

POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL CLANS AND THE PROSPECTS FOR PHILIPPINE DEMOCRACY

EMMANUEL C. LALLANA*

Once again, the formation of political parties has taken center stage in Philippine politics. The furor over the formation of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP) had barely died when the long-expected defection of Vice-President Laurel to the opposition occurred. The Union for National Action (UNA) would have been one of those many forgettable and pitiful attempts at opposition unity but for the fact that its establishment finally formalized the alliance between Laurel, the man who stepped aside in the 1986 snap elections in favor of Cory Aquino, and Juan Ponce Enrile, the leader of the military mutiny that sparked the February revolution and the lone opposition member of the Philippine Senate. The LDP and the UNA initiatives are significant because they are demonstrations of the continuity and transformation in Philippine politics.

An interesting and important feature in the formation of the LDP as a super-Cory party is Mrs. Aquino's adamant refusal to be actively identified with it. Time and again she has insisted that she is not interested in forming her own party. The drive to form the LDP came not from the president but those close to her. The absence of an overt presidential blessing, however, did not stop 6 Senators, 159 Representatives, 2 Cabinet members, 42 Provincial Governors, 30 City Mayors, 1,144 Municipal Mayors and 3,700 minor government officials from joining the LDP.¹ Speaker Ramon Mitra, who was elected party president, declared that the LDP is now the "ruling party" of the country.

Within the legislature, the formation of the LDP has led to serious rifts among parties loyal to the administration. The organization of the LDP has caused the break-up of the ruling administration coalition in the

*Associate Professor of Political Science, College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City

House of Representatives. Non-LDP members were stripped of Committee chairmanships. In the Manila City Council, city dads almost came to blows during the successful LDP move to oust the erstwhile majority floor leader who did not join the LDP.² A Metropolitan Mayor alleged that he was suspended by the Secretary of Local Governments because he refused to join the LDP.³

The formation of the LDP is criticized by groups loyal to the administration as well as by those opposed to it. Laurel's criticism is most graphic:

The LDP is like the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan of Marcos. It only cut branches from existing political parties. *Pag nahipan ng hangin ang miyembro niyan ay magliliparan ang mga iyan. (When a wind blows, they will be scattered.)*⁴

On this issue Laurel should be an authority: the legacy of the Laurel clan in Philippine politics is precisely the knowledge of new winds and the directions in which they blow.

The opposition uses the same strategy of cutting branches from existing political parties. The UNA is only the most recent failed attempt to form a united opposition alliance. As recent events have shown, the UNA like its predecessor, the Unlad-Bayan/Nation-Mover, is stillborn. It was finally laid to rest with the announcement that Laurel and Enrile would revive the Nationalista Party.

The UNA experience is important because it provides us with important insights to opposition-alliance building. That there is no common ideology or vision uniting the UNA — except for the fact of being out of power — is palpable in the difficulties in forming a united front. GAD leader Francisco Tatad questioned the choice of Laurel as the opposition's leader. The head of a group of congressmen loyal to Ferdinand Marcos declared: "We do not believe there is a future with Doy (Laurel)."⁵ Laurel's already low credibility ebbed further when members of his family and party refused to join him in the opposition. Today's oppositionists are living the bitter truth that the Marcos oppositionists had to contend with—the difficulties of making and the ease of unmaking a united opposition.

Politicians, Parties and Democracy

The current Filipino politicians' preoccupation with political parties is understandable—if not from the perspective of their need to form a vehicle to keep their hold on political power, then from the perspective of legitimizing the claim that the Philippines is a newly restored democracy.

