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

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

**Defining institutionalization: what is it and how do we know it when we see it?**

The existing literature defines institutionalization in a variety of ways (see Huntington 1968; Welfling 1973; Panebianco 1988; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Levitsky 1998; Randall and Svasand 2002; Hicken and Kuhonta 2011). One way to bring these disparate definitions together is to think of institutionalization as consisting of an external/systemic dimension and an internal/organizational dimension. Starting with the external/systemic dimension, party systems that are more institutionalized share two characteristics. First, there is stability in the rules and pattern of
inter-party competition. Second, political actors view parties as a legitimate and necessary part of the democratic process. By contrast, in weakly institutionalized party systems we see a high degree of instability in the pattern of party competition. There are both high birth and high death rates—new political parties regularly enter the system, while existing parties exit. There is also a high degree of electoral volatility—the fortunes of individual parties vary greatly from election to election. Finally, political actors in weakly institutionalized systems view parties as at best superfluous, and at worst a threat. It is this external/systemic dimension that corresponds most closely with the concept of party system institutionalization.

The second internal/organizational dimension concerns the nature of the party organization itself, and the parties’ links with the broader society—what we might term the level of party institutionalization. To begin with, where parties are institutionalized they exhibit a high degree of what Levitsky calls value infusion (Levitsky 1998). There are strong links between parties and identifiable societal interests and groups of voters. Parties are “rooted” in society to the extent that “[m]ost voters identify with a party and vote for it most of the time, and some interest associations are closely linked to parties” (Mainwaring and Tocal 2006, 206). Party membership is valuable in and of itself and not just as a means to an end and we can differentiate one party from another on the basis of its constituency and policy platform. Where parties are not institutionalized, political parties have weak roots in society, voters and politicians have few lasting attachments to particular parties, there are no enduring links between parties and interest groups, and parties have no distinct policy or ideological identities.

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

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

**External/systemic dimension: stability of interparty competition**

One common indicator of the stability or volatility of the party system from election to election is the measure of electoral volatility. Electoral volatility captures the degree to which there is variation in aggregate party vote shares from one election to another. Where there is a stable pattern of inter-party competition we expect to see a low volatility score, indicating that the same set of parties receive consistent levels of support from election to election. High levels of electoral volatility reflect instability in voters’ preferences from election to election and/or

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**Table 3.1 Party system institutionalization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External/systemic dimension</th>
<th>Stable pattern of interparty competition</th>
<th>Parties viewed as legitimate and necessary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal/organizational dimension</td>
<td>High degree of value infusion</td>
<td>High degree of organizational routinization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
elite-driven changes to the party system such as the demise of existing parties, the birth of new parties, party mergers, party splits, etc. (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007). Electoral volatility is not a perfect measure by any means – tracing party vote shares can prove extremely complicated where there are lots of party mergers or splits, or where a candidate’s party affiliation is difficult to assess. The latter is particularly a challenge in the Philippines, where candidates will often claim multiple party affiliations and candidate switching (turncoatism) is common. The very fact that party labels are so fluid in the Philippines is telling, but it makes calculating volatility challenging, so much so that some scholars eschew the attempt altogether. Nonetheless I believe it is possible to come up with reasonable estimates of volatility using some simple assumptions. It is also important to note that electoral volatility does not allow one to differentiate between the sources of instability – whether fickle voters or ephemeral parties (Hicken and Kuhonta 2011).

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

Table 3.2 displays the volatility scores for the Philippines alongside those of other countries in Asia for comparative purposes. I divide the Philippines into two periods corresponding to the pre- and post-martial law eras. The Philippines I covers the seven elections between independence and martial law. The post-Marcos sample (Philippines II) covers the 1992–2016 elections. I calculate volatility using only the votes for candidates in the constituency elections for the House of Representatives. In other words, I exclude the party list seats and party list parties from the calculation. Were I to include party list parties volatility would be even higher.

Two things stand out in Table 3.2. First, the party system of post-martial-law Philippines is very fluid. The fortunes of the individual parties tend to vary greatly from election to election. In other words, the results of past elections by and large are not a good predictor of future election results – in the case of the Philippines II, the result of a past election can be used to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.2 Electoral volatility in Asia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor Leste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
predict the result of the next election with less than 65 percent accuracy. Second, the Philippine party system appears to be much more volatile after martial law than it was before. Average volatility pre-martial law was 18.5. Post-Marcos the average is 34.8. (Figure 3.1 displays the electoral volatility scores over time.)

