

Contested Democracy and the Left in the Philippines after Marcos



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When “people power” toppled the dictator Marcos, the Philippines was considered a shining example of the restoration of democracy. Since 1986, however, the Philippines has endured continuing political and social unrest and encountered tremendous obstacles to the consolidation and deepening of democracy. Scholars have called post-Marcos Philippines an “elite democracy,” a “cacique democracy,” or a “patrimonial oligarchic state.”

In this volume, Nathan Gilbert Quimpo disputes such characterizations of Philippine politics and puts forward an alternative interpretation—contested democracy. He argues that the deepening of democracy in the country involves the transformation of an elite-dominated formal democracy into a participatory and egalitarian one. He focuses on emergent, democratically oriented, leftist parties and groups that seek to transform the formal democracy of the Philippines into a more substantial one and shows the difficulties they have encountered in fighting patronage politics. The complexity of the process to deepen democracy in the Philippines becomes evident from Quimpo’s exploration of competing notions of democracy, contending versions of the “civil society argument,” and contending perspectives in governance.

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