

# **Some notes and analysis of the May 9, 2022 national and local elections in the Philippines**

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**The political climate leading to the May 9, 2022 national and local elections was one of the most emotional and intense electoral campaigns in the country's history since 1986 elections that resulted in the exile of dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr. and his family mainly because the son and namesake of the dictator is about to reoccupy Malacanang (residence of the country's President) and govern the country once again.**

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## **THE CONTEXT**

### **POLITICAL REALITIES AND DYNAMICS BEFORE MAY 9, 2022 ELECTIONS**

Philippine society has become polarized between the followers of former Senator Bongbong Marcos (BBM) and the opposition led by Vice President Leni Robredo.

The opposition had tried to unite themselves in order to put up a common candidate for the President in the middle of 2021 but was not successful. A group of people from the academe and some personalities had organized themselves as volunteer group to select and screen candidates for the opposition including candidates for the presidency and vice presidency. The group called itself as 1SAMBAYAN (One People/Nation) but their efforts for a common candidate from the opposition had failed too. By October last year, the group (1SAMBAYAN) was able to convince Vice President Leni Robredo to run as President. But by that time eight other presidential candidates had already filed their respective candidacies. Before her decision to run as President, Vice President Leni Robredo was preparing to file her candidacy in the local politics in their region.

Around this time the ruling party Partido Demokratiko ng Pilipinas - Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban), President Duterte's party had splitted between the President's men and women. One faction is called the Cusi wing (Secretary of Energy of Duterte) which is supported by Duterte and which eventually had endorsed BBM (but without Duterte). The other faction is led by Senator Manny Pacquiao and Senator Koko Pimentel - the son of former Senate President Nene Pimentel, the founder of the PDP-Laban which fought the dictatorship of Marcos Sr. The latter faction did not endorse anybody for

presidency because Senator Pacquiao ran as President under another party - PROMDI (a party which means from the Province). They had anticipated that the Commission on Election (COMELEC) with all commissioners were appointees of Duterte would recognize the Cusi faction which was what had happened just before the May 9, 2022.

What was the reason why President Duterte did not endorse BBM while his faction in the PDP-Laban endorsed the latter would be another boggling story.

Meanwhile BBM ran in another unknown Party - Partido Federal ng Pilipinas (PFP) when he launched his Presidency. Mayor Sara Duterte (daughter of President Duterte) had ran under another party - Lakas-NUCD (National Coalition of Christian Democrats), the party of the former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and soon to be Speaker of the House of Representative Martin Romualdez, first cousin of BBM.

It is the first time in the Philippine electoral history where the ruling party did not have a candidate for President, Vice President and even solid line up in Senatorial candidates.

Earlier on, before Vice President Leni Robredo had manifested her intention to ran for President, it was widely known that Senator Manny Pacquiao, the boxing icon and very famous among the poor in the country had expressed his intention to ran as President- even courting President Duterte (his ally at that time) to support his candidacy. But it was also widely known that President Duterte was strongly considering his daughter Mayor Sara to ran as his replacement - because she was the leading figure as the next President as shown in the early surveys.

The split of the Ruling Party (PDP-LABAN) could be best understood in this context. The Party's President at that time was Senator Manny Pacquiao. President Duterte would want his daughter to be his replacement and was hoping that she would run under the ruling party. During this time Mayor Sarah Duterte was the Chair of her Regional Party (Hugpong ng Pagbabago -HNP- or Union for Change) and not a member of the PDP-LABAN. The split of the ruling party was the logical move to deprive and debase Manny Pacquiao of a party and support while adopt Sarah Duterte as the candidate of the ruling party. But the daughter did not agree with her father's plan and had initially decided to run for Mayor of Davao City. Pacquiao had to look for other Party to launch his presidency since he was sure that the COMELEC would decide in the President's favor.

