

Angat Buhay Lahat? A Review on the State of Philippine Politics and the Frame of Democracy during the 2022 Philippine National Elections

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Abstract

The 1987 Philippine Constitution describes the Philippines as a “democratic and republican State”. The same constitution upheld sovereignty of the country resides in the Filipino people and such that the government authority emanates from them. This provision clearly describes how democracy should work in the Philippines. However, election-related violence and vote buying are still happening around the country. These incidences are backed up by various theories about how democracy is operated in the Philippines such as elite democracy, patron-client framework and *utang na loob*. These two concepts may be the reason why political dynasties exist in the country, which leads to the weakening of the Philippine state. However, during the 2022 National and Local Elections, two aspirant leaders – then Vice President Leni Robredo and Senator Kiko Pangilinan – changed the perspective of how democracy in the Philippines operates due to the unusual way of campaigning by their supporters. The supporters wanted change from the previous Duterte administration especially from controversial issues such as the War on Drugs and handling the COVID-19 Pandemic. The mammoth crowd of supporters around the country who led and attended their so-called “people’s rally” was called a Pink Movement from supporters within and outside the Philippines. The campaign penetrates all levels of active participation – personally participative, participative, and justice-oriented. However, the results of the National Elections disappointed a lot of her supporters, as Robredo lost against Bongbong Marcos, son of dictator Ferdinand Marcos. But the launching of her new non-governmental organization, *Angat Buhay*, redirected the energy of her supporters in running the program.

Keywords: democracy, active participation, 2022 National and Local Elections, Leni Robredo, political participation



INTRODUCTION

The 1987 Philippine Constitution describes the Philippines as a “democratic and republican State”. The same constitution upheld sovereignty of the country resides in the Filipino people and such that the government authority emanates from them. This provision clearly describes how democracy should work in the Philippines. One of the most obvious manifestations of democracy in the Philippines is that its eligible citizens elect their leaders every three years (for local government posts and members of the Congress) or six years (for president and vice president and senators). The same constitution enshrines the right of the citizens of the Philippines to suffrage, and that “no literacy, property, or substantive requirement shall be imposed” (Article V, Section 1) that will hinder them to vote. Aside from this, the right to political participation is stipulated in the same constitution, especially in the Article XIII Section 16, which states that “The right of the people and their organizations to effective and reasonable participation at all levels of social, political, and economic decision-making shall not be abridged”. Hence, it is not surprising that in every election, may it be national or local, candidates for elections were busy campaigning for themselves, from highlighting their achievements in education or in public service to laying down their platforms should they be elected in the position they were vying for, The supporters, on the other hand, collaborate with the candidates to convince the people to vote for him or her during the elections.

However, the prevalence of election-related violence is seen in various parts of the Philippines, especially in far-flung areas outside of Manila. These desperate ways of winning their own candidates cost a lot of lives to the Filipinos. Such case is mentioned on the paper about the prominence of election-related violence cases in the country. They reported that more election-related violence happens as the election day comes closer. The usual targets are the state actors, usually those who run in the elections, but the citizens are also the targets during the election day. Unidentified assailants (or vigilantes) are the perpetrators of these activities – may it be they were paid or not by the opposing party. Unfortunately, these incidents always happen during election season, prompting the Commission on Elections to declare certain

areas of the country as “election hotspots” to safeguard the safety of the people during this period¹.

On the other hand, another common scenario that happens every Philippine election is vote buying. An empirical study indicates that the poor were the targets of vote buying. All 400 people surveyed agreed that they were experienced vote buying². These people have experienced either of the following types of vote buying: offering money, offering goods (grocery items), offering material things, or lending help or favor to them. It is interesting to note that majority of the respondents accepted the said offer primarily due to the track record than because they have no choice. This proves that the poor are vulnerable to such situation because they need money in the first place.

This highlights the domination of power in the realm of Philippine politics even at the national or local level. The use of violence and intimidation may force people to act differently.

