



A Multidisciplinary Frame for Studying Democratic Shifts in Southeast Asia: Mixing Politics, Sociology And Psychology Across Historical Time



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[Abstract]

Southeast Asia has been a showcase for democratic transitions in the past 30 years. This paper proposes a conceptual lens for studying political shifts in the Southeast Asian region. The argumentative storyline follows two fundamental propositions about democratic transitions. My first proposition is that during democratic transitions, human phenomena arise on nested analytical layers namely the global arena, the state, prodemocracy movements, and individuals. Each layer is conventionally studied by international relations, political science, sociology, and psychology respectively. I propose a multidisciplinary lens that transverses all these analytical layers. A second proposition is that during political shifts, social conditions are historically-situated. Historicity is anchored on stages of democratization, namely the authoritarian regime, toppling the regime, power shift, state building, and nation building. This paper describes a 4 x 5 matrix (analytical layer x historical stage) that may guide a regional agenda on the

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empirical study of democratic transitions in the Southeast Asian region. It likewise gives examples of research findings in Philippine-based studies that have already begun to provide empirical data about segments of this research matrix.

Keywords: democratic transition, stages of democratic shifts, Philippines, Southeast Asia, politics

I . Introduction

Democratic transition refers to a shift in the nature of a state's power distribution, from an authoritarian government to a more distributed form of political system. Such transition or regime change is often stimulated and brought about by collective action, sometimes referred to as People's Power. This specific phenomenon of authoritarian regime toppling tends to draw wide international media coverage; it has also become the main analytical focus of social scientists when studying democratic transitions.

The story, however, of democratic transition extends far beyond the dramatic and does not end with regime toppling and collective movements. The transition from authoritarian to a democratic form of state power is a long process; and not all transitions are linear or permanent shifts. Some states pendulum in a cyclic manner, from authoritarian to more open politics, then back to some form of personal or military dictatorship.

Existing social science research, specifically in political science, elaborates on the conditions for successful democratization or complete democratic transition (Dahl 1971; Dirdala 2009; Linz & Stepan 1996; Diamond 1994), with a specific focus on the institutionalization and normalization of democratic procedures, behaviors, and values in political and civil society. The theory of polyarchal democracy, as put forward by Robert Dahl (1971; Dirdala 2009) enumerates a set of institutional requirements, such as suffrage rights, free and fair elections, freedom of expression, and associational autonomy, which are deemed essential for the

democratization process. Dahl (1971; Dirdala 2009) explains that both political opposition (liberalization) and an increased opportunity for political participation (inclusiveness) are fundamental to establishing a democracy.

Theories of democratic consolidation (Linz & Stepan 1996; Diamond 1994) provide rich descriptions in terms of the process by which new democracies mature or become profoundly embedded in society, such that they are unlikely to break down or revert to authoritarianism. Democratic consolidation is achieved when democracy becomes deeply embedded in political, social, institutional, and even psychological life (Linz & Stepan 1996). This is characterized by a robust civil society able to monitor and influence the conduct of government; effective institutionalization of democratic political processes that govern our collective life; and a citizenship that believes in democratic procedures and institutions even in the face of severe crises (Linz & Stepan 1996; Diamond 1994). Some challenges to democratic consolidation include the lack of homogeneity especially in multinational or multicultural settings, which may exacerbate problems of the stateness, as well as the slow or lack of economic reform, which may delegitimize the new political democratic system (Linz & Stepan 1996).

Theories on democratic consolidation specifically highlight democracy to be more than a regime, but a process and an interacting system that extends beyond the state. In this research wherein I consider how democratic shifts and setbacks shaped the political landscape of the past 30 years, I ask, *how can one scientifically study the massive and dynamic field of democratic transitions, especially in the Southeast Asian region?*

I forward two propositions that can guide scientific observations about democratic transitions. The first is about penetrating the borders of one's disciplinary analytical lenses; the second calls for historical anchoring based on democratization stages, rather than on a nation's ancient past.

II . Democratic Transitions in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia has been a showcase for democratic transitions in the past 30 years, with various versions of People Power happening in the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, East Timor, and Cambodia. Here are some stories of democratic shifts in the region.

With the 1986 People Power Revolution, Filipinos toppled the Marcos dictatorship and set up a new democracy under the leadership of President Corazon Aquino (Santiago & Tirol 1995). A final blow to the Marcos regime can be attributed to the massive nonviolent show of force by millions of Filipinos who confronted the government military tanks on a main highway called EDSA or Epifanio de los Santos Avenue. One of the first laws passed under Corazon Aquino's presidency was the Local Government Code, which redistributed political and financial power away from the Manila-based central government to the local government units throughout the archipelago.

In the early 1990's, Cambodia likewise underwent its own democratic transition, with strong people's support on the ground. After a series of authoritarian regimes, democracy was gradually introduced to this war-torn country, through The Final Act of Paris Conference on Cambodia of 1991 (United Nations, Department of Public Information 2000; United Nations General Assembly 1991; United Nations Peacemaker 1991). As part of this normalization process, general elections took place in 1993, and Prince Norodom Ranariddh was elected prime minister (BBC 2015; UN n.d.). The monarchy was restored and the country was re-named Kingdom of Cambodia (BBC 2015; Lizée 1996; Un 2011).

Dhammayietras, or Buddhist Walks for peace, marked historical moments when Cambodia's peaceful transition threatened to escalate into another civil war. The Buddhist Walk practice began in April 1992 in an attempt to reunite Cambodian refugees on the Thai border, with their local Cambodian compatriots. A second Dhammayietra took place a year later, in the midst of

political tensions and sporadic violent outbreaks surrounding the 1993 electoral process. From 1994 to 1996, three more Dhammayietras were organized to address sporadic eruptions of political violence, land mines, and deforestation (European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation n.d.; Khemacaro 1998; Oxfam Community Aid Abroad 1994).