It should be recalled when the opposition was led by a very popular actor (Fernando Poe Jr) against the unpopular President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in 2004 elections, there was a big split among the opposition - the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino - LDP (Struggle of the Democratic Filipino) resulting to a weakened Party of a popular candidate against a united Party of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Aside from dividing the opposition, President Arroyo had conducted a widespread fraud and dirty tactics to win that election as was exposed later by the "Hello Garci" scandal - when she asked a COMELEC official to ensure that she should have at least 1 million votes more than her closest rival. She won the 2004 elections. And as what GMA had ordered through a phone conversation, COMELEC Commissioner Garciliano (Garci) the voting result was really more than a million vote over her next rival. (GMA-12,905,808 versus 11,782,232 for Fernando Poe, Jr.) it would be helpful to take note that the personalities involved in this famous 2004 split was also very much present in 2022 elections. Senator Panfilo Lacson who led the other faction of the LDP and in 2022 Gloria Macapagal Arroyo had adopted Sarah Duterte to run as Vice President with BBM as President under LAKAS-NUCD - Arroyo's party.

It would be a first time in Philippine election where the incumbent President did not endorse any candidate - including BBM. He gave his reasons for not endorsing the latter, like being drug addict, spoiled brat and lazy which does not speak well in terms of consistency and double standard

treatment on Duterte's campaign against illegal drugs. Rich and famous people like BBM could not be arrested even if Duterte is sure that he has been using cocaine.

Meanwhile there was a problem for the opposition whom to direct their campaign issues because the incumbent President did not have a candidate and was still popular.

The opposition could not hit the bloody anti-illegal drugs war of President Duterte simply because he did not have his own candidate. The President's weak stance on the West Philippine Sea could not be raised against the ruling party because they did not have a Presidential candidate. So the opposition had to focus on their own platform of governance in a general/generic terms vis-à-vis the current state of government's affairs.

And during the campaign, the Marcos-Duterte tandem had refused and did not attend all the public debates arranged by the COMELEC and different media outlets. So nobody could ask or debate with them about their platform of governance. And worst was that highly paid trolls and bloggers using all social media platforms were used to attack the leading candidate- like Leni Robredo. This kind of platforms had been used since 2016 elections and surely billions of pesos had been spent to hire trolls and content creators to attack opposition to BBM and Sarah. Tsek.Phil - the academe based which did the fact-checking found out that Leni Robredo was the number one recipient of these toxic and disinformation attacks while BBM was the one benefited most from these attacks. There is no law in the country which can regulate this kind of disinformation and toxic messaging by the paid trolls through social media.

During the pre-election period, various groups had filed disqualification charges against BBM in the COMELEC for not disclosing of his conviction for a crime of not filing his income taxes and for not paying and filing his property taxes in 1982-86. Various groups demanded COMELEC to cancel his candidacy or disqualify BBM.

He was accused of violating the Presidential Decree NO. 1994 of 1985 made by his own father at the end of his dictatorship. He was convicted and he did not appeal his conviction in the country's Supreme Court. But the case filed by various groups in the COMELEC were all dismissed a day after the Elections (May 10, 2022). All the sitting Commissioners in the COMELEC are appointees of President Duterte. The case is currently appealed in the Supreme Court.

The different Presidential candidates had focused their campaign on good governance and anti-corruption and one candidate from the Partido Lakas ng Masa (Leody de Guzman) focused on the welfare of the workers and the toiling masses and advocated the socialist alternative. Not a few progressive groups have supported Leni Robredo and not Leody de Guzman and Walden Bello tandem because for them these elections are more than advocacy and propaganda. All efforts should be focused on defeating the dictator's son. They strongly believe that helping Leni Robredo win is the most appropriate call to win and work for democratic space to continue with the democratic mass movements and have more tactical gains towards eco-socialist alternative. The other candidates did not really focus on the issues on inflation, bloody anti-illegal drug campaign by the Duterte administration and the weak stance of the latter on the issues in West Philippine Sea. Both issues are the most unpopular in Duterte government based on the surveys. Four out of five Filipino said that the country should find alliances in the fight on what was happening in the West Philippine Sea during July 14, 2020 while in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2019 SWS survey 76% of Filipino see many human rights cases in administration's war on illegal drugs. Since then, the results of the surveys have not really changed.

