for the target audience and in the light of its inherent important and interest. News, according to this model, is viewed as a neutral description of real events, which have an objective reality.

In other words, it is up to the consumer to choose those parts of the media which best suit his interests. Because the consumer is the 'king', any influence on public attitudes will be primarily to reinforce them. They watch or read what they wish to find out and the moment they are exposed to information that challenges their



TH-11432



Th11432

assumptions, they 'turn off'. They remember only that which conforms to their beliefs and ignore that which is not attuned to their ideas.

In this model, the consuming public is not a passive body which mindlessly absorbs all that has been put forward to it. It is rather considered to be a heterogeneous group of consumers who use the media in the way that suits their needs.

The mass manipulative model: This model offers a different approach. Consumers are considered to be the gullible recipients of the message which the media imparts. The consuming public constitute a homogeneous body, which when indoctrinated with a single viewpoint soaks it up. This is also known as the hypodermic model of media effect.

According to this model, the owners use the media to put forward their own outlook and foist it upon the audiences. They make a conscious effort to influence public response, by ensuring that the contents of the media conform to their ideas and purposes. Their ownerships allow them to become even more richer and powerful. Theorists of this school point to the dominance of the press in many countries by major business tycoons like Rupert Murdoch, who are more interested in perpetuating their own position rather than seeking to provide the public, a balanced account of the happenings. Theorists also suggest that advertisers contribute to this manipulative effect, because they provide the finances on which the newspapers or channels sustain.

The hegemonic model: A less extreme than the other models is this model, represented by the interactionists or hegemonics. They see the media, on the one

hand, reflecting the existing views of the audience, and on the other, as helping to create and reinforce a consensus outlook. They do not see bias in newspapers or television being consciously introduced. According to them, it is derived from the attitudes of those who work in the media. They suggest that the dominant class in the media propagate the dominant or hegemonic value-system in society. But if “those who produce media output may be conditioned by powerful forces... they are not totally determined by them.”²⁹

GLOBAL RESPONSES TO MEDIA FREEDOM

The ideology of media professionalism characterized by objectivity, impartiality and balance in news, the public's, right to know and checks and balances has been certified by the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR). Article 19 of the UDHR asserts that

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.”

However even more than half a century after the adoption of the Declaration, its application leaves much to be desired. A South Asian scholar, A. Mehra, in his book, *Free Flow of Information: A New Paradigm*, says:

“Publicly, all societies profess to be free. In practice, no society permits absolute freedom, restraints only come in varying degrees. The issue becomes even more complex during interaction among societies with different levels of freedom.”

This appears to be true even with countries having the highest order of democratic set-up, like the United States. Even in the United States, where press

²⁹ For details on theories on media, please see, Glasgow University Media Group, *War and Peace*, Open University Press, Keynes, 1985

freedom is probably more highly developed than anywhere else in the world, the media has, at times, had to act as the conscience of the nation as well as the lonely adversary of the government in power.

An instance from the recent American history can be cited to illustrate this controversial role performed by the major media institutions in the country in 1971, when they made public the 'Pentagon Papers', a classified Defense Department history on the American role in Southeast Asia.³⁰ At the time when the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and other newspapers published articles based on these top-secret documents, the Congress was still far behind the American public in its attitudes and actions in relation to Vietnam, the legislature, and also the executive branch had to be shocked by the press into recognizing certain realities and taking certain steps.³¹ By revealing that the American government had systematically lied to the public about the circumstances in Vietnam for several years, these articles made it easier to effect a change in American policy. And, finally, when the Supreme Court upheld the right of the newspapers to publish articles based on the documents, it was apparent that the media had, indeed, made a significant contribution to the vitality of the American system through this episode.

Freedom of the press has also come under frequent attacks in recent years in other Western democracies — liberal democracies that conform to the pluralist model. The close ties between the United States and England always remain a sensitive subject for the American officials, but the British media has repeatedly been

³⁰ Sanford J. Ungar, *The Papers and the Papers: An Account of the Legal and Political Battle over the Pentagon Papers*, rev. ed. Columbia University Press, USA, 1989, p.3.

³¹ Sanford J. Ungar, "A Free Press Strengthening Democracy", in Judith Lichtenberg (ed.), *Democracy and the Mass Media*, Cambridge University Press, USA, 1990, p.379.

restricted for more than a decade during the prime ministership of Margaret Thatcher. The Thatcher administration had pressed a vigorous attack on British civil liberties, going over beyond what was possible under the Official Secrets Act. The changes incorporated by her in the Act strongly encouraged the prosecution of British civil servants who engaged in 'whistle blowing' or telling the press and the public about corruption or other official misconduct in the government. Thatcher's government continued to move in this direction in spite of setbacks. One of the most notable setback was the failure to prevent newspapers and magazines from discussing the contents of a book, *Spycatcher*, by Peter Wright, a former member of the British Secret Service or to prosecute Wright under the Official Secrets Act for writing the book. However, after this decision by the British courts, Thatcher struck at broadcasters. In October 1988, her administration announced that radio and television would be prohibited from airing interviews with members or supporters of 'terrorist' organizations. This was viewed as an obvious attempt to silence Sinn Fein, the political arm of the Irish Republican Army, which had caused a lot of trouble in Northern Ireland. During election campaigns, the media is free to quote Sinn Fein as a legal political organization; but after the election concludes, Sinn Fein representatives again become taboo.³² All this was brought to public notice by the *Index on censorship*, a London magazine, which devoted its entire issue of September 1988 to the problem. Ronald Dworkin, Professor of jurisprudence at Oxford University and of Law at New York University, wrote in the magazine:

"Liberty is ill in Britain. Censorship is no longer an isolated exception, in which the nation grudgingly gives up some of its liberty, with great regret and a keen sense of loss, in the face of some

³² Robert Lustig, "Margaret Thatcher's 'Non-Persons'," *The Observer*, October 22, 1988.

emergency.... The sad truth is that the very concept of liberty...is being challenged and corroded by the Thatcher government."³³

Another nation, Israel, which prides itself on being the only democracy in the Middle East and claims to share Western values of free expression, also came under criticism for imposing restrictions on reporters covering the Palestinian Intifada in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Although Israeli military censors have for long imposed limits on the foreign and domestic media in the territories occupied since the 1967 war, but the awareness of the phenomenon has been much more widespread since December 1987, when the Intifada began. In fact, many Israelis and supporters of Israel have attempted to deflect the blame for the uprising, to the press.

Although the scenario appears to be quite grim, the press standards of Britain, United States and Israel may be considered to be higher than those of most other nations in the world. If the Arab nations of Middle East were evaluated by these standards, most of them would overwhelmingly fail the test. Restrictions on the press are common throughout the Middle East and if an Arab government wants to impose its will on restive citizens, it tends to ban the media and work its will. An example in this context that can be cited is the brutal massacre of an estimated 10,000 people in Syria's city of Hama in 1982, with no meddlesome press coverage.³⁴

The picture in the Communist bloc or the Third World is no different and is also in dire need of a free press that can serve as a catalyst for democratic reforms. And this fact was appreciated by none other than Michael Gorbachev, former President of the erstwhile Soviet Union. Greater press freedom was also one of the

³³ Ronald Dworkin, "Devaluing Liberty", *Index on Censorship*, September 1988, pp.7-8.

³⁴ Jonathan Alter, "A Maze of Double Standards", *Newsweek*, January 11, 1988, p.7

central elements in his policies, *glasnost* and *perestroika*, because the media has served as a useful weapon in ferreting out corruption in the Soviet system. Newspapers and magazines felt an immediate impact when they began to exploit his reforms. While subscribers flocked to the new Soviet journals and literary periodicals testing the limits, the readership of the newspapers calling for a more cautious approach, such as *Pravda*, the official publication of the Communist party plummeted.³⁵

However, this trend can be made to contrast with Deng Xiaoping's China. The 1989 students protests were caused partly by widespread frustration with corruption and partly with the fact that economic reforms had not been accomplished by a loosening of political restrictions, long before the events in Tienanmen Square, Deng had made it clear that he would not tolerate any challenge to Communist Party rule, and the media was also expected to follow suit. But a press empowered to expose the financial abuses that accompanied economic expansion, and to discuss the political ferment that was spreading across China, might have helped the country avoid the cataclysm of June 1989. Therefore, it was no accident that one of the strongest and earliest demands of the protesters was for an open and honest media, and it was no surprise that the pro-democracy movement had many open, bold journalistic supporters at Radio Beijing, the *People's Daily* and other official media outlets.

In Asia, press freedom as defined by Freedom House is not significantly correlated with the economic standing of a country. However, only two countries of Asia, the Philippines and South Korea have ratified all eight of the international

³⁵ Ulrich Meister, "Soviet Readers, Spurred by Glasnost, Look for the Truth in the Press", *New Zurcher Zeitung*, July 5, 1988

human rights instruments highlighted by the United Nations. Three South Asian countries — Bhutan, Maldives and Pakistan and six Southeast Asian countries — Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar and Singapore as well as China have failed to ratify both of the 1966 international covenants: one on civil and political rights and the other on economic, social and cultural rights. However, the 1999 Freedom House surveys of press freedom worldwide, rated Norway as the freest country on a scale of zero through 100. Norway had a restriction score of 5. The United States, in the same survey had a score of 13. Thus the land of the First Amendment was not the freest in press freedom worldwide on the Freedom House criteria. Significantly, according to this survey not a single Asian country scored 15 or less. Japan was the freest in Asia with a restriction score of 19. The Philippines came much later with a score of 30 along with Thailand and Mongolia. The Freedom House survey measures press freedom worldwide on a set of criteria founded on Article 19 of the UDHR, stressing on the pronoun 'everyone'. These four criteria are: Laws and regulations that influence media content; political pressures and controls on media content; economic influences over media content; and repressive actions.³⁶ The first three criteria are judged on a scale of 0-15 and the fourth on a scale of 0-5 both for broadcast and print media. Countries with scores of 61 to 100 come under the 'not free' category, those with a score of 31 to 60 come under partly free and those with a score of 0 to 30 come under 'free'.

On the basis of these criteria, South Asia has no nation within the 'free' category; East Asia has four — Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and Mongolia; and

³⁶ Shelton A. Gunaratne (Ed.), *Handbook of the Media in Asia*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, London, p.3.

Southeast Asia just one — Thailand. The Philippines, which also used to enjoy this position for the last six years, was removed from this category in the 2004 annual survey after the murder of a number of journalists in 2003.

From the above observations, it is evident that the long periods of colonialism, marked by a mix of liberalism and democracy as well as by ethnic, religious and other forms of civil strife have clearly had an impact on the current state of the media in Asia. Therefore the above-mentioned models can be applied to the Asian countries in this manner.

Manipulative model: Communist countries like China, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam and countries having authoritarian rule (or traditional monarchy, non-party presidential and military) like Bhutan, Maldives, Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar and post-coup Pakistan as well as the countries having a dominant party like Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore.

Pluralist model The parliamentary/presidential democracies with a relatively free media system like Mongolia, India, post-Suharto Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal as well as the parliamentary/presidential democracies with a large degree of media freedom like Thailand, Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Japan.

From this classification, it is apparent that the Philippines has opted for the Western model in practicing the free press concept. In reality the Philippines owes a good deal of its liberal press traditions in terms of its status and norms, to the United States, its erstwhile colonial sovereign. For more than two decades after receiving its independence from the United States in 1946, the Philippines was regarded as having the freest press in Asia and one of the freest in the world. But in September 1972 after

the declaration of martial law, President Ferdinand Marcos, amongst other measures, temporarily shut down all the print and broadcast facilities in the country. However, later during his regime, Marcos realized the stabilizing power of press freedom and became quite adept of opening and closing this safety valve. In the words of a Filipino reporter,

“Marcos is, in fact, a very good politician to realize that people need to let off steam. So he is allowing them to do that, but not on substantial matters. The problem is that by loosening up a bit, Marcos has succeeded in dividing the opposition.”³⁷

However, such kind of manipulation of press freedom although bought Marcos some breathing space, it could not buy him survival in the long run. Because Marcos’ charade was not effective for long due to the fact that he did not loosen up enough to win the trust of independent voices in the Philippines media. Thus heavy-handed repression was greeted with a relentless popular revolt. And inevitably the country has had to reckon, strategically or tactically, with popular clarion calls to democracy and press freedom.

Therefore, notwithstanding the differences between ideal and reality, liberal ideologies (such as the ‘fourth estate’, the public’s right to know, checks and balances) as certified by the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights, eventually seemed to have been important empowering and liberating forces that emboldened such a democratic movement in the Philippines. But the overall and specific contributions of the US neo-imperialist-cum-democratic pressure on its authoritarian clients in Asia (like the Philippines) to open up political and media spaces need specific enquiries and answers. Also, another fundamental question that

³⁷ Joel Dresang, “Authoritarian Controls and News Media in the Philippines”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, June 1985, p.40.

needs an answer is how free is the press actually in the 'freest' country of Southeast Asia? And how different is the media scenario from the Western liberal democracies and why? Added to these will be other queries like is the media really assisting the process of democratization in the Philippines? And is the media guiding public policies and helping in shaping the political agenda in the country and influencing election outcome? This study will attempt to answer these queries in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF DEMOCRACY IN THE PHILIPPINES

Etymologically, the concept of democracy combines two basic ideas: demos, meaning people, and kratos, meaning rule or power. The democratic idea clearly suggests the principle of popular sovereignty.

Section 1, Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution provides that “sovereignty resides in the people and all government authority emanates from them.” This implies that if regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials fail, the people can use a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions. While the modern innovation of democracy does not give the people the power to rule themselves directly, it gives them the (political) rights which they exercise as means of self-government.

The democratic idea also suggests the principle of accountability. Accountability does not mean the rule of the people. Implied in the idea of accountability is the right of people to replace leaders who are unable to maintain their confidence. With the mandate that is given to them, elected officials and other public servants are free to innovate and make crucial decisions on behalf of the nation. However, they remain legally responsible for their conduct and can be replaced if they lose the confidence of the people. Apparently, accountability includes the power of the people to throw the incompetent, the corrupt, the immoral and the unjust leaders out of office.

In an ideal democracy, civil liberties include free speech, press, and assembly, enabling citizens to participate effectively in politics. And elections must be free, fair, regularly held and meaningful, enabling governments to be replaced. More specifically, elections are free in that the voting franchise is inclusive. They are fair in that incumbent governments eschew any partisan use of state agencies, facilities and funding. They are regularly held within fixed time frames, probably record in a constitution. And they are meaningful in that elected chief executives and legislators control the state apparatus, not cabals of generals, bureaucrats, and business elites nestling in “reserve domains”.¹

Of course, no democracy in the real world conforms fully to this ideal type. But when they depart egregiously from these ideals, even if stopping short of leaving the democratic category altogether, concerns arise over quality.²

INDEPENDENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES

On 4 July, 1946 the US granted independence to the Philippines, in keeping with its promise of self-determination for the islands after a period of Commonwealth administration. The Philippines thus became the first independent democratic country in Asia. During its colonial administration, the US had encouraged the development of political parties. Though the two major parties which developed, differed little in ideology — the main differences concerning their attitudes to US administration of the islands. At independence the Philippines political system was modelled on that of

¹ Juan J Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition: Southern Europe, South America and Post Communist Europe*, John Hopkins University Press, US, 1996, pp.67-69.

² William Case, *Politics in Southeast Asia: Democracy or Less*, Curzon Press, UK, 2002, p.6.

the United States, where the Constitution required the armed forces to uphold civilian supremacy. As in the US, elections were held every four years in the Philippines, and Presidents were limited to two terms in office. This constitutional requirement was initially upheld and the military played a minor role in politics.

However, the establishment of the Republic of the Philippines in 1946 had no anti-colonial or democratic content. It consisted of little more than a transfer of political power from the US colonial administrators to a puppet government, drawn from the pro-US Filipino elite. In this way, Washington ensured continuing US economic dominance over the islands. The Constitution of the new “independent” state gave US companies “parity” with Filipino firms, exempting them from a provision that only allowed companies with 60 per cent Filipino ownership to exploit the natural resources and land in the country. Moreover, the US military retained its naval base at Subic Bay and Clark air bases, both of which were to become vital strategic assets during the Cold War.

For the mass of the population, independence meant virtually nothing. The lack of economic development over the preceding decades had left the vast majority dependent upon peasant agriculture to survive. While most Filipinos lived in backwardness and poverty, the elite used the political power handed to it by the US to concentrate ever more of the country’s land and wealth into their own hands. By the early 1970s, it was estimated that an oligarchy of 400 families owned 90 per cent of the national wealth. In exchange for US military and political support against the Filipino masses, this Philippines’ ruling elite functioned as a voice of the US in Asia.

The attitude of the US to “democracy” in the Philippines was highlighted in 1972. In response to widespread social unrest over inequality, a peasant insurrection in the countryside and pressure for an end to the parity for American companies, Washington encouraged President Ferdinand Marcos to declare martial law. The Marcos years witnessed political murders, ruthless military repression of the rural population and the labor movement, and the unchecked looting of the economy by government cronies.

The US continued to back Marcos until 1986, when the Reagan administration decided to shift its support to Corazon Aquino, the most prominent representative of the rival faction of the ruling elite. A popular uprising against Marcos was channeled, and Marcos was assisted by the US to flee the country, while Aquino ensured that neither the interests of the oligarchy nor the US were threatened by the change of personnel in the presidential palace.

ORIGINS OF DEMOCRACY IN THE PHILIPPINES

When the United States colonised the Philippines in 1898 it had planned to gradually grant self-determination to the country. As education was not widespread, the elite and the educated benefited most from the system instituted by the US, which was largely executed by officers of the US army. Filipinos worked in the American administration and quickly came to value the concept of self-government. By 1917, when the US decided to institute its policy of ‘Filipinisation’, the elite was ready to assume positions vacated by departing US military officers. Between 1917 and 1935, when the Commonwealth came into existence, political parties were formed and most

of the population was educated into accepting the principles of democracy, which meant having a ruling party and an opposition. The small elite who controlled the political process realised that each party would have its turn in government. The Nacionalista and Liberal parties, which differed little ideologically, dominated politics, and politicians switched parties to gain office. But the democratic system that developed did not represent the majority of the population.

The Philippine Commonwealth was inaugurated in 1935 under a democratic Constitution patterned after the US bicameral system. The first duty of the Commonwealth government was national security. President Manuel Quezon procured the services of General Douglas MacArthur to establish the Philippine military. MacArthur and his US military advisory team used the Swiss army as a model for the Philippine army. A military academy, patterned after the US military academy at West Point, was designed in which officers were to be instructed in the techniques and skills of the military and taught that the proper role of the military in a democracy was one of subservience to civilian government. In practice, however, these ideals were not easily imparted to the new recruits, many of whom attained their place at the academy through political patronage rather than merit. While the Philippine military was still being developed, World War II abruptly interrupted the military training and education program. To defend the islands, the fledgling Philippine military was incorporated into the United States Armed Forces for the Far East (USAFFE) under the command of General MacArthur.

At the termination of the war, the Philippines had suffered severe damage. It also had over one million people claiming to be guerilla fighters and thus seeking a

place in the military. Reconstruction of the Philippine economy and the reconstitution of the military became priorities of the newly-installed government under President Osmeña. Independence was also granted during this period. But the country was inadequately equipped to assume full sovereignty.

The 1935 Constitution, which was adopted at independence on 4 July 1946, provided the framework within which a democratic state could develop. The Constitution was supplemented by laws enacted by legislatures at the national, provincial, and city/municipal levels of government. A centralised court system which was headed by the Supreme Court performed the judicial function of the state and a career national bureaucracy administered the policies of the government. In other words, the political and institutional infrastructure of a democratic government was in place in the Philippines at the time of independence. What was not altered was the distribution of wealth, economic power and social status.

The President, the military and democracy

The American-style democracy exported to the Philippines was bound to encounter problems: So, not surprisingly soon after independence, Philippine democracy was threatened by the communist-inspired Hukbalahap movement. The insurgents who had fought against the occupying Japanese forces resumed their fight against the newly-installed administration; they had little confidence in the Philippine democratic process which they saw as favoring the ruling elite. Appointed Defense Secretary, Ramon Magsaysay was, however, determined to restore faith in democracy, and especially the electoral system. Magsaysay used the Armed Forces of

Philippines (AFP) extensively to ensure that the 1951 elections were conducted fairly, and indeed they were alleged to have been the fairest in Philippine electoral history. Although he did not completely restore the Huks' faith in democracy, Magsaysay reformed the military with assistance from the US and defeated the Huks.

Having worked closely with the military, Magsaysay realised that the skills of the officers could be harnessed to develop the country. When he became President in 1953, Magsaysay decided to use the military in government. He appointed active duty officers to perform a range of functions in his administration. Magsaysay, who probably would have been re-elected in the presidential elections of 1957, died in a plane crash that year. Carlos Garcia the vice-president assumed the presidency, and was determined to rid the administration of officers appointed to government by his predecessor, who were by then holding Cabinet positions normally occupied by civilians.

Abrogating Democracy

A civilian politician, Ferdinand Marcos, was elected President in 1965. Marcos, who claimed a distinguished career as a guerilla fighter during World War II, courted the AFP while he was a Congressman, but was generally believed to be suspicious of the AFP, which was rumoured to be planning to seize power in 1965. Concerned about the military's political ambition and believing that a closer relationship with senior officers would serve his long-term interests, Marcos retained the Defense portfolio for the first 13 months of his administration. The military was subsequently enlisted to assist in his re-election campaign. Marcos became the first Philippine president to be re-elected in what became one of the most violent and

fraudulent elections in the country's history. Increasingly during his second term he became dependent on the AFP to remain in office. To serve the interests of the President, the military harassed the opposition and violently quelled demonstrations against the government.

Constitutionally prevented from remaining in office for a third term, Marcos declared martial law in 1972, with the consent of the military, under the pretext of saving the country from Communist and Muslim insurgencies. Martial law allowed the AFP to play a larger role in government. Marcos argued that the democratic system would not allow him to develop the 'New Society' he envisaged for the Philippines. For him, the practice of democracy was 'energy-consuming' and 'time-wasting'; authoritarian rule allowed him to make the changes he wanted without having to endure democratic procedures. Under his self-styled constitutional-authoritarianism the institutions of democracy were dismantled: Congress was disbanded, political parties were declared illegal, and civil and political rights were suspended. Freedom, a fundamental tenet of democracy, was taken away from Filipinos. As commander-in-chief, Marcos directed the AFP to carry out martial law functions. The military was, according to the principles of democracy, to remain subservient to the civilian head of state. But the head of state had abrogated the Constitution under which he was elected and which officers were sworn to uphold.

Martial law lasted from 1972 to 1981. These nine years had a profound effect on the society and the AFP. The AFP was no longer the protector of the nation. Instead, like a private army, it served Marcos and his cronies. Officers became deeply involved in politics as they rigged elections and suppressed the opposition. Self-

interest led officers to pursue activities which lost them the respect of the people. And in turn the military lost its *raison d'être*. More concerned with government than military duties, the AFP was incapable of defeating the growing Communist and Muslim insurgencies; by 1985 the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was claiming control over most of the *barangays* (villages) in the country. The AFP was even incapable of performing the functions of a conventional armed force in conjunction with American forces.

By and large the AFP remained loyal to an authoritarian civilian leader who satisfied its corporate interests and had no intention of restoring democracy. But some officers came to the conclusion that the prolonged period of martial law was working against the President. Widespread dissatisfaction among intellectuals and the middle-class finally surfaced after the 1983 assassination of popular opposition leader Benigno Aquino. A consensus therefore developed among the senior military leadership that if the country was to survive as a political system, especially with the CPP/New Peoples Army rapidly gaining ground against the regime, Marcos had to be replaced. These views were shared by secretary of defense, Juan Ponce Enrile, and vice chief of staff of AFP, General Fidel Ramos. Plans to replace Marcos by a military coup were hastily abandoned when he suddenly announced on television that elections were to be held in February 1986. Surprisingly, the opposition was able to unite against Marcos, backing the widow of Benigno Aquino.

The battle to stop Marcos from cheating Aquino of victory and the defection of elements of the AFP, including General Ramos, culminated in what became popularly known as the 'EDSA revolution' of February 1986. Yet this was not the

outcome envisaged by the senior military leaders who had conspired to replace Marcos. Defense Secretary Enrile had nurtured a group of reform-minded officers to form the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM). With Enrile, they planned to seize political power and install an interim military-civilian council. But when the coup was discovered by Marcos, Enrile joined General Ramos and they declared their support for Corazon Aquino. People power resulted from this rebellion which saw the military conceding its desires for political office to Aquino. The accession of Aquino to the presidency, however, did not stop elements in the military from conspiring to seize political power. Enrile's actions while in the Aquino government, and his subsequent links to a number of the coup attempts, clearly demonstrated his and the RAM faction's desire to have a continuing role in government.