The holding of regular and open elections and the presence of parties is the *sine qua non* of modern democracy. Giovanni Sartori explains:

In areas where democracy has never been stable or effective... a polity qualifies as a democracy because of its machinery rather than its achievement and is more of a political arrangement than a state of society. This more limited political character is revealed by the fact that emphasis is laid less on equality and more on liberty—as is only natural, for liberty has a procedural priority over equality. The test is provided by free elections, a competitive party system and a representational system of government. It would be unfair to require more exacting standards; for only the successful functioning of the machinery over time allows democracy to strike roots in the society.⁶

For Edward Greenberg, the following are minimum standards in determining the democratic nature of electoral and party politics:

1. Candidates and parties should offer clear policy alternatives to the public; they should be competitive.
2. Candidates and party competition should be nontrivial; it should be based on issues that are important to the mass public.
3. Once elected, officials should be generally bound in their official actions to positions that they articulated during the campaign.
4. Once elected, officials should be able to transform campaign promises to binding public policy.
5. Elections should generally influence the behavior of those elites who are responsible for making public policy.⁷

But the linkage with (an admittedly limited understanding of) democracy is only one of the reasons why western social science acknow-

ledged the centrality of political parties. Western social science also attributes the following functions to parties:

1. representation (and brokerage), conversion and aggregation;
2. integration (participation, socialization, and mobilization);
3. persuasion, repression, recruitment and choice of leaders, delimitation, policy formation, control of government.⁸

Given these functions, it is thus not surprising that the claim "It is generally taken as axiomatic that no political system can exist without political parties" is not taken as outrageous nor incorrect.⁹ But the mere presence in a polity of groups claiming to be political parties does not constitute a party system. Parties must perform the functions outlined above. Thus the narrow understanding of political parties as mere vehicle to gain political power is severely limited and limiting.¹⁰ As Richard Rose, in *Do Parties Make a Difference?*, argues:

To view parties solely as individuals or teams competing for electoral victory is to deny any further purpose to parties. An election victory would be an end in itself, like victory in a boxing or football match, and not means to larger political ends.¹¹

It has been suggested that in actually existing liberal democratic political systems, parties do not offer real alternatives; nonetheless there is a strong case in arguing against the American political science tendency to define political party as simply means to getting elected.¹²

Besides representing alternative policy options, groups, to be called parties, must pass an organization test so-called for want of a better term. La Palombra and Weiner believe that the following organizational features are constitutive of parties:

1. continuity in organization...;
2. manifest and presumably permanent organization at the local level, with regularized communications and other relationships between local and national units;
3. self-conscious determination of leaders at both national and local levels to capture and to hold decision-making power...;

4. a concern on the part of the organization for seeking followers at the polls or in some manner striving for popular support.¹³

These organizational criteria are important tests that any group claiming to be a political party must pass. Insisting on these strict criteria is not idle hairsplitting. The intimate link between political parties and democracy is established when parties are more than vehicles of individuals to power. James Jupp, in *Political Parties*, warns that "In looking at politics in underdeveloped countries, we must not lose sight of the fact that superficially western terms and practices may disguise different realities."¹⁴ He observed that :

The most common type (of party) found in the third world have been loosely organized combinations of local communities, with loyalty families, individual or tribal and linguistic groups as the main cement. Coherent ideologies have been relatively unimportant, despite the commitment to 'socialism' of the greatjority of third world parties.¹⁵

He noted that "Western models are simply shells into which the traditional social and political forces of the third world have been poured."¹⁶

I do not wish to dispute Jupp's characterization of parties in the Third World. As I hope to demonstrate later on, at least in the Philippines, the case is exactly as he described it. What I cannot understand is why despite his conclusions, Jupp still calls these groups political parties.

Philippine Political "Parties"

The fact that the first Philippine political 'party' was the Federal Party, whose main goal of US statehood is a fitting insight to the American role in Philippine politics.¹⁷ The Federal party was organized by the Filipino elites who defected to the American side during the American campaign against the newly proclaimed Philippine Republic. Its formation was actively encouraged by the American colonial government.

With the 1907 lifting of the American ban on groups and parties who were pro-Philippine Independence, the Nacionalista Party (NP) emerged as the preeminent 'political force. Its dominance over other parties was

so clear that, according to R. S. Milne, "It was only during the periods when the Nacionalista Party split that there was any approach to an alignment consisting of two parties of roughly equal strength."¹⁸

Luzviminda Tangcangco describes the NP:

The party leaders and members constituted a small elite group of wealthy landowners. Their status was preserved by the semi-feudal economic set-up under the American regime. Disagreement among party members on issues of policy was unlikely. Electoral campaigns were not mass appeals for voters nor forums for the discussion of societal issues, but negotiations between provincial elites and national political personalities.¹⁹

The NP became the rallying point for Philippine Independence. This served the interest of the Filipino elites well: it was able to direct the pace and direction of the Philippine independence drive. It was through the NP that the revolutionary fervor of the masses was channeled and contained.²⁰

While the NP politicians were able to secure Philippine independence through lobbying in Washington D.C., it was not able to translate this into NP dominance in politics since independence. This was due to a split within the NP in the immediate post-war years.