BBM's campaign had revealed scant specifics on his political and economic program. But his core beliefs can be seen in two strategic areas: 1) vaguely perpetuating his father's legacy hinting of an

alternative narrative different from the realities of Martial Law regime. His consistent avoidance of public debates save for sloganeering and motherhood statement of unity for all. This safe posturing has proven effective vis-à-vis the mainly disorganized opposition and often times toxic method of campaigning. The case of Leni and her thousands of volunteers would be an exception here; 2). The second strategy of BBM was simply to attract and hold on to President Duterte's supporters preferring instead to camouflage himself with vague, emitting "chill" posturing and staying above the problems and troubles. This earns for himself the title "teflon candidate" where political dirt and bickering would not stick or affect his person - a stance that gained tractions among millions of voters.

A decisive factor for BBM was when he was able to convince Sarah Duterte to run as his Vice President. BBM has overtly projected himself as the co-inheritor of the Duterte Legacy and continuing his predecessor's populist policies and programs. He has promised to adopt and continue Duterte's successful Build, Build, Build initiatives - a decisively important foundation of Duterte's economic trust investment intended to reap rewards in the years ahead. This investment thrust, however has been dependent on foreign loans - or loan-dependent development model for a debt-driven growth - which is simply an illusion of development.

These infrastructure projects of the Build, Build, Build are expected to generate employment of around 12 million workers but this also reminds one of the massive infrastructure projects of Marcos Sr during his reign like Cultural Center Complex in 1966, San Juanico Bridge in 1969, Philippine International Convention Center in 1974 and the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant in 1982. Everyone was also aware that these projects were the source of mega-corruption of the Marcos Sr's cronies. These were definitely not "need of the people" driven projects.

Duterte and Marcos Sr seemed to suffer the same disease known as "edifice complex".

A month before the elections Social Weather Station (SWS) conducted a survey from April 19-27 about the poverty situation in the country and how do Filipinos rate themselves. The results were the following: 43% Filipinos rated themselves as poor in December 2021 while another 34% rated themselves as borderline poor.

Geographically, self-rated poor families was most pronounced in Mindanao where the number rose from 43% in December 2021 to 60% in April 2022 and in Metro Manila from 25% to 32%.

When the BBM camp has employed thousands of paid troll workers, vloggers and content creators and influencers and saturate all the social media platforms with serious consideration of the widespread dependency in social media especially among the young people developing an information seeking behavior the introduction of their version of economic social and political narratives easily get traction among millions of young people. These paid trolls have mastered the social media algorithms where a system of sorting out of posts in a user's feedback on identified relevant issues. Briefly one can see the events with all Presidents after the EDSA People Power in 1986 so as to understand the steady economic and political regression of the country.

## **HISTORICAL AMNESIA OR NEGLECT?**

In 1986, President Cory Aquino, had restored democracy from the Marcos dictatorship. One of her focus was to recover the stolen wealth of the country amounting to \$10 billion. The Philippine Commission on Good Governance (PCGG) was created for this task and this was the first act of Cory Aquino Presidency. She encouraged the creation of the New Constitution. The Marcos cronies were dismantled but a new crony developed popularly known as the Kamag-anak incorporation. President

Cory had difficulty consolidating and strengthening the democratic institutions because she was besieged by nine (9) coups coming mostly from within her own government. She had initiated peace talks with different revolutionary groups. When President Cory took over from the dictator, the country's debt was P395.50 billions but she honored to pay all of them including those who went to the pockets of the Marcos and their cronies. She had endorsed Fidel V. Ramos (FVR) a relative of Marcos to replace her and mainly to put down the mutinies from the security sector. Ramon Mitra was the logical successor of Cory Aquino since he had been active in the People Power revolution. He could have focused with the dismantling of the Marcos institutions and influence. FVR effectively neutralized the coups and developed his economic program - the Philippines 2000. He had initiated the implementation of the neo-liberal programs like privatization, deregulation and liberalization. He had also continued the peace talks with revolutionary groups like the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

