

The Philippines: After elections, left calls for broad front against Marcos-Duterte ‘axis of evil’

Wednesday 15 June 2022, by [MOHIDEEN Reihana](#), [PRICE Susan](#) (Date first published: 15 June 2022).

The May 9 Philippine national elections result represented a consolidation of the power of political dynasties and clans in the country, according to Reihana Mohideen from the Party of the Labouring Masses’ (PLM).

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Speaking to *Green Left Radio* on May 13, Mohideen said that to understand the victories for presidential candidate BongBong Marcos jnr (son of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos) and vice presidential candidate Sara Duterte (daughter of the outgoing president), “we have to understand the features of the Philippine capitalist system and political system, that is: the rule of dynasties and political clans”.

These clans “are a landed capitalist class in the Philippines, with established electoral bailiwicks in different parts of the country,” said Mohideen.



Photo: Party of the Labouring Masses/Facebook

Political dynasties

“In the case of Marcos jnr and his family, his dynasty is in the north of the country. In the case of the Duterte dynasty, they’re in the south of the country.

“They run these areas with a system of patronage, backed by coercion and violence enacted by their private armies and goons, and a corrupt state machinery. These are the semi-feudal vestiges — if you like — of Philippine capitalism.

“These dynasties dominate the entirety of the Philippine electoral system, from the national Senate

and Congress to the provinces, districts and barangays at the local level.

“Seventy-one per cent of the [outgoing] congress was comprised of members of dynasties and political clans. Over 80% of governors in the provinces are members of dynasties, and the majority of them are aligned with Duterte.

“If you look at the recent Forbes list of Philippine billionaires, the majority of them backed the Marcos-Duterte ‘axis of evil’ as we call it.”

The Marcos family has been trying to get back into power since their ousting in a people’s uprising in 1986, which overthrew the two-decades-long Marcos dictatorship, said Mohideen.

Marcos jnr spent P623.23 million (\$1.7 million) on his election campaign [1], according to his statement of contribution and expenditures filed with the electoral commission on June 7.

“Marcos jnr himself was a senator. His mother Imelda was in congress. So this has been going on for a while,” she said.

“However, this interference by the dynasties in the political process and the political system worsened under the rule of Duterte.”

Electoral irregularities

During the election, there were allegations that memory cards in vote counting machines (VCMs) were replaced and suspicions raised over the quick transmission of electoral results and early proclamation of victory by Marcos jnr.

An investigation [2] carried out by the National Citizens’ Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) and investigative news outlet Rappler into several allegations of electoral fraud debunked those claims.

However, investigative team member and Rappler investigative editor, Miriam Grace Go, clarified that “debunking allegations of cheating ... doesn’t mean that we are ruling out future evidence, if any.”

Suspicious about electronic voting fraud took place in a context where key leaders of the electoral commission were appointed by Duterte. In addition, the companies supplying the voting technology also have links with Duterte, explained Mohideen.

Protests took place outside the electoral commission after the election over voting irregularities, including the fact that many people were unable to vote because more than 1800 voting machines malfunctioned on the day, according to Al Jazeera.

“We had so-called ‘glitches’ that happened with the voting machines which have not been explained,” said Mohideen. “There were 201 power interruptions recorded between 4am and 11am on May 9, each with an average duration of 17 minutes. We don’t know why this happened, or what happened during these interruptions.”

Furthermore, in a system where dynasty rule is based on “institutionalised electoral fraud”, Mohideen said, “electoral fraud is not a one-off thing; there is ‘vote-buying’ machinery that operates at the local level, run by the political dynasties”.

According to Mohideen, the market rate for a vote during this election “was P10,000 to P15,000 per vote” (between \$260-400).

“Then, of course, you had the role of social media and collusion in Facebook, with fake news denying and revising the history of the [Marcos] dictatorship, saying that the economy was great, there was no plunder, that there were no violations of democratic rights, and that, in fact, this was a ‘golden era’ of Philippine politics,” said Mohideen.

“All this was backed by violence, especially at the local level, with private armies and even the state machinery [raiding] polling booths.” Video exists of raids where ballot boxes were carried away and burnt, said Mohideen.

“Elections will never be free, honest and peaceful until these political dynasties are dismantled. We cannot have genuine democracy as long as these political dynasties are in power.”

Resistance

When asked what Marcos Jr’s election may mean for oppressed groups and the working class, Mohideen explained that the new government will likely be a continuation of “Duterte-style” authoritarian rule.

“Ferdinand Marcos ... was backed by the United States. Without this political and military backing, through military bases and CIA operations on the ground against the underground resistance, Marcos would not have survived as long as he did. In the end, the US had to ferry him out of the country, to go and live in the US, where he died.

“[Marcos] had to close down congress. Duterte never had to close down congress because it was with him, and I think that will continue.

“But there is resistance. Resistance to electoral fraud and to the possibility of this regime being established started on the evening of May 9, when polling booths closed. On that evening, students called for a complete closure of campuses and a boycott of classes.

“Large sections of the population are refusing and will refuse to grant legitimacy and credibility to the rule of these families of thieves. The people are desperate after decades of neoliberal rule and the pandemic on top of that. Their lives have been destroyed, the socio-economic fabric of the country has been destroyed and the people are desperate.

“This is part of the reason for some of the support for Marcos jnr, because of what they have experienced under liberal/neoliberal rule. In terms of all the promises that Marcos jnr has made, he has promised everything so, there’s a populism to his platform as well. He’s just not going to be able to deliver it and there will be tremendous anger as a result of this.

“This is the kind of scenario that we’re expecting. If [the government] is established and congress reconvenes in July, which is when the new president formally takes on that role, then it’s going to be extremely unstable politically and it might not last even a year.

The left

Despite running a full ticket in the election, including candidates for president and vice president —

labour movement leader Leody de Guzman and Walden Bello, respectively — the PLM was unsuccessful in obtaining elected posts.

Mohideen puts this down to the targeted electoral fraud against the opposition.

“Nevertheless, we still had a big national, political impact. Our platform, which was an anti-capitalist, anti-neoliberal platform, got mainstream national projection. We got a very positive hearing and response ... especially from the youth.”

“We now have established, nationally recognised candidates, who are putting forward our cause right now to resist the regime, with authority in the eyes of the masa [masses], especially young people.”

Following the election, the PLM has called for a “broad, united front”, involving presidential candidate Leni Robredo [3], who came second, and “the anti-Marcos opposition” against the election result.

Rodrigo Duterte’s term ends on June 30, when the Marcos Jr-Sara Duterte regime takes over. What happens next is in the hands of the Filipino people.

Susan Price

P.S.

- GLW Issue 1349, June 15, 2022:
<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/philippines-after-elections-left-calls-broad-front-against-marcos-duterte-axis-evil>
 - Interview transcription by Arie Huybregts.
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Footnotes

[1] <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/ferdinand-marcos-jr-presidential-campaign-statement-contribution-expenditures/>

[2] <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/namfrel-ppcrv-debunk-myths-of-electoral-fraud-in-2022-polls/>

[3] The Electoral Commission credited Leni Robredo with 28% of the votes (the next candidate obtained only 7%). Her campaign brought together a wide range of components, including many progressive social movements (associations, unions ...) and left-wing parties. Leody De Guzman (associated with Walden Bello), a cadre of the Party of the Labouring Masses (PLM), was credited with 0.19% (ESSF informative note).