Filipino politicians were split over the issue of collaboration with the Japanese in the immediate post-Pacific War years. A group of former NP stalwarts broke away from the party over the collaboration issue and formed the Liberal Party. Once again, the Americans were actively involved in the formation of a Filipino party. According to Tangcangco:

With deeply entrenched economic, military, and political interests in the country, the United States was unwilling to leave the government to one party—like the NP—whose top nationalist leaders like (Jose P.) Laurel, (Claro M.) Recto and (Camilo) Osias, it has charged with collaborating with the enemy. The United States was thus (sic) able to pluck a willing group from the old NP to serve as its own local political force, especially after it had succeeded in keeping the NP's nationalist leaders, who harboured anti-American feelings, from participating in the national elections of 1946.²¹

The period of the Republic between 1946-1972 saw the NP and LP contesting political leadership, without one becoming preeminent. Until 1969, when Marcos was reelected, the two parties succeeded each other in power. There were also attempts at forming third parties. But most of these were either too small to matter or ended up being absorbed by

either of the two big parties. The LP and the NP are virtually identical parties in terms of social composition and policies. Commenting on the LP and NP in 1961, Milne wrote:

The whole system is loosely bound together, at various levels, by the loyalties to *persons*—to party backers, to friends, to compadres, to relatives and not to platforms or ideologies. It is only rarely that the man at the top of the party structure can *directly* influence the votes of those at the foot. Otherwise, he has to operate through the chain of party leaders. But the point to notice is that this 'hierarchy' is based on personal loyalties, not vice-versa. At any particular time the chain may be broken by a leader at any level switching his allegiance.²²

Carl Lande explains why there is hardly anything different between the LP and NP: "Of necessity the two national parties are identical because both represented loose combinations of pre-fabricated, identical and interchangeable parts: the provincial factions."²³

The end of formal democracy in 1972 saw the end of the LP-NP tiff and the emergence of the *Kilusang Lipunan* (New Society Movement, KBL). The dominance of the KBL is seen in the party affiliation of those who were elected in public offices during the period of the Marcos Regime (1972-1985). The KBL controlled, by overwhelming majorities, the 1978 Interim *Batasang Pambansa* (Interim National Assembly) and the 1984 *Batasang Pambansa*. In the 1980 local government elections, the "KBL won 70 of 73 provincial governorships, at least 60 of 59 city mayorship, and almost all of the more than 1,500 town mayorship."²⁴

Of elections and the KBL during the Marcos regime, Raul de Guzman notes:

Elections in the end did not turn out to be a fair, honest, and decent competition among candidates for offices. The non-KBL candidates did not have an equal chance. The results of the elections were predictable: only KBL candidates won with very few exceptions. Elections became the legitimizing forum for the administration but failed in winnowing the qualified from the unfit.²⁵

The Marcos era also saw the emergence of the political parties that rallied around Mrs. Aquino in the February 1986 snap presidential elections. Some of them are PDP-LABAN, UNIDO, and the revived Liberal Party. The PDP-LABAN was a merger of the Filipino Democratic Party (PDP) — itself a former faction of the Mindanao Alliance—and *Lakas ng Bayan* (People's Power, LABAN). The merger created a national organization combining the PDP network in Visayas and Mindanao and

the Laban machine in Luzon. Like the KBL, the United Democratic Nationalist Organization (UNIDO) started as an umbrella organization which included a number of small anti-Marcos parties. It was formed in 1979 when Salvador Laurel split from Marcos KBL in 1984. Soon enough the UNIDO became a party closely identified with Laurel. In 1980 the LP was revived. However, it was quickly split into two factions—that of Eva Estrada Kalaw and Jovito Salonga.