But during the 2022 National and Local Elections, a new face of democracy was shown not only in the Philippines, but around the world. The immense support of the Filipino people to then-Vice President Leni Robredo, who was running for presidency, and then-Senator Francis “Kiko” Pangilinan, proved that the power still resides to the people. Their campaign is comparable to the EDSA People Power Revolution that toppled the dictator by using the force from the people. The so-called “pink movement” was reported around the world because of the hope it brings to the Filipino. With this said, this paper aims to discuss the following:

¹ Imelda Deinla et al., “Election-Related Violence in the Philippines: Trends, Targets, and Perpetrators,” SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY, February 17, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4036939>. a thorough analysis on the nature of ERVs in the country is necessary for the development of policies that combat such violence. While there has been a number of ERV studies post-Marcos, this is the first that looks at electoral violence data at both the individual and aggregate levels. This study examines incidences of Election-Related Violence (ERV)

² Tristan A. Canare, Ronald U. Mendoza, and Mario Antonio Lopez, “An Empirical Analysis of Vote Buying among the Poor: Evidence from Elections in the Philippines,” *South East Asia Research*, March 12, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967828X17753420>.

1. How is democracy exercised in the Philippines especially during election season?
2. How the Leni-Kiko Campaign during the 2022 National Elections altered the perspective of democracy in the Philippines?

This is, however, does not downplay the role of the masses even before the start of the Leni-Kiko campaign, as mass movement were also clearly seen even before Leni and Kiko came to spotlight.

In order to answer the first point, the paper needs to discuss all salient theories and perspectives explaining how democracy operates in the Philippines. Theories to be discussed are the emergence of political dynasty and bossism brought about by elite democracy and *utang na loob* and the weak Philippine State. On the other hand, the second point needs to uncover the nature of Leni-Kiko campaigns and how their supporters rally behind them, and how this campaign had presented another version of democracy today. Voting behaviors will also be discussed also. The paper will end by giving its feedback on how this campaign became a movement to their supporters.

Elite Democracy and Political Dynasty

Philippine politics is often described as family-driven and elitist – or in other words, full of *trapo* (or *traditional politiko*). An alternative view of Philippine democracy was provided in a study: the combination of elite democracy, and democracy from below.³ He named this version of democracy “contested democracy”. He argued that “[f]or the country’s ruling elite, democracy involves mainly elections, a formal democratic exercise that they can easily manipulate for selfish ends. Major sections of the country’s subordinate classes and marginalized communities and groups and even part of the upper classes” (23). In this particular framework, he used related theories such as the “defunct” patron-client framework, elite or cacique democracy, and the history from below. Here he recognizes the fact that the ruling class (the elites and oligarchs) aims to dominate the country through various means

³ Nathan Quimpo, *Contested Democracy and the Left in the Philippines After Marcos*, vol. 2 (Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 2012).

such as using their economic and political connections, vote buying, or worse, using guns, goons, and gold. Quimpo (2012) also recognizes the struggles of the masses, he said that the democracy from below “stresses greater popular participation in decision making as well as social and economic equality...that aims to bring Philippine democracy much closer to the classical meaning of democracy” (47). Both versions of democracy clash with each other, hence the existing version ng democracy in the country.

I argue that elite democracy is still prevalent up until now. The existence of having political dynasties is one concrete manifestation of elite democracy in such a way that a family rules over their city, town, or province. Encarnacion-Tadem and Tadem (2016) ⁴ theorized that several political dynasty variants were come into place in the country: rent-seeking, political violence, and electoral politics and network. Because of their established connection to power, they can “diversify economically, enabling them to adapt and hold on to their political power. At the same time, for new dynasties, the accumulation of a diversity of economic interests means that a small dynasty can emerge from even the poorest provinces of the country” (Encarnacion-Tadem & Tadem, 2016, 331). Mendoza et al (2016) ⁵ made a study on the linkage between poverty and the prevalence of political dynasty in the country. Here he discussed some of the implications of the existence of political dynasty in the country, especially in the distortion of political competition, such as covering information from the people to the government and avoiding having accountable mechanism that would threaten them to lose their position in the government. In addition, members of the political dynasty may use their influence to select their relatives to any political position instead of someone more deserving of that position. These mechanisms would “produce a non-competitive political system and, in some cases, underpins the restraints, if not the mechanisms for reversals, on growth- and equity-enhancing as well as poverty-reducing reforms” (Mendoza et al., 2016, 2). The findings from

⁴ “Political Dynasties in the Philippines: Persistent Patterns, Perennial Problems,” *South East Asia Research* 24, no. 3 (September 2016): 328–40, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967828X16659730>.