Reconstituting Democracy

Much was expected of the Aquino administration. It was anticipated that the government would revive the institutions of democracy abrogated by Marcos in 1972; however, Filipinos also expected the government to take steps to eradicate economic and social inequities. Aquino assumed office with a provisional government under a provisional Constitution. This meant that both legislative and executive power was vested in the President until a new Constitution was enacted. With the promulgation of a new Constitution on February 11, 1987, a new era dawned for democracy in the Philippines. The Constitution, which has many similarities with the 1935 American-inspired Constitution, has a number of important provisions for the armed forces. Most important of all is the stipulation that active duty officers cannot participate in government.

As promised, elections for all government offices were held throughout the islands under the new Constitution by mid 1987. But similarities to the pre-Marcos era were clearly evident as many candidates elected to office were former elected officials, relatives of powerful political families or members of the powerful economic elite. However, when her term in office ended on 30 June 1992, Aquino claimed that she had achieved her objective of restoring democracy to the Philippines.

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines is a republican state with a presidential form and unitary structure of government. The President is both the head of state and head of government. The government has three branches — the Executive, headed by the President; the bicameral Legislature or Philippine Congress with the Senate and House of Representatives headed by the Senate President and Speaker of the House respectively; and the Judiciary with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court at the helm. These branches are in theory co-equal and reflect a system of separation of powers and checks and balances between and among them. The concept of co-equality and separation of power forestalls the dominance of any of the branches and enhances a democratic arrangement of power. The 1987 Philippine Constitution sets effective limits upon the power that it confers to each branch of the government.

The first fundamental law of the Philippines, the 1935 Constitution, heavily reflected the ideals of both American liberal democracy and market-based capitalism. Filipinos had no other option but to adopt the Constitution since the country was then a US Commonwealth. The 1935 Constitution helped preserve preferential treatment

to American goods and services in the Philippines. Even after independence in 1946, the US government felt it had a legal document that protected American landholdings and other vital interests in the former colony.

In fact, one of Marcos' promises, which won him two terms as President, was to change this biased scenario and make the country's economy more pro-Filipino. The 1973 Constitution passed under Marcos' martial law was supposed to accomplish this. It did eliminate many of the pro-American provisions. However, Marcos replaced these with sections that gave him virtual dictatorial powers, which he used to transform the economy to one that was dominated by his relatives, cronies and technocrats. In fact, the monopolies that were created for his close associates scared away many foreign investors.³

After Marcos' ouster, President Aquino issued Proclamation No.9 immediately creating and convening a Constitutional Commission (Concom). The Concom drafted a fundamental law that sought to re-democratize the country and make it a more business-friendly place, and is the basis for the Philippine's current liberal democracy. It contains many provisions on people participation, sectoral representation, agrarian reforms, social justice, private sector liberalization, administrative decentralization and human rights, which were introduced by the Concom members to prevent the emergence of another dictatorial regime. A proposal to amend the Constitution can be implemented by three-fourths vote of Congress members, a constitutional convention on a petition of at least 12 per cent of the total

³ Joaquin L. Gonzalez III "Philippines: Continuing people power", in John Funston (ed.), *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2001, p.262.

number of registered voters, of which legislative district must be represented by at least 3 per cent of the registered voters.

The importance of regional autonomy is also emphasized in the 1987 Constitution and local government units (LGUs) are one of the main beneficiaries of the post-Marcos Philippine political and economic democratization processes. The local government system can be sub-divided into provinces, cities, municipalities and barangayas. All local government officials are elected by the people. Based on this constitutional mandate, the Congress passed the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991, which is generally perceived as a “*magna carta*” of local government autonomy especially after experiencing centuries of centralized colonial rule and decades of central government control.

With enhanced political freedom and administrative autonomy, local government units now have a larger share of tax collections from the national government. They also have the authority to levy additional local taxes as they deem necessary. The LGC also provides guidelines for the creation of consultative and deliberative bodies such as school boards, health boards, development councils, and peace and order councils, and strongly encourages private sector and civil society participation in local governance.

To promote administrative autonomy, the Philippine government created autonomous regions in Muslim Mindanao and in the Cordilleras Republic Act 6766 (1989) devolved a high degree of political and administrative responsibilities to these areas. Within the autonomous region, the indigenous people of the Cordillera and

Mindanao can exercise, legislative, executive and judicial functions that are in keeping with their needs and particularities.

HEAD OF STATE

As with republican systems generally, the Philippine President is the head of state, with both symbolic and executive powers. The President is directly elected by the people to serve a single six-year term in office. Article VII, Section 2 of the Constitution decrees that: “No person may be elected President unless he is a natural-born citizen of the Philippines, a registered voter, able to read and write, at least forty years of age on the day of the election, and a resident of the Philippines for at least ten years immediately preceding such election.”⁴

The President is the highest symbol of the country’s sovereignty, meeting with foreign counterparts, receiving credentials from foreign ambassadors and certifying the eligibility and approving appointments of Philippine ambassadors. Yearly, he or she addresses the opening session of Congress to give a State of the Nation Address (SONA), where major policy issues, accomplishments and administration plans are highlighted.

The President is assisted by the Vice-President who is separately elected for a six-year term but is allowed to serve two successive terms. It is possible that the President and the Vice-President come from two separate political parties, as in the case of the Ramos and Estrada administrations. The Vice-President may also be appointed to hold a Cabinet position. He may succeed the President under the conditions defined in Article VII, Section 8 of the Constitution, which states:

⁴ Ibid.

“In case of death, permanent disability, removal from office, or resignation of both the President and the Vice-President, the President of the Senate or in case of his inability, the speaker of the House of Representatives, shall then act as the President until the President or the Vice-President shall have been elected and qualified.”

THE EXECUTIVE

As head of the executive branch of the government, the President bears the main responsibility for policy enforcement and administration. The President has the power to appoint or remove Cabinet members, who are responsible to him in managing the affairs of the government. Apart from the Cabinet members the President is also mandated to appoint members of the Judicial Bar Council, diplomatic representatives and high ranked officials of the armed forces. This practice of political rewards is a mix of the American-inspired political “spoils system” and what was earlier described as Filipino-style “patron-client system”.⁵

As Commander-in-chief of the Republic’s armed forces, the President decides when conditions warrant the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus and the declaration of martial law. Considering the abuses of power committed by Marcos during martial rule, the 1987 constitution places limitations on the use of these powers. For instance, the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus and declaration of martial law cannot be imposed for more than 60 days, any extensions need the concurrence of the Philippine Congress voting jointly by simple majority of all its members. If the Congress is not in session, it must convene within 24 hours. Should Congress revoke martial law, the President cannot overrule or dissolve the Congress. Further, the state of martial law will not suspend the operation of the Constitution, nor supplant the functions of civil courts or legislative assemblies, nor authorize the

⁵ Ibid.

conferment of jurisdiction on military courts and agencies over civilians, were civil courts are able to function.⁶

As chief administrator and head of the government, the President is vested with heavy fiscal and budgetary responsibilities, and powers to organize and reorganize the government. In this regard, the President has various means of lobbying the legislature into passing Bills, including through the State of the Nation Address at the opening of each legislative session.

Political role of the military and the police: Although a part of the executive branch, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has been likened by many political scientists to another branch of the Philippine government. The AFP reached its peak during the martial law period, when it experienced a significant growth spurt from 60,000 to close to 200,000.⁷ The police and the Philippine Constabulary became integral parts of the AFP. The AFP's consolidation and expansion were needed by President Marcos to counter the growing Communist and Muslim insurgencies. The AFP was also utilized by Marcos to quell street protests, arrest and intimidate opposition leaders and suppress civil society including the media, the church, labour, women, ethnic groups, farmers, fishermen, students and academia.

This large armed forces, composed of the Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force, was conceived primarily for internal security purposes of the country. Battle-tested within the country, the Philippine armed forces lack the modern equipment that its neighbouring countries' military services have to combat external threats.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Charles I. McDonald, *The Marcos File*, San Francisco Publishers, US, 1987, p.159.

Following exposure to civilian politics and administration during the Marcos martial law years, some elements in the military sought a more direct political role. President Aquino faced several coup attempts, but all were eventually repulsed. However, till date, the Philippines has never experienced a successful military coup. The military did play an important role in the downfalls of Marcos and Estrada, but in each case it did so in support of a mass popular uprising. However, many military officers have entered the country's politics. Retired generals and admirals have become ambassadors, cabinet ministers, run for elections and become mayors, governors, senators, and even, like General Fidel Ramos, the President. In December 1990, President Aquino signed into law the Republic Act No.6975 establishing the Philippine National Police under the reorganized Department of Interior and Local Government. This formally segregated police and military powers. With the devolution of powers to local government units, the police have to report to local officials.

THE LEGISLATURE

Legislative authority is vested in the bicameral Philippine Congress consisting of the Senate (Upper House) and the House of Representatives (Lower House). The Senate has only 24 members, elected for six-year terms but prohibited from serving two consecutive terms.

The House of Representatives cannot have more than 250 members. Of these 208 are elected from legislative districts apportioned countrywide in accordance with the number of inhabitants. They serve three years, but are prohibited from more than three consecutive terms.

The Congress has the power to amend the Constitution. Declaration of war can be carried out through two-thirds vote during a joint session of the Senate and the House of Representatives. It also has the power to impeach the President, the Vice-President, the members of constitutional commissioner, the members of the Supreme Court, and the Ombudsman, for violation of the Constitution, treason, bribery, graft and corruption, other high crimes or betrayal of public trust.

The House of Representatives has the exclusive power to initiate cases of impeachment. Power to try and decide on impeachment cases is solely vested in the Senate. When the President is on trial, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court shall preside but shall not vote.

Congress operates through a committee system whereby Bills and resolutions introduced are referred to an appropriate committee for study and action.

Apart from the Congress, the Constitution also empowers the people to directly propose laws, or reject any law passed by Congress or local legislative bodies, through a system of initiative and referendum. To start this process at the national level, at least 10 per cent of the total number of registered voters, including at least 3 per cent of every legislative district must petition for the enactment or repeal of a particular law. A national referendum follows which approves or rejects the proposed law. However, since the passage of the 1987 Constitution, a national referendum has yet to be held.

ELECTIONS

The right of suffrage of all citizens (born or naturalized) of the Philippines is guaranteed under the Constitution. However, voting is not compulsory. Nevertheless, as shown by past elections, more than 85 per cent of the voters exercise this right.

Elections are held on a regular basis whereby qualified electorates exercise the right of suffrage at large. The people elect the President, the Vice-President and the Senators every six years, and members of House of Representatives every three years. The highest vote pollers win the seats of the President, Vice-President and Senators. And there is no run-off where a President elect, for example, secures less than a majority.

As a corollary to elections, the Constitution provides a system of initiative and recall against local officials perceived by constituents to be unsatisfactory in performing his/her functions.⁸ The 1991 Local Government Code stipulates that upon the petition of at least 25 per cent of the total number of registered voters in local government units, concerned proceedings for recall can be validly initiated and an election has to be called and administered by the election commission (COMELEC). However, recall can be initiated only once during the official's term and cannot take place within one year from their assumption to office, or one year preceding a regular local election.

⁸ Joaquin L. Gonzalez III "Philippines: Continuing people power", in John Funston (ed.), *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2001, p.262.

JUDICIARY

The judicial branch of the government is engaged in settling disputes regarding the appropriate application of law, interpretation or clarification of the true meaning or scope of an indeterminate statute, and adjudication upon claimed violations of a rule. Judicial power is vested in the Philippines Supreme Court and other lower courts. In discharging judicial power, courts determine what is law. Any act of the legislature or of the executive that conflicts with the Constitution, transgresses the proper limits of their power, or infringes upon guaranteed human rights, is considered as unlawful and void. The judiciary also enjoys relative fiscal autonomy as appropriations cannot be reduced by the legislature below the amount appropriated for the previous year and, after approval, has to be automatically and regularly released.

People Power II during President Estrada's ouster, clearly illustrated that the judiciary remains an important check and balance on the powers of the executive and legislative branches. With the Presidency and Congress both paralyzed, an independent and credible judiciary needed to act quickly to pave the way for a transfer of power from Estrada to Arroyo. On the morning of January 20, 2001 the Supreme Court invoked a time-honoured principle — "the welfare and will of the people is the supreme law" — to approve Arroyo's installation.⁹ This powerful decision provided the legal basis for the Chief Justice to swear in the new President a few hours later, averting both bloody civilian strife and a military takeover.

⁹ *ibid.*

POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties in the country came together with elections at the turn of the 20th century. As in the American model, two parties were initially established, the Partido Federal (Federal Party) and the Partido Conservador (Conservative Party). Their platforms were approved by US authorities. The passage of the 1901 Sedition Law, which imposed the death penalty on any political party endorsing independence from the US, even by peaceful means, enabled Partido Federal, effectively to dominate the political landscape during the early years. With heavy support from the land-owning class, it was able to popularize its agenda of stronger political economic and social ties with America. After independence in 1946 until 1972, two parties – the Nationalista Party and the Liberal Party — became the prominent political organizations in the country. The two parties controlled a majority of the elective positions in the government. However, personalities rather than platforms distinguished the two parties since they both advocated policies for the government to achieve economic independence and social equity. Members jumped party affiliation when they were not chosen to run for a particular elective office. This is what Marcos also did when he was not selected as the presidential candidate of the Liberal Party; he simply switched to the Nationalista Party and was made its standard bearer.¹⁰

During the period of martial law, the Philippines entered an era of one-party politics, with Marcos' Kilusang Bangong Lipunan (KBL or New Society Movement) as the only party in power. Even after martial law was lifted in 1981 and other political entities were revived, the KBL used its government links to ensure a

¹⁰ Rommel C. Banlaoi and Clarita R. Carlos, *Political Parties in the Philippines: From 1900 to the present*, Konard-Adenauer-Stiftung, Manila, 1997, pp.102-105.

majority of votes in national and local elections. Accusations of massive election frauds, vote buying, terrorism and irregularities were widespread. In order to defeat Marcos and his KBL in the 1986 snap presidential elections, the Philipino Democratic Party (PDP), Lakas ng Bayan (LABAN), and United Democratic Opposition (UNIDO) formed an opposition coalition. Inheriting the mantle of the Nationalista and Liberal Parties these groups coalesced around powerful leaders, but were united by opposition to Marcos.

Marcos' ouster in 1986 ushered in a new era in party politics, which encouraged a free and open multi-party system. Currently, there is a broad spectrum of parties, from leftist, centrist to rightist. On the extreme left the Communist Party of the Philippines is legal — a rare exception to the norm in non-communist countries of Southeast Asia — even though a small number of communists remain in armed opposition to the state.

Apart from re-inventing versions of the old, many new parties find it wise to form coalitions, alliances or merge to increase their chances of winning. For instance, President Aquino formed the Lakas ng Bayan (LAKAS) another coalition of parties to contest the 1987 national and local elections. For the 1998 national elections, President Estrada's Partido ng Masang Pilipino (PMP) allied with the Nationalist People Coalition (NPC) and the LABAN to increase its capacity to win multi-sectoral and multi-class support.

However, major political parties in the country are viewed as “elite clubs” or vehicles for political and economic elites to perpetuate themselves in power. They form around powerful individuals, and disintegrate quickly when such people lose

influence.¹¹ Non-elites join because of patron-client ties as opposed to ideological links. A client's debt of gratitude determines whom he or she will support politically. Political parties then tap into this complex web of inter-relationships spread across society to harness grassroots' support in the urban and rural areas.¹²

STATE IDEOLOGY

The Philippines has no official state ideology, but leaders expose strong liberal-democratic values in accordance with the country's Constitution. Article II of the Constitution provides "the Declaration of Principles and State Policies" of the country. It affirms that:

"The Philippines is a democratic and republican state. Sovereignty resides in the people and all government authority emanates from them."

The succeeding principles and policies elaborate on this fundamental theme. Civilian authority is supreme over the military, whose role is confined to protecting the people and defending the country's sovereignty. Church and state are separate. Government must serve and protect the people, maintain peace and order, secure life and liberty and property and promote the general welfare.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE

The passage of the 1991 Local Government Code (LGC) is one of the most remarkable changes that has taken place in the Philippines since the restoration of democracy in 1986. It issued in a revolution in governance, devolving substantial

¹¹ Joaquin L. Gonzalez III "Philippines: Continuing people power", in John Funston (ed.), *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2001, p.262.

¹² Ibid.

power, responsibility, and resources from the national government to the local governments.

The LGC transferred significant financial resources, responsibilities, and personnel from the national government to local governments. The Code also contained a number of features designed to increase the level of citizen input into local government decision-making. For local government to work well, local communities would need to become more involved in the process of governing.¹³

The Code granted local governments more power to generate their own financial resources. Local governments have more freedom in the use of property taxes and in the levying of business taxes. They are able to obtain credit by taking out loans or floating municipal bonds. Build-operate-transfer schemes enable local governments to access private sources of funds for projects the community needs. Clearly, the LGC has allocated the local governments much more money to spend. The money goes partly to fund the new responsibilities devolved from the national government. Basic health care, from *barangay* health centers to provincial hospitals, was transferred to local governments. Delivery of social services was similarly devolved. Agricultural extension work was transferred to municipalities and cities. And some environmental-management responsibilities were passed down.

The Code also instituted a number of local special bodies to encourage citizen participation. Local Development Councils were created and given responsibility for formulating local development plans for ratification by the local elected councils. The Code requires that at least one-fourth of the council members, all of whom are

¹³ Steven Rood, "Decentralization, Democracy, and Development", www.asiasociety.org/publication/philippines

appointed, be representatives of NGOs. There are also Local Health Boards, Local School Boards, Pre-Qualification, Bids, and Awards Committees--each with its respective nongovernmental representation.

PROBLEMS & HURDLES IN THE PHILIPPINE DEMOCRATIC SET-UP

A Democracy 'inherited': After gaining independence in 1946, the Philippines possessed a democratic regime, but one introduced to elites through colonial tutelage, rather than demanded by participatory society. Of course, without this tutelage, local elites would doubtless have been slower to adopt democratic procedures. But once in place, they discovered that these procedures could be operated in ways that met their interests, enabling them peacefully to gain access to state positions and resources. And they were encouraged in this too, by the Philippine society remaining quiescent. While rural uprisings did take place, ethnic sentiments never hardened like in the neighbouring countries, Indonesia and Malaysia. To add to this, at junctures in which such elite-mass relations grew strained, the United States posed managerial interventions. Most striking of such interventions was the one when after President Quirino's fraudulence and violence during the campaign of 1949, US officials recruited a new figure, Manuel Roxas, to break away from the Nacionalistas in order to form the liberal Party.¹⁴ They also introduced an election commission (COMELEC) and a poll watching organization, the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL).

¹⁴ William Case, *Politics in Southeast Asia: Democracy or Less*, Curzon Press, UK, 2002, p.214.

These two parties then formed an 'understanding' to cooperate over the next two decades. First, they avoided all ideological appeals that might have heightened their differences. Then they collaborated in marginalizing any third parties that might have offered policy alternatives. Finally, they contested vigorously against each other in general elections, but by ways that remained bound by understandings. More specifically, the Nacionalistas and the Liberals each tried to capture the Presidency while maximizing their Senate seats, enabling them to gain control over budgetary processes, bureaucratic hiring, bribe taking and license selling.¹⁵ Further, once a party emerged victorious, its elites took care to observe the principle of the minimum winning coalition, accepting enough members to their uppermost ranks to hold power, but not so many so as to dilute the high offices. And, when some elites felt isolated or deprived, they were wooed by the opposition party, aspiring to greater rewards in the event of a change in government. In this way, political weight shifted gradually from the ruling party to the opposition, enabling a transfer of power to take place.

In the words of Thomson: "No party ever won the Presidency for a third consecutive four-year term."¹⁶ And hence, as Kerkvliet observed, elections offered, "a process by which elites rotated among themselves access to public coffers."¹⁷ Indeed, during the 1950s-60s, the Nacionalistas and the liberals exchanged resources in much the same way that intra-party factions of elites had throughout the colonial period.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Mark R. Thompson, *The Anti-Marcos Struggle: Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines*, Yale University Press, US, 1995, pp.20-24.

¹⁷ Benedict J. Iria Kerkvliet, "Contested Meanings of Elections in the Philippines" in Taylor (ed.), *The Politics of Elections in Southeast Asia*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 1996, p.163.

When a democratic regime is operated in this manner, doubts arise about its quality. Indeed, at low levels of development, elites may perpetuate democratic procedures because, while peacefully exchanging state positions and resources, they have little fear of intrusion by submissive social forces. In such circumstances, even landowners – the practitioners of a labour repressive agriculture, that is cast as the enemy of democracy – can become democracy’s advocates.¹⁸ Further, after the effects of modernization, elites who had happily operated their democracies amid quiescent societies, may rediscover old virtues in authoritarian rule.

Declaration of Martial Law: Perhaps the biggest setback to the Philippine democracy since the country’s independence, was the declaration of martial law by President Marcos in 1972.

In 1969, Ferdinand Marcos won re-election gaining a second term as President. But restricted by a constitutional provision that would allow him to run for a third term, he proposed that his wife, Imelda, run a Nacionalista candidate for the Presidency in 1973. However this was regarded as unacceptable in the national scene. Thus he struck even more assiduously, summoning a constitutional convention (Con Con) through which to introduce a parliamentary system. By this, Marcos could gain prime ministership, neatly skirting the term limits on Presidents. However, while Marcos softened up the delegates with bribery and won them over with false promises of seats, they laboured obediently in drafting a new charter. Hence, with the end of his presidency approaching, Marcos feared the loss of incumbency, loosening his grip

¹⁸ William Case, *Politics In Southeast Asia: Democracy or Less*, Curzon Press, 2002, p.214.

on the delegates. It was under these circumstances that he declared martial law in 1972, although he cited the communal disturbances in central Luzon as his reason.

However, in suspending democracy in the country, Marcos was not opposed by most elites. Their acquiescence thus revealed their practice of democracy to have been conditional — subject to their constituents remaining quiescent as they steadily rotated state positions and resources.¹⁹ Further, the declaration of martial law soon intensified the communist insurrection, while also giving an early boost to the Muslim separatist movement in Mindanao. Marcos also suspended all democratic institutions in the country — the most important of which was the press — and suppressed whatever dissent by his ever-expanding armed forces. He also abolished the elected legislature and replaced it with a Parliament that was loyal to him.

In clinging to his presidency, Marcos not only monopolized the office, but also made changes in it, closing the Congress in order to personally control patronage flows to local officials. To this, a few elites began opposing him, most notable among them were Senator Benigno Aquino. Aquino formed a large private army and cultivated ties to the Huks, who were operating as bandits during that period. He cooperated with these forces and the Communist Party to form the New People's Army. Aquino's aim was to instigate rural guerrilla actions that would check Marcos' power.

After the imposition of martial law, Aquino abandoned his armed strategies and started to denounce Marcos more openly. Marcos responded by jailing Aquino and a military court sentenced him to death, though the order was later rescinded.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Marcos then attacked Aquino's organizational bases, ordering that his opponent's landholdings be redistributed and business interests sold. However, in spite of all this, public sympathy for Aquino began to mount. Thus, when Marcos called elections in Batasrag in 1978, he tried to gain credibility by allowing Aquino to contest. Aquino was even permitted to form a party, the LABAN (Lakas ng Bayan). During the elections, Marcos cheated vigorously, relying on "prestuffed ballot boxes, phony registration, 'flying voters', manipulated election returns, and vote buying".²⁰ Thus, after the election was over, official results showed that despite the growing popularity of LABAN, not even in single candidate was successful in winning a seat in the Batasang.

The harsh treatment given to Aquino and the flagrant electoral cheating succeeded in raising doubts among the elites about Marcos. Thus, after Marcos officially lifted martial law in 1981 and again called elections, this time for the Presidency under the new dual executive system, a growing opposition movement refused to oblige him.

In reply, Marcos tried to strike deals with the elites and politicians who opposed him — breaking up their haciendas and tightening political outlets — Marcos also worked to contain the business elites. The best example involves the Lopez brothers, Fernando, who was also the Philippine Vice-President and Eugenio, publisher of the *Manila Chronicle*. During the early years of martial law, they like most elites, had firmly supported Marcos. But when Marcos later denied them important opportunities in petrochemicals and other industries, they began to criticize

²⁰ Mark R. Thompson, *The Anti-Marcos Struggle: Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippine*, Yale University Press, US, 1995, p.78.

him in the press.²¹ Marcos struck back by seizing their media interests, redistributing their lands. Eugenio was also imprisoned for allegedly plotting to assassinate Marcos.