These parties did not play a central role in the February 1986 revolution. The mobilization that occurred in those crucial days in February 1986 were done by "cause-oriented groups" and neighborhood or church associations. This is not altogether surprising since these parties were meant only to mobilize votes. The massive fraud committed to keep Mrs. Aquino from winning the snap Presidential elections was the immediate cause of the revolution; to the extent that these parties mobilized for that election, they contributed to people's heightened state of awareness in the early part of 1987. We must remember that the cause-oriented groups were more effective than these parties in mobilizing against the Marcos regime.

With the revival of elections, the politicians were able to push aside the cause-oriented groups. In the 1987 national election, the pro-Aquino parties coalesced under the banner *Lakas ng Bansa*. The KBL was renamed UPP-KBL (Union for Progress and Prosperity-Kilusang Bagong Lipunan), which was the party of those who sought the return of Marcos. The anti-Marcos and anti-Aquino forces formed and contested the 1987 national election as Grand Alliance for Democracy (GAD). Like previous Philippine elections, personalities were the main issue in this election. The enormous popularity of Mrs. Aquino contributed heavily to the *Lakas ng Bansa* near-sweep.

It is very clear, therefore, that despite claims to the contrary — Philippine political parties, in general, do not qualify as parties. What Filipinos think of and label as parties do not pass the substantive criteria in the definition of parties outlined in the early part of this paper. Very few Philippine "political parties" outlive their leaders. The Philippines has as many parties as there are potential presidential candidates. Among the most recent examples Blas Ople's *Partido Nacionalista ng Pilipinas*, Salvador Laurel's UNIDO, and Eva Estrada Kalaw's wing of the Liberal

Party. New parties are formed because of leadership feuds. A case in point is the Mindanao Alliance (MA). Squabbles among its three most prominent leaders—who all fancy themselves as future presidents—led to the formation of Aquilino Pimentel's Pilipino Democratic Party (PDP), Ruben Canoy's Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Homobono Adaza's Mindanao Alliance (MA).

A common perspective is not characteristic of Philippine parties. As a result, changing parties among Philippine politicians is akin to changing clothes. Among the most prominent political turncoats are three presidents: Manuel Roxas, who bolted the Nacionalista to form the Liberal Party; Ramon Magsaysay, who moved from the Liberal Party to the Nacionalista Party; and Ferdinand Marcos, who changed from the Liberal Party to the Nacionalista Party. These men were not backbenchers in their former parties before they jumped ship. Ramon Magsaysay was Secretary of National Defense to his LP partymate Elpidio Quirino before he contested the presidency against the latter as a Nacionalista. Ferdinand Marcos was Senate President, while his LP partymate Diosdado Macapagal was President.

This musical chair in party membership goes all the way down the hierarchy. Benigno Aquino, Jr. (who would be declared Philippine hero and saint if the sycophants would have their way) was a Nacionalista Governor of Tarlac but changed parties when a Liberal (Diosdado Macapagal) was elected president in the 1961 election. As a matter of fact, B. Aquino was better than other politicians: he held out for a year and a half before he switched parties. Many politicians did not wait that long. Barely a month after Macapagal became president, one congressman, six governors and more than 100 municipal mayors swore allegiance to Macapagal's party.²⁶ It took Macapagal only one year to control the local governments and the House of Representatives.²⁷

With the emergence of authoritarian rule, and the death of the LP and NP, Marcos *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* acted as a veritable sponge that absorbed all the politicians who wanted to keep their hold on power. Only this time, these politicians had to take a clearly subordinate position to Marcos.

The February Revolution of 1986 did not change things much. The exodus to the newly elected President's party continued: in the new

Philippine Congress, elected in 1987, 21 of the 200 members of Congress who won under the banner of the Aquino loyal parties were former Marcos supporters.²⁸ While no study has been made on the party affiliation of those who won in the last local government elections in the Philippines, impressionistic data tend to show that political turncoatism was the rule in that election. The new LPD has under its wings old politicians closely identified with the Marcos regime.

When politicians switch parties in the Philippines, they bring along their retinue. The membership roll of the new party is immediately bloated. However, these new members will never be loyal to the new party. This also explains why Marcos gained the 1965 NP nomination for the Presidency immediately after he defected from the LP.