His term started in 1992 and also the year when the Marcoses were allowed to go back to the country from Hawaii, USA. In 1998, FVR was replaced by Joseph Ejercito Estrada - a popular actor and he started his Presidency by launching Angat Pinoy which was a poverty alleviation that mostly reflected his screen fantasy image as the champion of the masses. But his elitist lifestyle of governance (midnight cabinet meetings but mainly drinking with his buddies) alienated him from the realities of the masses. Estrada is a well-known Marcos loyalist. In fact many would say that he had the Marcos charisma but not his brains. He was ousted from office to what was known EDSA People Power 2 because of mismanagement of government and public funds. Estrada was replaced by Gloria Macapagal Arroyo by law of succession. She had launched her brand of governance and announcing the building of Strong Republic. She had the 10 point economic program which had continue the implementation of the neo-liberal programs imposed by the IMF-WB. She was boasting an increase of the country's economic growth of 4.5% before her it was 3.8% during Cory Aquino, FVR 3.7% and 3.7% under Estrada. Her governance was marred by issues of corruption and government's mismanagement. Her presidential reelection was known to be one of the dirtiest in Philippine elections. Almost half of her cabinet had resigned as a protest to the massive electoral cheatings and corruption but she survived to finish her term.

GMA was replaced by the son of Cory Aquino - Benigno "NoyNoy" Aquino and he started his government to be clean and upright following his campaign slogan of "Daang Matuwid - a straight road" with "Kung walang Kurap, walang mahirap of if there is no corruption there will be no poor in the country" he persecuted those who were accused of corruption including GMA who was put in hospital jail for 2 years and 2 former senators Revilla and Jingoy Estrada (son of former President Erap). They were all pardoned by Duterte.

He (NoyNoy) had continued to put into final stage the peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). This Aquino was also known to give preferences/favors to his close buddies - Kabarilan (buddies in gun club). NoyNoy's presidency could have been a second chance that the people gave to the Aquinos to continue the efforts to finally dismantle the influence of the Marcoses and the influence.

In 2016, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte (PRRD) was elected into office. President NoyNoy had endorsed Mar Roxas. His main campaign slogan was to save the country into becoming a narco-state. He promised to put an end to this drug problem in 3 to 6 months. He had shown a brave front/face in confronting China in the issue of West Philippine Sea. As the term of Duterte is ending and obvious not fulfilling his promises - he simply said that all these slogans were just jokes to boast his campaign. He had promised to end corruption in the government during his term but it has even gotten worst. He promised to end the problem of insurgency but as one could observe on the ground the problem has just become more serious. Despite the Duterte administration's vulgarities and misogynistic kind of governance it has remained popular.

PRRD's administration is often considered a rupture in Philippine politics. President's first act as president was to rehabilitate the Marcoses by allowing the dead dictator's burial in the Libingan ng mga Bayani (Heroes Burial place). This act was one of the last acts in paving the way for the "come back" of the Marcoses to the national politics.

