

**Working Paper Series No. 2022-01**

**The Legacy of the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan:  
Authoritarian Contamination in  
Philippine Party Politics**

**Julio C. Teehankee**

**January 2022**



**La Salle Institute of Governance**

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Published in 2022 by La Salle Institute of Governance

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## ABSTRACT

One of the puzzling outcomes in most countries that underwent democratic transitions is the return to power of parties and personalities who have deep roots in the dictatorship. Ferdinand Marcos' authoritarian regime destroyed the postwar two-party system and institutionalized a dominant presidential party. Marcos organized the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL) to consolidate authoritarian rule and serve as a focal point to dispense patronage to local warlords and political clans. Recent literature on authoritarian vestiges has focused on the rise of "authoritarian successor parties" or parties rooted in the dictatorship that has successfully transitioned into electoral democracy and the preponderance of "authoritarian diasporas" or the migration of party elites identified with the dictatorship into multiple parties post-democratic transition. This paper introduces another variant – "authoritarian contamination" personalities closely identified with fallen authoritarian infecting or contaminating "democratic parties" (i.e., parties that struggled against authoritarianism or were founded in its aftermath to consolidate democratic gains). This paper will delineate how political successors and defectors from the KBL have contaminated Philippine electoral democracy and party competition in the three decades since the collapse of the Marcos dictatorship.

**Keywords:** authoritarian successor parties; authoritarian diaspora; authoritarian contamination; Philippines; Ferdinand Marcos; Rodrigo Duterte; Kilusang Bagong Lipunan

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## INTRODUCTION

The declaration of Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr., son of former president and ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos that he would seek the presidency in the 2022 national elections, was not surprising to most observers. Insistent historical revisionism and persistent social media propaganda over three decades of a campaign for the family’s political rehabilitation had been preparing for a capstone return to the presidential palace. What was surprising was the openness of a faction of the Partido Demokratikong Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban) and the Lakas Christian Muslim Democrats (Lakas CMD) to support the late dictator’s son. Both PDP-Laban and Lakas CMD have roots in the anti-Marcos struggle and the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution.

PDP-Laban was a merger of two staunchly anti-Marcos political parties in 1983 - Laban founded by the slain anti-Marcos leader Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino Jr. In 1978 and the PDP founded by another anti-Marcos leader Aquilino “Nene” Pimentel Jr. In 1982. The merged party would carry the candidacy of Ninoy’s widow Corazon “Cory” Aquino in the historic 1986 snap presidential election that triggered the People Power Revolution and led to Marcos’ ouster (Teehankee 2020). For the party to even consider supporting a Marcos was tantamount to political heresy in the eyes of those who had fought the dictatorship. On the other hand, Lakas CMD was formed in the spirit of the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution that ousted the Marcos dictatorship. It was a merger of the Lakas ng EDSA founded by former general Fidel Ramos and the National Union of Christian Democrats (NUCD) founded by former senator and anti-Marcos leader Raul S. Manglapus. Lakas CMD supported Bongbong Marcos’ failed vice-presidential run in 2016 and his presidential bid in 2022.

The Marcos princeling won his Senate seat in 2010 and lost his vice-presidential bid in 2016 under the Nacionalista Party (NP) - the party that catapulted his father to the presidency in 1965. The moribund Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL), founded by his father, Ferdinand, Marcos in 1978 to consolidate authoritarian rule and serve as a focal point to dispense patronage to local warlords and political clans, at its national convention on September 24, 2021, declared Bongbong Marcos as its presidential candidate for 2022. But Bongbong eventually abandoned both the KBL and the NP and declared his presidential candidacy under the recently revived “Partido Federal ng Pilipinas (PFP).” Inspired by the country’s very first political party founded in 1900, the PFP was a spin-off party of PDP-Laban in its failed campaign to push for the shift to federalism in the country.



Fifty years since Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law and “ambushed” Philippine democracy (De Quiros 1997), vestiges of Marcos-era politics has survived through “authoritarian successor parties,” referring to “parties that emerge from authoritarian regimes, but that operate after a transition to democracy” (Loxton 2015: 158). Post-Marcos electoral politics was also highlighted by a high rate of defection or “authoritarian diaspora,” defined as “the subset of former regime officials that disperse across the electoral space after a regime transition” (Buehler and Nataatmadja 2021, 521). A growing literature on “authoritarian vestiges” or “the remnants of defunct dictatorships in present-day democracies” (Loxton 2021, 146) has elaborated both phenomena,

While the literature has advanced the accounting for authoritarian succession and dispersion, it has not yet addressed how personalities closely identified with fallen authoritarian regimes managed to infect or contaminate “democratic parties,” the parties that struggled against authoritarianism or were founded in its aftermath to consolidate democratic gains. This paper will delineate how political successors and defectors from the KBL have contaminated Philippine electoral democracy and party competition in the three decades since the collapse of the Marcos dictatorship. Despite propping up the authoritarian regime for almost a decade, there is a dearth of comprehensive studies on the critical role played by the KBL during and after the Marcos dictatorship. A recent study by Buehler and Nataatmadja (2021) compared the authoritarian diasporas between Indonesia’s Golkar and the Philippines’ KBL. Their study noted the Philippines had a higher rate of authoritarian diaspora since members of the KBL authoritarian cohort belonged to local dynasties and hence possessed independent power bases from the state. Following the dictator’s fall in 1986, these local oligarchs just maintained their long-standing machines. While this study provided a valuable count of dispersion into authoritarian successor and other parties in the Philippines, it leaves a gap in identifying authoritarian party elites at the top of the clientelistic chain and their migration patterns into other post-authoritarian political parties. This paper will attempt to fill in the gap.

## **AUTHORITARIAN VESTIGES**

One of the puzzling outcomes in most countries that underwent democratic transitions is the return to power of parties and personalities who have deep roots in the dictatorship. It is confounding to note that after gaining the right to pick their leaders in free and fair elections, people would vote for candidates identified with the authoritarian regime (Loxton 2015). Rarely does the transition to democracy abolish all vestiges of the preceding dictatorship. While democratization is frequently portrayed as a “big bang” moment in which one regime collapses and is immediately replaced by another, the reality is those remnants of the previous regime nearly always persist in the next (Loxton and Power 2021).