During the late 1970s, a few business elites grew so alienated by Marcos' crony capitalism that they turned violently against him, resorting even to urban terrorism. The technocrats were also dismayed by the corruption by Marcos, most of it traceable to crony monopolies, Imelda's prestige projects and the quadrupling of military budgets. But whenever the technocrats tried to rein in these enterprises, Marcos overrode them.

Therefore, in diversifying the elites, Marcos had destabilized his regime and put his leadership at risk. And as politicians got wind of rifts in the military, their hopes of ousting him surged. Thus, when Marcos announced that elections would be held for Batasang Pambansa in 1984, elites ended their boycott to contest them. Benigno Aquino also prepared to contest, returning from the US where he had gone for medical treatment. Marcos had allowed Aquino to go to the US, but had counted upon it amounting to exile. Thus, when Aquino attempted to return in 1983, he was shot immediately upon disembarking at Manila airport, an action evidently planned by Marcos. In reaction to this, much of the Philippine society was outraged, marking the assassination as a milestone towards society growing more participatory.

Finally, Marcos' dictatorship ended with the bloodless People Power Revolution in February 1986. When Marcos refused to step down after the disputed snap presidential poll returns, civil society and the united opposition mobilized against him, led by Corazon Aquino, the widow of Benigno Aquino. Confronted by

²¹ *ibid.*, pp.38-39.

hundreds of thousands in the streets of Manila, Marcos fled to exile in Hawaii with strong encouragement from the U.S.

Armed forces' interference in politics: One of the most enduring legacies of the long years of dictatorship under Marcos, was the politicization of the military. Since then, retired officers have played an inordinate role in civilian politics epitomized by the election of General Ramos to the Presidency. Also numerous retired officers have been elected to the Senate and the House of Representatives, including the election of former Col. Gregorio Gringo Honasan to the Senate, in spite of the fact that he led a failed *coup d'etat* against President Aquino in 1989, which killed and wounded scores of people.

Although the transition from dictatorship to democracy was advanced in the Philippines by Aquino becoming the President, stabilization was thwarted by her coalition's unraveling. Thus, in spite of Aquino, Enrile Ramos and the RAM (Reform the Armed Forces Movement) having cooperated in ousting Marcos, their relations stopped short of any settlement. In particular, Enrile was unconstrained by any sense of loyalty to either Aquino or to the democracy she had helped create. The memory of the People Power Movement being still fresh in the public mind, he was unable to act openly but he quietly began to ferret out allies with whom he could later mount coups.

Aquino attempted to raise the quality of the new Philippine democracy by closing the tainted Batasang and purging local offices. But by doing so, she angered many politicians, who even went to the extent of calling her undemocratic. Further, in attempting to sequester crony fortunes and dismantle the trading monopolies that had

accumulated under Marcos, many of the cronies who had inherited the monopolies, turned squarely against Aquino. Finally, in seeking to investigate human rights abuses and negotiate with the communists, Aquino seriously antagonized the military. It was in this context that Ernila and the RAM, along with the landowners and other elites who had been alienated, mounted seven major coup attempts against her administration during 1986-89.

Another instance when the military played a decisive role in the nation's politics was during the removal of President Estrada. From one vantage point, the President's ouster may appear as a victory for 'people's power', but from another it can be seen as the result of 'rich people's power', achieved through extra-constitutional means by an alliance of the elites who had opposed Estrada's presidency from the moment he won a landslide victory in the 1998 elections. The Senate began the trial of Estrada in the end of 2000. But suspicions soon grew that Estrada had succeeded in bribing his way to the support of a slight majority. Indeed, when new evidence appeared of Estrada's corruption, which would have made his acquittal difficult, the Senate voted in January 2001 to bar it, prompting resignations by the prosecutors and bringing the impeachment proceedings to a halt. However, soon afterward, large groups mobilized by NGOs, the Catholic church and trade unions gathered in the streets of Manila, gaining expressions of support from Aquino and Ramos and many business elites. In addition, top military commanders, fearing that the armed forces would split over questions of loyalty to Estrada, declared that

they no longer regarded the President as their commander-in-chief.²² They favoured instead the transfer of power to Vice-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The Senate's failure to facilitate this transfer of power, causing it to be upstaged by the military, suggested that there was no commensurate increase in the quality of procedures. Therefore, ultimately Estrada was forced out of office by the defection of the military and not by constitutional means. While the military had no intention of seizing power, as some had in 1986 when they deserted Marcos, they nevertheless played the determining role in ousting President Estrada.²³ The Supreme Court sought to justify their action in declaring the Presidency vacant and swearing-in the vice-president by invoking the legal principle of "*salus populi est suprema lex*" (the welfare of the people is the supreme law). The court, therefore, did not act according to the Constitution, but instead acted to legitimize an extra-constitutional *fait accompli* carried out by an alliance of forces in society and the state that were not content with the outcome of formal democratic procedures.²⁴ In fact, these events revealed the weaknesses of the Philippine democracy and the general weakness of the Philippine state.

All-powerful President: The 1987 Constitution formally sets a framework for an equal relationship between and among the executive, the legislative and the judicial branches. Especially after experiencing Marcos' abuse of power before 1986, the

²² *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 1, 2000, p.17. See also Peter Alford, "Philippines Asks: Was that a coup we just had?", *The Australian*, January 23, 2001, p.7.

²³ Amando Doronila, "People Coup: Bloodless, Constitutional, democratic", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, January 20, 2001.

²⁴ Dr. James Putzel, "A muddled democracy – 'People Power' Philippine Style", Working Paper Series, Development Studies Institute, London School of Economic and Political Science, 2001, p.7.

constitutional framers wanted to ensure that there were enough checks on executive powers. However, in practice, the Presidency is still a major force when it comes to leveraging support and influencing decisions of state institutions and even civil society. It is undoubtedly the focal point of political power in the Philippines.

The President is entrusted with massive control over the Philippine government bureaucracy, the largest employer in the world. Tasked with the implementation of public policies, the public bureaucracy is a massive source of human, material and financial resources — all at the disposal of the President. The President has the power to appoint persons who he/she trusts to manage the financial and material resources allocated to the various executive offices. He/she also has the power to reward through perks and promotions, the civil servants who have shown loyalty to his administration.

The President's power and influence extends to the local government units (LGU) level also. Even after the passage of the Local Government Code, the local officials still kowtow to the President to expedite disbursement of resources or to receive more funds than what are due to them.

The President also has immense power and strength over the Congress — the forum for legislative agenda setting and law formulation. The President knows very well that the leadership in both the Houses must be aligned to him or her to ensure that legislative members are 'friendly' to his/her policy initiatives. Thus, even though the President has no direct hand on the selection of the Senate President or House Speaker, he/she makes sure that his/her preferred candidates win. As the titular head of his or her party, the President uses political charisma, diplomatic savvy and

negotiation skills in leveraging the support of other parties' leaders represented in the Congress. And in exchange for Congressional loyalty and support, the President pledges to help Senators and representatives in their numerous developmental projects and programmes.

The President's influence is moderated by civil society — a “fourth branch” of government, which emerged during the People's Power Revolution. State-society partnerships, the privatization of state institutions and the devolution of authority mandated in the 1987 Constitution have reduced the relative dominance and diffused the power of the state and the national government. This post-martial law trend has allowed non-state actors in society, including business, media, academe, NGOs, Church, women, labour, community-based organizations and ethnic communities among others to assert their influence in the public policy process. Post-Marcos Presidents have been selecting individuals from the business community and civil society groups to serve in advisory and policy-making positions in state bodies like economic, social and human rights committees and commissions. Although on the one hand, multi-sectoral representation is empowering and democratic, on the other, multi-stakeholder bodies can also help legitimize the President's agenda. Just as they can be a forum for independent views, they can also be used for co-optation, under the Philippines' patronage-dominated system.²⁵

Oligarchial Democracy: A perennial challenge to Philippine politicians is creating enough social and economic rewards to all Filipinos in a nation with a

²⁵ Joaquin L. Gonzalez III “Philippines: Continuing people power”, in John Funston (ed.), *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2001, p.262.

population growth rate that is one of the highest in the Southeast Asian region. A small group of elite Filipino families (including the Filipino-Chinese and Filipino-Spanish Mestizos) continue to benefit more than the rest of the population economically and socially.

Over the years, many of these rich families have become integral parts of larger clans. Due to their enormous wealth, some elite families have been able to perpetuate themselves in local and national politics for generations forming political dynasties with solid control of Congressional districts, provinces and towns. Some of the notable families are the Marcoses of Ilocos. Nortes, the Aquinos and the Conjuangcos of Tarlac, the Magsaysays of Zambales, the Duranos and the Osmenas of Tarlac, etc.

A number of families also dominate and extract benefits from the Philippine business sector. There are the Filipino-Chinese clans who control a large segment of the lucrative banking, logging retail and wholesale sectors of the country; for instance, the Tys own Metrobank, the Sys own Shoemart and the Gokongweis own Metrobank, *Manila Times*, and Robina Farms.²⁶ The Filipino-Mestizo clans like the Zobela, Ayalas and Sorianos control large operations such as Ayala and Anscor.

The terms technocrats and cronies became popular during the Marcos years. These two terms were used interchangeably to describe the private sector oligarchy he developed, comprising of traditional elite families like the Lopezes and Osmenas. This grand coalition of new elites were notoriously called Marcos' cronies. Every presidential administration, before and after Marcos, has had their share of

²⁶ Ibid., p.283.

accusations of cronyism. But the intensity of such allegations increased under Estrada, after his associates, Eduardo Conjungco regained San Miguel (one of the country's top corporations) and Lucio Tan was allowed to buy the controlling interests in Philippine Airlines and the Philippine National Bank (two privatized government corporations).

Corruption in High Places: Corruption in the government administration and state institutions owing to centralization of power and oligarchy is not rare in the Philippine democratic set-up. The most prominent example of corruption at high offices, is the case of President Estrada, which eventually led to his removal and exposed how corruption had eaten into the very fabric of democracy in the country.

Estrada's personal corruption and poor policy making, aptly symbolized by his fondness for "midnight cabinets" and his creaming off funds to support his lavish lifestyle, soon brought the country's economy to ground. His behaviour also precipitated a long series of political scandals.

From the moment Estrada took up residence in the presidential palace, a relentless campaign against his wayward lifestyle and questionable business associates was unleashed in the press. Apparently, the President lived up to his reputation as a womanizer and gambler, holding late night drinking and gambling sessions in the palace. While he had strong economic managers in charge of key economic portfolios in Cabinet and progressive social reformers working in the Department of Agrarian Reform and many places in the Presidential Office, he never made his pro-poor campaign promises into a consistent government programme.

However, the crunch against Estrada came in October 2000, when his former confidante and ally, Governor Luis 'Chavit' Singson accused the President of receiving Peso 220 million (US \$4.5 million) in proceeds from *jueteng*, illegal gambling rackets and some Peso 130 million (US \$2.6 million) in kickbacks from tobacco excise revenues destined for the Governor's province of Ilocos Sur.²⁷ Governor Singson had turned against his friend after the President had approved a plan to replace illegal gambling rackets with a new government sponsored game and when the Department of Audit turned over information on Singson to the Ombudsman. These events and charges eventually led to his impeachment.

Terrorism: In spite of the widespread 'faith' in elections and people power as legitimizing forces, there are groups within the Filipino society who question regime legitimacy based on these political processes. Such groups include: Muslim rebels in Mindanao like the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and their sympathizers, the National Democratic Front (NDF) and the New People's Army (NPA), including some militant labour and student organizations. These groups argue that these "democratic" processes are captured by elite interests and will never really lead to political change that will be meaningful to them.²⁸ Hence, for these groups the only legitimate way to effect regime change is through armed struggle or militancy.

The Philippine government has been dealing with three principal separatist groups: the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front), the MILF (Moro Islamic

²⁷ James Putzel, "A muddled democracy – 'People Power' Philippine style", Development Institute Studies, London School of Economics & Political Science, Nov. 2001, p.4.

²⁸ Joaquin L. Gonzalez III "Philippines: Continuing people power", in John Funston (ed.), Government and Politics in Southeast Asia, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2001, p.262.

Liberation Front) — a more militant faction of the MNLF which broke away in 1984, and the extremist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). The ASG is regarded by the US as an international terrorist organization. Only about 1,200 strong, the group is smaller than the MILF or the MNLF. Its inconsistent agenda and the nature of its activities has put it outside the realm of any foreseeable political solution. Financing itself through kidnap-for-ransom activities, the group has earned notoreity for its daring escapades and attracted government action completely out of proportion to its size or political agenda.

In May 2001, the ASG raided an island resort taking hostage 20 people, including three Americans. This triggered a massive military response to rescue the hostages and to eradicate the group.²⁹

Until 1997, the Philippine government had dealt in any substantive way only with the MNLF. It signed a “Final Peace Agreement” with the group in 1996. The agreement, intended to implement the original Tripoli Agreement of 1976, created the SPCPD as a transitional body towards the goal of establishing a regional autonomous government by September 1999. The MILF, never included in the process, forced the government into new peace negotiations in 1997. Lack of progress led to an escalation of conflict, prompting President Estrada’s declaration of an “all-out war” against the MILF in 2000. But President Arroyo after assuming power, announced a major policy shift, by reversing the “all-out war” policy and declaring to resume talks with the MILF.

²⁹ Mel C. Zabradoa, “The Philippines in 2001”, *Asian Survey*, Vol.XLII, No.1, Jan./Feb. 2002, p.147.

PROSPECTS OF PHILIPPINE DEMOCRACY

Over the past two decades, sweeping political, economic and social changes have occurred in the Philippines that have affected the relationship between the public (government), the private (business) and the people (civil society) sectors. The 1986 People Power Revolution and the meteoric rise of the Philippine civil society, the passage of the pro-people 1987 Constitution, as well as the implementation of the landmark Local Government Code of 1991 and a number of development plans are events that created a new system of national and local governance encouraging partnerships among groups representing government, business and civil society. As a result, transparency, predictability and accountability have improved.

The rebirth of a flourishing Philippine non-governmental organization (NGO) community was an interesting post-Marcos phenomenon to watch. Advocates of issues pertaining to health, religion, labour, environment, women, etc. came forward and started lobbying the executive and legislative branches and even holding mass rallies and demonstrations to argue their causes. Post-Marcos administrations have acknowledged their important role in nation-building especially as an alternative service delivery system to the government.

The role of the market and the corporate community in national development has been transformed after the departure of Marcos. Crony and government monopolies were dismantled — Estrada's attempt to resurrect them led to his downfall. The business community has welcomed the privatization of inefficient government — owned and controlled corporations, which had enjoyed competitive advantages vis-à-vis private enterprises. The Build-Operate-Transfer-Law of 1993 —

enabling private enterprise to build infrastructure then operate it for a number of years before returning to public ownership — has led to closer cooperation between business and government. This emerging governance arrangement has made government more accountable, transparent and participatory. Sharing power with civil society has strengthened the effectiveness of the Philippine state.

During martial law, local government units had become highly dependent on the national government in terms of policies, finances and manpower. This changed significantly under the post-Marcos administrations. People's representatives in Constitutional Commission introduced into the 1987 Philippine Constitution provisions the wish for democratic development and decentralization.

Finally, the Filipinos have shown the world that in spite of their belief in electoral processes, they resort to use 'people power' to de-legitimize and overthrow an unpopular regime, as happened in the case of President Estrada. Although the military played a decisive role, indisputably People Power 2 incarnated the idea of deepening democracy. People Power 2 became the only viable alternative left after what the critical mass thought to be a castration of the constitutional process of last resort (the impeachment trial). The streets became the venue of collective action and the murals of people's sovereign rights. As Amando Doronila succinctly put it,

"When Filipinos are robbed of the constitutional or legal due processes through which they can effect political change, they exercise their fundamental sovereign rights."³⁰

People Power 2 brought back to the streets the fight for democracy from the sphere of 'tarnished' institutions (the Presidency, the Senate, the political parties and

³⁰ Amando Doronila, "EDSA II Worries foreign Media", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, January 31, 2001, p.A24.

even the Cabinet). It embodied the collective will and action of a critical mass that ultimately ousted a leader charged with cronyism and corruption.

Another triumph of democracy in the country may be illustrated in the Fidel Ramos case. In the Philippines, Fidel Ramos has often been lauded as the best President the country ever had. In recognizing the limited developmental capacity of the state, Ramos scaled back the state's capacity to extract, largely by deregulating state monopolies and privatizing state assets. In turn, foreign investors began to rediscover the Philippines as a favourable site for export-oriented industrialization. As a result, industrial parks sprouted around Manila Bay and the Visayan city of Cebu, boosting annual average growth rates to nearly 5 per cent throughout Ramos' term. But Ramos interpreted these achievements as signifying his indispensability.³¹ He began advocating that the Constitution be changed, so that he could stand for re-election in 1998 (a so-called charter change), first mounting a "people's initiative", then trying to convert the Congress into a constituent assembly.³² However, he was stoutly resisted by former President Aquino and Jaime Cardinal Sin. Reactivating people power, the two held a great prayer rally in Luneta Park, with audiences opposing any tampering with the Constitution. Finally, the Supreme Court ruled that in any event, the Charter cannot be amended by means of a signature campaign. Reacting to this and confirming once more that democracy in the country has reached equilibrium, Ramos accepted the court's decision, setting his personal ambitions aside.

³¹ William Case, *Politics in Southeast Asia*, Curzon Press, UK, 2002, p.231.

³² Segundo E. Romero, "The Philippines in 1997: Weathering Political and Economic Turmoil", *Asian Survey*, Vol.38, No.2 (Feb. 1998), p.197.

Finally, it may be concluded that although there are many problems crippling the Philippine democratic set-up and although the quality of democracy in the country may not appear satisfactory, but any reversion to Marcos style politics seems highly unlikely. This was demonstrated by Estrada's ouster in People Power II. But democracy assistance needs to look beyond the holding of free and fair elections and the promotion of free market enterprise. Because even with elections, representative government can continue to fail to be representative of national as well as collective interests. Even with constitutionally protected freedoms, there can be continuing repression and violation of basic rights. Even with a free market, there are many left out or cut off the flow of goods and capital. Even with free speech and free press, the public forum can be manipulated, resulting in confusion, in a lack of national dialogue and national consensus. Therefore, it is very essential that all institutions, particularly the press, need to be strengthened for proper functioning of the never-ending process called democracy.

CHAPTER III

GROWTH OF MEDIA IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines press may be called an institution, which began in the 17th century but really did not take root until the 19th century, which overthrew the shackles of three governments but became enslaved by its own members, which won a high degree of freedom of the press but for years neglected to accept the responsibilities inherent in such freedom.

It is a press, which uses English more often than its native language, which is Tagalog, or its adopted language of more than 300 years (Spanish). It is a press which has its daily newspapers centralized in Manila as is everything else centralized in that city. It is a press, which preaches — and probably thoroughly believes in — freedom of the press, yet cannot maintain independent daily newspapers in some cities (like Cebu city) because of political pressures. It is a press which has bred nearly all of the country's heroes (like Rizal, Mabini, Osmena, Romulo), while also breeding many corrupt and unscrupulous newspapermen.¹

THE SPANISH PERIOD

The Philippine mass media has roots that go back to the country's colonial past and to the year 1593, when Spanish friars brought printing to the islands and published their first book, *Doctrina Cristinna*. It was the first of nearly two dozen books to appear in the next four decades. Most of these works were published by Thomas Pinpin, since termed the father of Philippine printing. Pinpin is also credited

¹ John A. Lent (ed.), *The Asian Newspapers' Reluctant Revolution*, First Edition, The Iowa State University Press, USA, 1971, pp.191.

with printing the first newsletter in the archipelago, *Successos Felices* (or Fortunati Events), in 1637. In an effort to appease the Spaniards' hunger for news of current events in other parts of the Philippines, Pinpin devoted the 14-page newsletter entirely to the depredation committed by Muslim pirates on the Philippine people. A contemporary historian has said of the newspaper success: "Whoever wrote it did so in an interesting anecdotal style reminiscent of modern journalistic trends."² In fact, the newsletter was so successful that a second issue appeared after two years.

Besides Pinpin's endeavours, *hojas volantes* (or flying sheets, called so because they were passed, from person to person to ensure mass readership) have been found dating to 1799. Carrying the title *Al Publico*, these sheets acted as town criers for the Spaniards in the islands. Although these kind of flying sheets appeared intermittently for approximately 50 years, it was not until 1811 that the first real newspaper, a publication that was regularly issued under the same title with date and place of publication listed, emerged 218 years after printing was introduced.

The first newspaper, *Del Superior Gobierno*, was issued to satisfy the Philippine colonists' desire for information about European conditions which could affect the Spaniards abroad. Such information, as a letter on February 15, 1809, from the Viceroy of New Spain (Mexico) to Governor General Mariano Fernandez de Folgueras of Philippines, who wanted to share it with his compatriots. Therefore, in February 1809 Folgueras issued a newssheet explaining where Spain and the Philippines stood in regard to the Napoleonic intrigues in Europe. Approximately three months later, when a French schooner was captured off the Philippine coast, the

² Carlos Qurino, "First Newsletter in the Philippines", *Journal of History*, Nos.3-4, 1957, pp.169-78.

Spaniards noted that the ship carried gazettes with news of the first ten months of 1808. Again, Folgueras issued another newsheet, this one was named *Aviso al Publico*. A second *Aviso* in September 1809 resulted when Folgueras gathered news bits from the governor of Mauritius and published them.

However, the governor's biggest break in obtaining news for *Aviso* occurred in July 1811, when an English ship sailing from India stopped in the Philippines. On board were copies of English newspapers with news as recent as December 1810. According to the words of a modern professor-journalist, who gave an interpretation of the event and the resultant newspaper:

"The news in the London newspapers were naturally anti-Napoleon; but since British journals were known for their impartiality, Manila officialdom accepted them as the nearest reports to the truth and quickly had them translated and reported in what we now know as the first newspaper in the Philippines."³

There were only 15 issues over a six-month period. In the last few issues Folgueras used material lifted from the *Diarios de Cadiz* (Spanish gazettes) after he had run out of news and there were no ships forthcoming. However in 1810, because of an 1810 edict of the Spanish National Congress (December 6) which outlawed the reprinting of information from the *Diarios*, Folgueras was forced to close shop.⁴ Also, an attempt to bring out a sequel to *Del Superior Gobierno* in 1813 with the publication of *Noticias Secadas de la Gazette*,⁵ proved unsuccessful.

The islands then suffered in drought for the next eight years until March 25, 1821, when *Ramillete Patriotico* published news concerning the Spanish Cortes. This information was copied from a foreign journal delivered by ship. *Remillete* was

³ A.B. Calderon, "Pioneers of the Philippine Press", *Examiner*, June 10, 1963, pp.14, 42-53.

⁴ *Del Superior Gobierno*, No.15

⁵ John A. Lent (ed.), *The Asian Newspapers' Reluctant Revolution*, The Iowa State University Press, US, 1971, First Edition, p.193.

followed by a number of shortlived newspapers. Among them were, *El Filipino*, *Latigazo*, *El Filipino Noticioso*, *Noticioso Filipino* and *La Filantropia*. However, the Spanish censorship laws affected the newspaper publication in the Philippines. The first daily newspaper in the country, *la Esperanza* (established on December 1, 1846), lasted only three years. *Diario de Manila*, started in 1848, lasted until 1899. *Diariong Tagalog*, the first native daily in Tagalog appeared in 1882 but it lasted for only three to five months.

Spanish censorship laws

Perhaps the biggest setback to the developing Philippine press was the strict censorship laws provided by both the government and the church.⁶ The National Congress censorship of *Del Superior Gobierno* was the beginning of nearly a century of tight control of expression in the Philippines. Even before the 1810 ruling, *Del Superior Gobierno* was governed by censorship laws laid down by Spain as early as May 20, 1750. Another regulation promulgated on April 30, 1810, by Real Audiencia prohibited any discouraging news to be printed. Following these two 1810 rules, the Philippines witnessed a period of constitutionalism and enlightenment from 1813-24.⁷

Liberalism in the islands ended when the constitution was scrapped on August 7, 1824. Governor Juan Antonio Martinez issued a decree explaining that the constitution having been abolished, press censorship was again in effect. However when Martinez's successor arrived in July 1825, he made it clear that the democratic

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ John A. Lent (ed.), *The Asian Newspapers' Reluctant Revolution*, The Iowa State University Press, USA, 1971, First Edition.

era was definitely over by dumping into the sea all publications of a political nature issued from Spain during the previous years.

Other orders on censorship were also released by the Spaniards in 1827, 1834, 1839 and 1840. The culmination of this tightening censorship was during the strict administration of Governor Ramon Monetro, who in October 1856 created the *Comision Permanente de Censurr*, comprising a president and four delegates each from church and state.