Further proof of the relative uselessness of party labels to predict positions taken by elected legislators is their multiparty affiliations and the preponderance of "independent" legislators. The 37 opposition MPs in the 1984 Marcos parliament ran under two party banners. In the new Congress, out of the 200 elected representatives of the Lower House, 83 were registered under coalitions with other parties, and 22 ran as independents.²⁹

An analysis of the party affiliations of those elected to the Philippine legislatures from 1967 to the present (that was surveyed for this paper) reveals interesting data on the ease of party-switching in the Philippines.

The figures given below underestimate the prevalence of party-switching in the period because only the party affiliations of winners were studied. It is likely that if the names and party affiliations of all those who contested these elections were included, an even bigger number of party turncoats will be seen. Nonetheless, the figures below offer a glimpse of party switching in the Philippines.

Of the 689 who were elected to these legislatures, 103 individuals were elected twice (15%), 22 individuals were elected three times (3%), and 2 individuals were elected four times (.29%). But looking at the number of individuals who were elected at least twice may be misleading. It may be more useful to look at families as a more accurate indicator of political strength. When we look at political families represented, we notice that the total of those elected twice dropped to 99 (15%) but the

total of those elected thrice moved up to 36 (5%) and those elected four times up to 6 (1%).

Did the elite group of reelectionists change parties? Seventy-five percent (or 108 of the 143) of them did! All of those who did not change parties (35) were from the category of those elected twice. It seems then that the need to switch parties becomes greater the longer one wants to stay in power.

Because of the peculiar nature of the period under consideration, since Marcos effectively outlawed the LP and the NP before the 1978 elections, it is important to divide party shift into crucial shift and non-crucial shift.

Crucial shift is defined as jumping from the opposition to administration or vice versa. The jump from LP to the KBL falls under this category. Non-crucial shift is defined as moving from one opposition to another opposition party or from one administration to another administration party. Among those elected twice, there were 23 (23%) crucial and 41 (41%) non-crucial shifts. Of those who were elected thrice, 11 (30%) were crucial and 25 (70%) were non-crucial shifts. In the category of winning 4 elections, there were 1 (12.5%) crucial and 7 (87.5%) non-crucial shifts. The family that made the crucial shifts is the Laurel family.

Vice-President Laurel's UNA move is his fourth in his political career. He was a Nacionalista Senator in the pre-martial law Congress. He ran and was elected in the Interim Batasang Pambansa as a KBL member. He won the Vice-Presidency as an UNIDO man loyal to Mrs. Aquino.

What accounts for the shifts? B. Aquino in explaining his defection from the NP to the LP when he was Governor of Tarlac declared:

Let's face it: a governor is measured, not by the high standards of political morality he upholds, but by the lengths of road he has built or repaired, the number of bridges he has put up, the number of schoolrooms he has provided, the number of proteges he has accommodated, and by the actual, physical, material benefits he has brought home to his people.³⁰

Given a political system relying on pork barrel appropriations and a preponderance of ambitious politicians, switching to the party in power

is a very rational move. Philippine local government officials cannot afford to belong to the opposition parties.

Jean Grossholtz's 1964 observation of parties, when they were synonymous with the Liberal and Nacionalista parties, is still valid, with slight modification:

At first glance, the Philippines appears to have a two-party system that is national in character. But a closer look reveals that the two are not parties but coalitions of factions put together largely for electoral purposes and characterized by constantly shifting loyalties to men, not issues.³¹

Political Clans and Political Parties

Earlier we cited Carl Lande's conclusion that Philippine parties are indistinguishable because they are loose coalitions of provincial factions. It must be specified further that these provincial factions are families or clans. Certain electoral districts have been battle grounds for clans since Philippine independence. The Osmeña-Cuenco family rivalry in Cebu is a case in point. The Institute for Popular Democracy study of the composition of the new Philippine Congress shows that of the 200 elected to the House of Representatives, 130 are members of traditional political clans and 39 are from new political clans.³²

Why the dominance of families or political clans in Philippine politics? Onofre Corpuz argues that:

While party provided the vehicle, legal status and dynamic for political activity, family furnished the primary interests that were to be protected and promoted in politics, the system of ethics and behaviors for promoting and protecting those interests, and the network of support for party efforts.³³