Following transitions, remnants of the previous regime may persist in the new in a variety of ways: organizational, institutional, and territorial. Each of these three relics is extremely prevalent. They all point to what might be regarded as a fundamental premise of regime transitions: almost never does democratization produce a clean slate. Scholars have studied various forms of authoritarian vestiges in democratic regimes, such as authoritarian successor parties, authoritarian-era constitutions, sub-national authoritarianism (Loxton 2015), and, more recently, authoritarian diasporas (Loxton and Power 2021; Buehler and Nataatmadja 2021). In tracing the legacy of the KBL in Philippine electoral democracy, this chapter first focuses on authoritarian successor parties and authoritarian diasporas. It then introduces a new variant - authoritarian contamination.

### **Authoritarian Successor Parties**

Authoritarian successor parties operate *after* the democratic transition. They may begin as authoritarian ruling parties, but upon transition into the democratic regime, they become authoritarian successor parties. These parties lose their access to the repertoire of electoral manipulation (i.e., fraud, coercion, abuse of state resources) accorded to authoritarian regimes. In order to survive, these parties must win votes abiding by the democratic rules of the game. According to Loxton (2015), successor parties may emerge from authoritarian parties in two ways. First, they are former ruling parties that continued to exist as authoritarian successor parties. Examples of these types of parties in Asia are the Kuomintang (KMT) of Taiwan, the Democratic Justice Party (DJP) of South Korea, and the Golkar of Indonesia. Second, authoritarian successor parties may be created in reaction to democratic transition by former personalities associated with the authoritarian regime. These personalities may create new

parties to reposition themselves in the political market, often distancing themselves from the dictatorship to which they were beholden.

All authoritarian successor parties carry a mix of inheritance and baggage from the previous authoritarian regime. Scholars have pointed out that authoritarian successor parties can also have mixed effects on democratic transitions. They may continue to be a threat to democratic consolidation since they possess greater authoritarian political skills, and they may hinder transitional justice. Allowing authoritarian successor parties into the democratic system also promote intra-party competition and keep the former authoritarian personalities within the system rather than outside undermining it (Loxton 2015; Grzymala-Busse 2020)

### **Authoritarian Diaspora**

Personalities formerly identified with fallen dictatorships do not survive only in authoritarian successor parties; they also disperse across multiple parties and electoral vehicles. Authoritarian diaspora refers to “a pattern of dispersion among former authoritarian officials (the ‘authoritarian cohort’) in the lead-up to, or the aftermath of, a transition to competitive elections” (Loxton and Power 2021, 465). These personalities can exit from former authoritarian ruling parties by 1) forming new parties, 2) colonizing existing parties, and 3) running as independents. Similar to authoritarian successor parties, the phenomenon of authoritarian diaspora can be considered a double-edged sword hanging over democratizing polities. While dispersion can provide an avenue to reintegrate authoritarian personalities into democratic politics, on balance, its effects may be more harmful than authoritarian successor parties due to: 1) overrepresentation of the authoritarian cohort under democracy, 2) persistence of authoritarian-era practices and institutions, and 3) dilution of the regime cleavage between defenders and opponents of the former dictatorship (Loxton and Power 2021).

### **RISE AND FALL OF THE DICTATOR’S PARTY**

On September 21, 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos imposed martial law, ostensibly to protect the Republic from communist revolt on the Left and oligarchic rule on the right. Martial law resulted in the suspension of elections for six years, thus putting an end to all party activity and intra-elite competition (Teehankee 2020). Marcos then announced in August 1977 his plan to hold Interim Batasang Pambansa and local elections by the end of 1978 as a first step toward what he called

“normalization.” As titular head of the NP, he convened a meeting of the party’s National Directorate on February 1, 1978, to restructure its ranks in preparation for the elections. Former Speaker Jose B. Laurel Jr. made the following proposal:

To organize a coalition or movement, united front or umbrella organization that shall include as its members Nacionalistas, Liberals, veterans as well as ether politic all sectoral and socio-civic aggrupations and individuals who adhere to the ideals and principles of the New Society, and which shall field its own candidates in the Interim Batasang Pambansa elections (KBL 1985, 23, cited in Kimura 1991, 209).

Hence, the coalition movement Bagong Lipunang Kilusan ng Nagkakaisang Nacionalista-Liberal Atbp. was formed and later renamed Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL). Drove of former NP and LP members switched their loyalties to the KBL. As part of the process of authoritarian consolidation, the KBL Central Committee was accorded a prominent status of influence within the Marcos regime. Marcos appointed the most influential provincial clan leaders and warlords to serve as members of the Central Committee of the KBL (see Table 1). They included Benjamin Romualdez of Leyte, Ali Dimaporo of Lanao del Sur, Jose Roño of Samar, Felicísimo San Luis of Laguna, Felix Fuentebella of Camarines Sur, Lorenzo Teves of Negros Oriental, Vicente Cerilles of Zamboanga, Roberto Benedicto of Negros Occidental, Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. of Tarlac, and Antonio Floreindo of Davao (Wurfel, 1983-1984; Kimura 1991).

**Table 1 Central Committee of the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan, 1978**

President	Ferdinand E. Marcos
Secretary General	Jose A. Roño
Treasurer	Luis Yulo
<b>Regional Chairs</b>	
Region I	Conrado Estrella
Region II	Juan Ponce Enrile
Region III	Eduardo Cojuangco
Region IV	Imelda Romualdez-Marcos
Region IV-A	Felicísimo San Luis
Region V	Felix Fuentebella
Region VI	Roberto S. Benedicto

Region VII	Lorenzo Teves
Region VIII	Benjamin Romualdez
Region IX	Vicente M. Cerilles
Region X	Emmanuel Pelaez
Region XI	Antonio O. Floreindo
Region XII	Ali Dimaporo

**Source:** Kimura 1991

### **Regime Consolidation**

The KBL flexed its political muscles in the 1978 Interim Batasang Pambansa election with candidates that included 12 of the 27 Cabinet members; national government officials—undersecretaries, commission and authority chair, and fiscals—or their spouses; former justices; nine former Senators and 23 former Congressmen; incumbent or former provincial and town officials; and several members of business and professions. The KBL was primarily a party of officials and the local elite. It mobilized the electorate by relying heavily on governmental machinery with the objective of building a permanent national party organization (Machado 1979).