In spite of these restrictions, the number of periodicals increased steadily even during Montero's administration. Growing more frightened of this growth of periodicals, Montero on February 16, 1857, added to the Commission his "*Reglamenlo de Asuntos del Imprenta, Decrstadado El Excmo...*", probably one of the most thorough regulators of the Philippine press. The all-encompassing Reglamento was divided into articles dealing with printing, newspapers, books for sale, books for personal use, plays, clothing and scapulars, or other materials which were imprinted. Among the 15 articles which dealt with newspapers were license required before publishing, pre-censoring and banning of newspapers pleading reforms from abroad.⁸

Content of the early newspapers of Philippines

The early colonial newspapers, more literary than news in style, depended mostly on satire, poetry, articles and news of a sarcastic nature. Stories were long and rambling and most of the news concerned events abroad supplied by documents from Spain and Mexico. However the newspapers lacked significant Philippine-centric

⁸ Armando Malay, "Press Censorship in the Philippines", *Saturday Mirror Magazine*, May 25, 1957, pp.5-8.

news, like local volcano eruptions and earthquakes which took many Filipino limes and local agitation for Philippine representation in the Spanish cortes.

Most of the newspapers of the day had early demises because they were not conceived with any plan or purpose. According to a historian:

“One of the causes of infant mortality of the Spanish colonial newspapers was that they came out as children of flitting impulses. No previous survey was made of the clientele, no effort was exerted to discover the proper appeal, and no plan was drawn for a definite programme.”⁹

The absence of an overall plan to meet the wants of most of the people was reflected in the first daily newspaper in the Philippines. Published on December 1, 1846, *La Esperanza* was “colourless, dull and filled with long discussions of historical, scientific and religious subjects.”¹⁰ But *La Esperanza* in its three years of life aided Philippine journalism by setting the stage for other dailies, like, *La Estrella* in 1847 and *Diario de Manila* in 1848. Within a year of *Diario*'s founding, *Estrella* and *Esperanza* shut down, giving *Diario* a monopoly, which it had to relinquish in 1852 to the daily government organ, *Boletin Oficial de Filipinas*. The *Boletin* lasted less than a decade, disappearing in 1860 by Royal Order.

After the *Boletin* left the scene, *Diario* was reestablished and became, according to Spanish historian W.E. Retana, “not only the best edited newspaper but also one that had a long, continuous and prosperous existence”.¹¹ Edited by Don Filepe de Pan, the *Diario* lasted until 1899.

Another newspaper which marked some significant advances in Filipino journalism in the 19th century was *El Porvenir Filipino*, founded in 1865. After

⁹ Jesus Z. Valenzuela, *History of Journalism in the Philippine Islands*, Jesus Z. Valenzuela, Manila, 1933, p.28.

¹⁰ “History of the press in the Philippines”, *Manuscript in Manila Times*, Morgue.

¹¹ Feltus, *Journal of Bradely*, p.124.

importing the first press of double efficiency into the islands, *El Porvenir* appeared with two editions daily, becoming the first newspaper to do so. Other dailies in the latter part of the 19th century were *El Catolico Filipino* (1862), the first Philippine religious newspaper; *Revista Mercantil* (1865), an afternoon paper of commerce, industry, agriculture and advice, *El Comercio de Manila* (1876); *La Oceania Espanola* (1877), as successor of *El Porvenir Filipino*, the organ of progressive Filipinos defending their rights to representation in the Spanish Cortes; *Diario de Filipinas* (1880); *La Regeneracion* (1876), short-lived and succeeded by *El Fenix*. The latter two used sensational styles of reporting.

April 1, 1887, marked the beginning of political journalism in the Philippines when *La Opinion* was published. However, in spite of all attempts at advancing Philippine journalism, it was not until 1890 that a newspaper was popular with the public. This daily, *El Resumen*, was established by Pablo Poblete, the first multiple newspaper publisher. During his lifetime, Poblete was either founder, editor or chief contributor to no less than 20 newspapers.

Besides the dailies, numerous weeklies came out under the Spanish rule. In fact, the first Filipino newspapers were weeklies: *El Noticioso*, *La Filantropia* and *El Ramillete Patriotico*, all published in 1821. *Ramillete* was known as an audacious and liberal weekly, which attacked its rivals violently. Competing newspapers described *Ramillete* as an “internal monster, beast, jackass, charlatan, imp, heretic, libertine, vagabond and *dahonpalay* (rice snake).”¹² Unique among the weeklies were a number of satirical magazines published during the last two decades of the century. The fist of

¹² Carson Taylor, *History of the Philippine Press*, Bulletin Publishing, Manila, 1927, p.II.

this type of publication, which delighted in vulgarizing officials was *La Semana Elegante*, founded in 1884 by Pedro Groizard, the last were *Manililla Sport* and *El Cinife*, which disappeared in 1894.

However, the most neglected field of journalism in the Philippines has been that of the provincial press. Even today, there are very few influential dailies and weeklies outside Manila. The first provincial newspapers of the nation were *El Eco de Vigan*, founded in 1884 by the Mayor of Vigan, Jose Giver, and, *El Porvenir de Visayas*, established in Iloilo (1887) and *El Eco del Sur*, weekly in southern Luzen (1893).

Significant during this time was also the advent of a native press, conceived by *El Pasig's* fortnightly appearance in 1862. *El Pasig*, a bilingual in Spanish and Tagalog, was the 26th newspaper in the Philippines.

Media and the Philippine revolution against the Spaniards

Twenty years after the emergence of *El Pasig*, the first daily in native Tagalog appeared, but it lasted for only three months. *Diariong Tagalog*, as the newspaper was called was begun by Marcelo del Pilar, Philippine revolutionary fighter and Francisco Calyo. However, because Calyo was a Spaniard, some Filipinos prefer to call *El Ilocano* as the first Tagalog daily. Started in 1889 as a fortnightly by Don Isabelo de los Reyes, a champion of Filipino rights. *El Ilocano* "sowed seeds of rebellion against Spain and although Reyes was not a member of the Katipunan (secret revolutionary group active in 1896), he made his paper serviceable to the

association in the propagation of their doctrine.”¹³ *El Ilocano* lasted until 1896 when it disappeared during the chaos resulting from the political upheaval in the Philippines.

Reyes edited another native-language newspaper, *La Lectura Popular*, in 1890, which published in Spanish in the left column and in Tagalog in the right columns of the page. The first native newspaper to publish only in Tagalog was *Ang Patnubay ng Calolico*, started in 1890. Other prominent native newspapers were *Plihgong Pilipino*, *Dimasalang* (1900), *Katubusan* (1905), *Muling Pagsilang* (1903) and *Ang Mithi* (1910). All but *Muling Pagsilang* had short lives, perhaps, because of the limited number of readers caused by excessive governmental pressures on the freedom of the press.

However, the native press did play an outstanding role in the revolution against Spain, as did the Philippine press in general. Recognised as the mouthpiece of the revolution was *la Solidaridad* which first appeared in February 19, 1889 with a policy to work for social and economic reforms, to expose the real plight of the Philippines and to champion liberalism and democracy. But to champion such causes, *La Sol* had to be published in Spanish and smuggled into the islands. Therefore, to avoid detection, all the writers used pseudonyms. The paper finally closed on November 15, 1895.

After the *Sol's* closure, the secret society of rebels, Katipunan, on January 1, 1896, published its one and only issue of *Ang Kalyaan* (Liberty). Editors Emilio Jacinto, Pio Valenzuela and Andres Bonifacio, in an effort to misguide the Spanish

¹³ John E. Lent (ed.), *The Asian Newspapers' Reluctant Revolution*, The Iowa State University Press, USA, 1971, First Edition.

made it appear that *Ang Kalyaan* was published in Yokohama, that the Japanese were sympathetic to the Philippine cause and that the editor of *Kalyaan* was del Pilar, who was in Spain at the time. Initially, the Spanish authorities were taken in by their tactics. But because of the betrayal of the newspaper by a Katipunero, *Kalayaan's* second issue, which had already been printed, could never reach the streets. However, the sole issue of the newspaper made the ranks of the Katipunan swell up by 30,000 revolt-minded members. As this nationalistic fervour spread, other revolutionary newspapers were inaugurated. On January 1, 1898, *El Heraldo de Iloilo* was followed by the secret publication of *La Libertad* on June 20, 1898. The latter was suspended by Philippine military leader, Emilio Aguinaldo, because it had not applied for a license through his offices. *El Heraldo*, to mislead the Spaniards, professed to be a "political daily, Spanish through and through; religiously Roman Catholic and administratively decentralization."¹⁴

Probably the most widely read newspaper at the revolution was *La Independencia*, founded by General Antonio Luna and Fernando Ma Guerrero on September 3, 1898. *La Independencia*, extremely nationalist in that it castigated both Spaniards and Americans, resulted when Luna, realizing that the morale of the revolutionaries was at a low point in 1898, saw a need for a paper to keep the revolutionary spark aglow.¹⁵

¹⁴ *El Heraldo de Iloilo*, January 1, 1898.

¹⁵ John A. Lent (ed.), *The Asian Newspapers' Reluctant Revolution*, The Iowa State University Press, US, 1971, First edition, p.199.

THE AMERICAN PERIOD

Manila after being released from Spanish administration by September 1898, was occupied by American troops. After the United States “freed” the Philippines from Spanish rule, a new type of nationalist press developed — the press of the Fil-American war.¹⁶ General Aguinaldo, one of the leaders of the battle against the American takeover, needed the press as an ally, seeing that his armies were being shattered everywhere and rumours were flying fast. In an effort to control the press, Aguinaldo decreed that “as long as the abnormal conditions exist, no publication of any kind shall be permitted without a government license.”¹⁷ He also set up a revolutionary organ of his own, *El Heraldo de la Revolution*, on September 28, 1898.

When the Eighth Army subdued Manila on August 13, 1898, a number of American newspapers entered the country. Among the early American newspapers were the *American soldier*, *Freedom* and the *American*. These newspapers caused a lot of resentment among the Filipinos.

While the United States Congress decided what use it would make of the Philippines, the Filipino press assured the nationals that the Americans would leave soon. For instance, the *La Republica Filipina* told its readers on December 21, 1898:

“Many fear that the American nation wants to conquer us. Why? Only because of malicious rumours coming from religious orders who want to take vengeance on us because they are too weak to fight the Americans.”¹⁸

However, the American newspapers in Philippines, refuted by their actions all the defenses made by the Filipino press, continually ridiculing the Filipinos.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Puri Katigbak, “The Press and the Fil-American War”, *Manila Chronicle Magazine*, January 23, 1963, pp.20-23.

¹⁸ Ibid.

When the treaty of Paris was signed in 1898, the Filipino newspapers finally realized that the Americans were planning to stay. By February 1899, the Spanish press had goaded the Filipinos to such a degree that revolution against the United States seemed inevitable. The fighting erupted and the Spanish and Philippine newspapers had a field day reporting more and more atrocities — some real, some exaggerated — committed on Filipinos by American soldiers.

Realising that their armies were not as strong as the American troops, Filipino newspapers exaggerated their own victories while ignoring Filipino defeats. The truth was apparent, though that the Filipinos were suffering countless major defeats. As the Filipinos witnessed the slaughtering of their fellowman, they also lost faith in the native press and its optimistic reports. Thus, one by one, these newspapers shut down, the last of which was *La Independencia* in January 1900.

Thereafter, although the American press dominated the Philippine journalism scene, American authorities still instituted a military censorship to insure against the advent of more nationalistic papers. After US arms became more abundant in the islands, the one-year censorship was relaxed. However, it had already taken its toll. *El Nuena Dia* and *La Justicia*, among other newspapers were suspended. American journalists, after the takeover of the Philippines, saw opportunities to enter the publishers' ranks by creating their own dailies, and soon newspapers like the *Manila Daily Bulletin*, *Manila Times*, *The American* and the *Cable News* appeared. A pioneer among the American-owned newspapers was the *Manila Times*, established on October 11, 1898, as the first continuously issued daily published in English.

Owned by Americans during most of its 32 years, the *Manila Times* changed ownership a number of times before Manuel Quezon bought the newspaper house. Quezon kept the newspaper for approximately four years before selling it. After two other changes of ownership, the *Times* was purchased in 1927 by Alejandro Roces Sr., by then the owner of a chain of newspapers (*Taliba*, *La Vanguardia* and *Tribune*). He disbanded the *Times* in 1930. The oldest existing newspaper in the Philippines today, the *Manila Daily Bulletin*, began as a shipping journal but later widened its scope to include the general public by 1912.

In spite of the domination by the English language newspapers at the turn of the century, there was still room for a national and a Spanish-language press. Many of these publications were inspired by political parties or politicians. Ex-editor Arsenio Luz has explained that during the 1900-1920 era, Spanish, Tagalog and local dialect were the mainstay of journalism. Journalism was based on religious and political partisanship, and most of the newspapers were “narrow-minded, intolerant and chauvinistic”.¹⁹ Because of the intense rivalry and resulting name-calling between the English-language newspapers and those in Spanish and Tagalog, libel suits were not infrequent.

The first pro-Filipino, English language publication was the *Philippines Herald*, begun by Quezon on August 8, 1920. Feeling that the English press of Manila had not been sympathetic towards the Philippine independent movement, Quezon decided to establish a newspaper that voiced Filipino sentiments. And as a result, with the backing of numerous wealthy Filipinos, the *Herald* came into being.

¹⁹ “The Philippine Press of the Past and the Present”, *Deadline*, September 1952, pp.14-15.

Another journalism highlight of the 1920s was the development of the first chain ownership in the Philippines under Alejandro Roces Sr., often called the “father of modern journalism in the Philippines”. Along with Spanish and Tagalog dailies, *La Vanguardia* and *Taliba*, he also established his own English daily, the *Manila Tribune*.

After 1930, the *Tribune* and *Herald* shared the top positions among the newspapers, competing with each other very actively for circulation, news and advertisements. The *Herald*, under Senator Manuel Madrigal, not to be outdone by Roces’ TVT chain, created its own multiple ownership, called DMHM, with the *Monday Post* (a weekly), *El Debate* (a Spanish daily) and *Mabuhay* (a Tagalog daily).

The United States was also responsible for introducing movies and radio. Radio came to the Philippines in 1922, only two years after the establishment of the first American radio station in Pittsburgh. Henry Hermann, an American, set up three 50-watt radio stations in Manila and in the neighbouring city of Pasay in June 1922. The Radio Corporation of the Philippines introduced radio to the provinces in 1929, when it set up station KZRC in Cebu city. Americans owned most of the pre-World War II stations, which employed mostly their countrymen as their announcing staff, and the language used was English. Since, the programming included entertainment and news, radio became the main entertainment medium. The quick public acceptance of the medium and its profitability led local distributors to set up their own stations as channels for advertising their products.

The 1931 Radio Control Law set up the Radio Control Board that lasted until the 1972 declaration of martial law. Before World War II, the Philippines had six

commercial radio stations namely, KZRM, KZRF, KZIB, KZEG, KZRH — all in Manila — and the short-lived KZRC in Cebu city.

THE JAPANESE RULE

Manila newspapers, which had been silenced by both Spain and the United States, found an even more systematic and harsh censorship forced upon them after January 2, 1942. That day the first journalistic casualty of the Japanese occupation was DMHM, which was destroyed by bombs.²⁰ Within two weeks of the Japanese invasion, most editors were interned or chased into the hills, and all publications, except those which the Japanese planned to use for their own purposes, were disbanded. Only the TVT chain and one of Ramon Roces' magazine chains were allowed to function.

The *Manila Tribune*, *Taliba* and *La Vanguardia* came out regularly under the censorship of the Propaganda Corps of the Japanese army, but for anyone else who wanted to go into publishing, the Japanese stipulated certain conditions. These conditions were: first, they must secure a permit from the military; second, they must submit to military censorship; and third, any violators of the above will be severely punished.

On October 12, 1942, control of TVT and *Liwayway* (the largest of Ramon Roces' vernacular magazines) was taken over by the Japanese Military administration, and the publication of these periodicals was placed in the hands of the Osaka Mainichi Publishing Company, a group which established the Manila

²⁰ John A. Lent, *The Asian Newspapers' Reluctant Revolution*, The Iowa State University Press, First Edition, 1971, p.203.

Sinbunsya Corporation. Manila Sinbunsya was to control TVT, *Liwayway*, *Manila Sinbun*, *Shin-Seiki*, *Bicol Herald* and *Davao Nichi-Nichi*, the legalized periodicals of the Philippines. Theoretically, self-censorship was then in effect although official censors of the Department of Information still checked all copy. Another censoring organization was created in January 1944, when puppet President Jose P. Laurel launched his Board of Information to “control, indirect, supervise and coordinate all information and publicity of the government.”²¹ But in spite of these censoring agencies, the people did receive the other side of the news. They soon lost faith in the Japanese-controlled media and when they did read these newspapers, they read between the lines. Filipinos who edited the Sinbunsya periodicals often made sure that there was something between the lines to read. For example, in *Taliba*, a slug reading “*Hapones Sa Pilipinas*” (Japanese in the Philippines) “accidentally” wandered to the classified advertisement page and was placed directly under the heading “*Ipinagbibili*” (for sale).²²

Also, on hand, to give the Filipinos the other side of the news, was a strong guerrilla press. The guerrilla issued their own periodicals to boost morale, to warn against Japanese collaboration and to fight the Japanese in any way possible.

When Manila was liberated on February 3, 1945, Philippine journalism was also liberated from the pre-war “hoary tradition that newspapers must be million peso corporations”.²³ In fact, in the words of Amando Malay:

“The large pre-war newspapers having died, “any newspaper editor, reporter, proof reader or advertising solicitor who could dig up a Platen press and a box of type could put out a newspaper —

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Armando Malay, “When Manila had scores of Papers”, *Deadline*, October 1952, pp.18-21.

and they did. The problem was how to secure newsprint. In the race to put out newspapers, even Manila paper and the pad paper of school children were utilized. Newsprint was worth its weight in gold. Scouts were sent out to look for the precious commodity."²⁴

The first real post-liberation newspaper was the one published by the United States Army OWI on February 9 — the *Free Philippines*. According to observers' report on the scene in 1945, long queues were formed every morning to pick up copies of the free newspaper. The first privately owned newspaper after the war was Vicente Navarro's *Victory News*, which appeared on February 19. By March, the newspaper race was on, and during the next year, a score or more newspapers appeared in quick succession. The *Philippines Herald* was the last pre-war newspaper revived, appearing on July 10, 1949.

On the kind of journalism which this lot of newspapers produced, Teodoro Locsin, editor of the *Philippine Free Press* has said:

"Never had the press been so free, never had it wielded such power and influence. The government was but recently established and uncertain of its strength. It was extremely sensitive to public opinion and the press took advantage of this healthy state, pouncing on the government's least mistakes and making national issues of them. Daily to the offices of the newspaper, editors came crawling, and government spokesmen came pleading, explaining, promising not to do it again... The power of the press was utterly out of proportion to the circulations of the various papers. None could claim a sale of more than a few thousand copies.... There was censorship by the US Army. But after military censorship was erased and finally lifted, it was open season and good hunting for politicians."²⁵

POST-WORLD WAR II PERIOD (1946-72) OR THE DEMOCRATIC PERIOD

The relationship between the media and the government was firmly established during this democratic period, which lasted from 1946 (the date of independence of Philippine Republic) to 1972 (when President Ferdinand Marcos dismantled the democratic system by declaring martial law). After independence was

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Teodoro Locsin, "End of an Era...", *Philippine Free Press*, September 27, 1947, pp.4, 5, 42.

formally granted by the United States in 1946, the Philippine press fully assumed an adversarial role in relation to the government. The degree to which it exercised this privilege gave it the reputation of being one of the freest press in Asia, but at the same time it was also accused of failing to engage in responsible reporting. Although it was available primarily to the privileged classes, the Philippine press developed rapidly, especially in the urban areas. However, since political liberty was established in the Philippines ahead of its economic development, the press was slow to evolve into a truly representative mass media with proper infrastructure because the country's economy failed to fully expand to create the economic conditions in the rural sector necessary to support it.

So, a number of newspapers sprang up right after World War II. However, most of them were tabloids having short lives. Among those that survived was the *Manila Chronicle*, which a group of pre-war journalists had started in 1945. They later sold it to businessman Don Eugenio Lopez, brother of the then vice-president, Fernando Lopez. Publishers also revived pre-war newspapers like the *Manila Bulletin* and the *Philippines Herald*. Joaquin Roces, the son of Roces Sr, established the new *Manila Times* in place of the *Tribune*. In fact, up to the time of martial law in the country, the *Manila Times*, led all the Philippine-language dailies in circulation. The *Manila Chronicle*, on the other hand, with an average daily circulation of 250,000 copies, was building up a name as a paper of quality.²⁶

Radio broadcasting in the archipelago also expanded during this period, with 30 stations operating just five years after the war. The 1946 Commonwealth Act of

²⁶ Crispin C. Maslog, "Philippines", Shelton A. Gunaratne (ed.), *Handbook of the Media in Asia*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, London, p.377.

the US Congress permitted the President a four-year right to grant temporary permits to operate radio stations. Another Act passed in 1947 required the Philippines radio stations to change their first letter from K to D with DZ standing for Luzon stations, DY for Visayas and Palawan stations, and DX for Mindanao and Sulu stations. By 1968, the Philippines had 213 radio stations, with 40 in greater Manila. By 1972, the number had increased to 350, with 55 in Greater Manila. Luzon alone had at least 120 stations, while Visayas had 90 and Mindanao had 85. Many of these stations survived only with the backing of political parties because advertising alone was not enough to support them.

Commercial television came to the Philippines in 1953, when Alto Broadcasting System in Manila opened the very first station, DZAQ-TV channel 3. AQ stood for the initials of Antonio Quirino, the owner of the station and brother of the then Philippine President, Elpidio Quirino. The station started on a four-hours-a-day schedule (6 p.m.-10 p.m.) limited to a 50-mile radius. The prospects, however, then were dim for the future of television in the country. High production costs, the paucity of TV sets and of advertisers were big hurdles. By 1957, the Chronicle Broadcasting Network, owned by the Lopez family, operated the only two TV stations in the country — DZAQ and DZXL-TV channel 9. The Republic Broadcasting System opened DZBB-TV channel 7 in 1960. However, in spite of these problems, television continued to grow in the Philippines in the late 1960s and early 1970s causing overcrowding of television networks. By 1966, Philippines had 18 privately owned TV channels with a peak-hour audience of more than 1 million.

The ABS-CBN had become the country's biggest network by the time Marcos declared martial law in 1972.²⁷

MARTIAL LAW PERIOD (1972-86)

When President Ferdinand Marcos proclaimed martial law on September 21, 1972, he quickly brought the mass media to heel. At that moment, the press had been sharply critical of the graft, corruption and human rights abuses attributed to the Marcos government. The very first presidential decree, issued on September 24, 1972, under martial law reorganized the government bureaucracy and created a Department of Public Information, a first in Philippine history. The President's very first letter of instruction issued on September 22, 1972 directed the press secretary and the secretary of national defense to "take over and control all media of communications for the duration of the present national emergency."²⁸

Except for the *Manila Bulletin*, Marcos permanently closed all the leading pre-martial law metropolitan newspapers and magazines. The shut-down newspapers included, the *Manila Times*, its sister publication, *Daily Mirror*, the anti-Marcos *Manila Chronicle*, the ultra-nationalist *Philippines Free Press*, the *Graphic*, and the *Nation*. The *Manila Bulletin* was revived on November 22, 1972, under the new name, *Bulletin Today*.

Along with the closure of all mass media, Marcos simultaneously authorized the continued operation of the government TV and radio stations in Manila — the Voice of the Philippines (operated by the National Media Production Centre) and the

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

stations of the Philippine Broadcasting service. Additionally, he authorized the operation of two privately-owned mass media enterprises — the four-month-old *Daily Express* (published by Juan Perez, but reportedly owned by Roberto S. Benedicto, a crony of Marcos) and the Kanlaon Broadcasting System (also owned by Benedicto), which later changed its name to Radio Philippines Network, because they had not “participated in the communist conspiracy” to overthrow the Philippine government. The Far East System, owned and operated by Protestant missionaries in the Philippines, was allowed to resume operation on September 25, 1972.

Thereafter, Benedicto became Marcos’ closest partner in manipulating the mass media, and the biggest mass media oligarch in Philippine history. He took control of the Radio Philippines network, with six TV and 15 radio stations; Banahaw Broadcasting Corp., with two TV and seven radio stations; and Inter-island Broadcasting Corp., with eight TV and four radio stations.

Under martial law, the Marcos government sent to prison, dozens of top journalists on charges of subversion. Among those sent to jail were Joaquin Roces, publisher of the *Manila Times*; Eugenio Lopez Jr., publisher of the *Manila Chronicle*, its editor, Amando Doronila; Teodoro M. Locsin Sr., editor of the *Philippine Free Press*; Luis Mauricio, editor of *Graphic*; Max Soliven, top columnist of the *Manila Times*; Ernesto Granada, columnist of the *Manila Chronicle*; Napoleon Ranu, staff writer of *Philippine Free Press*; and Juan L. Mercado, joint executive of Press Foundation of Asia.