If the argument that voters’ ties to political parties develop gradually over time, bringing greater stability to electoral competition, is valid, we would expect electoral volatility to improve (decrease) over time in the Philippines. In pre-martial law elections no clear pattern is evident. Electoral volatility did decline steadily for the first few post-independence elections, but increased substantially in the two elections prior to martial law. Since the fall of Marcos there still does not appear to be any stabilization of the party system under way. Overall the average volatility score for the post-martial law period is higher than before martial law (34 versus 18) but both periods experienced relatively high degrees of instability in the pattern of inter-party competition. Note, however, that electoral volatility fell quite dramatically in 2016 to a post-Marcos low of 10.5. It is too soon to tell whether this represents a new trend towards more party stability, or an anomaly, but initial evidence suggests the latter. Almost as soon as the election concluded we witnessed the usual massive party switching to the party of the incoming president. The party of President Rodrigo Duterte, PDP-Laban, won only three seats in the House in 2016. Once the party switching dust had cleared, however, the party boasted 93 House members (Porcalla 2016). By contrast, the Liberal Party, the party of the outgoing administration, lost 80 Representatives to turncoatism after the election, falling to 35 members from a post-electoral high of 115 (Porcalla 2016).

Another indication of the instability of the party system is the high rate at which parties enter and depart the party system. Table 3.3 displays the birth and death rates alongside the total number of parties for each election, all calculated using the parties that gain seats in the legislature. A birthrate of 0.33 means that 33 percent of the parties in a given year did not gain any seats in the prior election. A death rate of 0.33 means that 33 percent of the parties that won seats in the last election, did not capture any seats in the given election. Prior to martial law it is

![Figure 3.1 Electoral volatility pre- and post-martial law](image-url)

*Source: Author’s calculations from Hartman et al. 2001, COMELEC.*
clear that the Philippine party system had become a two party system helmed by the Liberal and Nacionalista parties. Combining this information with the volatility information from Figure 3.1 we observe that the rise in seat volatility in the 1960s was driven entirely by the shifting fortunes of the Nacionalistas and Liberals, and not by party entries and exits from the system.

Contrast this with the post-Marcos era. A couple of things are immediately apparent from Table 3.3. First, it is clear that martial law marked the demise of the two party system. Unlike the earlier period the party system post-Marcos has not tended towards two. In fact, quite the opposite. During the last several elections we have seen a large increase in the number of parties winning seats. This jump is driven largely, but not exclusively, by an increase in the number of small parties taking advantage of the peculiar party list system used in the Philippines. This system will be discussed in more detail below. Second, the party birth and death rates start high in the post-Marcos era, and stay that way. Not only do we not see stabilization around two parties, we don’t observe stabilization of any sort. A substantial number of parties continue to enter and exit the system each election, and it is these births and deaths that are the main drivers of electoral volatility. Figure 3.2 shows the number of parties winning seats in the House over time, while Figure 3.3 charts the birth and death rates for the same set of parties. The greater instability in the post-martial law era is clearly evident.

**External/systemic dimension: legitimacy**

One of the most telling indications of a lack of institutionalization is the lingering doubt about whether the major actors view political parties as a legitimate and necessary part of political life. The disconnect between the ideal of democracy and the reality of Filipino democracy comes out again and again in surveys. In a 2012 World Values Survey, for example. 74 percent of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Birth rate</th>
<th>Death rate</th>
<th># of parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author’s calculations from Hartman et al. 2001, COMELEC.*
respondents expressed strong support for democracy – a number comparable to what we observe in established democracies (WVS 2012). However, a near majority of Filipinos (42.2 percent) also report being dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their country (ibid.). That dissatisfaction is strongly correlated with a distrust of the country’s political parties. Less than half of respondents report some confidence in Filipino political parties (ibid.).

Clearly parties are viewed with some suspicion by the masses, but what about other major political actors? Do other major power centers see party government as the only legitimate
means to political power? Unfortunately, military intervention and coup threats continue to be a prominent feature of Filipino politics, with regular rumors of coup plots and actual military interventions in 1986 and 2001 to resolve political stalemates.