⁵ Ronald U. Mendoza et al., “Political Dynasties and Poverty: Measurement and Evidence of Linkages in the Philippines,” *Oxford Development Studies* 44, no. 2 (April 2, 2016): 189–201, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2016.1169264>.

Mendoza et al (2016) found out that the prevalence of poverty in areas outside of Luzon was the reason of the existence of political dynasty. The presence of a more developed institutions and centralized economic and political power hinders the felt effect of political dynasty to its people, such as poverty.

The Prevalence of *Utang na Loob* during Elections and the Weak Philippine State

It is not surprising that unequal, personal reciprocation happens in the political arena. In the article of Masataka Kimura, as cited by Thompson and Batalla (2018)⁶, he provided characteristics of the patron-client model, which he described as a network of vertical dyads (with a leader and his/her followings) with unequal needs. Below I will cite some of the interesting points, which can also describe how our political scene is operating:

The relationship between a leader and a follower is a voluntary one based on reciprocity. Therefore, the leader has to make efforts to bring benefits to his follower and the follower to show his/her worth. Otherwise, the follower may abandon the leader and look for another one; the leader may no longer try to provide benefits to the follower

The system is formed by an aspirant leader who attracts other individuals who voluntarily become his/her followers. A corollary of this is that the leader is never replaced no matter how ineffective he/she becomes. The leader remains as a leader until the last follower disappears.

The system is integrated by the vertical dyadic ties between leaders and followers, whereas solidarity among followers is weak. (Thompson & Batalla, 2008, 19)

⁶ "Clientelism Revisited," in *Handbook of the Contemporary Philippines* (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2018).

These are obvious points, especially when leaders elect people when in fact, they are not capable of leading, as long as they are related by blood to their previous leaders, or that they promised to provide services to his/her supporter once they win the elections. The cycle continues because of the services they provide to the people on one hand, and the services these supporters provide to the leaders, for example, by working in the government, in return. Unfortunately, it is clearly seen in areas outside of Manila when political dynasty rules because of weak institutions (Mendoza et al, 2016).

The proliferation of political dynasties happens because of the presence of the *utang na loob* that has been practiced by the Filipinos ever since. This *utang na loob*, which is closely related to reciprocity, is prevalent in the provinces. On one hand, politicians provide services to the people, and on the other hand, their people work for them.

This phenomenon is supported by the study of Yean ⁷ about the politics of *tulong* (help) in the rural provinces in the Philippines, especially during the elections. Based on his interview with the people of Tanauan City, Batangas, he summarized that the concept of *tulong* serves as the mediator between the patron (politicians) and their clients (the people). It can be in the form of votes, financial aid, or services. When used in the context of elections, it becomes “manipulative” in the sense that they are used to win the hearts of the people. In the case of Yean’s work, the interviewees said that they use promises and material incentives to influence votes. Hence, one interviewee said that one must be smart enough to scrutinize the candidates. Since Yean (2012) described this situation of *tulong* as Janus-faced, when *tulong* is transformed into *gawa* (action) that captures the *loob* of the people, it becomes good. Another interviewee from the same author said that the *utang na loob* is being reinforced through the give-and-take framework between the politician and the masses. The mayor gave them some livelihood to their children, while the latter is doing their service to the mayor. This proves that having an *utang na loob* is personal during elections. If people feel the presence of the politicians in the form of projects, they will vote for him/her; otherwise, they would not vote.

⁷ Soon Chuan Yean, “Hidden Transcripts from ‘Below’ in Rural Politics of the Philippines: Interpreting the Janus-Facedness of Patron-Client Ties and Tulong (Help),” *Southeast Asian Studies* 1, no. 2 (August 2012): 273–99.