In every region across the country, the KBL possessed overwhelming advantages. Marcos supporters dominated the mass media, the Commission on Elections, the governmental apparatus, and Kabataang Barangay, the national youth movement. In Metro Manila, however, the KBL lacked sufficient popular support. Marcos attempted to enhance important constituencies' enthusiasm by establishing new insurance and retirement benefits for government employees, as well as pay increases for teachers. Finally, irregular measures were attempted to ensure a sweep in Metro Manila. What began as a tightly controlled exercise stacked in Marcos' favor devolved into a fraud characterized by intimidation of government employees, manipulation of voter registration and voting procedures to allow large-scale movement of transient voters into Metro Manila and "flying voters" to cast multiple ballots, and plain ballot box stuffing. The KBL won all 21 seats in Manila, garnering 60% of the vote for frontrunner First Lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos and nearly sweeping the rest of the country. After a challenge, the Pusyong Bisaya, a diverse opposition slate of local candidates, gained all 13 seats in Central Visayas, and one opposition candidate won in Northeastern Mindanao (Machado 1979).

On January 30, 1980, the president presided over local elections for mayors, governors, and councilors. His unexpected call for elections in January 1980 caught the opposition off guard. The dominant KBL contested practically every seat available. Opposition parties were divided, insolvent, and bound by tight election laws. The KBL won 69 out of 73 governorships and nearly 1,450 out of 1,560 mayoral contests. The KBL swept the elections because the opposition lacked both organization and finances. They exploited their positions' trappings and organizational foundation to gather votes. The local bureaucracy was mobilized and, in certain areas, replicated the KBL structure (Neher 1981).

On January 17, 1981, Marcos ceremoniously lifted martial law in anticipation of the visit of Pope John Paul II. Soon after, the Interim Batasang Pambansa sitting as a constituent assembly amended the Marcos-sponsored 1973 Constitution to introduce a number of changes that included a shift from parliamentary to a semi-presidential form of government. After the amendments were ratified in a national plebiscite on April 7, a presidential election was scheduled for June 16, 1981. The political opposition boycotted the presidential election, forcing Marcos to recycle ex-Congressman and ex-Defense Secretary Alejo Santos from his former party - the NP - to serve as his "rival." The NP faction headed by former senator Jose Roy would serve as Marcos' loyal opposition in succeeding elections. As expected, Marcos won with 88% of the votes, while Santos garnered a measly 8.5% (Youngblood 1982). Armed with his third presidential term, Marcos inaugurated the Fourth Republic on June 30, 1981.

Marcos' consolidation of power after martial law was disrupted by the assassination of his archrival and opposition leader Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr. Marcos had kept Aquino for seven years and seven months in prison before allowing him to fly to the United States to seek medical treatment. After spending the next three years in exile, Aquino flew back to Manila on August 21, 1983, with the hope of leading the political opposition in the May 1984 Batasang Pambansa election (Siliman 1984). He was assassinated upon his arrival at the Manila International Airport. The blatant political killing unleashed a wave of public protests that rocked the Marcos regime (Siliman 1984). With the opposition emboldened by the renewed public support, the KBL faced its first electoral setback since its establishment in 1978. The opposition gained 61 seats, independents got 10, and the KBL got the remainder. Marcos projected a 20-seat gain for the opposition. The opposition win might have been larger but for outright fraud by KBL supporters. The opposition won 15 of the 21 seats in Metro Manila, diminishing the political capital of First Lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos (Kessler 1984).

## Regime Crisis and Collapse

The KBL dominated all lopsided elections held under the Marcos regime, including the 1978 Interim Batasang Pambansa, 1980 local elections, 1981 presidential elections, and 1984 Regular Batasang Pambansa (Regular National Assembly). Marcos and Imelda consolidated all political power and authority around themselves. The KBL was a vehicle of their “conjugal dictatorship.” In this way, the authoritarian presidency prevented the emergence of factionalism within the dominant party (Tancangco 1988). The dictator’s declining health in the early 1980s eventually weakened the party’s ironclad dominance. Within the ruling KBL, factions jockeyed for the chance to succeed Marcos. The First Lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos headed the faction opposed by Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and top crony Ambassador Eduardo “Danding” Cojuangco Jr. (Neher 1980; Wurfel, 1983–1984). There was also a division between Marcos loyalists and more liberal party members. Marcos publicly reprimanded Blas Ople, Labor Minister, for publicly criticizing his administration and commenting on his health. He fired Foreign Minister Arturo Tolentino, a vocal opponent of President Marcos’ decree-making powers, and extended his term in office. (Villegas 1986).

On November 3, 1985, Marcos, in an attempt to arrest his diminishing legitimacy and under pressure from the US government, announced his decision to call a snap election via an interview on American television (Kimura 1991). The once monolithic and vaunted KBL machinery, however,

*had become politically obese and wracked with dissension after years of pampering and political rivalries between local families, cronies, and Marcos’ technocrats. The party’s rank and file were simply aghast at the opposition’s documented expose on Marcos and his family’s hidden wealth. Most of the KBL members disagreed with the Aquino assassination and the summary acquittal of the military - in a manner that further eroded Marcos’ credibility and leadership ... The majority had feared a snap election - the odds were different, the ground rules almost even, and the situation unpredictable (Almendral 1988, 191).*

The selection of former Senator Arturo Tolentino by Marcos as the party’s vice-presidential candidate also triggered a near rebellion within its top leaders. Tolentino was a party dissenter who projected himself as a “KBL-with-a-conscience” and had been fired by Marcos as Foreign Affairs Minister for his critical stance. He was the only KBL candidate who survived the opposition onslaught in Manila during the 1984 Batasang Pambansa elections. The choice of Tolentino was Marcos’ way of offering a

loyal oppositionist within his ticket (Almendral 1988). The genuine political opposition managed to forge a last-minute united ticket led by Ninoy's widow, Corazon "Cory" Aquino. In the end, Marcos' attempt to steal the election set off a series of events that led to the EDSA People Power Revolution that finally deposed the dictator (Villegas 1986). This also marked the collapse of the KBL.

### **AUTHORITARIAN SUCCESSION, DISPERSION, AND CONTAMINATION**

According to Loxton (2015, 160), the primary mode of authoritarian party reproduction is through a process of authoritarian inheritance, "highlighting the many potential resources that dictatorships may bequeath to their partisan successors." In the Philippines, however, it was not inheritance but contamination. The KBL was so decimated after the fall of the dictator that continued affiliation with the party carried a lot of authoritarian baggage. Hence, its key leaders and personalities opted to form new parties or migrated to other parties through the common practice of party-switching.