At the beginning of martial law in 1972, those who disagreed with the government were either imprisoned, exiled or were killed. But towards the end of the

decade, few brave journalists began to test the waters when the government averred that things were back to normal. They began to criticize, but cautiously. One of them was Jose Burges Jr., who founded the *We Forum* on May 1, 1977, as a weekly for the youth. It began publishing news that could not be found in the 'crony press' or the newspapers owned by the Marcos business partners.

Also, at this time, the *Philippine Collegian*, the student organ of the University of the Philippines, had also been pursuing a critical brand of journalism that the professional media were unwilling to adopt. The *We Forum* and the *Philippine Collegian* were the forerunners of the alternative press in the country in the early 1980s. They provided an alternative source of information to the crony press, which printed only pro-government stories. But more than anything else, it was the assassination of former Senator Benigno Aquino, upon his return from three years of exile in the United States on August 21, 1983, that released the floodgates of press freedom in the Philippines. Among other things it was Xerox and cassette journalism that made it impossible for the authoritarian regime of Marcos to suppress information on this tragic event of national importance.²⁹

Convinced that the Marcos government was responsible for killing the much loved and popular Aquino, middle-class Filipinos staged massive demonstrations. And witnessing the manner in which the story of Aquino's return and assassination was being played down or ignored altogether, they made greater freedom of the press one of their key demands.

²⁹ Ibid.

Remarkably, the Philippine business establishment, which was itself embarrassed by Marcos' behaviour, organized an advertising and circulation boycott of the largest newspapers in the country, all of which were controlled by Marcos' associates. Soon, those papers' coverage of the Aquino story and the government's cover-up became more balanced. At the same time, new opposition publications emerged, some with financing from the same businessmen. Within a few months, there were at least ten new non-establishment newspapers and there was no turning back.³⁰

The return to a Philippine tradition of robust and lively dialogue in the press — and the fact that the United States and other nations were fully aware of the ferment, courtesy of the international media — obviously contributed to Marcos' decision to hold presidential elections early in 1986 and to take the challenge of Benigno Aquino's widow, by then the leader of an opposition coalition, seriously. However, Marcos' capacity to continue to control most of the broadcast media and to highlight on television the election campaign, which was biased in his favour, angered the public even further.

In fact, just a day before the elections, his office distributed a 30-page collection of "talking points", advising radio and television personalities on how to convince the public that there was nothing questionable about the balloting and the tabulation of votes.³¹ At the one Manila station, which could claim nominal independence from the Marcos government, the woman who was news director and

³⁰ Jole Dresang, "Authoritarian Controls and News Media in the Philippines", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, June 1985, p.40.

³¹ Stanford J. Ungar, "The role of a free press in strengthening Democracy", Judith Lichtenberg (ed.), *Democracy and the Mass Media*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.387.

principal anchor person decided to abandon the election-night coverage altogether rather than follow the guidelines.³²

About two weeks after the elections, it was Marcos' loss of control over the Manila television stations that finally sealed the collapse of his regime. As it became even clearer that he had stolen votes and that the public did not support him, Marcos lost the loyalty of his military, and detachments of troops took over one television station after another and anti-government journalists moved in behind them. The final indignity came when Marcos insisted on going through with his own inauguration for a new term as President and demanded for it to be televised, but was unable to keep even a single station from carrying it on air for the full duration of the ceremony. Corazon Aquino's inauguration, held at the same time, was taped by a station whose loyalties had changed, and it was broadcast to the public later. That same night Marcos left the country for exile in Hawaii.³³

The American media also played a key role in the Philippine revolution. Perhaps out of vanity more than anything else, Marcos had allowed the international media to work unencumbered during his final campaign, and the Americans had got an unprecedentedly thorough inside view of a foreign nation's politics. In fact, the only one-or-one debate that Marcos and Aquino were ever scheduled to have was supposed to be on ABC News' *Nightline*, with Ted Koppel as the moderator. But it fell through because of last-minute conditions imposed by Marcos.³⁴ The extent of

³² Jonathan Kolater, "Uprising in the Philippines: Could There Have Been a Revolution Without Television?", *TV Guide*, May 31, 1986.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Stanford J. Ungar, "The role of a free press in strengthening democracy", Judith Lichtenberg (ed.), *Democracy and the Mass Media*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.388.

American network coverage of the Philippine election campaign and of Marcos' last-ditch effort to stay in power clearly put the Congress and the American public on Aquino's side.

American President Ronald Reagan finally had no choice but to withdraw his backing from Marcos. As one media critic observed,

"In a precarious few days, it was the total collapse of Marcos' American support that sped his end. TV proved its awesome power."³⁵

Another way to put it would be that free press — both of the Philippines and the US — provided the warning lights and a safety valve.

However, during the three years before Marcos' fall in 1986, there existed four dominant categories of the Philippine press. They were the Alternative Press, the Crony Press, the Provincial Press and the Tabloid Press.

The Alternative Press: The Alternative Press existed from 1983 to 1986. It was epitomized by national newspapers *Malaya*, *Mr. And Mrs. Veritas* and the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. These papers were extremely critical of the regime and blatantly called for its removal and replacement. However, radio and television were more timid than newspapers, although radio, relying on provincial newspapers' commentary, appeared to be a stronger medium of political change in many rural areas of the country.

Although the alternative newspapers attempted to provide some degree of balanced coverage, much of the content was anti-government and there were rarely two sides to any major issue. These papers exercised the adversarial or 'watchdog' function to the extreme, while providing a wide range of exposé-type stories

³⁵ Thomas Griffith, "Newswatch: The visuals did Marcos in," *Times*, March 17, 1986, p.72

highlighting the plight of the rural and urban poor, usually concluding that their plight was attributable to the policies and programmes of the Marcos government or to its corrupt practices. While the alternative press was centered in Manila, there were provincial newspapers, especially in Baguio (the *Gold Ore*) and Cebu (the *Freeman* and the *Visayan News*), which were very much the country cousins of the Manila Alternative Press.

Thus even before 1986, there was a general rejection of the Crony (or establishment) media in favour of a reform-minded Alternative Press. This was implicitly a rejection of the development communication model incorporated into crony newspapers to replace content, critical of the government, and its least popular policies. In effect, the public was overwhelmingly rejecting the modernization bent of the 'Marcos ideology', with its accompanying debt burden and chronic corruption, in favour of immediate political reform. However, it did not seem to matter to the public that Corazon Aquino and her followers were not adequately defining what direction such reforms should take. Therefore, the Alternative Press was more successful as an adversary of the government than it was in contributing to constructive policy formation, which might have hastened development in the country. That the mission and identity of the Alternative Press ended with Marcos, suggests that its only unique attribute was its adversarial function.

The Crony Press: The Crony Press was, in fact, a derogatory term for any newspaper owned by or supporting Marcos or his KBL (Kilusang Bangong Lipunan) political party. The Crony Press, led by newspaper like *Bulletin Today*, dominated the news market before Marcos' departure in 1986, especially gaining strength with the

declaration of martial law in 1972 and the closing of most anti-Marcos newspapers. The Crony Press that focused its efforts at keeping Marcos in power also ceased to exist with his downfall in 1986.

The Provincial Press: This generally comprised of newspapers published outside Metro-Manila. Although there are over 100 newspapers being published today, none of the provincial newspapers has achieved national circulation. The greatest concentration on development news was provided by these provincial newspapers, especially those which were sympathetic to Marcos and his KBL party. Although urban dailies also sympathetic to Marcos published development news provided by the government, there was no emphasis on such stories. This was because development-based stories generally failed to appeal to the urban masses. Since the urban dailies also contained a significant amount of international news, entertainment and advertising, their development news content was generally much lower than the provincial dailies, which for lack of resources and advertisement revenues, often depended heavily on government information, agencies and other developmental news centres.

Tabloids: The Philippine Yellow Press: Those who controlled the national dailies also controlled the sensational tabloid newspapers in the Philippines. Although these tabloids presented much of the same news and information as the broadsheets, they simply condensed and sensationalized it more. Tabloids also served a development communication function by informing their readers of overseas employment, opportunities and dangers, the success and failures of government programmes etc.

MEDIA AFTER MARCOS

The accession of the government of President Corazon Aquino after the fall of the Marcos regime in February 1986 saw the restoration of the democratic system, along with its key institutions such as the independent legislature, the judicial system and the free press. The restoration stimulated the renaissance of the libertarian traditions of the press. The Aquino restoration retained the structure of private ownership of the media, but it purged the industry of pro-Marcos newspapers and radio and television networks. The most notorious pro-Marcos newspapers were sequestered, and some of them even had to cease publication. But the Aquino government retained the government TV that was started by Marcos. Under this new ambience, some of the old newspaper families — like the Roces and Lopez families — reopened their newspapers that were closed by Marcos, during the martial law period. Although these families reopened their businesses, it is noteworthy that most of the 10 daily newspapers, published mainly in English, are at present owned by new entrants in the industry.

However, the new political context in which the media reemerged soon raised questions about the relevance of some of its cherished assumptions. One of which was the adversarial and confrontational posture of journalism as the hallmark of its in-depth investigation and even as the *raison d'être* for its existence. The media now had a more responsible role to play in the process of nation building, national development or nationalization of the country. And this was a phase when the Filipino newspapers had shrug off their colonial mentalities and stance during the period of authoritarian rule.

So, more and more newspapers were encouraged to look forward to more utilization of the national language, Tagalog. There were proposals for the nationalization of media ownership, decentralization of the Manila press with an upgrading of provincial papers, more emphasis on developmental reporting and less on sensationalism, fewer “canned” media presentations and adequate coverage of the East as well as the West. Specifically, newspapers were lessening their emphasis on crime news — some newspapers were even issued guidelines on crime coverage. Therefore, in place of news on violence, most metropolitan dailies pooled their resources to work on in-depth stories of development, economics, population explosion, environment, urbanization and the like. In fact, more usage of the national language by newspapers as used during the democratic period preceding Marcos’ rule, resulted in experimental papers, which mixed English and Tagalog in their sentences. Thus a sentence might start out in English and end in Tagalog.

However, the free Filipino press that reemerged after the Marcos rule, was plagued with a number of problems like, extreme jealousy of the publishers; too many dailies in Manila, thus leading to strangulation; newspapers controlling other media establishments; newspapers controlled by big business; lack of a strong provincial press; a political understanding with the press; lack of enough equipment and newsprint; and income rates not commensurate with the prices of newspapers.

The ultra-active jealousy proved detrimental to the adequate development of the press especially because it did not allow mergers in a city which could not support too many English dailies.

Most of the Philippine mass media were controlled by the large Manila dailies; for example the *Manila chronicle* interests owned nearly 30 radio stations, about seven television stations, magazines and even comic books. Many of these newspapers were in turn owned by large business complexes or families, like the Roces. So, such ownership structures often meant that the newspapers operated to support the vested interests of the owners. The ownership of the majority of the mass media by big business houses also resulted in other problems. For instance, in the resultant competitive situation, the publishers did not dare to risk money on building up a provincial press, which was perennially beset with problems like lack of readership, political pressures, low literacy rate and lack of income to purchase copies of newspapers. Also, because of the high costs of newsprint in the islands, newspapers had to limit the size of their editions and their circulations.

However, the Alternative Press and the Crony Press fought it out editorially in the years just prior to the EDSA Revolution. After the oppositionist forces led by Cory Aquino and supported by the Alternative Press were victorious in 1986, both alternative and crony newspapers moved ideologically to the center. Today, together they comprise the mainstream national press. The Provincial Press still struggles along with low profits and low circulation. But the scandalous Manila tabloids have become even more vigorous and economically successful. However, the provincial papers still retains a role in communication among the local elites, who are mostly only readers. These papers also serve to identify the local power structure and to state the most pressing problems and issues of the community.

CHAPTER IV

ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE PHILIPPINE DEMOCRATIC SET-UP

It is not that freedom of the press is easy to establish only in countries that have recent experiences with democratic values and institutions. But, in some nations, press freedom is much more likely to be accepted than other democratic traditions, such as an institutionalized opposition party, that might be seen as too much of a threat to existing regimes. So, instead of functioning strictly as an adversary of the government, a free press can provide an effective forum for public debate, and a mechanism for precious two-way communication between the people and their leaders. In this role it can accomplish a great deal. Any country with a genuinely free press, for example, will have a hard time holding a large number of political prisoners without having to explain itself to the public. Therefore, a free press may, in fact, be more effective than an opposition party in achieving change in an oppressive system.

Leaders who are intolerant of press freedom may soon find themselves powerless to prevent it, as new technologies are making it much easier to launch and sustain independent media.¹ However, one may argue that the rarity of press freedom, especially in the Third World and Communist-bloc countries, is proof of how difficult it is for democratic values to take hold. But the fact that it has, traditionally, been one of the first liberties to be denied by totalitarian governments, demonstrates the significance and power of a free press. For, even when a free press does not lead to the establishment of other parallel institutions, it inevitably reinforces democratic ideals. Invariably, with

¹ Stanford J. Ungar, "The Role of a Free Press in Strengthening Democracy" in Judith Lichtenberg (ed.), *Democracy and the Mass Media*, Cambridge University Press, USA, 1990, p.372

freedom of the press, people “are in position to participate in a decision-making process. The result of this shift is to redistribute power, which in the long run results in a different form of government.”²

There have been many nations, like the Philippines, where freedom of the press has been difficult to establish or reestablish. If a regime is brutally repressive and does not even pretend to be accountable to its people, it will never willingly tolerate a free press. It simply will not be in its best interest to do so. However, at times even repressive regimes allow, if not a completely free press, but an overt opposition media. This may be so because they recognize that independent media, while often cause controversies, may in fact be a crucial component in achieving stability. If press freedom is denied, this opposition may turn to other and, perhaps, more violent forms of expression.

In the Philippines, the departure of President Marcos meant regaining a freedom that Filipinos had enjoyed in the past. In the pre-martial law period, the Philippine society had already established press freedom as a value. As discussed in the previous chapter, even during the struggle against colonizing powers, the press had played a critical role in giving voice to suppressed national aspirations. The press developed its character as ‘watchdog’ and pursued an adversarial stance in its coverage of the government. For a generation of journalists, the post-Marcos period involved a simple matter of getting back to old ways and habits of doing things.

But few were aware of the problems of a newly recovered democracy. In a period of transition, government undergoes a period of trial, a baptism of fire in terms of its legitimacy and stability. The same holds for various institutions and agencies of the state.

² Madeleine Korbelt Albright, Poland: The role of the press in political change, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, Washington DC, 1983, pp. 128-9

Civil-military strife is part of this phase and presents only one aspect of what citizens must learn about the new dispensation.³

It is a period of learning for everyone, including journalists. People have to be educated about how institutions and systems should work in a democratic framework. In fact, journalists themselves had to learn what it is like to cover political events and government beats in a free environment. For example, what are the rules of court? What reforms make the elections different from what they were when they were held under an authoritarian regime? In 1992, Filipinos were going to vote for an entire national change, from the office of the President to the posts of local city or town councilors, which meant writing about a hundred names, on the ballot. No journalist had ever covered this kind of an election in the past.

Those press communities emerging from dictatorial controls tend to think that all that the press needs is the guarantee of its autonomy and it will become an instrument of progressive development and public education in the society. But gaining freedom may only be considered to be the first step. Like the legendary box of Pandora', press freedom lifts the lid on all kinds of forces that will affect how freedom is practiced.⁴ The proliferation of newspapers and news programs is the most visible effect. There are countless news outlets, providing options not only for citizens but also for journalists. The numbers in most cases, however, do not indicate real choices and real options. The intensive commercial competition makes newspapers more alike, all going for the bottom-line and tailored for broadest commercial appeal. Stories with elements of sex,

³ Melinda Quintos de Jesus, "The Problem with Freedom", USAID documents

⁴ Ibid.

scandal and crime are the easiest to deliver and attract readership/viewership and these tend to dominate the news agenda.

Democratic space nurtures all kinds of social, economic and political forces and the news begin to reflect information that are not genuinely on the editorial agenda. And, in spite of the abundance of press venues, the public is not necessarily assured of real knowledge or clarity of understanding.

The free press also tends to mirror the problems that beset the society in which it operates. If there is corruption in society, then the same degree of corruption will permeate the press. If there is no vigilant reading public, then the press tends to be ignorant. And with poverty and lack of education, the press tends to exacerbate these conditions.

In a number of countries that have emerged from authoritarian regimes, a free press has shown that freedom alone is no guarantee for excellence or even competence. A free press does not necessarily do the right thing in reporting a story. A free press does not always choose to tell the right stories. And under such conditions, a free press will not necessarily strengthen democracy. It can, in fact, exacerbate the inequities in a developing society, becoming instruments of those who are already in power, those who already have wealth.

Therefore, the growth of the press must go hand in hand with efforts to empower the people. Information is one means of people empowerment. While the press plays an important role in engaging citizens in playing a more coherent role in the public sphere, the press is only one of the instruments, only one of the tools of democratization. There is

synergy in the interaction of various institutions, in the exchange in the public dialogue. The press can be part of the problem as it is part of the solution.

Such a scenario is being reflected in the Philippines, which is touted to have one of the most independent media systems in Asia.

PRESS POLICIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

With the fall of the Marcos regime, a 14-year-old system of media controls collapsed overnight. Into that vacuum rushed dozens of new newspapers, and radio and television stations, as old Marcos-controlled media outlets folded or were taken over by the new government. Thereafter, a pluralistic, but somewhat anarchistic, media industry came into being.⁵ Today, the Philippine media operates under one of the laxest systems of state supervision in Asia. The post-Marcos Constitution, influenced by that of the United States, guarantees free expression.

POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PRESS

The Philippines has no licensing requirement to publish a newspaper. The only requirement is a permit to operate a business. Press freedom is enshrined in the 1987 Philippines Constitution, which includes a Bill of Rights guaranteeing that “no law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the people peaceable to assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances”.⁶ This is similar to the First Amendment to the US Constitution. In addition, Article III Section 7 of the

⁵ Sheila S. Coronel, “The Philippines: After the Euphoria, the Problems of a Free Press,” The Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, The University of Sydney, www.riap.usyd.edu.au/research/publications/coronel.htm

⁶ L.V. Teodoro Jr. & R.V. Kabatay, *Mass Media laws and regulations in the Philippines*, AMIC, Singapore 1998, p. 97

constitution recognizes “the right of the people to information on matters of public concern.”⁷

This guarantee has enabled the Philippines to have one of the “freest press systems” in Asia, if not in the world. Its freedom is bound by few limitations, except for the laws of libel, national security, privacy and obscenity. Most often, these laws are interpreted liberally by the Philippine courts.

Only Filipinos can own or publish newspapers. The Philippine Constitution states, “The ownership and management of mass media shall be limited to citizens of the Philippines, or to corporations, cooperatives or associations wholly owned and managed by such citizens.” (Article XVI, Section 10). Philippine laws also do not approve of monopolies. According to the Philippine Constitution, “Congress shall regulate or prohibit monopolies in commercial mass media when the public interest so requires. No combinations in restraint of trade or unfair competition shall be allowed.” (Article XVI, Section 11).

In practice, however, this provision of the new Constitution, ratified only in 1987 after the lifting of martial law, has not yet been implemented. One problem encountered in doing so was the correct definition of press monopoly.

The Philippines has three press monitoring bodies set up on the initiative of publishers, editors, and independent journalists: the press council of the Philippine Press Institute, the ethics committee of the National Press Club, and the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility. These three “have no legal or statutory basis but exist on the

⁷ Ibid.

strength of a fragile consensus within the journalistic community that certain abuses need to be corrected if the press is to commend any credibility.”⁸

STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF THE PHILIPPINE PRESS

The Philippine press is privately owned and is independent of government control. Although multilingual, the English-language press is more dominant. Being Manila-centered, it is underdeveloped in the provinces. It is politically free, yet controlled by big businesses. Commenting on its sensationalism and lack of ethics and professionalism, R.R. Tuazon points out:

“Mass media ownership remains in the control of a few vested interest groups, which exert considerable influence in the nation’s political and economic affairs.”⁹

While Vanden Heuvel and Dennis confirmed that although large business groups have been making inroads, “media ownership is concentrated in the hands of powerful Filipino families.”¹⁰ Even today, the Roces, Soriano and Lopez families are among those who own media establishments.

However, Sheila Coronel asserts that an enduring American legacy in the Philippines, which was a US colony from 1898 to 1946, is “a free press run as a private enterprise.” The press today is mostly privately owned because the Philippines is a democratic, capitalist country committed to free enterprise. Only four newspapers, sequestered after the downfall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986 are government-controlled: the *Philippine Journal*, *People’s Journal*, *People’s Tonight* and *Taliba*, all of

⁸ S.S. Coronel & T.H. Stewart, “The Philippines,” K.S Venkateswaran (compiled) *Media monitors in Asia*, Singapore: AMIC, 1996, pp.67

⁹ R.R. Tuazon, “Sociocultural factors as determinants of press freedom: The Philippine experience,” A. Latif (ed.) *Walking the tightrope: Press freedom and professional standars in Asia*, AMIC, Singapore, p.105

¹⁰ J. Vanden Heuvel & E.E. Dennis, “The unfolding lotus: East Asia’s changing media”, *The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center*, New York, 1993, p. 105

which were formerly owned by Benjamin Romualdez, brother of the former First Lady, Imelda Marcos. Others newspapers are run as business enterprises, depending mostly on advertising and circulation for support. However, a large number of such newspapers do not make much money and their owner prop up these newspapers with profits from their other business enterprises.

QUALITY AND POPULAR PRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES

According to Vanden Heuvel and Dennis: “The Philippines has achieved a media environment with a diversity of viewpoints, an idealism about the power of the media to improve society and an environment where media freedom is seen as right... improving the quality of the media’s offerings seems to be the course that Filipinos will pursue”¹¹

The Philippine press might be described as two-faced. One face is that of the Metro-Manila press — coming out daily, highly developed, widely circulated with advertising support, well written, better edited and using sophisticated technology. The other face is that of the community press or the provincial press — consisting mostly of weeklies, less endowed with financial resources, poorly edited with limited circulation, lacking advertising support and using old-fashioned printing technology.

The number of newspapers in Metro-Manila has proliferated from 12 dailies in 1986, when the Marcos dictatorship ended, to 50 in 1998. Of these, 24 are broadsheets and 26 are tabloids. The broadsheets in the country are mostly the quality newspapers read by the elite and the middle classes. The tabloids are mostly the popular newspapers read by the lower class or the masses. Of the Metro broadsheets, 19 are in English and five are in Chinese. This trend is understandable because the quality press is generally

¹¹ Ibid.

read by those who are financially well-off and English-educated. On the other hand, most of the 26 tabloids are published in Filipino, while only eight are in English. This is understandably due to its readership, which consists mostly of the masses whose education in English is limited.

About 85 per cent of the community newspapers are published either simply in English or in English combined with a national language. A typical community newspaper, today, is an eight-page weekly tabloid with a circulation of about 2,500, printed in English combined with Tagalog, Ilocano, Cebuano, Visayan or Hiligayon. The provincial press is a small business enterprise, with a full-time staff of four operating in a city of about 181,000 people. Its annual volume of business is a little more than half-a-million pesos, with a net profit of 140,000 pesos. It usually has three or four competing newspapers in the town and therefore hardly makes ends meet.¹²

The majority of the Metro-Manila magazines are published in English, with 18 published in Filipino, and four in regional languages. Thirty-six are weeklies and 13 are monthlies. The magazines are also the medium of the elite and the middle class.

DISTRIBUTION AND TECHNOLOGY OF THE PHILIPPINES NEWSPAPERS

C. Maslog has documented that the distribution of tabloids is based mostly on street sales as compared to broadsheets, which “vary in their pattern and distribution.”¹³ For instance, while the top-end *Philippine Daily Inquirer* sells all its copies in the streets, two other top-end newspapers — the *Manila Times* and *Philippine Times Journal* — sell 97 and 92 per cent of their copies respectively on the streets. The *Philippine Star*, on the

¹² C.C. Maslog, “The Philippines,” Shelton A. Gunaratne (Ed.) *Handbook of the Asia*, Sage Publications, 2000, New Delhi, p. 383

¹³ C. Maslog, *The Metro Manila Press*, Manila: Philippine Press Institute, 1994, p. 51

other hand, sells 60 per cent of the copies to subscribers, while the *Manila Chronicle* sells 55 per cent to subscribers. In a survey of nine broadsheets conducted as early as 1993, all nine papers were already using computers in their operations — seven in newswriting, eight in editing, nine in typesetting and nine in accounting.¹⁴ All were using offset press printing. Today, most of the broadsheets are using full colour headlines. In addition, several of the Metro Manila newspapers and few of the provincial newspapers have even gone online.

POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE BROADCAST MEDIA IN THE PHILIPPINES

The broadcast media in the Philippines comes under a greater degree of regulation than the press. Three main regulatory bodies are involved: the National Telecommunication Commission (NTC), the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas (KBP), and the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board.

Like the print media, broadcasting in the Philippines is mostly privately owned and free from government controls. This makes Philippine broadcasting unique in Asia, where mostly radio and television are dominantly in the hands of government. The government owns one radio-TV network, PTV Channel 4, and still controls two privately-owned networks — Channel 9 and Channel 13 — which it had sequestered after the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986. Four other channels are privately-owned — Channel 2, by ABS-CBN; Channel 5 by ABC Network; Channel 7, by GMA Network; and Channel 11, by a religious group, Jesus is Lord Church.

¹⁴ C.C. Maslog, "The Philippines," Shelton A. Gunaratne (Ed.) *Handbook of the Asia*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, London, 2000, p. 384

Unlike the print media, however, Philippine radio and TV stations need licenses from the NTC to operate. The NTC also assigns frequencies and promulgates and enforces guidelines for station operators. In addition, these radio and TV stations belong to the KBP (Association of Broadcasters in the Philippines), a self-regulating agency of the broadcasting industry. The responsibilities of the MTRCB include the review and classification of films and TV programmes.

In the exercise of its power to issue licenses, NTC indirectly controls the quality of performances and standards of radio and TV stations. According to the law, the functions of the NTC are: to establish and prescribe rules, regulations, standards and specifications in all cases related to the issuance of Certificate of Public Convenience, and to administer and enforce the same and; to promulgate such rules and regulations as public safety and interest may require, to encourage a more effective use of communications, radio and television facilities.

However, in practice, the KBP, regulates programming through its own codes of ethics.¹⁵ All the constitutional provisions and laws that govern the print media also apply to the broadcast media. In practice, however, the broadcast media is not as free and outspoken as the print media in criticizing the government.¹⁶ They are more entertainment oriented and are more vulnerable to pressures from the government because of the licensing requirement.

¹⁵ C. Maslog, *Communication values and society*, Philippine Association of Communication Educators, Manila, 1992

¹⁶ C.C. Maslog, "The Philippines," Shelton A. Gunaratne (Ed.) *Handbook of the Asia*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, London, p. 385

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE BROADCAST MEDIA

Like the print media, the broadcast media has also proliferated in recent years — from 338 stations in 1988 to 517 in 1998. Among all mediums of mass communication, radio has the greatest reach in the Philippines, both in the urban and the rural areas. The number of TV stations has also increased — from 75 in 1988 to 116 in 1998.

Radio set ownership by households in the Philippines is relatively high — 88 per cent in the National Capital Region (or Metro Manila) and 81 per cent in the provinces, as compared to the television set ownership, where except for the Metro Manila area, 87 per cent of the households own a TV set.

Cable television is also in the process of coming back into its own after a decade of stunted growth. Under the martial law regime (1972-86), cable television was limited to only four operators. But with the fall of Marcos, cable television was thrown wide open to anyone with capital and entrepreneurship.

The Lopez family's ABS-CBN, the leading local TV network, started SkyCable in 1992. The country has about 300 registered cable television operators. Most are members of the Cable Television Association of the Philippines (CTAP). Commercial-free, 24-hour TV viewing made cable television popular, especially among the urban middle classes with their Western tastes, fluency in English and higher incomes.

BROADCASTING PROGRAMME POLICIES

Although there exists a television code and self-regulation by the KBP, the local network programming in the Philippines has taken more of a tabloid orientation, with entertainment programmes being "limited to soap operas, game shows and inane

comedies.”¹⁷ Coronel also points out that when the ABS-CBN returned to the scene in 1986, following its closure under the martial law, the network “made it to the top only in six months” and garnered an audience share of 63 per cent by 1993 “through a combination of sensational news reporting, savvy marketing and sheer attitude.” It made news and current affairs “an amalgam of gore, celebrity and scandal designed to titillate and entertain rather than educate or inform.”¹⁸

The KBP’s television code that governs the TV broadcasting in the Philippines states:

“Public affairs program shall be geared towards building an enlightened citizenry through the discussion and clarification of issues of national and international significance.”¹⁹

The television code has guidelines for newscasts, public affairs programmes, and commentaries. It stresses community responsibility, support for nationalism and development and responsibility towards children. It prohibits sex, obscenity and violence. It has regulations for contests, public participation programmes and promotions, fund raising, showing of movies and movie trailers and superstition and the occult. It has standards for general programmes and for advertising. The radio code also covers similar grounds.²⁰

OWNERSHIP AND FINANCING

Of the 517 radio stations, 90 per cent are privately-owned commercial stations. The balance comprises 33 government stations, 11 stations owned by religious

¹⁷ S.S Coronel, “Media ownership and control in the Philippines,” *Media Development*, 45 (4), 1998, pp. 25-28

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ L.V. Teodoro Jr. & R.V. Kabatay, *Mass Media laws and regulations in the Philippines*, AMIC, Singapore, 1998, p. 415

²⁰ C.C. Maslog, “The Philippines,” Shelton A. Gunaratne (Ed.) *Handbook of the Asia*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, London, p. 386

organizations, five educational stations, and two stations owned by the military. Of the 116 TV stations, 111 are privately-owned stations and 15 are government stations. Of the privately-owned stations, 13 are under government sequestration because they were owned by the business associates of Marcos.

Thirty-two broadcast companies own these radio and TV stations. The companies range in size from the single station to the largest networks with 34 radio stations, the Radio Mindanao Network; or with 30 TV stations, the GMA Network. Big businessmen own both the networks. The 10 largest radio networks own 224 of the 517 radio stations and the two largest TV networks own 38 of the 116 television stations.

While cable TV depends on subscription as its financing mechanism, the overwhelmingly privately-owned TV networks depend on advertising. The TV networks have been getting the biggest slice of advertising revenues as compared to the advertising share of the radio.

INTERNET AND ON-LINE MEDIA

The Philippines Network Foundation Inc. a consortium of institutions from both the public and private sectors, established the Philnet (later Phnet), the country's first Internet gateway, on March 29, 1994. It did so via a leased line from the Philippine Land Distance Telephone Co., linked to SprintLink. Before the enactment of the 1995 Telecommunications Act, ISPs had to obtain a franchise from the Congress and a certificate of public convenience and necessity. The 1995 Act de-regularised telecommunication value-added services, including the Internet.

The first company to offer direct Internet access on a commercial basis was Mosaic Communications Inc. (Moscom). Internet connectivity was offered in May 1995 by IBM Philippines, while Globe Telecom GMCR Inc. offered Internet access a month later. Philcom started its Webquest Internet Service in 1996 while Capitol Wires Inc. (CAPWIRE) set up its own ISP named Wavenet to offer Internet business in April 1996. The country now has more than 139 full-service Internet service providers, six e-mail service providers, and 25 cybercafes. The ISPs have organized themselves as the Philippine Internet Service Organization

About a dozen Philippine newspapers have gone on-line as well. They include the *Bohol Times*, *Business World*, *Chinese Commercial News of Manila*, *The Filipino Express*, *The Journal*, *Manila Bulletin*, *The Manila Times*, *Philippines Daily Inquirer*, *The Philippine Reporter*, *Tempo* and *Today*. Two Cebu City newspapers, *The Freeman* and *Sun Star Daily*, also have Internet editions. The ABS-CBN network is also available online.

POLICY TRENDS FOR THE PRESS AND BROADCASTING IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines press and broadcasting are products of a democratic, free enterprise society. They, because of the country's colonial past, reflect an enormous degree of Western influence. The press and broadcast media are privately-owned commercial ventures supported by advertising. They have the virtues and the vices of a free-enterprising society. As they need advertising, they have to cater to the tastes of the masses; and because they are free, they tend to skirt limits often bordering on license.

The Philippines, being a developing country, its government information apparatus, as well as the academe, has promoted the philosophy of development communication to harness communication, the mass media and information for national development. Although the mass media and the government have an adversarial relationship in a free society, the media should also be concerned with the economic, social, cultural and political development of a developing nation. In the Philippines, however, the Constitution “recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-building” (Article II, Section 24). Another section of the Constitution — Article XVI, Section 10 — says:

“The State shall provide the policy environment for the full development of Filipino capability and the emergence of communication structures suitable to the needs and aspirations of the nation and the balanced flow of information into, out of, and across the country, in accordance with a policy that respects the freedom of speech and of the press.”

These new constitutional provisions were absent in the earlier 1935 and 1973 Philippines Constitutions.

The Philippine press, today, has the distinction (or the notoriety) of being one of the freest in the world.²¹ It is generally referred to as a two-faced press — developed in Metro Manila and underdeveloped in the provinces. The print media is considered to be an aggressive critic of the government, whereas the broadcast media is largely timid and uncritical, content to remain purely an entertainment medium.

The country has a group of sober, quality English-language broadsheets, but a majority are rip-roaring tabloids published in Filipino — rambunctious, sensational, freewheeling and proliferating and often reckless and irresponsible. It is a free, exciting

²¹ C.C. Maslog, “The Philippines,” Shelton A. Gunaratne (Ed.) *Handbook of the Asia*, Sage Publications, 2000, New Delhi, London, p. 389-90

press that lacks a sense of history and urgently needs to mature and become, not only responsible, but also relevant and responsive to the needs of the society.²²

MEDIA AS AN INSTRUMENT IN PHILIPPINE DEMOCRACY

The media in the Philippines, considered to be the freest in Southeast Asia, has always played an important role in the country's politics, establishing and reestablishing democratic governance by forcing officials and institutions to account for their actions. The most concrete examples of media power being instrumental to the country's democracy can be illustrated in the overthrow and impeachment of former Presidents, Marcos and Estrada.

The fall of Marcos

Probably nowhere have the effects of the electronic media been more dramatic than in the Philippine revolution. One of President Marcos' advisors noted after the President fled the Philippines that if it had not been for what television news revealed he had no doubt that Marcos would have retained his position as President.²³

Ferdinand Marcos was initially elected President of the Philippines in a democratic election in 1965. But, in order to hang onto his leadership he had to declare martial law and suspend a Constitution that would have otherwise required him to step down after two terms. Later, he again altered the country's Constitution so that he could override any parliamentary decision that was not in his favour.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ron Whittaker, "The Broadcast Media's Growing Role in International Politics," www.internetcampus.com/intmed2.htm

As a result he maintained his position for 20 years. During these two decades he and his family had amassed a personal fortune estimated in billions. He made little distinction between public and private funds, taking full control over the national budget, then helping himself to the state coffers — either directly to enrich his family members or cronies or to deepen the loyalties of his social constituents. Marcos also introduced a range of business cronies, nurturing them with seized assets, state contracts, cheap credit and operating licenses. The most favoured cronies were given sure-fire monopolies over commodity exports. Eduardo Conjuangco, the estranged cousin of Corazon Aquino was given control over the country's coconut industry — the country's largest export earner. Similarly, Robert Benedicto took control of much of the sugar industry, while Antonio Floriendo dominated the banana market.

Therefore, despite of hundreds of millions of dollars from the United States each year, Marcos' government was falling increasingly into debt; and, even as his personal fortunes rapidly escalated, the majority of his people were living in poverty. And because Marcos had the country's media under his control, these transgressions were either not publicized or were accounted for by carefully constructed, official explanations. In fact, about 25 journalists had even “disappeared” in the country after losing favor with the Marcos regime. One radio announcer was reportedly shot while he was on air. Anyone who openly criticized the Marcos government was also at risk.²⁴

Because of the effective approaches used in controlling its own media, both the widespread governmental corruption that existed and the human rights abuses in the Philippines did not come to the general attention of the international news media. Unfortunately, more often than not, the international media take their cues from local

²⁴. Ibid.

press coverage. The US media was also further diverted from what was happening by the long-standing friendship that existed between Marcos and Washington.

However, once the international news media became interested in what was really going on in the country, things changed.

By 1983, internal protests were already taking place against the Marcos dictatorship. In response, the military tortured, killed, and imprisoned tens of thousands of workers and peasants. But once the international media started looking beyond official US and Philippine statements and woke up to the actual situation in the Philippines, the position Marcos had so carefully built over two decades began to crumble.

The most significant event in the revolution came when Philippine Defence Minister Juan Enrile and Philippine General Fidel Ramos hastily called a news conference in a third floor room of Camp Aguinaldo. In an effort to gain the protection which worldwide media visibility provides, Enrile and Ramos explained to foreign reporters why they had finally turned on the leader they had served for so many years.

Shortly after the three-hour Enrile-Ramos press conference ended, Marcos used his powerful television network to strongly denounce Enrile and Ramos as traitors.

But then a top Catholic cardinal, seeing the possibility of hope after two decades, broke through his years of restraint and used Catholic radio stations to issue pleas to the Filipino people. (The Catholic radio stations were the only significant media force that Marcos interests did not, to some degree, have control.)

What happened next changed the course of history in the Philippines. Thousands of Filipino people poured out into the streets of Manila to protect Ramos and Enrile. Throughout the tense days of one of the few bloodless revolutions the world has ever

seen, the Catholic radio stations represented the guiding force behind the “people power” which eventually swamped Marcos. But Marcos did not give up power without a fight. Knowing that the Catholic radio stations had become the Philippines’ most trustworthy source of information, the Marcos regime devised an ingenious plan to use the stations to their own advantage.

Using a point-to-point radio frequency that Marcos officials knew was being monitored by the rebels, a report was transmitted that Marcos had fled to Guam. They hoped this false report would do two things: cause the rebels to come out of their stronghold, and give them justification to declare martial law and shut down the stations.

What the Marcos regime had counted on, happened. After news of the report was broadcast, confusion and premature jubilation broke out. Marcos then called a television news conference to show the world that, contrary to the widely circulated report, he was still in his Manila palace and still very much in control. The credibility of Catholic radio stations was badly shaken. The people did not know whom to believe. But Marcos’ newfound credibility quickly faltered. In a further attempt to quell opposition, he launched another televised appeal. With his wife, family, and three generals around him, and as thousands of Filipinos watched, Marcos was cut off in mid-sentence just as he was authorizing troops to use small arms against the rebels.

The rebels had taken over a key Manila television station and Marcos' picture was soon replaced by those of rebel leaders, Enrile and Ramos. That television program also backfired in another way. Marcos had ordered General Oxales to use fire on the rebels. (The rebels by then included thousands of his fellow countrymen.) But when Oxales saw Marcos on television with only three generals around him, he knew that his support was

gone and the cause was hopeless.²⁵ Using the commandeered government TV station, the rebel General, Ramos, explained to the people that the rebels now controlled 85 per cent of the nation's military. As the outcry against Marcos rose, the liberated broadcast media in the Philippines kept Filipinos in immediate contact with changing world opinion.

The case of Ramos

In September 1997, the media joined Jaime Cardinal Sin and former President Corazon Aquino in rallying opposition to a constitutional change that would have allowed President Fidel Ramos to run for a second term in the May 1998 elections. The Philippine Constitution, rewritten after Marcos' downfall, limits Presidents to a single six-year term. "Because of the experience of Marcos and martial law, when all newspapers and broadcast stations were closed down, the media is very wary about any return of authoritarian rule." Sheila Coronel has noted. Faced with relentless criticism in the media and half a million protesters, Ramos finally stopped waffling and said he opposed to any change in the Constitution.²⁶

The toppling of Estrada

The fall of the Estrada presidency was the result of a confluence of political and technological factors that began with the dramatic exposé of the President's involvement in the country's illegal numbers game, *jueteng*. This, in turn, unleashed a series of media reports on Estrada's lavish lifestyle, hidden wealth and alleged connection with the underworld. These together with an unprecedented live coverage of the subsequent

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Peter Eng, "The media and democratization in Southeast Asia," *Current History*, December 1997, p. 438

investigations, set in motion a protest movement that culminated in the urban uprising later known as EDSA 2. Politically speaking, it was the withdrawal of the support of key sectors of Philippine society — the military, big business, the Supreme Court etc — that finally brought Estrada down. However, in technological terms, the media and especially the electronic media, hastened the process with live and comprehensive coverage of the congressional investigation, the impeachment trial and the assembling of the masses at the EDSA shrine. Magazines, newspapers and tabloids also played a part. But the most crucial part was played by the deluge of anti-Estrada SMS text messages, jokes and calls to EDSA.

Particularly the role of text messages cannot be overlooked in the impeachment of President Estrada. Anti-Estrada text messages had hounded the President since the beginning of his administration in July 1998. At first, they circulated as jokes about real and imagined presidential faux pas and paramours. But over a period of time, text messages exposed Estrada's involvement in incidents of scandal, so that even before the eruption of the *Jutengate* in the mainstream media, networks of Filipinos were already briefed by anonymous texts linking him to mansions, business cronies, mistresses and underworld figures. The revolving text messages started raising questions about the legitimacy of Estrada's presidency. Political rumours sent by text thrived under conditions of anonymity and privacy — making them difficult to trace, monitor or suppress.

Texting also provided a tool for the public to exchange details that filled the gaps in news coverage. And while journalists and experts had their hands tied by expectations of objectivity and the burden of proof, not to mention the risks of political backlash,

texters, with their immunity to censorship and libel, provided the information that was neither aired nor printed in public. With an alternative form of mass media in their hands, texters bypassed journalists, politicians and commentators — the traditional gatekeepers — that until then had monopolized the public sphere.

Programmers responded with interactive news formats where viewer sentiments were integrated into the broadcasts through text message boards and text polls on screen. The public, at the time, was not only making itself heard by text but also was producing the content, which was being aired and printed. Investigative journalists and columnists kept their eyes on text messages for new leads to work on. And the public, having found a way to break through the walls of bureaucracy as well as the indifference of the newsrooms, found itself increasingly framing political coverage as well.

When TV images on the night of January 16, 2001 broadcast the tearful vote to keep evidence from the court, text messages inundated the network with calls for a noise barrage and protests on the streets. At first, the instant protesters turned up on street corners and in major thoroughfares, blaring horns and hoisting banners, then there followed text suggestions to converge at the EDSA shrine where the 1986 People Power uprising against Marcos was staged. In the collaborative spirit of the network, the protesters followed the trail of the texts to EDSA, where for the next four days, “hundreds of thousands would ebb and flow from the shrine until the news of Estrada’s fall was announced.”²⁷

As was apparent, traditional media and ward leaders played a key role in mobilizing the public. For, had it not been for the live television footage of the lively crowd gathering at EDSA, few would have felt the urge to go at all. Political parties,

²⁷ David Celdran, “The Philippines — SMS and citizenship,” *Development Dialogue*, 2002:1, p. 99

labour unions and cause-oriented organizations likewise mobilized their members. However, apart from the role of these, it was the public — communicating over virtual networks (or SMS), which played a decisive role in mobilizing more people. An appeal sent exclusively through text on the third and critical day of the protest illustrates the increasing dependence of the anti-Estrada forces on SMS for mobilising protesters at EDSA. The message read:

“Military/PNP nids 2 c I million critical mass n EDSA 2 morow, Jan. 19, 2 make decision against Erap, plz join, pas on.”²⁸

Although much of the credit should be given to political leaders for giving form and direction to an otherwise nebulous mass, even the leaders of EDSA 2 concede that mobile phones, and texting in particular, and the media, were crucial to speeding up communication, coordinating logistics, and keeping the crowds updated on fast-moving political developments. Wireless technology and the SMS accelerated what could have been a protracted battle to oust Estrada. In fact, the decisive role played by new media technologies, like texting, can be assessed by President Estrada’s comment. He said that he was “ousted by a *coup de text*.”²⁹

MAIN ISSUES PLAGUING THE PHILIPPINE MEDIA

As discussed earlier, it is evident that Filipino journalists guard their freedoms fiercely and are strong believers in the adversarial role of the press as watchdog and Fourth Estate. The freedom unleashed by the 1986 uprising gave the media wide latitude to report on events and issues, and media exposés have caused the resignation of officials,

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

raised public awareness and prompted investigations of official abuses and wrongdoing. Thus, the media plays an important role in democratic governance by forcing officials and institutions to account for their actions.

However, the downside is that such an adversarial stance has meant sober debate is sometimes difficult in an atmosphere of media hectoring. Moreover, the media has been accused of irresponsible and sloppy reporting and of using its freedoms to commercially exploit the public's taste for the sensational. Intense competition in a crowded market, the lack of trained journalists, "chequebook" journalism, and the business interests of media owners are among the problems that stunt the professional development of Philippine journalism. Some of the most significant among them are:

Redressing the imbalance in the flow of information between rural and

urban areas: At present, information flows largely from the cities to the countryside.

The mass media is too Manila-centered and reports little of development in the provinces, where the majority of the Filipinos live.

Establishing community newspapers in the countryside: These newspapers generally do not flourish without sufficient advertising. And advertisers do not place their advertisements in these weeklies because they do not have a high circulation, which itself, results from an inadequate income. The advertising industry faces the challenge of breaking this vicious cycle by placing goodwill advertising to help community newspapers survive.

The rise of oligopolies in the print and broadcast media: Oligopolistic ownership of the mass media, or a situation where the control of the mass media remains in the hands of a few elites, is dangerous for democracy. Although the Constitution

prohibits monopolies, the Congress has so far not enacted laws defining monopoly to implement this constitutional provision.

In reality, media ownership in the country, which is concentrated in the hands of wealthy business houses, sometimes use their newspapers to defend and advance their business and political interests. The major dailies and broadcast networks are owned by the giants of Philippine business who operate a wide range of interlocking corporate concerns, including banking, manufacturing, telecommunications and real estate. While most owners rarely intervene in day-to-day editorial decision-making, they place great constraints on the freedom of journalists.

Mass media ownership by the elite, whose interests and values are different from those of the masses: This is especially true for the print media, the majority of which is published in English. The elite also own the radio and television stations.

Newspapers have been used by their owners to promote their businesses, put down rivals, and on many occasions, contest the results of public biddings in which the press proprietors lost. At the very least, editors tone down or censor negative reporting on their owners' businesses. Many newspaper proprietors have also tended to take politically safe positions, discouraging reports or exposés that will incur the ire of government.

In the 1990s two Manila newspapers even went to the extent of attacking the results of public biddings in which their owners lost. Reporting is often skewed to favour the business and political allies of media magnates. At other times, corruption exposés are used to put down political and business rivals.

Moreover, because business in the Philippines is subject to often-whimsical government regulation, media owners who run business empires are vulnerable to government pressure. In 1999 and 2000, President Estrada threatened tax audits and other government sanctions against the owners of critical media outlets, which then toned down their reporting on the corruption and wrongdoing of his administration.

Access to the mass media: In a full-fledged democracy, the masses should have access to the mass media anytime. This, however, is not the case with the Philippines, where the elite and the upper class monopolise access to the newspaper pages and to radio and television programs.

The impact of sex and violence in the mass media: Sex and violence dominate the tabloids, movies, radio and television in the country. The government and the industry have done very little to curb this adverse development.

Ethics and professionalism among the journalists: Although the Philippines Press Council (for the print media) and the KPB (for the broadcast media) have done some policing, unethical practices still prevail among media practitioners.

Holfilena says that media corruption in the post-Marcos era has become more costly, more pervasive and systematic. She adds that corrupt transactions have become much more sophisticated and even been institutionalized through a network of journalists or to professional public relations people — a mafia of corrupt practitioners.³⁰ She also asserts that during the 1998 presidential election campaign, reporters received monthly

³⁰ C.F. Holfilena, "News for Sale, The corruption of the Philippine media," The Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism and the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility, Manila, 1999

bribes ranging from Peso 5,000 (US\$ 128) to Peso 10,000 (US\$ 256), and editors received Peso 10,000 to Peso 15,000 (US\$ 384) from one candidate's payroll.³¹

In 1998, the Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism polled 100 beat reporters in Metro Manila and found that 71 had been offered money by their sources. Of these, 33 per cent admitted they took money, with 22 per cent keeping the cash for themselves, and 11 per cent turning it over to their editors. Petty corruption of journalists by politicians or businessmen who are seeking stories twisted in their favour, is almost routine in the country. At press conferences, swarms of young, poorly paid journalists are frequently handed envelopes for "taxi" or "lunch" money for attending. "Envelopmental journalism," refers to these widely expected envelopes of cash.³²

Competition leading to the deterioration of television programming and newspaper content: The need to get high ratings has forced TV stations to lower their news and entertainment program standards to cater to the taste of the lowest common denominator. In the race to outdo rivals to peddle newspapers and television programmes, the conduct of journalism and the content of newspapers, and the programming of radio and television have suffered immensely. Today, *TV Patrol*, the highest-rating television news program in the country, serves a daily diet of skimpily clad starlets and bloodied corpses. It runs scandalous accounts of the private lives of celebrities and sensationalises crime. As it ate into most of the audience share, the program's rivals were forced to compete by offering more of the same. Competition has therefore resulted in homogeneous reporting and programming because newspapers and

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sheila S. Coronel, "The Philippines: After the Euphoria, the Problems of a Free Press," The Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, The University of Sydney, www.riap.usyd.edu.au/research/publications/coronel.htm

broadcast stations tend to produce news reports that are guaranteed to sell. The result is a tabloidisation of news and public affairs.