This unequal give-and-take phenomenon of the *utang na loob* and elite democracy has something to do with the existence of reciprocity between two parties. In the study of Rungduin et al⁸ about the link between *utang na loob* and gratitude, it was shown that *pagbabalik* (returning of perceived favor) that “surfaced in providing more dynamics in providing *utang na loob*”. Meanwhile, it was *pasasalamat* (thankfulness) that was floated to be the central concept linked to gratitude. Combining these two concepts, it is through returning of favor is a way of showing their *pasasalamat* to other persons, may it be through acts of service. In the *utang na loob*, the participants mentioned that the “social demands of returning the good deed becomes salient” because of the *panlipunang gawain* (social responsibility) underlies the act of giving the *utang na loob*. Hence, in the context of Philippine elections and governance, the act of reciprocity of putting the politicians in authority is much heavier than the act of giving service. Still, the act of having debt of gratitude is still there. What is important for the politicians is for them to satisfy their personal needs masked through their acts of service. This is their way of expressing their gratitude to them.

These scenarios prove that electing a leader is personal and is driven by selfish gains. Because of these, the Philippines becomes a weak state due to a lack of strong, impersonal leaders to lead the country and its local government. The failure of the Philippine state to control the emergence of elites and strong local leaders has a long-lasting effect especially in leading the country at the national or local level. The study of Yean is just one example of how impersonal the elections are, which undermines the qualifications of a good leader. Morada and Encarnacion-Tadem⁹ explained the implication of such having a weak state, in which they quote that “the weakening of state’s social control led to elites maximizing their control on the society and permeating state institutions resulting in less participation for the rest of the society” (p.9).

⁸ “The Filipino Character Strength of Utang Na Loob: Exploring Contextual Associations with Gratitude,” *International Journal of Research Studies in Psychology* 5, no. 1 (November 7, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrsp.2015.1322>.

⁹ *Philippine Politics and Governance: An Introduction* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Diliman, 2006).

2022 National and Local Elections: Background and Campaign Medium

However, another version of democracy unfolded during the recently-concluded 2022 National and Local Elections in the Philippines. A movement was said to be “born” as the leader of the position, then Vice President Leni Robredo decided to run for presidency on October 7, 2021. Her campaign, together with then-Senator Francis Pangilinan, was different from the other campaigns for the past years, due to unwavering support of the Filipinos not only in the Philippines, but also around the world. The movement was said to be comparable to EDSA People Powers I and II. The looming national problems brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic, on top of the concerns face by the Duterte administration such as the war on drugs, extrajudicial killings, increasing foreign debt, and questionable relationship of the Philippines to China inspired people to campaign for a new leader – who will probably put an end to these problems.

Apart from this, the National and Local Elections that happened last May 9, 2022 was also a spectacle. First and foremost, it was the first time for the country to conduct the elections at the middle of the pandemic. The second was that most of the voters in the recently concluded elections are the youth. The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) recorded that 56% of the local voters are youth¹⁰, and that there are 7 million new voters. Because of this, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) Commissioner George Garcia said that the new voters will become “game-changers”¹¹.

This election also witnessed the greatest number of presidential candidates – two of them are Vice President Leni Robredo, and the son of the dictator, former senator Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. The campaign for the national elections started last February 8, 2022, and ended on May 7, 2022. Part of the activities organized by COMELEC was the Presidential Debates that aired twice – March 19 and April 3, 2022.

¹⁰ Melissa Luz Lopez, “56% of May 2022 Voters Part of the Youth – Comelec,” CNN Philippines, February 8, 2022, <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2022/2/8/youth-vote-56-percent-2022.html>.

¹¹ Christia Marie Ramos, “New Voters Will Be ‘Game Changers’ in 2022 Polls – Comelec Exec,” INQUIRER.net, May 5, 2022, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1592729/fwd-new-voters-the-game-changers-in-2022-polls-comelec-exec>.

The *Kapisanan ng Brodkaster ng Pilipinas* (KBP) also had their own panel discussion with the Presidential candidates last February 4, 2022. These events helped the Filipinos to scrutinize the candidate's platform and agenda once they got elected as Presidents.