In the post-Marcos period, patronage politics and party-switching continued to weaken democratic institutions, leading to their further erosion. The authoritarian virus, dormant for decades, gradually infected most of the country's party politics in various ways. First, the elite-led and negotiated democratic transition since 1986 provided the opportunity for the rehabilitation of key enablers of Marcos' authoritarian regime. It allowed former Marcos associates and KBL members to switch easily and even take up leadership positions in the post-authoritarian political parties. Second, patronage-based party switching fueled the rise of KBL-like monolithic parties in succeeding presidential administrations – from the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP) during the term of Corazon Aquino, followed by the Lakas-NUCD-UMDP founded by Fidel Ramos, the Laban ng Makabayang Masang Pilipino (LAMMP) of Joseph Estrada, the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi) of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the Liberal Party (LP) under Benigno Aquino III, and the PDP-Laban under Rodrigo Duterte. Third, the Marcos dynasty gradually rebuilt their political base by recapturing their provincial bailiwicks in Ilocos Norte and Leyte and re-entering national politics by winning seats in the Senate.

#### **The KBL as an Authoritarian Successor Party**

After Marcos fled the country, the once-dominant KBL crumbled rapidly. Its leadership broke into a few factions and lost a large number of supporters. Immediately following the revolution, the KBL



national leadership began assessing the new circumstances and formulating a response. Marcos attempted to retain control of KBL from Hawaii via close allies Nicanor Yñiguez and Jose Roño. Blas Ople, Marcos' Labor Minister, made it clear on March 7, 1986, during a meeting of the KBL Executive Committee, that he was entirely distancing himself from Marcos. On March 13, a group of KBL reformists led by Ople agreed to launch a new party from the ranks of the KBL, launching the Partido Nasyonalista ng Pilipinas (PNP) on March 15. The PNP established a policy of "critical collaboration" with the Aquino Administration. Along with this policy, it accepted President Aquino's request to serve on the Constitutional Commission; four of its leaders, notably Bias Ople, Regalado Maambong, Teodulo Natividad, and Rustico de los Reyes, Jr., were appointed constitutional commissioners (Kimura 1989).

Meanwhile, the NP-Roy Wing, then headed by Rafael Palmares, initially approached Ople's PNP for a possible merger. But this did not push through as Palmares joined another NP faction organized by KBL Assemblyman Renato Cayetano. On August 19, in commemoration of President Manuel Quezon's 103rd birthday, the NP-Cayetano Wing was launched. Numerous KBLs joined the NP-Cayetano Wing, including Mayor Richard Gordon of Olongapo City and Assemblymen Victor Agbayani and Antonio Carag. While many KBL leaders abandoned the party early on, many remained loyal, with much of the membership of the Central Committee staying intact as of July 9, 1986 (see Table 2). The majority of KBL's national leadership either joined the PNP or the NP-Cayetano Wing or remained KBL members (Kimura 1989).

Former KBL personalities competed in the 1987 congressional and 1988 local elections. After returning from exile, former First Lady Imelda Marcos ran for president in the 1992 election. She placed fifth in a field of seven candidates (Teehankee 2002). For the next two decades, former KBL members would rebuild the subnational authoritarian enclaves of the Marcos-Romualdez dynasty in the Northern Ilocos region and in Southern Leyte. Different members of the clan would be elected in these bailiwicks, which reemerged as subnational, territorial, and authoritarian enclaves reviving after a national-level transition to democracy (Loxton 2021). But the original KBL has become a husk of its former self, often fielding token candidates in the various post-authoritarian elections.

**Table 2 Central Committee of the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan, 1986**

Titular Head	Arturo Tolentino
Acting President	Nicanor Yñiguez
Acting Secretary General	Manuel Garcia
Acting Treasurer	Edith Rabat
<b>Regional Chair</b>	
Region I	Conrado Estrella
Region II	Faustino Dy
Region III	Mercedes Teodoro
Region IV	Isidro Rodriguez
Region V	Felix Fuentebella
Region VI	Salvador Britanico
Region VII	Lorenzo Teves
Region VIII	Jose Roño
Region IX	Vicente M. Cerilles
Region X	Constantino Navarro
Region XI	Alejandro Almendras
Region XII	Ali Dimaporo
National Capital Region	Gerardo Espina
Concon Representative	Antonio Tupaz
IBP Representative	Rogelio Quiambao
Representative of former Congressmen	Ramon Duran
Representative of former Senators	Wenceslao Lagumbay
President, City Mayor's Leagues representative	Honorato Perez
President, Municipal Mayor's League of the Philippines	Evaristo Singson
Chairman, National Association of Barangay Captains	Nora Petines

**Source:** Kimura 1989

In preparation for post-authoritarian elections, more former KBL members started joining the parties supporting President Cory Aquino. Among these were the United Nationalist Democratic Organization (UNIDO) and the PDP-Laban. The former was an umbrella group (comprised of twelve

political parties and movements) that was created in 1979 following Salvador Laurel's departure from the KBL. The latter was formed in 1983 as a result of a merger between the social-democratic, grassroots-oriented PDP and the Luzon-based Laban, which was founded in 1978 by Cory's husband, former Senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino to contest the Interim Batasang Pambansa elections.

Aquino's relatives, led by her brother Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Jr., sought to strengthen their own political influence by attracting defectors from other organizations, including notorious individuals from the KBL and a sizable pro-Aquino section within UNIDO that broke with Laurel to create Lakas ng Bansa (Lakas). Lakas then merged with a PDP-Laban faction led by House Speaker Ramon Mitra Jr. and presidential brother-in-law Paul Aquino to establish the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP) in 1988 (Teehankee 2020).

### **Rise of Authoritarian Successor Parties**

Authoritarian successor parties emerged to contest the first democratic election for members of the restored bicameral Congress in 1987. Two parties formed the opposition to the Aquino government, the Union for Peace and Progress-Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (UPP-KBL), headed by Arturo Tolentino and Nicanor Yñiguez, and the Grand Alliance for Democracy (GAD), led by former Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, former Marcos cabinet men, KBL legislators, and conservative pre-1986 oppositionists originally against Benigno and then against Cory Aquino. The component parties of GAD were: the Espina faction of UNIDO, Partido Nasyonalista ng Pilipinas (PNP) of former Labor Minister Blas Ople, the Enrile wing of the NP, the Mindanao Alliance (MA) of former MP Homobono Adaza, the Bangsa Moro Islamic Party (BMIP), the Christian Social Democratic Party of former Information Minister Francisco Tatad, and the Kalaw Wing of the LP (Teehankee 2020).