Politicians holding office getting actively involved in the media: In a country, which has elected a former movie star as President, politicians are increasingly taking advantage of media practitioners by getting actively involved in the media industry. Such a trend of concentration of political as well as press power is unacceptable in a democracy. Examples include, Vicente Sotto, a former senator, who runs the weekly prime time TV program *Brigada Siete*; a cabinet secretary (Orlando Mercado) who ran a daily radio programme on DZRH and a weekly TV program *Kontak 5*; another former cabinet undersecretary who also has her own radio programme; Renato Cayetano, a senator in Estrada's government, who conducts the TV program *Companero y Companera*; another former senator, Blas Ople, who had a column in the *Manila Bulletin*; Loren Legarda, another senator, ran a monthly TV show *Loren* over ABS-CBN. Moreover, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had her own TV program *Dighay Bayan* and former President Joseph Estrada also used to star in the weekly radio-TV program *JEEP ni Erap*.³³

CONSTRAINTS ON THE MEDIA

The role played by the anti-Marcos press, and to a lesser extent, independent radio stations, in raising awareness about the excesses of the Marcos government and in encouraging citizens to take part in protests guaranteed that the media would play a central role in the post-dictatorship era. But while the freedom Filipino journalists enjoy

³³ C.C. Maslog, "The Philippines," Shelton A. Gunaratne (Ed.) *Handbook of the Asia*, Sage Publications, 2000, New Delhi, London, p. 391

are the envy of their colleagues elsewhere in Asia, there are also real impediments on their ability to report freely and responsibly.

Is the media under siege?

In the present day, those who wish to silence or control the Philippine press do so through market mechanisms, rather than by the strong arm of state control. The more sophisticated methods — including the withdrawal of advertisements, bribery, and the linking of business success in other spheres to the editorial line of the owner's newspaper — may serve as useful examples of alternative threats to press freedom in the region's new democracies. President Joseph Estrada, for example, has used advertisers and business-owners to put pressure on critical newspapers.

Killing of journalists

The most alarming of such impediments is the high casualty rate of community journalists. Although Manila journalists can get away with accusing the highest officials with grave wrongdoing, there is less tolerance for critical reporting in the provinces, particularly in areas where political bosses or clans have ruled for decades. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists puts the number of Filipino journalists killed since 1986 at 44. Therefore, Journalism continues to be dangerous profession even after authoritarian regimes have been dismantled.

The casualties include Ferdinand Reyes, editor of *Press Freedom*, a weekly in Dipolog City on Mindanao island. Reyes was a crusading journalist who took on local

officials, military officers and even a faraway hotel that had mined the white sand out of a local beach. He was shot in his home in 1996, and his killers remain at large to this day.

Nesino Toling, founder and editor of the *Panguil Bay Monitor*, also met a similar fate in Mindanao. Toling was gunned down in 1991, just three years after he put up an independent and fighting paper that ran exposés of the abuses of local officials, including a town mayor whom Toling had accused of stealing steel beams intended to repair a local bridge. But even after more than a decade after the murder, the case still remains unsolved.³⁴

In the last year alone, five journalists were slain in the course of their work — a toll surpassed only by war-related killings of journalists in Iraq. While on the one hand, Philippine media has been among the freest in the developing world since democracy was restored in 1986, on the other, more than 40 journalists there have been murdered and nobody has been convicted of the killings.

Nationally known radio commentator, Juan “Jun” Pala, who was gunned down near his home in September 2003, had already survived two attempts on his life. Pala, a hardline anti-communist conservative and critic of the mayor of his home town of Davao City, was, like many Philippine radio journalists, opinionated, enmeshed in local politics and vocal in his diatribes against his enemies. Before his murder, Pala had accused the mayor on air of plotting to kill him.

However, there are many lesser-known journalists unlike Pala, who generally become easy targets and their killings hardly cause a stir because they are rarely known recognized their communities. On May 17, 2003, unidentified men ambushed Apolinario

³⁴ Sheila S. Coronel, “Opening a Pandora’s Box: The emergence of a free press in Southeast Asia,” *Development Dialogue*, 2002:1, p. 42

“Polly” Pobeda, a commentator on radio station DWTI in Lucena City in southern Luzon, while he was driving to the studio. The suspects, who were arrested, were reportedly aides of the son of the town’s mayor, whom Pobeda frequently targeted in his broadcasts. However, the mayor denied any involvement in the killing.³⁵

Other journalists killed for their work in 2003 were: Bonifacio Gregorio, of *Dyarya Banat* newspaper in La Paz, Tarlac (July 8); Noel Villaratne, of DZJV Radio and the *Laguna Score* newspaper in Santa Cruz, Laguna (August 19); and Rico Ramirez, of DXSF Radio, Agusan del Sur (August 20). Masbate-based radio broadcaster Nelson Nadura, killed on December 2, was the seventh media person killed in 2003. The only evident link between these victims was that they were all working as low paid journalists in provincial areas, and that no one has been charged with their murders.

Taking account of this carnage, President Gloria Macapagal, in November, 2003, offered a 1 million Peso (US\$ 18,000) reward for information leading to the arrest of anyone responsible for killing a journalist in the past five years.

However, the public perception was that the announcement of the reward was more of a public relation stunt than a serious attempt to pursue justice. Such perception may be justified in the high-profile murder of broadcaster Edgar Damalerio in Mindanao in April 2002. Two witnesses identified a local police officer by name as the assailant. Police and prosecutors failed to act for months until local and international pressure finally forced a judge to issue an arrest warrant for the suspect in February 2003. But it was too late. The officer, who had been under house arrest in police headquarters, disappeared shortly after the warrant was issued and has not been seen since. Damalerio’s

³⁵ Attacks on the Press 2003: Documented cases from Asia for 2003, CPJ, <http://www.cpj.org/attacks03/asia03/phil.html>

family, who have been in hiding since the killing, have said that they have been receiving death threats because of their desire to push for justice in the case.

The killing of journalists in the Philippines, the Constitution of which guarantees the protection of press freedom, reached its most critical level since 1987 in the year 2003. The Marcos dictatorship was overthrown in 1986, but six journalists were nevertheless killed the year after. The 1987 killings, however, were then regarded as part of the transition period from dictatorship to democratic rule.

In spite of 17 years of democratic restoration, however, the killings have continued at an average of three per year. Seven journalists were killed in 2003, doubling the average since 1986. The figures of 2003 and those of 1987 are the highest ever recorded number of journalists' casualties in the Philippines.

In terms of safety, there is a huge gap between conditions for journalists working for national outlets in Manila and their colleagues in the provinces. In rural areas, members of the press must face criminal justice systems that are often at the mercy of local political bosses, as well as guerrilla warfare in such places as Mindanao — all of which becomes especially dangerous when journalists speak out against abuses and corruption.

Harassment suits

Journalists in the Metro-Manila tend to be hit by lawsuits rather than bullets. Philippine libel laws, which are patterned after that of the US, are less restrictive than those elsewhere. But this has not stopped officials and other parties who feel offended by critical reporting from filing harassment suits against journalists. Libel in the Philippines

is both a civil and a criminal offence, with penalties ranging from six months to six years. Journalists can end up in jail for what they have written, and the law provides that even publishers, business managers and the entire cast of editors in a newspaper may be included in the lawsuit.

In 1987, a *Philippine Star* columnist reported that the then President Aquino, who was also Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, had been hiding under her bed as rebel troops surrounded the Palace, in one of the bloodiest coup attempts of her first years in power. It was a pivotal moment for Philippine politics, which had been marked by persistent questioning of the ability of a former housewife to firstly run the country, and secondly command the armed forces. For "Cory" the suit demonstrated a deeply personal battle against her detractors. The lower court ruled in her favour but the Supreme Court later reversed the decision.³⁶

In March 1999, President Estrada sued the *Manila Times* for Peso 101 million in damages for reporting that he was an "unwitting godfather" to a supposedly anomalous power contract. Estrada withdrew the suit after the *Times'* owner apologised for the "anxiety" caused by the story, although the paper stood by its report.

In 1997, journalist Joy Francisco, editor of a small weekly in Cotabato, ended up in jail after a local revenue official filed a case against her. The case had not even been heard by the prosecutor but a warrant was already issued for her arrest, in clear defiance of court procedure. This was a case of "local bosses" putting pressure on the courts, and it

³⁶ Sheila S. Coronel, "The Philippines: After the Euphoria, the Problems of a Free Press," The Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, The University of Sydney, www.riap.usyd.edu.au/research/publications/coronel.htm

is journalists like Francisco — who labour out of the protection of the limelight — who are most vulnerable.

In August 2003, officials arrested well-known *Daily Tribune* publisher and editor Ninez Cacho-Olivares after she wrote an article accusing a local lawyer with ties to the President of trying to extort money from a company involved in the construction of a new terminal at the Manila international airport. The lawyer filed a criminal libel suit against her, and she was taken to a police station, where she had to appear on TV and radio to denounce the charges. In a televised interview, Ninez Olivarez said,

“I have been monitored, I have been surveyed, I have been monitored, my phones have been tapped, I have complained to the authorities. I was able to get a copy of an intelligence report that said I have been monitored and my calls were being tapped but they just deny it and say, of course, that they never did it. The whole political system, the whole military, all the democratic institutions have been so prostituted that they no longer work.”³⁷

In yet another incident in November 2003, President Macapagal criticized a journalist for airing an interview with an opposition Senator, Gregorio Honasan, who was accused of leading a coup against the President. The television reporter, Tina Perez got a presidential tongue-lashing after interviewing Senator Honasan, who denied involvement in the uprising. However, soon after, fearing a backlash from the public, Macapagal’s government made a peace offer to the journalist by giving her three dozen roses, a hug from the President and a presidential invitation to dine at the Malacanag Palace.

Sale of Manila Times

In the Philippines, the press has experienced intense political pressure to curb any criticism of the government. But Philippine journalists fiercely focused their attention on

³⁷ Transcript of interview with Ninez Olivarez, editor & publisher of *Daily Tribune* & Inday Espina-Varona, vice-chairperson of the Philippines National Union of Journalists, Asia Pacific online, <http://www.abc.net.au/ra/asiapac/programs/s929511.htm>

President Estrada's penchant for crony capitalism. As a result, Estrada had a highly contentious relationship with the media, particularly the English-language newspapers.

In March 1999, the President filed a highly publicised Peso 101 million (US\$ 2.6 million) lawsuit against the *Manila Times* — one of the country's most respected dailies — for running a story that implicated him in a government corruption scandal. After the paper issued a public retraction, the President dropped his suit. In July the same year, a real-estate magnate and crony of former President Fidel Ramos, bought the newspaper. On July 23, 1999, it ran its last edition under its former management, as the new owner vowed to hire his own staff.³⁸

The sale of the *Manila Times* may be considered as a serious blow to the Philippines press. The out-going editor-in-chief, Malou Mangahas, said that the newspaper's sale was orchestrated by a group "acting supposedly in the name and on the behalf of the (present) administration, to tame a critical press." In a press statement issued on July 20, 1999, Mangahas said,

"A tragic chapter in the life of the *Manila Times* is about to close. It is officially called an asset sale. In truth, it is death by corporate strangulation of a newspaper with an independent editorial staff. In fact, it unfolds after a group of persons closely identified with President Estrada, has allegedly acquired — or is conspiring to acquire, but into or buy out — several print and broadcast media agencies."³⁹

However, the pressure on Estrada continued as another English newspaper, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, revealed that the President was applying financial pressure to silence reporters critical of his administration. Billionaire business tycoon Lucio Tan, one of Estrada's close associates, then, reportedly threatened an advertising boycott against the newspaper.

³⁸ Kevin McGahan, "Southeast Asia's press under siege," *Asia Times* online, <http://www.atimes.com>

³⁹ On the sale of the *Manila Times*, press statement of Malou Mangahas, Editor-in-chief, the *Manila Times*, July 1999

Pressure from advertisers

Given the constitutional and legal protection that the press in democratic regimes enjoy, leaders in the country have had to resort to underhand methods to control the media, including taking over the ownership of media companies, pressurizing media owners or initiating the withdrawal of advertising from 'uncooperative' news outlets.

The threat of advertisement withdrawals in retaliation for adverse reporting is quite common. Television, which sucks up the biggest chunk of advertising revenues, tends to be the most cautious about incurring the ire of advertisers.

One of the biggest advertisers is the beer and tobacco magnate Lucio Tan whose firms spent some Peso 1.6 billion in advertising in 1997. TV advertising managers say that Tan's policy is to air commercials only in programs considered friendly to the tycoon — a man who has been accused of tax evasion and of being a Marcos "crony". In 1996, when ABS-CBN anchor Korina Sanchez read aloud a news report detailing tax evasion charges against Tan, the businessman's tobacco company promptly pulled out its ads from her program.

Tan's case is not unique. In 1997, the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), which for years ran a profitable telecommunications monopoly, withdrew its ads from a TV program, which ran a story on how the firm was delaying interconnection with rival telephone companies. PLDT also pulled out its ads from *Business World* in 1993, after the paper ran critical reports about its monopolistic practices.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Sheila S. Coronel, "The Philippines: After the Euphoria, the Problems of a Free Press," The Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, The University of Sydney, www.riap.usyd.edu.au/research/publications/coronel.htm

Restrictions on information access

The Philippine Constitution recognises “the right of the people to information of matters of public concern.” It states that “access to official records and documents, and papers pertaining to official acts, transactions, or decisions as well as to government research data used as basis for policy development, shall be afforded the citizen.” Other pertinent laws guarantee public disclosure of information and make it the duty of public officials to release information.

As a whole, Filipino officials tend to be more co-operative about releasing documents and information than many officials elsewhere in the region. But there remain problematic areas. Officials are often not co-operative about releasing sensitive information, especially in the provinces. They normally delay disclosure for weeks or months or else provide only incomplete documents.

The quality of information that is made public often falls short of journalists’ expectations. Partly this is because government record-keeping is bad, but it is also because having disclosure laws are sometimes a disincentive to filing complete or truthful information. For example, all government officials are required to file statements of assets and to release these to the public. But because journalists have used these statements to write reports on corruption or the accumulation of ill-gotten wealth, officials have tended to fudge their declarations or to leave out assets that may rouse the suspicions of inquisitive reporters.⁴¹

Moreover, while there is a constitutional provision that guarantees disclosure, there is no freedom of information law that will ensure that the constitutional mandate is

⁴¹ Ibid.

implemented. There is no system of appeal if requests for disclosure are turned down. Recourse can only be made through the courts, which means getting mired in expensive and time-consuming litigation. The Philippine judicial system is clogged with cases and lawsuits often take years before they are settled.

THE OVERALL PICTURE

Today, the press in the Philippines has emerged as an important player in the political arena. Journalists are feared by politicians because they have succeeded in uncovering corruption, the abuse of power and assorted malfeasance. They are also relentlessly wooed because a bad press can mean the end of a political career. Policies have been changed, reforms initiated and corrupt officials — including Presidents — ousted, partly because of media exposés. The power of the press has also been bolstered by the new Constitution that provides broad guarantees of press freedom and right to information, allowing journalists to report on areas that were previously taboo. In addition, democratically elected legislatures have enacted laws that allow both journalists and ordinary citizens much more access to information on government policy. Now there are laws in the Philippines that compel officials to make a full disclosure of their assets and to make such declarations public.

However, there also exists a grim aspect to the scenario, as is apparent from the above discussion, there have been many instances when the press has been suppressed or used for vested interests. This brings us back to the fundamental question of how free the press actually is in the post-Marcos democratic era. Also, it must be noted that although the press must be free from government control, yet freedom from government

is only the first step. Making freedom meaningful in terms of democratic growth is more difficult but just as urgent. As is all aspects of rights and freedoms, press freedom requires responsibility in practice.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The end of the Cold War has prompted Francis Fukuyama to argue that liberal democracy constitutes the “end of history,” “the end point of mankind’s revolution” and “the final form of government. However, his observation of liberal democracy is oblivious to the authoritarian roots of a particular democracy. The fact is that the fight for democracy may be considered to be an ongoing and never-ending process and not a finished product, for it can be won and lost if not guarded with vigilance. Likewise, the same can be said about Philippines, where the institutions of representative democracy have emerged after a popular uprising against a decade of dictatorial domination. The country after the overthrow of authoritarian regime and instalment of elected government has seen an expansion of media outlets, greater freedom from government control, and a growing sense of professional autonomy. In such a country if the government proves incapable of resolving public grievances within the institutionalized framework, the newly-installed power structure may face challenges (in the form of military coups or popular uprisings) from below.

In such a scenario, both the media and the democratic government have a stake in the survival of constitutional democracy. But at the same time, the media must perform its function as a social and political critic or a ‘watchdog’. But if the government is weak and totters from crisis to crisis, as has been in post-Marcos Philippines, a negative adversarial posture by the media will deliver body blows to it. On the other hand, if the media shuts its eyes to the failings of the administration, then it abandons its primary role as a social critic. In western democracies, especially the US (on which the Philippine democratic set-up is based) where the powers of state are shared between the Presidency,

Congress and the judicial system, the equilibrium has been established such that an adversarial press can contribute to maintaining the balance. So in the democratic processes of stable democracies, no matter how critical the media is, the worst damage its criticism can do is to bring about the resignation of a head of state, or contribute to the electoral defeat of an unpopular party. The worst fate that awaits official savagely criticized by the press is to lose office. A new election can lead to a change in office but the system of governance remains. But in a country like the Philippines, which has a past of years of colonial past in addition to an authoritarian regime, the alternative to a democratic system will be a military junta. Therefore, irresponsible criticism in the media can weaken the government and make it vulnerable to further takeover attempts. However owing to the fact that different governments in the country, especially, the Estrada and the present Arroyo governments have been found deficient in providing visionary and decisive leadership, and failed to demonstrate their competence, the argument that it must be supported at all costs because it is democratic, seems unconvincing.

Therefore the role of press, one of the pillars in a democratic set-up cannot be ignored. For, if it's responsibilities are subdued, on the basis of the argument that a hard-hitting press may result in bringing back authoritarian rule, it will lose its very character cease to be a watchdog of the society and an instrument to put forth the voice of the masses. However, the Philippines press, which is touted to be bold, free and hard-hitting, and the envy of many Southeast Asian countries, has also experienced intense political pressure to curb any criticism of the government. An example may be President Estrada's highly-publicised lawsuit against the *Manila Times*, which eventually led to the sale of

the newspaper. This was a serious blow to the country's press, which is considered to be one of the most freewheeling.

That the country's press is under siege even after authoritarian controls have been dismantled is evident of the fact that journalism continues to be a dangerous profession, even today. An example is the number of journalists killed in the country — 44 reported since 1986. Most of the killings have taken place outside Manila as there is less tolerance of critical reporting in the provinces, particularly in areas where political bosses or clans have ruled for decades. This brutal repression of journalists in the country has led to the removal of the Philippines from the 'free' category of the annual Freedom House survey. It was a position that the country had enjoyed for the past six years.

Although the power of the press in the country has been bolstered by a new Constitution that provides guarantees of press freedom and right to information, allowing journalists to report on areas that were previously taboo, leaders and high officials use sophisticated pressure tactics — generally threatening financial ruin — to intimidate the press. This trend is especially prevalent in Metro-Manila. As discussed in earlier chapters the major dailies and broadcast networks in Manila are owned by the giants of Philippine business who operate a wide range of interlocking corporate concerns, including banking, manufacturing, telecommunication and real estate. And due to the fact that business in the Philippines is often subject to whimsical government regulations, media owners who also run other business empires are vulnerable to government pressure. In fact, the Philippine Presidents have discovered that ownership patterns is the chink in the armour of the media in the country and have taken advantage of this vulnerability to put the squeeze on recalcitrant segments of the press. So, given the constitutional and legal

protection that the press in democratic regimes enjoy, leaders have had to resort to underhand methods to control the media, including taking over the ownership of media companies, pressurizing media owners or initiating the withdrawal of advertising from 'uncooperative' news outlets. An illustration of the usage of such pressure tactics is the highly contentious relationship that President Estrada had with the media. Philippine journalists had fiercely focused their attention on Estrada's penchant for crony capitalism. As a result, Estrada threatened tax audits and other government sanctions against the owners of critical media outlets in 1999 and 2000, which then toned down their reporting on the corruption and other wrongdoing of his administration.

It is indeed a matter of grave concern if the media is so humbled by the whims and fancies of heads-of-state in the name of government regulations in a country that is considered to have the most freewheeling press in Southeast Asia. Because even though constitutionally protected, the media is being repressed by subtle means and therefore unable to use its freedom to its fullest. Democratic governments in the country have not proved themselves to be more honest than their authoritarian predecessors. They are aware of the power and reach of the press and therefore still consider and even use it as a propaganda machine and try to reign its boldness in name of law. For instance, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has used the global war against terrorism, after the September 11, 2001 terror attack on the US, as a justification for cracking down on left-wing political parties and organizations. She has also proposed anti-terrorism laws, which, if implemented, will restrict the media, the right to information, and free expression. While these tough laws are likely to face rough sailing in the legislatures of these countries, they

nonetheless raise the possibility that more severe restraints on discussion and dissent would be put in place.

Corruption and other forms of wrongdoing in the political sphere are always hotly debated issues in the media. As the killings of journalists and slapping of lawsuits on the journalists in the country show, this can be a matter of life and death. This is especially the case when societies break out of authoritarian mould, and previously repressed social forces, including the media, are unleashed and have to satiate the public's hunger for news about the newly-instaled system of government. The same has happened in the case of the Philippines where Presidents have had to resort to underhand means to reduce the sting of the media.

Democracy itself brings forth many changes, such as the decentralization of government and the privatization and liberalization of the economy, which create new opportunities for malfeasance for many more players. During an authoritarian regime, corruption is generally centralized, for example, it was basically concentrated in the hands of Marcos and his kin and cronies. The fall of authoritarian rulers and the establishment of democratic institutions — freely elected executives and legislatures, independent judiciaries and bureaucracies that have legislative oversight — mean that the enforcement for law, crafting of policy and, in general, the running of affairs of state are shared by various branches of the government. The devolution of powers to local governments that are inevitably part of the package of democratic reforms means that local officials have more powers and also more revenues under their control, as the flow of public funds from the center to the provinces is increased. And unlike in the past — there will be many more hands to grease if laws, policies and decisions on the use of

public money are to be skewed in favour of certain interests. In democracies the various branches of the government and many interests associated with various political factions compete with each other for power and influence — and the perks that come with them. The media is often the arena for their competition and corruption charges are the ammunition in the battle.

Such a scenario has led to a problem of credibility that although is not borne out of repression of press freedoms but nonetheless affects its very character of being a medium of free speech. Thus, the media's effectiveness as a corruption watchdog in Philippines is hampered by credibility problems. And as long as such problems reflect in the contents of the various mediums of communication, it will not be considered authentic in its portrayal of the administration or the society. Such credibility problems partly stem from the sensationalism and the superficiality that often characterize daily reporting. The unhealthy competition among many rival media establishments is to a great extent responsible for stories being blown out of proportion or sometimes even manufactured from scratch just to justify the sensational headlines. Such a problem in the Philippines also arises because journalists, who evolve from the competitive media market scenario that emerges to satisfy the hunger for news that comes after the fall of authoritarianism, are generally poorly trained. So the reportage on corruption, economics and politics in general, often lacks context and depth. Rarely do stories on corruption report who gains and who loses, much less what can be done in terms of institutional or social reforms. Corruption charges are seldom investigated to the full. Reporters often do not dig enough and remain content to write only about allegations and counter allegations that officials make against each other. At times, even honest officials are unjustly

pilloried by the mob mentality of an overzealous press. Moreover few journalists have the skills to report on sophisticated forms of corruption that emerge with economic growth and the integration of local economies in the global market. Given the range and the depth of corruption in Philippines the media just has not been able to report enough.

Today, the thrust of the Philippine press is not towards achieving particular development goals or towards promoting public or private development efforts. Major newspapers are engaged in primarily supporting the greater economic or political interests of their stockholders. On a daily basis, they provide the news and information with the greatest public appeal and potential to stimulate sales and increase profits. In doing so, they conveniently slant news and information in a manner that assists the families or business allies of their owners. Newspaper ownership in the country is a symbol of political and economic power, and as such is a coveted status symbol. Large business interests have struggled since 1986 to gain control of national dailies even though most of these newspapers lose money or provide only small profit returns. Such economic control of the press allows the oligarchy to ward off existing and potential challengers and to protect its other business and political interests. In Patria Amor's words, "newspapers serve to protect the interest of the big business groups and their owners. With newspapers to back them, they are seldom harassed by the government or their competitors."