Corpuz dates this marriage of parties and families to the American period, when Americans introduced elections and political parties to the country. He argues that since the first popular elections in the Philippines were local in nature, it was but natural that these elections be a contest among important local families. He insists that "when the first national elections were held in 1907, it was merely to broaden the scope of operations for the provincial blocs of leading local families."³⁴

Grossholtz's study confirms Corpuz' claim that families were the initial base of political parties. However, by 1964. Grossholtz observed a change:

In the past the factions were built up by landed families who controlled significant number of votes on the basis of personal loyalty or economic threat. This base has given way to a leader, who uses the support of the traditional elite but more often relies on pork barrel and patronage to build a strong electoral base.³³

On the latest Merry-Go-Round

President Aquino's speechwriters obviously did their political science homework when they wrote her speech before the LDP convention. She said:

Now that the institutions are in place and the processes have been tested, it is time for the political forces to start aligning themselves on the basis of their respective beliefs and programs. There can be no democracy without parties, for the various kinds of opinions in the country cannot make their influence felt unless they are organized and able to pursue systematically their specific political agenda.³⁶

If she really believed in this, why did she not join LDP? Or any other party? How does this square with the President's persistent refusal to join or form her own party?

That Philippine political parties do not offer meaningful alternatives and are mere convenient vehicles to gain political power may explain President Aquino's resistance to join a political party. She sees through the rhetoric of politicians and recognizes Philippine political parties for what they are: alliances that perpetuate politicians hold over power and not instruments of social change. Indeed, the President's position *vis-a-vis* political parties is consistent with her claim that she is not a "politician". It is also an indictment of the nature of Philippine politics. The LDP has been criticized by other politicians for having no ideological direction. In denying this charge, LDP spokesman, Rep. Oscar Orbos, claims that the party ideology is anchored on the 1987 constitution. He further weakens an already weak defense by adding: "The LDP presents itself as an opportunity for the President to hammer out a national working agenda."³⁷ Commenting on the LDP constitution, Joaquin Bernas ob-

served: "What it has is an entire article on motherhood, 'Basic Principles' and another equally motherhood article on 'Goals and Objectives.'³⁸

Because the President's relatives occupy important party posts, the LDP is hard pressed to deny that it is another KBL. Mrs. Aquino's brother, Rep. Jose Cojuangco, is Secretary General. Paul Aquino, her brother-in-law, is Director General of the party's campaign institute. Rep. Teresita Aquino-Oreta, her sister-in-law, heads the research and documentation committee. Rep. Emigdio Tanjuatco, her cousin, is one of the Party's Vice-Presidents. The clan base of the LDP is evident in this list of party officers.

LDP apologists claim that the party represents a wide coalition of forces. Many believe this to be an expedient way of justifying the number of known Marcos supporters who have joined the LDP. Among the members of the LDP are former KBL stalwarts Carmencita Reyes, Jose Zubiri, Ronnie Zamora and Ismael Mathay. Mathay, who ran as independent in the 1987 election, was a KBL member of the Batasang Pambansa and was second only to Mrs. Imelda Marcos in the Metro Manila Commission, the government body running the Metropolitan Manila Area.

That those around the President are interested in forming a super-Cory party is understandable. The LDP, aside from a mechanism to channel pork barrel funds, is really an attempt to establish an instrument through which an enormously popular President can transfer the mantle of leadership to her successor. It will also be a conduit to dispense patronage. Patronage is the bind that secures the network of allies throughout the archipelago—the other leg upon which a successful election campaign rests.

The temptation to join the LDP is great. Speaker Ramon Mitra has been accused of dangling "P15 million doleout(s) for district projects to attract Congressmen into joining his Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP)".³⁹ Those who did not join the LDP were stripped of Committee Chairmanships in the House of Representatives. The exodus to the LDP, and the consequent depletion of the ranks of the other pro-Cory parties, are recent confirmations of what Onofre D. Corpuz noted 23 years ago:

In Filipino politics the spoils of victory are so handsome, the inhibitions on partisan use of public resources are so weak, the discipline within the parties is so

lax, that there is a mass exodus of defectors from the minority to the majority after every change of the party in power.⁴⁰

The need for a united opposition is recognized even by a two-bit politician. Since the thread that will sew a united opposition is the desire to change the person in power, the chances for success of a working alliance are very slim indeed. What is required in any alliance is selflessness, a characteristic not to be found in Filipino politicians.