Most of the local politicians identified with the former dictator opted to run as independents or angle their way into one of the pro-Aquino parties. No less than fourteen former KBL members of parliament and six Marcos-era provincial governors ran under the Cory Coalition. Some of these were: Jeremias Zapata (Abra), Samuel Dangwa (Benguet), Antonio Roman (Bataan), Augusto Ortiz (Sorsogon), Adeling Siloy (Cebu), Rodolfo del Rosario (Davao) and Alberto Ubay (Zamboanga). (Velasco 1989: 78)

### ***Nacionalista Party***

Several attempts were made in the early post-authoritarian period to resurrect the dormant NP. The post-Marcos NP was divided into four factions: the Roy wing, led by former Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile; the Laurel faction; a former governor Isidro Rodriguez faction that backed Cojuangco; and a faction known as the Partido Nasyonalista ng Pilipinas, led by former Marcos Labor Minister Blas Ople. In 1991, attempts were made to unite the NP groups. These attempts failed because the respective leaders all wanted support as the NP presidential in the 1992 election. Finally, Laurel obtained a Supreme Court ruling establishing his faction as the sole legal NP (Crisanto and Crisanto, 2007). Laurel contested the 1992 presidential election under the NP banner. He landed last in seventh place.

This signal another period of decline for the country's Grand Old Party until Laurel bequeathed the party to billionaire politician Manny Villar in 2004. Under the leadership of Villar, the party has grown in size and influence and is currently the second-largest party in the country. Aside from having served as House Speaker and Senate President, Villar is currently the richest man in the Philippines. In the 2019 midterm elections, the party won 3 national positions (senators) and 2,682 local positions (district representatives, governors, vice governors, mayors, vice mayors, and local legislators).

The Marcos dynasty has a long history with the NP. After serving as a congressman, senator, Senate President, and party president of the LP, Ferdinand Marcos switched to the NP to capture the presidency in 1965. In 2010, his son, Bongbong, would also affiliate with the NP to finally win a Senate seat. The same feat was followed by the dictator's daughter, Maria Imelda "Imee" Marcos, in 2019. Bongbong mounted his failed vice-presidential bid in 2016 under the NP.

### ***Nationalist People's Coalition***

One of the NP factions, led by billionaire politician and Marcos crony Eduardo Cojuangco Jr., formed the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC). A number of pro-administration legislators and former KBL stalwarts shifted allegiance to the NPC in support of Cojuangco's presidential candidacy in 1992. Although Cojuangco came in third in the election, his vice-presidential running mate, Joseph "Erap" Estrada won under his party - the Partido ng Masang Pilipino (PMP). In 1998, the NPC, in coalition with the LDP and the PMP, would successfully field Estrada for the presidency (Teehankee 2002). The NPC became the party of choice for many former KBL stalwarts. Bongbong Marcos would fail in his first attempt to win a national Senate seat in 1995 under the NPC.

The NPC became the most durable authoritarian successor party in the post-authoritarian period. The NPC has maintained its strength and numbers and has consistently served as a junior partner to most presidential administrations. Ideologically, it can be considered as a right conservative party. The party is now identified with Cojuangco's protégé, Filipino-Chinese billionaire Ramon Ang. Currently, it is the third-largest party in the country. In the 2019 midterm elections, the party won 1 national position (senator) and 1,908 local positions (district representatives, governors, vice governors, mayors, vice mayors, and local legislators).

### **Authoritarian Dispersion**

Since the once monolithic KBL immediately crumbled after the dictator fled to Hawaii, a large number of its leaders and members gradually but resolutely exited to affiliate with the emergent post-authoritarian parties. As discussed above, authoritarian diaspora refers to "a pattern of dispersion among former authoritarian officials (the 'authoritarian cohort') in the lead-up to, or the aftermath of, a transition to competitive elections" (Loxton and Power 2021: 465). In a recent article, Buehler and Nataatmadja (2021, 522) argued that "the two variables shaping defection calculi are the prevailing levels of party institutionalization (of both the Authoritarian Successor Parties and alternative parties) and the type of reversionary clientelistic network available to elites in post-transition politics." Since the KBL was poorly institutionalized and clientelistic relations offered a more stable basis for voters' mobilization, it was relatively easy to disperse into other parties. Thus, the majority of the authoritarian cohort from the KBL defected to other post-authoritarian parties.

In the same study, the survival and defection rates of the authoritarian cohort were tracked and counted: the overall KBL members who sat in the Regular Batasang Pambansa in 1985 and who won a seat in the national legislature on another party label after 1986 (See Table 3). The data reveal a significant number of authoritarian dispersions even way beyond the immediate period of democratic transition. This can be contrasted with the Indonesian case in which authoritarian diaspora was minimal and vanished quite quickly from national legislative politics (Buehler and Nataatmadja 2021).

**Table 3 Survival and Defection Rates of the Authoritarian Cohort in the Philippines, in Percentage per Election Year**

	1987	1992	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010	2013	2016	2019
<b>AC - Overall<sup>1</sup></b>	18.8	17.0	16.1	11.6	8.9	8.0	8.9	3.6	2.7	1.8	0.9
<b>AC- KBL<sup>2</sup></b>	12.05	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>AD - KBL<sup>3</sup></b>	6.3	17.0	16.1	10.7	8.0	8.9	8.9	3.6	2.7	0.9	1.8

**Source:** Buehler and Nataatmadja 2021

The large rate of authoritarian diaspora in the Philippines can be attributed to the “relational clientelism” rooted in more durable social relations that often last for decades (Aspinall and Hicken 2020). Thus, members of the authoritarian cohort were far better prepared to survive in the newly democratic environment. Numerous members of the KBL authoritarian cohort were derived from local dynasties and hence possessed autonomous power bases from the state. While the Marcos family made large quantities of money accessible to KBL members prior to the 1984 elections, many members of the authoritarian cohort competed in elections throughout the Marcos regime using their own personal networks. Following the dictator’s downfall in 1986, these local oligarchs simply continued to rely on their long-established machinery (Buehler and Nataatmadja 2021). Another factor not mentioned in the study is the high rate of party-switching in the Philippines (Teehankee and Kasuya 2020). An average of 32% of district representatives was elected from the 8th to 17th Congress between 1987 and 2019 (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Party-switching at the House of Representatives, 1987-2016**

	Total District Representatives	Total Party Switchers	%
Eight Congress (1987-1992)	200	154	77
Ninth Congress (1992-1995)	200	89	45
Tenth Congress (1995-1998)	203	19	9
Eleventh Congress (1998-2001)	208	84	40

<sup>1</sup> **AC-Overall:** the total percentage of the 1984 Regular Batasang Pambansa authoritarian cohort that returned to the Batasang Pambansa in any given election year after 1986

<sup>2</sup> **AC-KBL:** the percentage of members of the authoritarian cohort that returned to the Batasang Pambansa for the KBL

<sup>3</sup> **AD-KBL:** the percentage of the authoritarian cohort that returned to the Batasang Pambansa after 1986 on another party label.