In the span of more than 36 years after the dictator was ousted and under six (6) presidencies the lives of the majority of Filipinos did not substantially change. In fact many became worse off than they were under the dictatorship as land grabbing have intensified by the big monopoly capital dislocating thousands of small farmers, Indigenous Peoples and the Bangsamoro. Corruptions have intensified that today according to Commission on Audit (COA) report in 2019 - P700 billion is lost every year due to corruption. Land reform since Cory Aquino government become a market-assisted type of land reform which enable private developers and agri-business corporations to accumulate more lands - convert its land-usage and consolidate their holdings, public infrastructures are privatized and taxes have been anti-poor (increase of revenue tax and consumer-based tax but decrease corporate tax). All the administrations had abandoned the project of building and strengthening the national economy. Such regressive condition made millions of Filipinos to remain poor. In 1986, the poor was 23.97 million in 2013 it was 24.45 million. Currently it is more than 50% of 110 million of the total population of the country who have become poorer. This has become worst during the pandemic where millions of Filipino are socially locked-down and the social amelioration programs of the government had barely reached the poorest of the poor - the situation has become worse before it became better. And when people and their communities began to initiate community pantries to help those who would barely have food on their table - sharing food from the hungry to give to the starving - the government did give its response - that is red-tagging the community pantries volunteers. Worst still is that the government had incurred trillions of pesos of loans in the name of COVID-19 response but only a fraction went to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. In 2020-2021 the government had borrowed P5.5 trillion according to the Department of budget and Managment (DBM) for mitigating the impact of the pandemic but only P616 billions was spent for COVID-19, P1.9 trillion was spent in transport-related infrastructure projects and P2.3 trillion was spent to debt services in terms of interests and principal payments. Today, the total national debt is P12.68 trillion pesos which according to Ibon Foundation each Filipino now owns P106,000.00 to pay for the national debt.

It is very frustrating to see how the Duterte government had this misplaced priorities in terms of spending. The National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) had received the following budget during the period of the pandemic: in 2020, P1.03 billion, in 2021 P19.33 billion and in 2022 - P30.46 billion. Confidential and Intelligence Fund of the government had received P8.90 billion in 2020, P4.38 billion in 2021 and P8.56 billion in 2022 according to the DBM. During the 2021-2022 period there is zero allocation for COVID-19 amelioration program. Meanwhile the 50 richest families in the country (billionaires club) have 30% increase in their wealth during the pandemic. There has been no attempt from the Duterte administration to suspend the yearly automatic allocation of debt repayment (principal and interest) because of the pandemic. Since Cory Aquino the government automatically allocates more than 30% of its annual budget for debt payment. Last year's debt allocation was more than 1 trillion pesos.

This kind of realities caused so much frustrations and disappointments and have slowly morphed in the indignation and rejection by the people against the old manner of governance from the elite and have become open and ready to jump to candidates who they were made to think (through massive disinformation in the social media) can give them new life and hope. Different platforms of social media were used to this narrative that life did not improve after the people power revolution and present BBM's self-portrayal that he and his family also became a victim of the liberal establishment. Such narrative had a ready receptor or audience among millions of people and had become very

effective precisely because millions of ordinary people have seen themselves in similar situation. BBM was able to relate and connect himself and the masses. Further, it was animated by the promise that they will collectively rise again. They coined the meaning of BBM during the campaign as Bayan Babangon Muli - the Nation will rise again - and that a beautiful morning awaited them after a long period of darkness. For such sophisticated social media narrative of massive disinformation to be successful BBM's camp has to hire an expensive but famous firm like Cambridge Analytica. Obviously millions of poor Filipinos have been convinced to this kind of narrative.

## **2022 MAY ELECTION RESULTS**

Thirty six (36) years and three months to this day when his family hastily evacuated Malacanang Palace after the fall of his father's dictatorship, BBM had won the 2022 Presidential elections. He brings both hope of unity to the nation and fear of a repeat of a strong man rule.

BBM got 31,629,783 votes or 58.77% of 55 million who had casted their votes. Leni Robredo got 15,035,773 votes or 27.94%. The total registered voters for 2022 election was 67.5 million and the total turn-out of the election was 82%, one of the highest in the election history in the country. In 1998, the turn out of the election was 86.5%. For the Vice President, Sarah Duterte got 32,808,417 votes or 62.53% while Kiko Pangilinan got 9,329,207 or 17.82% of the votes.

There were widespread issues of fraud and vote buying and selling like in the case in Mindanao (Zamboanga del Norte) the buying/selling of votes had reached to P15,000.00 per vote (or \$300 per vote) and if you have 5 voters in the family you easily get P75,000.00 or \$1,500. This is just one case shown in the result of our assessment of the electoral conduct in the different parts of the island. This has brought back the Jalosjos family (the head of the family was convicted of rape but was pardoned by GMA) into power once again. The elections in the Bangsamoro region are full of this kind of stories but it would take another article.