Mrs. Aquino downplayed the formal announcement of Laurel's defection to the opposition, with the quip, "I thought he was there all along." But downplaying Laurel's almost anti-climatic move does not erase the possible danger it creates. While this is not the first time in Philippine politics that a Vice-President has broken with the President (VP Pelaez quarreled with Macapagal, VP Lopez had a falling out with Marcos), there is cause for concern because the schism occurred during a volatile period. Laurel's move seemed to many an open signal that he would be a willing player in a constitutional coup. At the same time that the formation of the UNA was announced and Laurel's call for the resignation of Mrs. Aquino was issued, there were reports of stirrings among the Marcos loyalist groups and renewed attempts by the putschists in the Armed Forces to gain power. Laurel and Enrile denies the charge that they are part of an extra constitutional attempt to gain power. If this is true, and Laurel's move is a mere preparation for his anticipated victory in the 1992 polls, we can certainly indulge Laurel in his illusion of grandeur.

If opposition initiatives such as the formation of the UNA were merely to build a stronger organization towards an honest government and laying the groundwork for future elections, then its formation would be a positive development. However, if the UNA were established to provide coup plotters with a civilian component, then it cannot but be a direct threat to democracy. The fear that a political aggrupation is formed to address a group other than an electorate is a new dimension that the formation of the UNA brings to Philippine politics.

Parties and the Prospects for Philippines Democracy

The formation of genuine political parties and the emergence of a competitive party system in the Philippines is imperative for the Philippines to leave out of its deep morass.

The lack of ideologically based parties is the cause of the politics of muddling through — the politics prevailing during the crucial period of transition from authoritarian rule to liberal democracy. In a period when policy leadership is vital, all institutions of government are in default. Clearly this is seen in the current lack of positions on very basic policy issues such as population, nuclear weapons, national language, privatization of industries, and the foreign debt. The standoffs between the Executive and Legislature—the most celebrated of which is the power of the Commission on Appointments—are over turf, not policy. The irritants that keep our legislators busy are over what would maximize their reelection or their personal interests.

The faith of Filipinos in liberal democracy is also dependent on the emergence of genuine parties and a competitive party system. So long as a national network of clans has a monopoly over the title political parties, less and less Filipinos will be sympathetic to a political system that has parties as a cornerstone. The lack of public outcry when Marcos dismantled the Philippine party system in 1972 should serve as a reminder and a warning to all Philippine parties.

The need for a sound party system is underscored despite the limitation of the party system. As C.B. MacPherson has argued “the party system has been the means of reconciling universal equal franchise with the maintenance of an unequal society.”⁴¹

What are the prospects for political parties and a competitive party system in the Philippines? For an answer, we have to go back to the LDP story.

The LDP was carved out of the PDP-LABAN, one of the few genuine political parties in the Philippines. Alexander Magno, writing in 1983, describes the party:

Ideologically, the PDP is more advanced than the other open (Marcos) opposition groupings in its analysis of Philippine society and the ills that beset

it. Breaking away from the shallow anti-Marcos line of the opposition mainstream, the PDP traces the problems of landlessness, hunger, poverty, oppression, low wages, human rights violations, etc. to the fundamental characteristics of the Philippine social structure... The PDP's vision of society is based on the five basic principles of humanism, nationalism, socialism, political democracy, and solidarity. These five principles derive from the PDP's understanding of the nature of the crises plaguing Philippine society.⁴²

Magno also noted that as a result of the PDP's cadre-type party organization, it operated "on the basis of organizational initiative rather than, merely on the basis of personal loyalty to politician-personalities".⁴³ PDP was unique in that it required its prospective members to attend a seminar, during which the ideology and organization of the party were discussed.

In justifying the formation of the LDP, Rep. Jose Cojuangco, then PDP-LABAN president, declared that the new party and the PDP-LABAN share a common vision. If this were true, why form the LDP at all? Those loyal to the PDP-LABAN insist that it was ambition, not vision, that propelled the drive to form the LDP.