**Internal/organizational dimension: value infusion and organizational routinization**

How deeply rooted and organizationally strong are parties in the Philippines? One indication of the weak links between parties and cohesive societal interests in the Philippines is the high volatility scores discussed previously. Another indication of the low degree of value infusion within most parties is the lack of party loyalty manifest by large numbers of voters, even within a single election. Filipino voters frequently split their votes between candidates from different parties. For example, Filipino voters cast two separate votes, one for a presidential candidate and one for a vice-presidential candidate. These votes need not be for candidates from the same political party. Taking advantage of this rule, voters frequently split their votes between two different parties. As a result, both the 1992, 1998, 2010 and 2016 presidential elections returned a president and vice-president from different political parties. Since 1992 the average difference between the top presidential contenders and their running-mates is more than 12 percentage points. In the 2016 election the vote share of President Duterte and his vice-presidential running mate (Alan Cayetano) was more than 24 percentage points.

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

In the 2007 Senate election there were two large multi-party alliances: TEAM9 Unity, a coalition of supporters of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and Genuine Opposition (GO), made up of anti-Arroyo politicians. During this election the division between the pro- and anti-Arroyo forces was arguably the most prominent division in the electorate. And yet, when it came to their Senate vote, voters readily crossed alliance lines and/or failed to cast all of their available votes. GO candidates collectively received 50.9 percent of the total votes and 7 of the 12 seats, while TEAM Unity received 36.8 percent of the votes and 3 seats. (Had voters been primarily motivated by party loyalty we would expect one party alliance to sweep the Senate as each voter would simply vote a straight party ticket.) Within each alliance the difference between the largest and smallest vote-getters was wide. For the GO alliance the candidate with the most votes received three-and-a-half times the number of votes as the last-place GO candidate. Within TEAM Unity the gap was even larger, with the strongest candidate receiving more than five times the number of votes as the weakest candidate.

In 201310 we see a similar pattern, with two large multi-party alliances forming: one centered around the sitting-president, Benigno Aquino III (Team PNoy), and the other around sitting-vice-president Jejomar Binay and former president Joseph Estrada (the United Nationalist Alliance – UNA). Voters once again showed little party loyalty – nine seats were filled by Team PNoy and three by UNA.11 In Team PNoy the first place vote-getter received more than three times the number of votes than the team’s last place candidate. For UNA the gap between the first place finisher received five-and-a-half times the number of votes as the weakest candidate.
The political party system

In the run-up to the 2016 election there were several major party alliances, the two largest of which was the administration-backed alliance dubbed Koalisyon ng Daang Matuwid (KDM) and the alliance associated with sitting vice-president and presidential candidate Jejomar Binay – the UNA alliance. Once again voters displayed no loyalty to these alliances, with the first place KDM and UNA candidates winning 23 and 17 times the number of votes as the last place candidate on their respective slates.

Perhaps it was the case that voters felt very little attachment to these alliances – created solely for the purpose of this election. Did they exhibit more loyalty to parties within that coalition? The answer is no. The two largest parties in the 2007 election, in terms of seats in the House of Representatives, were Lakas-CMD and the NPC. The gap between the largest and smallest vote-getters for each party in the Senate elections was 2.5 times and 4.4 times the number of votes respectively. The numbers are similar for other Senate elections, as displayed in Table 3.4. For each election I’ve listed the vote differentials between the largest and smallest vote-getters for the two largest party alliances and for the two largest parties (according to seats in the House) which ran more than two candidates in the Senate election. Similar to presidential contests voters once again exhibit very little attachment to a particular party.

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

Table 3.4 Vote differentials between first and last place candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Party alliance 1</th>
<th>Party alliance 2</th>
<th>Largest party</th>
<th>Second largest party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes
a The LDP was actually the fourth largest party but the second and third largest parties ran only one or two Senate candidates in 2004.
b The Liberal Party was actually the third largest party but the second largest party, the NPC, ran only one Senate candidate in 2004.
c The NPC was actually the third largest party but the second largest party, KAMPI, ran only one Senate candidate in 2007.
There are other indications that party labels mean little to candidates. For example, a significant number of candidates regularly run as independents. Other candidates accept guest candidatures – an offer to run under a party’s banner without formally switching parties. Still others run under more than one party banner – sometimes opting to run as a standard bearer for both the government and one of the opposition parties (Hicken 2009a). One prominent example is Senator “Chiz” Escudero’s endorsement of candidates from the dueling party alliances of President “Noynoy” Aquino and Vice-President Jejomar Binay in 2013, which he dubbed team “Noybi.”