Apart from the live telecast of debates in free television, it is worth noting that social media outlets were used to campaign for Presidentiables. The data provided last February 2022 by the Data Report: We Are Social show that there are:

- 92.05 million social media users in the Philippines
- 83.85 million Facebook users, or 75 percent of the total population
- 56.50 million YouTube users, or 74.3 percent of the total population
- 18.65 million Instagram users, or 16.7 percent of the total population
- 35.96 million TikTok users, or 47.3 percent of local internet user base
- 55.15 million Facebook Messenger users, or 49.3 percent of the total population
- 10.50 million Twitter users, or 9.4 percent of the total population ¹²

These numbers are very important as these are commonly used in electoral campaigning online. Take note also that the Philippines ranked second in the list of countries whose citizens use internet and social media ¹³. In light with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, people gather more information about the candidates through social media. But the Commission on Elections admitted that there are no mechanism on regulating social media campaigning. Likewise, it was also expected that online campaigning may become toxic. Due to the nature of Facebook algorithm, where Facebook feeds information that the social media users want, it was unavoidable to engage in trolls for the sake of

¹² Simon Kemp, "Digital 2022: The Philippines," DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, February 15, 2022, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-philippines>.

¹³ Cristina Eloisa Baclig, "Social Media, Internet Craze Keep PH on Top 2 of World List," INQUIRER.net, April 29, 2022, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1589845/social-media-internet-craze-keep-ph-on-top-2-of-world-list>.

increasing social media engagement ¹⁴. Hence, the proliferation of fake news and misinformation was rampant.

In the report released by a Manila-based data consultancy, Nerve, it appears that then Vice President Leni Robredo and former Senator Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. dominates the social media scene. TikTok is now rising as an avenue as supporters’ post-election-related videos. However, it also became a venue for disinformation. On Facebook and Tiktok, it was Marcos who leads the race, but Robredo gains more support on Twitter. The huge and established network on the Marcos side makes it easy on their end to penetrate on Facebook, while volunteer-driven networks from the side of Robredo was trying to challenge the former’s network. ¹⁵

On top of these debates, presidential candidates also did rallies and sorties in several parts of the country. Volunteers did house-to-house to introduce the candidates, especially to the undecided voters. But what captured the eyes of the international scene is the campaign of Vice President Robredo.

Leni Robredo’s Campaign

On October 7, 2021, Vice President Robredo announced that she will be running for the presidency. Under the campaign slogan of “*Gobyernong Tapat, Angat Buhay Lahat*”, Robredo aimed to lift the lives of those who are in the “*laylayan*” (marginalized sector) through an honest and trusted government. He also challenged the present status quo of having a political dynasty. In one of her interviews, she uttered “*Ang policy namin, hanggang nakaupo pa ako sa gobyerno, walang [ibang] puwedeng kumandidato sa amin*” (Our policy is that, as long as

¹⁴ Aries A. Arugay, “2022/33 ‘Stronger Social Media Influence in the 2022 Philippine Elections’ by Aries A. Arugay” 2022, no. 33 (April 7, 2022), <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2022-33-stronger-social-media-influence-in-the-2022-philippine-elections-by-aries-a-arugay/>.

¹⁵ Pauline Macaraeg and Don Kevin Hapal, “On Social Media, It’s a Two-Way Presidential Race between Marcos, Robredo,” Rappler, May 7, 2022, <https://www.rappler.com/plus-membership-program/social-media-two-way-presidential-race-between-marcos-robredo/>.

I am still in the government, no one else can be a candidate)¹⁶. Though there might be a possibility that her daughters may enter politics, she advised them to work hard on that position and not simply inherit the position. As of the writing, she did not have any other relatives who ran in any government position. At the same time, she does not own any company under her name while she was in the position. What admires her supporters is the fact that she is transparent in her projects – she publicizes on her website all the contracts made during her tenure.