	Total District Representatives	Total Party Switchers	%
Twelfth Congress (2001-2004)	209	15	7
Thirteenth Congress (2004-2007)	212	62	29
Fourteenth Congress (2007-2010)	219	149	68
Fifteenth Congress (2010-2013)	229	60	26
Sixteenth Congress (2013-2016)	234	15	6
Seventeenth Congress (2016-2019)	238	41	17

**Source:** Teehankee and Kasuya 2020

The lethal combination of dynastic politics and constant party-switching has contributed to a variant this author terms as “authoritarian contamination.” The outbreak and spread of this variant to the democratic parties in the post-authoritarian period shall be discussed in the following section.

### **Authoritarian Contamination**

In the 2019 midterm elections, the ruling PDP-Laban under President Rodrigo Duterte endorsed the senatorial candidacy of Imee Marcos. She was a candidate of the NP, which was in coalition with the PDP-Laban. Earlier, Imee’s cousin and nephew of former First Lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos, Leyte representative Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, assumed the presidency of Lakas CMD. Romualdez has been a high-profile party member since the administration of former president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. The PDP-Laban was the party that fielded populist Rodrigo Duterte for the presidency in 2016. Lakas CMD not only backed Duterte but also the failed vice-presidential candidacy of Bongbong Marcos. Both PDP-Laban and Lakas CMD have roots in the anti-Marcos struggle and the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution.

Authoritarian contamination is a potent variant of the authoritarian diaspora since it infects democratic parties or parties that struggled against authoritarianism or were founded in its aftermath to consolidate democratic gains. This type of infection serves to weaken democratic norms and values within a political system already compromised by patronage and clientelism. The following will discuss the democratic parties that emerged during and after the struggle against the dictatorship and how these parties were contaminated by vestiges of authoritarianism.

## ***PDP-Laban***

Despite ascending to the presidency under the banner of PDP-Laban, Cory Aquino refused to formalize her affiliation with the party. Instead, her brother Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Jr. assumed the leadership of the party. From its inception, tensions have been felt between the reform-minded activists within the party and its traditionally oriented political partners. This was exacerbated by Cojuangco's slide towards political pragmatism. Unlike Pimentel, Cojuangco did not adhere to the party's ideology. He started recruiting turncoats from other parties, including notorious elements from the KBL.

Later, Cojuangco orchestrated the merger of PDP-Laban and another pro-Aquino party - the Lakas ng Bansa - largely composed of party-switchers from UNIDO and the KBL. This would result in the formation of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP). The highly decimated PDP-Laban led by Senator Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr. and Makati Mayor Jejomar barely survived as a minor party entering in and out of alliances and coalitions. In 1992 it entered a coalition with the Liberal Party to support the presidential candidacy of Senator Jovito Salonga. In 2004 it reunited with the LDP in an alliance with the PMP known as Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) to support the presidential candidacy of populist actor Fernando Poe Jr. Practically half of the KNP senatorial slate included personalities formerly identified with the Marcos authoritarian regime that included: Juan Ponce Enrile, Salvador Escudero, Jinggoy Estrada, Alfredo Lim, and Francisco Tatad. Ironically, the slate also included the staunchly anti-Marcos Nene Pimentel.

Binay was elected vice president in 2010 under the banner of the dormant PDP-Laban. In preparation for the 2013 elections, Binay's party formed an electoral alliance with the PMP to form the United Nationalist Alliance (UNA). Binay resigned from the PDP-Laban in 2014, after serving as a party stalwart since the party's foundation in 1983. Following Binay's decision, the PDP-Laban, led by Senator Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III - the son of PDP-Laban founder Nene Pimentel - opted to withdraw from the UNA alliance as well. Binay relaunched UNA as a political party in 2016 to campaign for the presidency.

Following Binay's departure from the PDP-Laban in 2014, the PDP-Laban became the country's ruling political party after the 2016 presidential elections. Rodrigo Duterte, the Davao City mayor and standard-bearer of the PDP-Laban won the five-way contest with 39.01 percent of the overall popular vote. Less than three weeks after the elections, the PDP-Laban's multi-party coalition Coalition for Change effectively attracted up to 260 allies, or 90% of the expected 290 members in Congress"



(Cabacungan 2016). By this time, the PDP-Laban has been fully infected by the authoritarian populism of Rodrigo Duterte, who has openly admitted his admiration for the dictator Marcos.

### ***Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino***

The formation of the LDP was an outcome of earlier efforts by House Speaker Ramon Mitra Jr. and Peping Cojuangco to merge all political parties and groups supporting the Aquino administration into a single party similar to the KBL. An alliance for the 1988 local elections was forged between the two parties headed by presidential relatives Cojuangco and Paul Aquino - the PDP-Laban and Lakas ng Bansa to pave the way for this merger. The alliance fielded a common slate in 53 out of 75 provinces. These included politicians formerly affiliated with the KBL. The machinery built around the traditional leadership networks in the provinces and regions by the former dictator may have been dismantled, but the Marcos political leaders have preserved their enormous clout at the local level.

After the local elections, the formation of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP) in 1988 formalized the merger. The core of the party was built around Lakas ng Bansa and the PDP-Laban. Speaker Mitra was elected Party Chair, and Representative Cojuangco assumed the position of Secretary-General. The new party opened its membership to all kinds of personalities and political persuasions. Bereft of any clear political ideology but totally armed with patronage and access to state resources, the fledgling party was able to attract a large number of congressmen, mayors, and governors.