Another indicator of value infusion is the extent to which political parties are clearly associated with particular societal interests. Two questions are especially germane. To what extent do parties rely on different/distinct constituencies? Can we differentiate one party from another on the basis of its policy platform? Traditionally, the ties between Philippine parties and identifiable societal interests and voter groups have been very weak. Very few voters, for example, identify with any political party. In a recent survey two-thirds of respondents reported that no party truly promoted their welfare (SWS 2006). The broadest support any one party receives in the survey is 8 percent. Philippine parties are generally ephemeral alliances of locally focused politicians, as opposed to cohesive political parties with distinct policy visions. In fact, one of the defining characteristics of the party system is the enduring lack of policy or ideological vision among most political parties (Hicken 2009b). When asked to describe the difference between political parties a Filipino high school student tellingly quipped, “I do not believe one species of mud can be very different from another” (quoted in Sicat 1973, 437).

There are, of course, some exceptions to this pattern. There are a few parties on the Left as well as parties that run for party list seats that tend to have clearer ties to identifiable constituencies and party platforms that are programmatically distinct. However, these parties have performed poorly at the polls (in the case of the Left) or are constitutionally prohibited from having more than three seats in the House (in the case of party list parties). In the case of party list parties many of those parties have come to represent the interests of narrow groups or even individuals, rather than broader programmatic constituencies or underrepresented groups.

In terms of organizational routinization, parties in the Philippines have yet to develop party organizations that “matter” (Mainwaring and Scully 1995). Parties function almost entirely as electoral vehicles for powerful individuals. Parties are highly factionalized and noticeably devoid of any lasting autonomous organizational structures. In between elections parties cease to operate for all intents and purposes, with very little in the way of active connections to party “members.” The internal governance structure of parties is also notoriously weak. Members who deviate from the party line (when there is one) are rarely sanctioned. Finally, responsibility for and control of financing is very decentralized, usually completely bypassing the formal party organization (de Castro Jr. 1992; Carlos 1997). Philippines scholar Nathan Quimpo summarizes the state of Philippine parties in this way: “Far from being stable, programmatic organizations, the country’s main political parties are nebulous entities that can be set up, merged with others, split, resurrected, regurgitated, reconstituted, renamed, repackaged, recycled or flushed down the toilet anytime” (Quimpo 2005).

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

Explaining institutionalization

Socio-historical roots

There is a growing body of work that examines how the political system in the Philippines (including the party system) was shaped by the manner in which democracy unfolded. This is consistent with Mainwaring and Zoco’s (2007) emphasis on the link between the timing of democratic transition and institutionalization. They argue that there is a distinct difference between early and late democratizers. In early democratizers, political parties were mobilizing institutions – incorporating new citizens into the political system and pushing for an expansion of suffrage and other rights for those citizens. This helped forge strong links between parties and the citizens they helped to mobilize. By contrast, in later democratizers the move to competitive elections and the formation of new parties was preceded by, or occurred in conjunction with, the adoption of universal suffrage. As a result, parties did not have to become mobilizing institutions and consequently the kinds of links and networks that characterized early democratizers never developed (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007).

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

Several of the U.S. colonial government’s decisions had the unintended consequence of hampering the development of a more institutionalized, cohesive, nationally oriented party system (Hutchroft and Rocamora 2003). First, while the U.S. installed democratic institutions in the Philippines, it did very little to build up a strong central administrative bureaucracy (Hutchcroft 2000). As a result, political and economic power remained spread among the various large land-owning elite throughout the country. This land-owning elite, also known as the oligarchs, became the patrons atop numerous patron-client networks spread throughout the Philippines (Tancangco 1992).