Throughout the 90-day campaign period, Robredo was able to visit 68 out of 81 provinces. She had the most visited provinces during the national campaign among the presidential candidates. Most of the rallies (whom the organizers dubbed the “people’s rallies”) the campaign supporters organized were blockbusters, as there are a lot of the *Kakampinks* attending the said events. Among on the list is Miting De Avance in Makati with 780,000 estimated attendees and the Pasay’s Grand Rally in Macapagal Avenue when it had 420,000 estimated attendees. In addition, campaign volunteers around the world were holding events in support of Robredo. In Japan, 300 Filipino wore pink and marched at the Shibuya Crossing, one of the most popular intersections in Japan (“In Japan, Filipinos Close down the Famous Shibuya Crossing to March for Leni-Kiko” n.d.). Likewise, supporters in Canada marched to Bales Park in Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg. In the United States, small events were done in San Francisco and in other cities in California, Illinois, Texas, Massachusetts, and Connecticut¹⁷.

It is also interesting to note that people, regardless of age and socioeconomic class, went to the rallies. Worth observing also is the fact that the food and other souvenirs distributed during the rallies were given to the supporters for free. This phenomenon is similar to what transpired during the EDSA People Power when people flocked to EDSA to fight in the name of democracy. This is where the spirit of

¹⁶ Jamaine Punzalan, “Robredo Family Rule: Only One Active Member in Politics,” ABS-CBN News, December 7, 2021, <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/12/07/21/robredo-family-rule-only-one-active-member-in-politics>.

¹⁷ “Leni-Kiko Supporters Ramp up Campaign in U.S. and Canada,” INQUIRER.net USA, April 27, 2022, <https://usa.inquirer.net/99127/leni-kiko-supporters-ramp-up-campaign-in-u-s-and-canada>.

pakikipagkapwa was manifested there when the supporters identify themselves as being part of their *kapwa*-supporters ¹⁸.

This would not be possible without the help of the supporters, or the *Kakampinks*, who initiated several groups to aid in the campaign of Robredo. Among the groups formed are Robredo's People Council, Solid Leni Pilipinas, and Youth Vote for Leni. These organizations were formed in consonance with her late husband Jesse Robredo's Naga City People's Council (NCPC), which aimed to form representatives from the different sectors in the city ¹⁹. The continued rising of the "Pink Wave" was due to the effort of the volunteers from different parts of the country. An interview with a lawyer said that the campaign for Leni Robredo was a breakthrough from the past, traditional campaigns, as the volunteers themselves are the ones leading it. Instead of the national team taking the lead during the campaign because of their long experience in campaigning, it was the volunteers themselves who took the initiative, and the national team adopts it. Hence, the volunteers themselves say that it is not a campaign anymore, but a movement. One of the interviews with the supporters said that "It inspires you to stand up. It is no longer just about yourself. It is for everyone, especially for future generations. I feel like I am contributing to something bigger than myself"²⁰. According to Robredo's spokesperson, Atty. Barry Gutierrez, that on February 25, days after the start of the national campaign period, there are over two million individuals who signed up to be part of Robredo's campaign. Most of them are first-time voters or too young to vote ²¹.

¹⁸ Rogelia Pe-Pua and Elizabeth A. Protacio-Marcelino, "Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology): A Legacy of Virgilio G. Enriquez," *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 3, no. 1 (April 2000): 49–71, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-839X.00054>.

¹⁹ Antonio, "'Robredo's People Council' Formed to Organize Her Supporters, Volunteers," *Manila Bulletin*, November 9, 2021, <https://mb.com.ph/2021/11/09/robredos-people-council-formed-to-organize-her-supporters-volunteers/>.

²⁰ Michelle Abad, "The Pink Wave: Robredo's Volunteer Movement Defies Traditional Campaigns," *Rappler*, May 4, 2022, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/leni-robredo-volunteer-movement-defies-traditional-campaigns/>.

²¹ Sui-Lee Wee, "'We Want a Change': In the Philippines, Young People Aim to Upend an Election," *The New York Times*, May 1, 2022, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/world/asia/philippines-election-marcos-robredo.html>.