Between 1988 and 1991, its membership in the lower house grew to 154. Out of the 148 congressmen who ran under several pro-administration parties, alliances and coalitions, the LDP was able to recruit 123. Of the 30 elected oppositionists, 17 affiliated themselves with the new party. Seventeen independent legislators also joined the LDP. These legislators were politicians identified with the Marcos administration who distanced themselves from their former patron, ran, and won as independent candidates. They formed a legislative bloc known as the "Group of Independents" headed by former KBL stalwart Ronaldo Zamora. The group formed the core of Mitra's faction within the LDP. By the time Mitra declared his candidacy for the presidential election in 1992, the LDP, which was founded in the spirit of the anti-Marcos struggle, had morphed into another KBL.

The LDP suffered the same fate as the KBL after Mitra lost his presidential bid. Cojuangco attempted to consolidate the LDP by running for the speakership in the House of Representatives, but

a majority of the legislators had already switched to the new party in power - the Lakas ng EDSA-National Union of Christian Democrats (Lakas NUCD). The LDP reorganized itself under the leadership of Senate President Edgardo Angara and became the primary opposition party under the Ramos presidency. Edgardo Angara was a Marcos-era technocrat whose firm lawyered for Marcos cronies. The party briefly entered into a coalition with Lakas for the 1995 mid-term elections to form the Lakas-Laban coalition.

Later, Angara orchestrated the coalition of three opposition parties – the LDP, NPC, and the Partido ng Masang Pilipino – into the formation of the Laban ng Makabayang Masang Pilipino (LAMMP) to support the presidential candidacy of populist actor Joseph Estrada. Later the party would also support the failed candidacy of another populist actor Fernando Poe Jr. Although its membership has dwindled in recent years, it has entered into a coalition with Duterte and has become one of the administration's reliable allies in Congress.

### ***Lakas CMD***

The Lakas Christian Muslim Democrat (Lakas CMD) was formed in 1991 to support the successful presidential candidacy of Fidel Ramos. Ramos, a cousin of Ferdinand Marcos and West Point graduate, served a chief of the Philippine Constabulary and chief implementor of martial law. His critical defection, together with Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, led to the ouster of Marcos in 1986. He would later defend the fledgling Cory Aquino administration against several coup attempts orchestrated by Enrile and his followers in the military. Hence, Ramos managed to claim the mantle of EDSA hero and defender of democracy.

In 1991, Ramos contested but lost the presidential nomination of the LDP to Speaker Ramon Mitra Jr. He then consolidated his disparate groups of supporters that included the United People Power Movement, EDSA-LDP, and Partido Lakas Tao into the Lakas ng EDSA (Lakas). Lakas would then merge with the National Union of Christian Democrats-United Muslim Democrats of the Philippines (NUCD-UMDP). The merged party shall be known as Lakas NUCD-UMDP (later shortened to Lakas CMD). Upon winning the presidency in 1992, the Lakas NUCD-UMDP was identical to its forerunners, the KBL and LDP. It was largely organized to advance the incumbent president's political agenda. By inducing party-switching, all the administration super-majority parties since then have followed the same instant party-building strategy.

The chief architect of the growth of Lakas NUCD-UMDP into a monolithic party under the Ramos administration was Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. - a former ranking member of the LDP despite his personal and business association with the Marcoses. He successfully negotiated for a series of formal coalition agreements between Lakas and other minor parties such as NP, LP, PDP-Laban, NPC, and the KBL. The "Rainbow Coalition" did not only facilitate the smooth passage of President Ramos' legislative agenda, but it also allowed the ruling Lakas-NUCD-UMDP to expand and consolidate its membership by raiding the ranks of its political partners. Party switching was made easier since they were all members of the ruling coalition. From an original number of 38 elected members, it was able to expand itself to 119 (Querijero 1997).

A number of former KBL stalwarts were accommodated within the ruling coalition and awarded key positions in the House of Representatives. These included Ronaldo Zamora of San Juan; Rodolfo Albano of Isabela; Manuel Garcia of Davao; Simeon Datumanong of Maguindanao; and the dictator's son Bongbong Marcos who was elected in his father's old constituency in the Second District of Ilocos Norte. Despite its avowed adherence to the ideology of "Christian Democracy," it was doubtful that the majority of its membership adhered to the party's basic beliefs and principles. Similar to the failed experiment of the PDP-Laban to blend a semblance of ideology and principles with practical politics, the voice of the handful party ideologues of Lakas was drowned by the cacophony of personal interests, political deals, and compromises.

Just like Mitra in 1992, De Venecia lost his bid for the presidency in 1998 despite his control of well-oiled national political machinery. But his running mate, Senator Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, won as vice president. Arroyo, the daughter of former president Diosdado Macapagal, would assume the presidency after the ouster of Estrada in 2001. She won her own mandate in the 2004 presidential elections, defeating populist actor Fernando Poe Jr. Her remaining term in office was marked by instability after it was revealed in taped conversations with election officials that she intervened in the counting of her votes.

In order to survive her stay in office, she consolidated political power by disbursing patronage to key political allies and sectors. Arroyo engineered the merger of Lakas with her original party Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi) to form the Lakas Kampi CMD (LKC). Kampi was formed in 1997 by then-senator Gloria Macapagal Arroyo as a breakaway faction of the LDP to launch her presidential candidacy. However, she opted to coalesce with Lakas, support Speaker De Venecia's presidential candidacy, and run as his vice president. In 2010, Kampi broke away from the merger to form the

National Unity Party (NUP), organized by veteran strategist and former Marcos political operator - Ronaldo Puno.

One of Arroyo's protégé within Lakas was Martin Romualdez, nephew of former First Lady Imelda Marcos, who rose in party ranks to become its president. Under Romualdez's leadership, the party that was inspired by the spirit of the 1986 EDSA people power revolution supported the vice-presidential candidacy of Bongbong Marcos in 2016. Lakas CMD has become a close ally of the Duterte administration and a principal endorser of the alliance between Bongbong Marcos and Sara Duterte in the 2022 election.

### **THE SON ALSO RISES**

Bongbong Marcos - the only son and namesake of the late dictator - failed in his bid to run for the vice presidency in 2016, despite silently preparing for the presidency since he was elected senator in 2010. He accompanied his father and family members in exile abroad after they were ousted in the first people power uprising in 1986. He returned from exile in 1991 and, together with his sister, Imee Marcos Manotoc, began rebuilding their family's political influence. In running for the vice presidency, Marcos has refused to acknowledge the human rights abuses and plunder committed under his father's dictatorial regime. He even endorsed the historical revisionist view (propagated in social media and popular among young millennials) that the Marcos years were the most progressive in the country's history.