Before the July 1988 announcement of formation of the LDP, there were 50 members of the House of Representatives who were registered as PDP-LABAN members. This number shrunk to 3 after the LDP founding congress on September 16, 1988. Cojuangco and those who joined him in the LDP claimed that the PDP-LABAN was dissolved in a party congress on September 15, 1988. On the other hand, Pimentel and other PDP-LABAN stalwarts expelled Cojuangco and other PDP-LABAN leaders who were joining the LDP in a party meeting on July 24, 1988.

If this were simply one of the many mutations undergone by Philippine political groups—as was stated earlier, the PDP-LABAN was a merger of two parties—then it would not deserve special attention. But the PDP-LABAN was an attempt to form a nation-wide political party. What is at stake here is not only the future of one political group but the future of the party system in the Philippines.

PDP-LABAN stalwarts are confident that the formation of the LDP will not mean the end of the party. Pimentel sees the defection of some

congressmen to the LDP as a blessing in disguise: "We are happy that those who are not comfortable with the PDP-LABAN in its pristine form have now transferred to the LDP."⁴⁴ However, it cannot be denied that the PDP-LABAN must rebuild and it remains to be seen whether it will survive. But the PDP-LABAN has an excellent chance of survival. Unlike the recently formed Partido ng Bayan (PnB), the Philippine military is not hostile and openly working against the PDP-LABAN. Furthermore, it has an established network and a winning track record.

But even if the PDP-LABAN does not survive, there is hope for a bigger and more organized group to merge. The formation of the LDP also triggered the possibility of an alliance among the PDP-LABAN, the Liberal Party, the PnB, and the National Union of Christian Democrats—all ideologically based parties firmly committed to democracy. Already, a group of 25 members of the House of Representatives from this group has formed a "Conscience Bloc".

Admittedly, the "Conscience Bloc" is a small step towards genuine political parties and a competitive party system in the Philippines. But it is one step towards the goal.

NOTES

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³Nick B. Ferrer, "Mayor suspended for rejecting LDP," *Evening Star*, October 14, 1988, p. 6.

⁴"UNA to hear graft cases against Cory kin, officials," *Manila Chronicle*, September 21, 1988, p. 6.

⁵M. Coronel Ferrer, "Making a Scene: Right opposition leaders Laurel and Enrile unite and agitate against Aquino" *Conjuncture*, Vol. 1, No. 10 (September 1988), p. 12.

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⁷Edward S. Greenberg, *The American Political System: A Radical Approach* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1983). pp. 171-172.

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¹⁰*International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. XI, p. 428.

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¹²See for instance Giuseppe Di Palma, "Party Government and Democratic Reproducibility: The Dilemma of New Democracy," in Francis Castles and Rudolf Wildenmann, eds., *Visions and Realities of Party Government* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986).

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¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁷Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (Quezon City: Tala Publishing Services, 1975), p. 239.

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¹⁹Luzviminda Tangcangco "The Electoral System and Political Parties in the Philippines," in Raul P. de Guzman and Mila Reforma, eds., *Government and Politics of the Philippines* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 89.

²⁰cf Reynaldo Iletto, "Orators and the Crowds: Philippine Independence Politics, 1910-1914" in Peter Stanley (ed.) *Reappraising the Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

²¹De Guzman and Reforma, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.

²²R.S. Milne, "The Filipino Party System," p. 186.

²³Carl H. Lande, *Leaders, Factions, and Parties: The Structure of Philippine Politics* (Monograph Series no. 6, Southeast Asia Studies; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University), p. 40.

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²⁶Jean Grossholtz, *Politics in the Philippines* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1964), p. 145

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²⁸Institute for Popular Democracy, *Political Clans and Electoral Politics* (Manila: IPD, n.d.), p. 99

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³⁶cited in Joaquin Bernas "Can Mitra whip LDP into line?" *Manila Chronicle*, October 11, 1988, p. 4.

³⁷Christina Pastor, "LDP in search of credibility", p. 15.

³⁸Bernas, "Can Mitra whip LDP into line?", p. 4.

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⁴⁰Corpuz, *The Philippines*, p. 94.

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