Although economic and intellectual elites maintain economic control over the Philippine press, both in the rural and urban sectors, they generally do not actively manipulate news content. This is because, there is not much need for them to with

journalists editors and reporters being unlikely to jeopardize their jobs by going beyond the ideological and editorial bounds that the publishers have implicitly set.

Because of such inherent problems, the press is also used easily. Since the media is a part of the larger society in which corruption has become an integral element, it has encroached into the realms of the media as well. So, corruption is also rampant in the press. People with certain vested interests easily buy journalists to defend themselves or attack their rivals. In 1998, the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) polled 100 reporters and found that 71 had been offered money by their sources. Of these, 33 per cent admitted they took the money, with 22 per cent keeping the cash for themselves, and 11 per cent turning it over to their editors.

Such constraints on the 'free' press will definitely have consequences for the democratic development in the country. Thus far freed from past restrictions, the media in the country has been like attack dogs unleashed against erring officials and corrupt institutions. However, much remains to be investigated. All over the country, scandals have hounded freely elected Presidents, and other democratic representatives. The rot in bureaucracies has now come under public scrutiny. The police and the armed forces, once feared and untouchables institutions, are also being opened up, the corruption at their core laid bare. In a clear departure from the past, when the media kept mum about wrongdoing, especially those in high places, newspapers in Manila today regularly report corruption scandals. It is true that media exposés have contributed in ousting corrupt officials and raising public awareness about the problems of governance. For example, journalistic investigation of the assets of President Joseph Estrada in 2000 provided the initial evidence that was used in his impeachment trial, which ended in his ouster after a

'people power' uprising in January 2001. In the People Power 1 revolution against Marcos also the media had played a crucial role to bring down his authoritarian regime. Although, both the cases brought about a positive change in the nation's democratic set-up, the fact cannot be ignored that the media had been used by the military and other parties with self-interests. Therefore, even though media exposés in country have ousted even Presidents and brought about a change in governance system, they have not resulted in bringing long-lasting reforms. It is apparent from this that the media in the country is definitely under a cloud.

Therefore, apart from the covert state repressions and other pressure tactics exerted in the post-Marcos years, there are other persistent problems hindering the Philippine press from giving unbiased, non-partisan and authentic information. These include: elites, who treat the press as an extension of their business empires, owning majority of the newspapers in the country; concentration of a large number of English dailies in Metro Manila, which increases extreme and unhealthy competition; too many English-language dailies and too few in Tagalog and the provinces, thereby limiting the readership to only English-educated masses in a country which has a very high rate of illiteracy; nature of reportage, which is less development oriented and more sensational-based aimed at creating an impact and increasing readership; and finally, the infiltration of corruption into media, making journalists vulnerable to various perks and incentives in exchange of a certain tilt in their reportage. These problems not only have an adverse effect on the news content but also restrain the freedom of the press in performing its actual functions in a democracy. And owing to these obstructions, the media in the country is not being able to deliver as per public expectations in terms of guiding public

policies, shaping political agenda or significantly influencing election outcome — the most basic functions of a free press in a democracy. Thus, it finally contributes to spoiling the country's reputation of having the 'freest' press in Southeast Asia in terms of press freedom.

So, it may be rightly said that the media is a hydra or a many-headed beast. Many sectors of the press do promote democratic reforms, because they generally believe in them and know that the news business thrives best in democracies. Yet for various reasons — the interests of the proprietors, the sympathies of individual editors and journalists, or the payoffs and pressures from vested interests — other sectors align themselves with the more retrograde elements of the democratic polity, whether these are racist, extremist or criminal and corrupt.

However, in spite of such problems crippling the Philippines press, there exists a positive aspect. Journalists' organisations, press councils and press institutes in the country are attempting to fill up the slack in terms of training, correcting ethical problems and enforcing code of ethics. A positive step towards this direction is the establishment of the PCIJ (Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism), an independent non-profit news organisation in 1989. Founded by nine Filipino journalists who realized the need to hone journalistic skills to go beyond day-to-day reportage and to provide more depth and context to news reports, PCIJ attempts to address many of the above shortcomings and constraints of a free press. It does this by conducting training and seminar workshops for beat reporters.

Another corrective to media abuse may be the plurality of media's interests. Press proprietors may have their own agenda, but even they cannot be too partisan. Otherwise

their rivals will expose them and they would lose their credibility and their ability to survive in the competitive market. Therefore the need to play up to the market has some advantages, as demonstrated during the Estrada crisis in the Philippines, when the media outlets which had once feared the President found their audiences turning to more daring news organizations. Faced with the choice of supporting a presidency in obvious decline or letting go of their market share, these media companies opted to preserve their profits by loosening the controls on their journalists. Media organizations, therefore, must constantly balance, varied, and at times, even contradictory interests if they are to survive.

The media is only one among the many institutions responsible for building democracy and bringing about good governance. However, it is a well known fact that media overlaps other functional areas of democracy and governance. Support for media may yield results in governance activities, particularly those related to decentralization, anti-corruption and citizen participation in the policy process. The rule of the law may be further institutionalized by support for an independent media that keeps a check on the judiciary, reports on the courts, and promotes a legal enabling environment suitable for press freedom. Free and fair elections conducted through transparent processes require a media sector which gives candidates equal access and reports the relevant issues in a timely, objective manner.

In many respects, the corruption that gnaws at democratic politics is rooted in flawed elections. Ironically elections are supposed to be the heart of democracy as they are the means by which citizens have a direct say on who will rule over them. The persistence of money politics, however, wraps citizens' choice and skews the playing

field in favour of the wealthy. In the Philippines, it was estimated that a presidential candidate in 1998 needed at least US\$ 50 million for a serious campaign. Vote-buying is also rampant, but election laws including caps on campaign-spending, are ignored or breached. The scandals that hounded President Fidel Ramos were mostly because of the diversion of public funds to finance campaigns of the ruling party. The media can help arrest such impunities. But so far, the reporting on the money that flows during elections has not made a dent. This may be partly because the citizens see nothing wrong with selling their votes. Mostly, voters do not think of elections as a democratic exercise and they do not realize the consequences of selling their ballots. Unfortunately, the media in the country has not succeeded in changing this perspective.

The problem lies not just within the press or the restraints on its freedom. A press that is borne out of an authoritarian society has to evolve in a democratic set-up. For, democracy brings with it new processes and new structures whose workings need to be explained and appreciated. They also have to be watched although their sheer reach and complexities can be mind-boggling. In the Philippines, everyone from the President to the minor bureaucrats is required to make a public disclosure of their assets. This means that hundreds of thousands of disclosures must be monitored. Congress alone has 220 members and keeping track of the assets of each and everybody is too big a task for a single news organization to take on.

So, there is definitely a need to focus. But even then the task of monitoring public life and public officials is not easy, especially when news organizations are still uncertain about their freedoms and still in the process of defining ethical and standards, even while having to survive in a ruthlessly competitive market.

Finally, it may be concluded that the press in the Philippines is definitely under a cloud. Although the government regulations and the Constitution do not restrict it, various pressure tactics and internal malpractices have restrained its freedom to a great extent in the country. Therefore, it is not being able to perform its functions and role in the country's democratization process properly. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the media cannot even afford to maintain a very adversarial stance against the government, for there is always a threat of a change in the system of governance altogether. So, the media in the country has to walk a tightrope between not being too critical of the government and yet maintaining its credibility and not becoming a mouthpiece for a certain party or individual. The media ownership patterns and the poor quality of political reporting have also done nothing to help the situation. Therefore, it can only be said that the Philippines is an evolving democracy and to further strengthen the process of democratization it has to strengthen its most basic pillar — the press. The media, on its part, must be more responsible in putting its freedom onto practice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Assisting Democracy: The Philippines Free Press, Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) Documents, Centre for Democracy and Governance (Philippines), June 1999

Attacks on the Press 2003: Documented cases from Asia for 2003, CPJ, <http://www.cpj.org/attacks03/asia03/phil.html>

Economic Memorandum; Republic of Philippines; November 1984

Freedom House annual survey report

On the sale of the Manila Times, press statement of Malou Mangahas, editor-in-chief, the *Manila Times*, July 1999

Philippine Media accuses government of stifling press freedom, transcript of interview with Ninez Olivarez, editor & publisher of *Daily Tribune* & Inday Espina-Varona, vice-chairperson of the Philippines National Union of Journalists, Asia Pacific online, <http://www.abc.net.au/ra/asiapac/programs/s929511.htm>

"*Philippines History — Significant Events and Impact*", US Agency for International Development (USAID) documents

The Philippines: An agenda for Adjustment and Growth, World Bank Report, March 30, 1984

"*The Role Of Media In Democracy: A Strategic Approach*, Center for Democracy and Governance," US Agency for International Development (USAID) documents, June 1999

SECONDARY SOURCES:

BOOKS:

Albright Madeleine Korbelt, *Poland: The role of the press in political change*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, Washington DC 1983

Alger Deane E., *The Media and Politics*, Prentice Hall International., Eaglewood Cliffs, New Jersey, US, 1989

Asian Communication Handbook, Singapore, 2001

- Ball Alan R., *Modern Politics and Government*, Macmillan Press Ltd., London, UK, 1978
- Banlaoi Rommel C. and Clarita R. Carlos, *Political Parties in the Philippines: From 1900 to the present*, Konard-Adenauer-Stiftung, Manila, Philippines, 1997
- Barker Ernest, *Principles of Social and Political Theory*, Oxford University Press, London, UK, 1961
- Bernard C. Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy*, Princeton University Press, 1963
- Bosch Vanden, *Changing Face of Southeast Asia*, University of Kentucky Press, US, 1966
- Bresnan John (ed), *Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, US, 1986
- Carlyle Thomas, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, Chapman & Hall, England, 1907
- Case William, *Politics in Southeast Asia: Democracy or Less*, Curzon Press, Surrey, UK, 2002
- Constantino Renato, *A History of the Philippines: From the Spanish Colonisation to the Second World War*, Monthly Review Press, New York, London, 1975
- Cook and Morgan, *Participatory Democracy*, N.Y. Harper & Row, US, 1971
- Curran James, *Media and Power*, Routledge, London, UK, 2002
- Friedrich Carl J., *Constitutional Government and Democracy*, 4th Edition, Waltham, Massachusetts, US, 1968
- Funston John, *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2001
- Gaubha O.P. *An Introduction to Political Theory*, Macmillan India Ltd, New Delhi, India, 1981
- Glasgow University Media Group, *War and Peace*, Open University Press, Keynes, 1985
- Gleek Lewis E. Jr., *American Institutions in the Philippines (1898-1941)*, R.P. Garcia Publishing Cp., Quezon Blvd., Philippines, 1976
- Graber Doris A., *Media Power in Politics*, Macmillan India Ltd., New Delhi, 1994

Gunaratne Shelton A (ed.), *Handbook of the Media in Asia*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, London, 2000

Halle Louis J., *The United States Acquires the Philippines: Consensus vs. Reality*, University Press of America, US, 1985

Heeman Patrick and Lanontagne. *The Southeast Asia Handbook*, Fitzory Dear Born Publishers, London, England, 2001

Huntington Samuel P., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1991

Kolb Eugene J.A., *Framework for Political Analysis*, Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey, US, 1978

Kothari Rajni (ed), *State and Nation Building: A Third World Perspective*, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd, Bombay, India, 1976

Kornhauser William, *The Politics of Mass Society*, Free Press, New York, 1959

Kramnick Isaac & Fredrick M. Watkins, *The New Age of Ideology — Political Thought, 1750 to the Present*, Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey, US, 1979

Latif A. (ed.) *Walking the tightrope: Press freedom and professional standards in Asia*, AMIC, Singapore

Lent John A., *Mass Communication in the Philippines: Before 1811, After 1966*, Philippine Press Institute, Manila, 1971

Lent John A., *The Asian Newspapers; Reluctant Revolution* (First Edition), The Iowa State University Press, US, 1971

Leonard Davis, *The Philippines: People, Poverty and Politics*, Macmillan, London, 1987

Lichtenberg Judith (ed.) *Democracy and the Mass Media*, Cambridge University Press, US, 1990

Lineberry Robert, *Government in America*, Second Edition, Little Brown, US, 1983

Linz Juan J. and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition: Southern Europe, South America and Post Communist Europe*, John Hopkins University Press, US, 1996

Lippmann Walter, *Public Opinion*, Macmillan, US, 1922

MacIver R.M., *The Modern State*, Oxford University Press, England, 1966

- MacIver R.M., *The Modern State*, Oxford University Press, London, England, 1966
- MacIver R.M., *The Web of Government, The Free Press*, New York, US, 1965
- Macpherson C.B., *Democratic Theory — Essays in Retrieval*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, England, 1975
- Macpherson C.B., *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy*, Oxford University Press, England, 1977
- Magno, Alexander R. "Technocratic Authoritarianism and the Dilemmas of Dependent Development", In Godfrey Gunatilleke, Neelan Tiruchelram, and Radhika Coomaraswamy (eds.), *Ethical Dilemmas of Development in Asia*, Lexington Books, D.C. Heath and Company, Massachusetts, 1983
- Majul Cesar A., *Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution*, University of the Philippines Press, Quezon City, Manila, 1967
- Manglapus Raul S. *Philippines: The Silenced Democracy*, Orbis Books, New York, US, 1966
- Maslog C., *Communication values and society*, Philippine Association of Communication Educators, Manila, 1992
- Maslog C., *The Metro Manila Press*, Philippine Press Institute, Manila, 1994
- McDonald Charles I., *The Marcos File*, San Francisco Publishers, US, 1987
- Meyer, Milton W., *Diplomatic History of the Philippines Republic*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, US, 1965
- Miller W., *Media and Voters*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, England, 1991
- Nemenzo Francisco and May R.J. (Eds.), *The Philippines after Marcos*, Croom Helm, London and St. Martin's, New York, 1985
- Pitkin Hanna, *The Concept of Representation*, University of California Press, US, 1967
- Pringle Robert, *Indonesia and the Philippines: American Interests in Island Southeast Asia*, Columbia University Press, US, 1974
- Ray Hiebert, Robert Jones, John Lorenz and Ernest Lotito (eds.), *The Political Image Merchants: Strategies in the New Policies*, Washington Acropolis Books, US, 1971
- Rees John, *Equality*, Pall Mall, London, England, 1971

Rosalinda Pineda-Ofreneo, *The Manipulated Press: A History of Philippine Journalism since 1945*, Cacho Hermanos, Manila, Philippines, 1984

Rosenberg David, *Marcos and Martial Law in the Philippines*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1979

Roy Amal and Bhattacharya Mohit, *Political Theory: Ideas and Institutions*, The World Press Pvt. Ltd, Calcutta, India, 1983

Sabine George H. and Thomas L., *A History of Political Theory*, Dryden Press, Illinois, US, 1973

Sartori Giovanni, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, Vol.1, Chatham House, New Jersey, US, 1987

Stanley, Peter W., *A Nation in the Making: The Philippines and The United States, 1899-1921*, Harvard University Press, US, 1984

Taylor (ed.), *The Politics of Elections in Southeast Asia*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 1996

Taylor Carson, *History of the Philippine Press*, Bulletin Publishing, Manila, 1927, p.II.

Teodoro L.V. Jr. & R.V. Kabatay, *Mass Media laws and regulations in the Philippines*, AMIC, Singapore, 1998

Thompson Mark R., *The Anti-Marcos Struggle: Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines*, Yale University Press, US, 1995

Valenzuela Jesus Z., *History of Journalism in the Philippine Islands*, Jesus Z Valenzuela, Manila, 1933, p.28.

Vandenboso Amry and Butwule Richard, *The Changing Face of Southeast Asia*, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, US, 1967

Veloso Jose and Guzman Paul P. De., *Foundation and Dynamics of Philippino Government*, Bookman, Manila, Philippines, 1964

Venkateswaran K.S. (compiled) *Media monitors in Asia*, AMIC, Singapore, 1996

Vermani R.C. *An Introduction to Political Theory*, Geetanjali Publishing House, New Delhi, India, 2000

Waddell J.R.E., *An Introduction to Southeast Asian Politics*, The Griffin Press, Adelaide, Australia, 1972

Watts Duncan, *Political Communication Today*, Manchester University Press, US, 1997

JOURNALS, PERIODICALS & OTHER ARTICLES

Antonio Ma. Nieva, "Media and the US Factor", *Philippines Despatch*, Manila, 17-24 July 1987

Bourdreau Vincent, "Diffusing Democracy? People power in Indonesia and the Philippines", *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 31, 1999

Calderon A.B., "Pioneers of the Philippine Press", *Examiner*, June 10, 1963

Celdran David, "The Philippines — SMS and citizenship," *Development Dialogue*, 2002:1

Chua Yvonne T., *Southeast Asia's Uneven Information landscape*, *Development Dialogue*, 2002:1, 2002

Chuan Lee Chin, "Beyond Oriental Discourses: Media and Democracy in Asia", *Javnost: The Public*, 2001

Coronel S.S., "Media ownership and control in the Philippines," *Media Development*, 45 (4), 1998

Coronel Sheila S., "Opinionated, Rambunctious and Powerful", *Nieman Reports*, Vol 50, Fall, 1996

Coronel Sheila S., *New Media Played a Role in the People's Uprising: Alternative Forms of Communication Forced Mainstream Media to do their Job*, *Nieman Reports*, Vol. 56, Summer 2002

Coronel Sheila S., "The Philippines: After the Euphoria, the Problems of a Free Press," The Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, The University of Sydney, www.riap.usyd.edu.au/research/publications/coronel.htm

Coronel Sheila, "The Philippine Press — free and rambunctious", Australian Centre for Independent Journalism, November 1994

Coronel Shiela S., "Opening a Pandora's Box: The Emergence of a Free Press in Southeast Asia", *Development Dialogue*, 2002:1, 2002

David Arnold and David Gold., "The Facilitation Effect of Social Environment" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36:176-87 (Summer 1972)
DepartmentofPoliticalScience@admu.edu.ph

Dresang Joel, "Authoritarian Controls and News Media in the Philippines", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, June 1985

- Dworkin Ronald, "*Devaluing Liberty*", *Index on Censorship*, September 1988
- Eng Peter, "*The media and democratization in Southeast Asia*," *Current History*, December 1997
- Eng Peter, "*Fear, Journalism and democracy*", *Nieman Reports*, Volume 50, Fall, 1996
- Eng Peter, "*Media Rising: How the Press is Bolstering Democracy*", *Columbian Journalism Review*, Vol.36, May-June 1997
- Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 1, 2000
- Garrido Marco, "*Philippines: Between democracy and disaster*", Paper presented at International Seminar on Systems for the protection of Traditional Knowledge, organized by Ministry of Commerce, Government of India & UNCTAD, New Delhi, April 3-5, 2002
- Gonzalez Hernando, "*Mass Media and the Spiral of Silence: The Philippines from Marcos to Aquino*", *Journal of Communication* 37(4), 1988
- Hernandez, Carolina G., "*Constitutional Authoritarianism and the Prospects of Democracy in the Philippines*", *Journal of International Affairs*, 38:2 (Winter 1985)
- Hernandez Carolina G., "*The Philippine Military: Under Marcos and Beyond*", *Third World Quarterly*, October 1985
- Hernandez, Carolina G., "*The Philippine Military and Civilian Control: Under Marcos and Beyond*", *Third World Quarterly*, 7:4, October 1985
- Heuvel J. Vanden & E.E. Dennis, *The unfolding lotus: East Asia's changing media*, The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, New York, 1993
- Holfilena C.F., "*News for Sale, The corruption of the Philippine media*," The Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism and the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility, Manila, 1999
<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itggic>
- Independent Media's Role In Building Democracy* by Fredrick W. Schieck, Deputy Administrator, US Agency for International Development
- Jonathan Alter, "*A Maze of Double Standards*", *Newsweek*, January 11, 1988
- Juanillo Napoleon K. Jr. & Clifford W. Scherer, "*A Paradigm Shift? Indigenous Media and Development in the Southeast Asian Context*", *Asian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1993

- Katigbak Puri, "*The Press and the Fil-American War*", *Manila Chronicle Magazine*, January 23, 1963
- Kolater Jonathan, "*Uprising in the Philippines: Could There Have Been a Revolution Without Television?*", TV Guide, May 31, 1986.
- Labrador Mel C., "*The Philippines in 2001*", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLII, No. 1, Jan./Feb. 2002
- Lande, Carl H. and Hooley Richard, "*Aquino Takes Charge*", *Foreign Affairs*, 64:5 1986
- Magno, Alexander R., (ed.) *The Nation in Crisis: A University Inquires into the Present*, University of the Philippines Press, Quezon City, 1984
- Magno, Alexander R., "*The Succession Crisis: An artificial Order Disintegration*", *Diliman Review*, March-April 1984
- Malay Armando, "*Press Censorship in the Philippines*", *Saturday Mirror Magazine*, May 25, 1957
- Manning Robert, "*The Philippines in Crisis*", *Foreign Affairs*, 63:2, Winter 1984/85
- Marlay Ross, "*Is Ferdinand Marcos a political Genius?*" *Pilipinas. A Journal of Philippines Studies*, 5 (Fall 1985)
- McGahan Kevin, "*Southeast Asia's press under siege*," *Asia Times* online, www.atimes.com/media
- Media And Transformative Leadership*; Seminar paper presented, CAPWIP and CMFR, November 8-10, 2001
- Meinardus Ronald, "*The Political Impact of the Internet*", *Business World Internet Edition*, Manila, March 26, 1003 & March 27, 2003
- Munro Ross, "*The New Khmer Rouge*," *Commentary*, December 1985
- Noelle-Neuman Elisabeth, "*The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion*", *Journal of Communication*, 23 Spring 1974
- Putzel James, "*A muddled democracy — 'People Power' Philippine Style*", Working Paper Series, Development Studies Institute, London School of Economic and Political Science, England, 2001
- Quezon Manuel L. III, "*Then and now*", Paper presented at International Seminar on Systems for the protection of Traditional Knowledge, organized by Ministry of Commerce, Government of India & UNCTAD, New Delhi, April 3-5, 2002

Qurino Carlos, "First Newsletter in the Philippines", *Journal of History*, Nos.3-4, 1957

Randall Vicky, *The Media and Democratisation in the Third World*, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 14, No.3 1993

Roberts John, "Bush's Philippines model for Iraqi 'democracy'," World Socialist Web Site, October 29, 2003

Rood Steven, "Decentralization, Democracy, and Development" ,
www.asiasociety.org/publication/philippines

Romero Segundo E., "The Philippines in 1997: Weathering Political and Economic Turmoil", *Asian Survey*, Vol.38, No.2 (Feb. 1998)

Said Tribuana, "The Importance of Press Freedom", *The Journal of Development Communication*, No. 1, N\Vol. 11, June 2000

Selochan Viberto, "The Military and the Fragile Democracy of the Philippines",
www.espress.anu.edu.au/mdap/mobile_devices.com

Shafer Richard, "Press Freedom in the Philippines", *Media Asia*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 1991

Simon Sheldon W., "Southeast Asia", *Strategic Asia*, 2001-02

Sussman Gerald, "Telecommunications Technology: Transnationalizing the New Philippine Information Order," *Media Culture & Society* no. 4, 1982

Sussman Gerald, *Politics and the Press: The Philippines since Marcos*, *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 22 (1), 34-43, Jan-March 1990

"The deepening of democracy", Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, Loyola Schools, Ateneo de Manila, February 15, 2001

Tichenor Phillip, "Agenda-Setting: Media as Political King Makers?", *Journalism Quarterly* 59, No.3 (1982)

Whittaker Ron, "The Broadcast Media's Growing Role in International Politics,"
www.internetcampus.com/intmed2.htm

Zabradoa Mel C., "The Philippines in 2001", *Asian Survey*, Vol.XLII, No.1, Jan./Feb. 2002

NEWSPAPERS

Advocate, July 15, 1988

Deadline, September 1952

Del Superior Gobierno, No. 15

El Heraldo de Iloilo, January 1, 1898

Journal of Bradely

Manila Standard, November 7, 2001

Manuscript in *Manila Times* Morgue.

New Zurcher Zeitung, July 5, 1988

Philippine Daily Inquirer, January 22, & February 25, 2001

Philippine Free Press, September 27, 1947

Pinoy Times, June 17-27, 2001

Times, March 17, 1986

The Australian, January 23, 2001

The Manila Times

The New York Times

The Observer, October 22, 1988

The Philippine Star, January 19, 2001

Washington Post



Diss

306.2309599

P954 Ro



Th11432