During the campaign season, there are a lot of Robredo supporters who took the risk of doing house-to-house campaigns, to the point that they left their school or work for this. What is also interesting here is that various sectors were also represented during the campaign. The likes of Teachers for Leni, Doctors for Leni, and Lawyers for Leni, among others are proof that they support the candidacy of Robredo. Apart from this, different artists took part in the campaign – from songs, books, and artworks that emerged throughout the campaign. Included also here are the expressions of support from celebrities, church organizations, schools, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and some politicians to Robredo for free. It is also worth noting that some supporters of the other presidentiables were also switched to Robredo – one of which is the Ikaw Muna (IM) Pilipinas group, who withdrew their support to Manila Mayor Isko Moreno. These are the manifestations that people’s movement at work during the campaign period. This proves that the second form of democracy – which Quimpo (2012) has mentioned – the democracy from below is now taking its place side-by-side with the elite democracy²². And these empowered people were hoping that Robredo will win the elections.

The Power of Citizen’s Active Participation

Interesting to point out here that some of the volunteers here are the members of the youth, which debunks the notion that the youths nowadays are apolitical. In the study of Cabo²³ involving youths who volunteered in an election monitoring exercise, it was proven that the youths are critical of the political scene in the Philippines. She noted that when the youths are allowed to directly participate in political and democratic processes, they are empowered more to be part of the political scene in the name of achieving social change. Cornelio²⁴ had a similar observation when he said that the Filipino millennials find their voice in the most creative, yet disruptive way. In this context,

²² *Contested Democracy and the Left in the Philippines After Marcos*.

²³ “View of Youth and Political Participation in the Philippines: Voices and Themes from a Democracy Project,” 2018, <https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jopag/article/view/123298/93736>.

²⁴ *Rethinking Filipino Millennials: Alternative Perspectives on a Misunderstood Generation* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2020).

the volunteers, and supporters of Robredo were able to innovate the campaign by making it catchy to the eyes of the Filipino people.

These observations are evident to the reasons why Filipinos in general voted for Robredo, and that they were willing to do everything to make her win in the elections. Despite the various network of disinformation against her from the online trolls, her supporters remained strong to fight for her. Below are the snippets of the interviews done by international media outlets BBC and Al Jazeera to Robredo's supporters

It feels like a big party. It feels like we're waking up and it feels like there's this new sense of hope and pride for our country.

I think she can do the job, she can be the next leader that we are looking for. We have been searching for so long for a politician who isn't corrupt. This time, it's already handed to us, we just need to look at it.

This time, we don't have to choose who is the 'lesser evil' ²⁵

I've seen how Vice President Leni worked, who she is and what she can do. She's been an inspiration to me since 2016 so I really channeled that into showing people who she really is through the song

We went to the Pasig rally and we were inspired by a lot of volunteers who brought food for everyone. We were starving that day, but we were happy that we got full without spending money, so we thought, let's pay it forward

The path to victory for Leni Robredo is narrow. But she showed us before, and even in this current race, that she can tread the thinnest of paths ²⁶

²⁵ "Leni Robredo: The Woman Leading the Philippines' 'Pink Revolution,'" *BBC News*, May 6, 2022, sec. Asia, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-61318519>.

²⁶ Anthony Esguerra, "'Our Generation's Fight': Robredo's Campaign to Stop Marcos Jr.," May 7, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/7/our-generations-fight-the-robredo-campaign-to-stop-marcos-jr>.

Interestingly, the youths comprises most of the volunteers during the house-to-house campaign by Robredo. We cannot deny the fact that aside from they are trying to challenge previous generation's assumption that they are politically apathetic, they can also channel ways on how they encourage people to participate politically through campaigns. In essence, the youths are trying to establish networks of youth supporters for Robredo. This is in line with the statement from Allen and Light ²⁷,

...many young people find their way to participatory communities through interest-driven networks; that is, networked group of youth with common interests around art, gaming, sports, entertainment, and so on. Many youth, for example, participate in online communities that share interest in hobbies, sports, or comparable topics that are associated with popular culture. (p.47)

In this context, their shared interest is for Robredo to win the elections. But supporters also tend to integrate popular culture to gain the attention of their target market. Teen Vogue reported that a lot of fandoms were united during the campaign period, such as those supporting SEVENTEEN, Taylor Swift, NXT, and other K-pop groups. Worth noticing is when the fans of Ariana Grande were glad that her song, Break Free, was played during the said activity, with Grande herself posted the said video in her Instagram account ²⁸.