Marcos lost both the election and his protest to Maria Leonora "Leni" Robredo of the then ruling Liberal Party (LP). In the run-up for the 2022 presidential elections, he has entered into negotiations with Davao Mayor Sara Duterte, the equally feisty daughter of the populist president who was initially the frontrunner in presidential surveys. When she opted not to file her candidacy, Marcos took the opportunity to declare his candidacy. After much hemming and hawing and upon the urging of former president and Lakas CMD stalwart Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, Sara Duterte opted to run as the vice-presidential candidate of Marcos. A potential Marcos-Duterte victory in 2022 would place the Philippines in a full political cycle with an authoritarian resurrection.

## **NEO-AUTHORITARIAN SUCCESSOR PARTIES**

Thirty years after the ouster of the Marcos dictatorship, the specter of authoritarianism threatens to undo the limited gains of democratization in the Philippines. Reflective of the democratic rollback in the region and given the resilience of authoritarian electoral systems in Southeast Asia, dictatorship remains an attractive alternative for the Filipino elite and middle-class longing to shortcut the country's economic development. Neo-authoritarianism is a recent phenomenon in countries that underwent a democratic transition in the 1980s and 1990s but failed to consolidate their democratic gains. It is a lite form of dictatorship that legitimizes itself by competing in elections, sparing use or threat of violence, and generating mass support by exploiting popular issues and aspirations through demagoguery.

The victory in May 2016 of Rodrigo "Digong" Duterte as the 16th president of the Philippines and the near victory of Marcos for vice president reinforced this shift in the political mood of the electorate towards neo-authoritarianism. Several parties were spawned under the neo-authoritarian presidency of Duterte. They may be considered as indirect successors of the KBL under the current regime. These "neo-authoritarian parties" are the Hugpong ng Pagbabago (HNP); Partido Federal ng Pilipinas (PFP), Pederalismo ng Dugong Dakilang Sambayanan (PDDS), and the Katipunan ng Demokratikong Pilipino (KDP).

### ***Hugpong ng Pagbabago***

Hugpong ng Pagbabago (HNP) was founded in February 2018 and was accredited as a regional party based in the Davao area in July 2018. HNP is led by Sara Duterte-Carpio, the president's daughter and incumbent Mayor of Davao City. According to reports, being nominated by the HNP has become a means for some contenders to demonstrate their support for President Duterte without joining the PDP-Laban. HNP is the regional counterpart of the local party Hugpong sa Tawong Lungsod, founded by Rodrigo Duterte in 2011.

### ***Partido Federal ng Pilipinas***

The Partido Federal ng Pilipinas (PFP) was founded in February 2018 and was accredited as a national party in October 2018. The founder was John Rualo Castriciones, a former vice president of the PDP-Laban for Luzon, who Duterte appointed as Secretary of Agrarian Reform. The party emerged from

the Mayor Rodrigo Roa Duterte-National Executive Coordinating Committee (MRRD-NECC), which supported Duterte's presidential campaign in 2016. It was one of two satellite parties of PDP-Laban organized to support Duterte's push for federalism. The party also claims to have been inspired by the Partido Federalista, the country's first political party founded in 1900 by Pedro Paterno and Trinidad Pardo de Tavera. In September 2021, the party nominated Bongbong Marcos as its presidential candidate for the 2022 election. Marcos joined the party in October and was elected its chair. However, a faction of the party headed by former chair Abubakar Mangelen challenged Marcos' leadership and his nomination as its presidential candidate. Moreover, party founder Castriciones opted to run for a senate seat under the PDP-Laban.

### ***Pederalismo ng Dakilang Dugong Sambayanan***

The Pederalismo ng Dakilang Dugong Sambayanan (PDDS) is the second among two satellite political parties organized to support Duterte's federalist agenda. Presidential Anti-Corruption Chairman Greco Belgica founded it in October 2018. The party is also closely identified with former Duterte aide and incumbent senator Christopher "Bong" Go. Go filed but later withdrew his presidential candidacy under the PDDS.

### ***Katipunan ng Demokratikong Pilipino***

The Katipunan ng Demokratikong Pilipino is a party organized by Duterte's ultra-right supporters. The party was launched in 2018 as an "independent" ally of the Duterte administration. Its officers are also affiliated with the Citizens National Guard, a nationalist, anti-communist political advocacy group. The party has fielded the former red-tagging general Antonio Parlade Jr. for president in 2022. Parlade, however, was disqualified by the Commission on Election (COMELEC) from seeking the presidency due to a technicality.

## **DEMOCRATIC VACCINATION**

The inability to adequately address the legacies of authoritarianism three decades since the ouster of the Marcos dictatorship has impacted the overall consolidation of the country's democratic gains and continues to weaken its electoral and party system. The rise of an authoritarian populist like Rodrigo Duterte was a symptom, not the cause, of this democratic erosion. The possible return of a Marcos to the presidential palace would be symptomatic of this infection. If Philippine democracy has

gradually been infected by authoritarian contamination, the appropriate response would be democratic vaccination

For decades, reform advocates have pushed for new rules to address the country's weak political institutions. The intransigent hold of political dynasties to power, the constant party-switching, and deep dependence on patronage politics to get things done have severely weakened the health of the country's electoral democracy. The law enabling the constitutional ban on political dynasties has not been passed by Congress three decades since its inception. Similarly, the "Political Party Development Act" (PPDA) has been languishing in Congress since 2003.

The proposed PPDA seeks to promote the institutionalization of political parties in the Philippines by addressing four essential reform issues, namely, campaign finance reform, the state subsidy to political parties, a ban on party switching, and strengthening citizen-parties linkages. Establishing a well-defined and differentiated political party structure will advance democratic accountability, facilitate government formation, and help construct legislative majorities. To this purpose, the proposed PPDA aims to foster the development of meaningful political identities, policy platforms, and agendas; internal democratic institutions; a dependable core of followers and leaders; and the capacity to raise funding for party activities. Parties and candidates who take innovative tactics to secure grassroots support should be commended and rewarded. The passage of these measures will hopefully help build immunity and restore the health of democratic politics in the country.

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