Second, the early introduction of elections in the Philippines reproduced the decentralized and fragmented nature of political life at the national level (Hutchcroft and Rocamora 2003). As the political system was thrown open to electoral competition those in the best position to compete for elected office were the oligarchs. Oligarchs were able to use elections as a means of acquiring and strengthening political power, first locally, then nationally via congressional elections (Landé 1965; Anderson 1988; Wurfel 1988; Hutchcroft and Rocamora 2003). Political parties and Congress quickly became the domain of these powerful locally based interests, rather than a forum in which mass interests could be articulated and national policies debated. In sum, the parties that came to dominate the political system were not cohesive parties with national constituencies, but internally mobilized (Shefter 1994), highly fragmented parties with narrow, particularistic constituencies.
The interaction of the Philippines social structure, colonial administration and early elections made early institutionalization unlikely. However, this cannot completely explain why key features of the party system have endured in the Philippines for more than a century. Much has changed in the intervening hundred years and many of these changes would seemingly auger well for the emergence of a more institutionalized party system. For example, by the 1960s traditional patron-client networks were breaking down, beginning first in and around Manila and then spreading to other areas of the Philippines (Wurfel 1988). Likewise, a new class of business elite had emerged to challenge the power of the oligarchs. This business elite (largely Manila-based) had interests that were very different from the traditional landed-elite (Hawes 1992).

One could argue that path dependence might account for the stickiness of the party system in the face of these and other changes. However, given the political, economic and social upheaval of the Marcos era it is not difficult to imagine that new paths were at least possible following his fall from power. First, under Marcos the relative decline of the oligarchs accelerated as he sought to centralize political and economic authority while empowering a new class of cronies (Hawes 1992). Second, in their attempt to oust Marcos, opposition political parties joined together to back Corazon Aquino for president. They were supported by a large, mobilized segment of the Filipino populace. Yet this mass mobilization and relative decline of the traditional oligarchs did not lead to the creation of large, mass–based parties after the fall. Nor did the coming together of different opposition groups to overthrow Marcos translate into more cohesive parties post-Marcos. Instead, as discussed above, the party system that emerged was similar in most respects to the pre-1972 party system. One explanation for the continuity of the party system, despite the significant changes that occurred before and during the Marcos era, is the continuity of key features of the Philippine institutional environment, along with the strategic use of institutional reforms designed to keep the level of institutionalization low.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Institutional obstacles – continuities}

Alongside the historical and sociological factors discussed above, certain features of the Philippines electoral environment have discouraged the development of greater institutionalization.\textsuperscript{19} This environment has remained relatively constant across the pre- and post-authoritarian periods and reinforced, and in some cases amplified, the effects of sociological and historical factors. Specifically, the electoral systems for both the House and Senate give voters strong incentives to place person before party and give candidates an incentive to pursue a personal strategy while discounting the value of party label. I've already discussed the method for electing the Senate. This method encourages Senatorial candidates to eschew party strategies in favor of personal strategies. Senate elections are first and foremost personality contests and Senators generally possess little in the way of party loyalty. Multiple votes allow voters to split their votes between Senatorial candidates from different parties – something that Filipino voters frequently take advantage of.

Elections for the House of Representatives are only slightly better. In House elections, single-seat districts – by themselves often associated with weak parties – are combined with a system that gives party leaders very little control over their members’ behavior and even who runs under the party banner. For example, candidates are not required to obtain the nomination or endorsement of a political party in order to run for office. Candidates may run as independents or run under the banner of more than one party.\textsuperscript{20} Party officials often lack strong control over nomination and endorsement within their own party. Strong candidates can usually run under the label of their choosing. In some cases strong/wealthy candidates will use a party’s label
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with or without the party’s official endorsement (Wurfel 1988, 96). Some districts even feature multiple candidates each claiming to represent the same party, giving rise to intra-party competition (Kasuya 2001). Finally, candidates and politicians are free to switch parties at virtually any time without penalty. All in all the system is one in which there are very few payoffs to either voters or candidates for investing in, or even paying attention to, political parties.

Institutional obstacles – interventions

In addition to the unfavorable electoral incentives – a constant throughout the democratic periods – there have been a few key institutional interventions that had the effect of arresting any incipient institutionalization. Two of these interventions were not direct attempts to shape the party system and institutionalization, but the consequences were nonetheless profound. Two other interventions were strategically calculated to prevent the development of a stronger party system, and they have been fairly successful at doing so.