Election results were missing in the provinces of Pampanga, Sultan Kudarat and Surigao del Norte. This involved a total of two (2) million votes but not enough to change the outcome of the national elections - according to the COMELEC (but it could affect the Partylist standing) but disturbing enough that some lawmakers had expressed concerns that it had disenfranchised a good number of voters (Daily Inquirer - May 26, 2022). Election paraphernalia were found damaged in Tondo and Cavite, but no one was held accountable like Smartmatic and F2 Logistics (owned by Duterte's friend - Dennis Uy).

The result of the election was so fast including the canvassing in both houses that everybody knew the results in 2 days while voters were still lining and waiting to vote. It became the quickest canvassing in electoral counting in the country.

In May 25, 2022 the 17<sup>th</sup> President and Vice President of the Philippines were proclaimed by the Congress of the Philippines. All the immediate families of BBM had attended this historic proclamation including his 93 years old (convicted of graft) Mother and former first lady of the dictator. In contrast, no one from Sarah Duterte's family witnessed her proclamation including her husband and her father - the outgoing President Rodrigo Roa Duterte. To date, there is no personal congratulatory statement to BBM from the President himself.

While both BBM and Sarah Duterte were proclaimed thousands of protesters were brutally dispersed by the police using water cannons even when protesters held their rally against the Marcos-Duterte proclamation in the Commission of Human Rights compound. The police had used

the law during the Marcosian era- Batas Pambansa number 880 in the inhuman dispersal. The brutal way the assembly was dispersed could be a portent of things to come on the next six years.

## **FIRST TIMES**

The elections of Marcos-Duterte has come with many first times. It was the first time that Filipinos elected a majority president and vice president (Marcos 58.77%, Duterte 61.77%) under the 1987 Philippine Constitution. FVR got only 23.6%, Estrada got 39.86%, GMA got 39.99%, NoyNoy Aquino got 41.84% and Rodrigo Duterte got 39.01%.

It was the first time in 18 years when the elected President and Vice President got elected as a team. In the Philippine, the President and Vice President are elected separately. Only in 2004 that GMA and her running mate Noli de Castro got elected as a tandem.

It was the first time in 24 years that the voting turn-out was very high - 82%. In 1998, the turn-out was 86.5%.

It is also the first time in Philippine history that the children of former presidents of the country will lead the nation as its president and vice president.

And this is the first time in Philippine history that a convicted candidate for President (BBM) won and was proclaimed. He was convicted for not filing his income tax return and for not paying his taxes from 1982-1986 when he was vice governor in Ilocos Sur. The case is currently an appeal to the Supreme Court.

## **THE LONG AND PROTRACTED JOURNEY OF THE MARCOSES TO POWER**

The Marcoses were ousted from Power through the EDSA people power revolution in 1986. They left Malacanang in a hurry and through the courtesy of their patron - the US government which facilitated their stay-vacation in a US territory in Hawaii. The very hasty manner of their departure from Malacanang left thousands of documents of their plunders and have become the bases for the Philippine Commission for Good Governance (PCGG) to recover these billions worth of wealth while more than half of the Philippine population at that time could barely eat and survive.

In 1989, Marcos Sr died while in their vacation in Hawaii and Cory Aquino government had allowed the Marcos to return to the Philippines and expected closure for a displaced political clan.

As expected, the Marcoses went back to their roots in the northern part of the country (Ilocos Region). The Aquino regime did not give much credit to traditional practice of helping one of their own in times of need. In Ilocos this practice is called "ilihan" or a place of refuge provided in times of war or calamities. The Marcoses did not waste time in plotting to recover their political project of getting back their influence and power towards reoccupying Malacanang. They have started to regain their political base in the North. As what is shown during these events - they were elected back in local positions - which could say something that after all in their political base - they were never discredited and still seen as the beloved sons and daughters by the people in the region. They tried their luck in the national scene, Imelda Marcos ran for President in 1992 elections (6 years after they were ousted). In this election FVR won with only 23.6% of the votes. With Imelda Marcos, one of their famous crony Eduardo (Danding) Cojuangco also ran. Imelda got 10.3% of the votes higher than Jovito Salonga - 10.2% but Cojuangco got 18.2%. Combining Imelda Marcos and Danding Cojuangco's they could have won the Presidency as early as 1992 (their combined votes