Moreover, Robredo supporters were able to penetrate all the levels of active participation that Moro (1999) – personally participative, participative, and justice-oriented. To put into perspective, personally participative citizens are citizens who obey the rules and regulations of their community. By exercising their right to vote, Robredo's supporters were able to practice being personally participative citizens. On the other hand, participative citizens are citizens who actively organizes and joins event to help the community. The rallies, donation drives,

²⁷ *From Voice to Influence: Understanding Citizenship in a Digital Age* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).

²⁸ Condé Nast, "These Filipino Youth Use Fandom to Have a Voice in Presidential Elections," Teen Vogue, April 28, 2022, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/filipino-youth-k-pop-ariana-grande-taylor-swift-advocacy-presidential-candidate-leni-robredo>.

and other Robredo-inspired arts that her supporters made are some examples of these. Lastly, justice-oriented citizens are citizens who give importance to collective action to solve the root of injustices in the system. For this one, the massive crowd of Robredo supporters believes that the concrete platform of the supposedly-Robredo administration could probably solve some of the most pressing issues in the Philippines. These types of citizenship will also be reflected after the election results had been made later.

What Happened After the Elections? The Democracy in Question

What happened after the 2022 National Elections was something that Robredo's supporters did not expect. The massive number of supporters during her People's Rally did not translate to the number of votes in most of the provinces she and her supporters visited. The latest election results show that Marcos Jr leads the final count with over 30 million votes, in contrast to Robredo's 14 million votes.

It was also worth noting that several election-related anomalies were recorded during the May 9 elections – such as defective SD cards, malfunctioning Vote Counting Machines (VCMs), reports of vote buying in the provinces, voters still waiting and lining up to the precincts while waiting for the VCMs and SD cards to be repaired, torn ballots, and killings in the provinces²⁹. Kontra Daya, an organization aimed to fight election fraud, recorded 2,683 reports of election frauds, of which 1,318 of them are VCM errors. They also questioned why despite the errors in the VCM, the process of transmission went fast. COMELEC is yet to investigate such reports.

With that said, some of Robredo's supporters were disappointed and disheartened. In response to the election fraud and reported glitch, some of them marched to COMELEC's main office in Intramuros in protest of those incidents. In the online setting, some psychiatrists

²⁹ “3 ‘flying Voters’ Killed after VCMs, Ballots Were Destroyed in Lanao Del Sur, Says Military,” cnn, May 10, 2022, <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/regional/2022/5/10/3-flying-voters-killed-Lanao-del-Sur-.html>; Allena Therese Juguilon, “‘Wait or Come Back’: Netizens Report Malfunctioning VCMs, Long Lines on Election Morning,” RAPPLER, May 9, 2022, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/netizens-report-malfunctioning-vote-counting-machines/>.

offered some post-election processing in response to the grief and anger experienced by the supporters.

Days later, Robredo addressed her supporters in Quezon City, thanking her for their countless effort during the campaign. She also addressed that a foundation will be established to help those who are in the *laylayan*; hence no efforts will be put to waste. The supporters believed that the “Pink revolution” that once sparked during the campaign will continue to the best of their ability and that the active citizenship framework that Moro (1999) mentioned will still push through now that the organization will be part of the civil society movement. She said that starting July 1, 2022, the Angat Buhay Foundation, which she said to be the largest volunteer network in the history of the country. This foundation is the successor of the Angat Buhay Program that she initiated when she was the Vice President, which aims to help those who are in the laylayan in the far-flung areas of the country. She hoped that this foundation will help the supporters continue bringing “radical love” to the Filipinos ³⁰.

CONCLUSION

This paper shows that democracy is not only limited to participating during elections. This paper also described the state of Philippine democracy in the sense that it is contested between the elite democracy and the democracy from below. The campaign of Leni Robredo for the elections challenged the existing elite democracy in the sense that it gives empowered citizens to give their support to her. Comparable to EDSA People Power I and II, active citizenship is shown during that time – and it would not end even after the elections are over. Hence, democracy is still alive in the Philippines, and we hope that it will be sustained even during the new administration.

³⁰ *Robredo Announces Creation of Angat Buhay NGO, 2022*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UWkPTzTvgk>.

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