The first two interventions which indirectly affected the party system were Marcos’ actions under martial law, and the introduction of a single term limit for the president after the fall of Marcos. We know that the types of strategies adopted by dictators during authoritarian interludes have important consequences for post-authoritarian party system (Geddes and Franz 2007; Hicken and Kuhonta 2011). Had Marcos simply banned or repressed the Liberal and Nacionalista parties during his rule, experience elsewhere in the world suggests that voter loyalties might have remained more or less intact and the Liberals and Nacionalistas would have reemerged as strong parties when democratic elections returned. Instead, Marcos coupled the banning of existing parties with the creation of his own electoral vehicle – Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL). Past experience predicts that such parties will tend to attract supporters and candidates at the expense of the traditional parties, but once democratic elections return the party system then tends to fragment as the artificially created new party falls apart (Geddes and Franz 2007). Indeed, this is precisely what happened in the Philippines. Upon the fall of Marcos the former two-party system fragmented, the Liberals and Nacionalistas never fully regained their former strength, and the KBL quickly lost most of its support.

After the excesses of the Marcos years it is not surprising that reformers put in place a number of constitutional provisions designed to limit the power of future presidents and would-be dictators. Key among these reforms was the introduction of a ban on reelection.21 This had two (unintended) effects on the party system (Choi 2001; Hicken 2009a). First, it undermined the incentives of sitting presidents to invest in party-building. Why build an organization you are not going to be able to directly benefit from? Second, it led to an increase in the number of presidential candidates and a corresponding increase in the number, birth rate and death rate of political parties. Prior to martial law the presence of a presidential incumbent with control of government resources encouraged coordination around two large parties. Would-be challengers from within the government ranks had incentives to stay put while the opposition faced strong incentives to back a single challenger in order to maximize their chances of defeating the incumbent. With the end of presidential incumbency these coordination incentives have greatly diminished and this has contributed to less party discipline, more factionalism and to a larger number of short-lived parties, as demonstrated earlier.

Finally, there are two reforms that seem to have been specifically designed to thwart progress towards greater institutionalization. Shortly after independence the election code was revised to allow for party voting. Rather than writing individual candidates’ names, as had been the norm in the past, voters could write in the name of a party and the ballot would be “deemed as a vote for each and every one of the official candidates of such party for the respective offices” (Revised
Election Code of 1947, Article XI, Section 149, No. 19). Had this option remained in effect it is intriguing to consider whether parties might not have increased their efforts to win those “party” votes and whether voters might have developed stronger ties to particular parties over time. However, politicians quickly acted to return to the status quo, amending the Election Code in 1951 to eliminate the party voting option (Wurfel 1988, 94). Voters were once again required to write in the name of each of their chosen candidates for every elected office. Given that local and national elections are synchronized this can mean that voters must write in up to 40 names on election day. This cumbersome ballot structure provided voters with ample opportunities to split their votes between many different parties, thus undermining the value of party label. The introduction of electronic voting in 2010 meant that voters no longer had to write in names by hand, but they still lacked the option of casting a single vote for a party slate.

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

In addition, opponents of the reforms were able to water down the provision substantially and minimize the impact on the existing party system. Rather than a German-style legislature with one half of the seats allocated on the basis of party lists using proportional representation, the Philippines reserves only 20 percent of the total House seats for the party list. Both political parties and sectoral organizations can compete for the seats. However, the five largest parties from the previous election are barred from competing. To obtain a seat parties (or sectoral organizations) must receive at least 2 percent of the party list votes. For every 2 percent of the vote a party is awarded a seat. No party or group can receive more than three seats via the list tier. The limit on the number of seats and the ban on mainstream parties competing has effectively kept the impact of these changes to a minimum. While the party list provision has probably resulted in more diverse interests being elected to Congress, it has also partially ghettoized those interests. Mainstream political parties and politicians seem largely content to leave programmatic campaigning and the representation of marginalized interests to party list groups. At the same time, the low 2 percent threshold and three-seat limit has led to an explosion of new, small parties in recent years, many of which appear to be the vehicles for narrow interest groups to protect and promote their interests rather than programmatic, policy-oriented organizations.