percentage was 28.5%, FVR had only 23.6% of the votes). From her lost, Imelda tested the political waters and peoples' sentiment in her own province in the Visayas. She successfully won a congressional seat in Leyte first district.

BBM had tried his national acceptance by running in the Senate in 1995 - he did not get the seat in the Senate. He ran as Governor in the Ilocos Norte and easily won. Before this (1992) BBM ran as representative of the second district of Ilocos Norte and won.

From being Governor of Ilocos Norte, BBM ran and won a senate seat in 2010 (the year when NoyNoy Aquino was elected President).

In short, the Marcoses have never left the political scene after their six years of stay-cation in Hawaii.

Just before the 2022 elections, one could see that the Marcos' political clan and dynasty have almost total control of their home region. And to name a few, Mathew Manotoc - grandson of Marcos Sr and son of Senator Imee Marcos is the provincial governor of Ilocos Norte; Cecilia Marcos (widow of Marcos' nephew and first cousin of BBM) is the Vice Governor; Angelo Barbe (Marcos Sr's nephew) is the 1<sup>st</sup> district representative of Ilocos Norte; Michael Keon (Marcos Nephew) is the Mayor of Ilocos Provincial Capital Laoag City. And for the 2022 elections, Sandro Marcos (Marcos Sr's grandson and BBM's son) ran and won in the second congressional district of Ilocos Norte. This is the clear picture of Ilocos Norte. Before the May 2022 elections - the Marcoses have total dominance of the province.

Not a few in the opposition have blamed historical amnesia or the massive disinformation about the atrocities of Martial Law and the Marcos dictatorship about the victory of the Marcoses. But the opposition (mostly anti-Marcos) have refused to see that millions of people have readily accepted the alternative narrative as presented by the social media through paid trolls, vloggers and content influencers because they have concretely seen and experienced the same sufferings (even worst) during the 36 years after dictatorship.

## **QUALITATIVE OR QUANTITATIVE CHANGE?**

The opposition since 1986, have given stresses and focus on institutionalizing powerful reminders of the post-Marcos dictatorship like Ninoy Aquino Day (August 21), EDSA People power revolution (Feb 25), as well as naming the international airport as Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) and the Aquino (Ninoy-Cory) 500-peso paper currency. But in terms of substantially impacting the lives of ordinary people not much have been done - precisely because international multi-lateral institutions like IMF-WB dictated the economic model of the country. And despite many years of claiming fiscal and financial stability the economy is still mal-developed, joblessness is still widespread and poverty is still entrenched. The free-market globalization policies do not definitely develop a national economy.

The dominance of the opposition in the mainstream media as seen from the Marcos' prism of presenting their own narrative (actually the mainstream media in the main are really dependent on fact-based reporting) have prompted their highly paid army of trolls, vloggers and content creators to counter the historical truth and facts about the Marcoses. These army of trolls have perfected the information ecosystem that they have ably penetrated the values and social media dependency of the young people.

The hard truth, however is that, not much have substantially changed since the dictatorship left and

people could have placed their hope to almost anybody not identified with the elite especially identified with the post-EDSA period. This explains why the opposition which is identified as Yellow, has been easily discredited and despised. Social media have made the “new Marccos” version to fill in the gap.

The 2022 victory of the Marcoses is the second chapter and chance for the political dynasty to govern the country from the center. This is a case of effectively capturing the center government from the political bases in the North, Central Visayas and Duterte’s south.

MAY 28, 2022

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**P.S.**

- Richard S. Solis has been a political activist based in Mindanao. He has been active in social movements since the 1970s.