Conclusion

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

So, in conclusion, why should we care about the level of institutionalization? We can observe differences in the level of institutionalization from country to country, but does it really matter for things we ultimately care about? Elsewhere I have argued that the level of institutionalization might affect democratic governance (Hicken 2008b; Hicken 2015). Specifically, I argue that under-institutionalized party systems are generally a hindrance to democratic consolidation and good governance in at least three ways. First, where parties and party systems are under-institutionalized politicians will tend to have narrow constituencies and short time horizons – both of which are problematic for the provision of needed public goods. Second, a lack of party system institutionalization undermines the ability of voters to hold politicians individually and collectively accountable. Finally, where party institutionalization is low, the disillusionment with the extant system might eventually produce ambivalence among some voters about the relative merits of the democratic status quo versus strong, decisive, albeit less democratic, leadership. This ambivalence, combined with weak party loyalties, may provide opportunities for political outsiders with anti-party and sometimes anti-democratic sensibilities to rise to power (e.g., Marcos and perhaps Duterte).

Notes

2 The discussion of these two dimensions draws on Hicken (2009b).
3 Compare to Levitsky’s (1998) discussion of behavioral routinization.
4 Where possible I follow Mainwaring and Zoco’s (2007) rules about how to treat such situations.
5 E.g., Ufen (2008).
6 Specifically, where candidates claimed multiple party affiliations I use the largest party of which they were a member to calculate volatility. To the extent that the largest parties are those that are likely to be around over several elections, any bias is likely to be in the direction of understating the level of volatility. I also include independents and “other” minor parties as single categories for the purposes of calculating volatility. The average percentage for each category is less than 5 percent in any given election. Excluding the independents and “other” categories from the volatility calculation would have the effect of lowering the volatility score by an average of two points per election.
7 When asked how important democracy was on a scale from 1 to 10, 0 being “not at all important” and 10 being “absolutely important” 74.1 percent of respondents gave a rating of 7 or higher.
8 Degree of confidence in the government.
9 Together Everyone Achieves More.
10 There were no large multi-party alliances for the Senate elections in 2010.
11 Candidates were not paragons of partisan loyalty either. Three candidates appeared on the slate of both party alliances.
12 There was also alliances associated with presidential candidate Grace Poe, Partido Galing at Puso.
13 For 2016 I report the vote differentials for the Liberal Party, the largest party in the House, and UNA. UNA actually finished as the fifth largest party in the House, but parties 2–4 (NPC, NUP and NP) fielded only two, zero and one Senate candidates respectively, while UNA fielded six.
14 Liang (1970); Banlaoi and Carlos (1996); Landé (1996); Hicken (2009a).
15 This section draws on chapter 5 of Hicken (2009a).
16 For an analysis of the policy consequences of this arrangement see Sidel (1996) and Hutchcroft (1998).
17 For an opposing view (i.e., that the reports of oligarchs’ deaths were highly exaggerated) see Putzel (1993).
18 The unwillingness of Aquino to capitalize on her popularity to form her own political party or take over the leadership of an existing party also likely contributed to the return of an under-institutionalized party system.

19 There are a number of Philippines scholars who blame the state of the party system on the establishment of a strong president (see for example Grossholtz 1964; Wurfel 1988; Banlaoi and Carlos 1996). A powerful presidency, so the argument goes, undermines party cohesiveness, frees legislators and parties to focus on particularistic concerns (leaving national policies in the hands of the president) and generally discourages the development of an institutionalized party system. This observation is not unique to the Philippines – presidentialism is often associated with weaker and less-cohesive legislative parties (Lijphart et al. 1993, 322; Samuels and Shugart 2010). However, I discount a powerful president as a significant causal variable for two reasons. First, Mainwaring and Zoco (2007) find no relationship between presidentialism and institutionalization, once they control for other factors. Second, if there is a relationship there is some uncertainty about which way the arrows run. A strong presidency may hinder the rise of an institutionalized party system, but it may also be employed as an institutional antidote in polities with under-institutionalized party systems (Shugart 1999). In fact, the effort of the Philippines’ first president, Manuel Quezon, to guarantee a powerful presidency was in part a reaction to the perceived shortcomings of the party system (Quezon 1940).

20 See the earlier discussion of guest and joint candidacies.

21 Prior to martial law presidents were limited to two terms.

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

23 See also Mainwaring and Torcal (2006).

References


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Revised Election Code of 1947, Article XI, Section 149, No. 19.