East Timor's democratic transition moved against a foreign-based rather than a domestic authoritarian ruler. This Southeast Asian country fell under Indonesian control in 1976, but the forceful integration was not recognized by the UN, which called for Indonesia's withdrawal (BBC 2015; United Nations Security Council 2002). In the meantime, the East Timorese organized themselves into liberation fronts, led by the *Frente Revolucionaria de Timor-Leste Independente* (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) or FRETILIN. However, through the years, local resistance suffered heavy casualties from systematic bombing campaigns. Gradually, the FRETILIN considered nonviolence as its overarching strategy, and collaborated with the East Timorese Catholic Church. By 1999, the East Timorese overwhelmingly voted in favor of independence through a UN-managed referendum. In 2002, the East Timorese celebrated their Independence Day, with FRETILIN leader and 6-year political detainee Xanana Gusmao as the country's new president (Burr & Evans 2001; Deats 2001; Shah 2000).

Indonesian democratic transition demonstrated a steady and stable progression toward democratic consolidation (Abdulbaki 2008; Mietzner 2014). The Suharto government was pushed to its toppling edge by youth protest rallies, other prodemocracy movements, and economic and political jolts directly linked to the Asian financial crisis in the mid-1990's (Abdulbaki 2008; Lee 2011). One distinct feature of Indonesia's new democracy was the separation of military and civilian powers. Armed forces personnel were prohibited from participating in the bureaucracy, a stark difference from the earlier Suharto government (Abdulbaki 2008; Meitzner 2014).

Finally, Thailand's recent history has been marked by pendulum

swings toward and away from democratic governments, alternating between civilian and military rulers (Farrelly 2013). Although often pushed to the brink of unbridled military control and street chaos, Thailand has remained politically cohesive largely due to everyone's loyalty to the Thai monarchy, and the monarchy's peaceful interventions during critical historical moments of political conflict (Farrelly 2013; Ockey 2007). For example, in 1992, bloody street protests against the military government of General Suchinda persuaded King Bhumibol to intervene. Eventually, Suchinda resigned as Prime Minister of Thailand.

In summary, the Southeast Asian region has recently hosted dictatorial downfalls, people-based prodemocracy movements, and swings toward and away from local forms of state democracy.

To answer the question of how to scientifically study the massive and dynamic field of democratic transition in the region, I elaborate a conceptual lens for studying political shifts based on two fundamental propositions about democratic transition. But before I proceed with my suggested way of doing science in this field of study, I would like to offer a word of caution. I do not forward any pretensions to causal explanations or predictions. This is not because I do not want to stumble into ideological rhetoric of colonial or neocolonial arguments, but more so because before one argues causality, one must first observe. What I suggest are ways of observing and making thick descriptions. Hence, this paper suggests ways of answering the What's and How's of democratic transitions, rather than the Why's.

III. Proposed Conceptual Lens on Studying Southeast Asian Democratic Transitions

My argumentative storyline follows two fundamental propositions about democratic transitions. My first proposition is that during democratic transitions, human phenomena arise on nested analytical layers, namely, the global arena, the state, prodemocracy movements, and individuals. A second proposition

is that during political shifts, social conditions are historically-situated. Historicity is anchored on stages of democratization, namely the authoritarian regime, toppling the regime, power shift, state building, and nation building. My final argument merges the two propositions and asserts that a research agenda on democratic shifts should transverse analytical layers and social disciplines, and should simultaneously reference particular historical stages of a country's political transition.

3.1. Proposition One: In democratic transitions, social phenomena arise on nested and interactive analytical layers.

Political shifts and their related phenomena unfold simultaneously on varying layers of human analytical units. One can observe democratic transitions from the viewpoints of macro lenses like global and state changes; meso units like social movements and liberation fronts; and micro individual phenomena like the leader and activist. Conventionally, these observations of democratic shifts have been carried out by different social sciences bound by their respective idiosyncratic lenses. Specifically, global effects on transitions have been studied by international relations, state changes by political science, collective movements by sociologists, and individual mentalities and behaviors by psychologists. However, because human phenomena related to political transitions take place simultaneously on the levels of the global system, state, collective, and person, observations of power shifts likewise need to collect social data on all these levels, and analyze data with an openness not only to main effects but also to interaction effects traversing these layers. Succinctly, what and how things happen in one analytical layer are interconnected with what and how things happen on the other layers of analysis.

The call to heightened interactive analysis across disciplinary borders is not new. Political scientist Migdal and his colleagues (Migdal, Kohli & Shue 1994) asserted the bidirectional embeddedness of society within the state. Similarly, sociologists Giddens (1994) emphasized the imperative role of society in

viewing democracy, including in his analytical lens social spheres like personal life, social movements, and self-help groups, organizations, and the global order. Recently, psychologist Montiel (2015) demonstrated how personal traumas during transitions develop and heal alongside varying stages of a political shift away from dictatorship.

<Table 1> identifies varying human phenomena in different analytical layers during democratic transitions in Southeast Asia. The columns give examples of Southeast Asian countries that experienced democratic transitions fueled by large-scale people’s mobilizations. The rows, on the other hand, identify layers of analytical units from the more macro global and state phenomena, to smaller groups like social movements, to the micro unit of the individual.

<Table 1> Examples of Analytical Layers during Democratic Transitions in Southeast Asia

| | Global System | State | Social/Political Movement | Individual |
|-------------|--|--|---|--------------------|
| Cambodia | Global peace NGO's | Cambodian People's Party domination (one-party ruling) | Dhammayietra or Buddhist Walk for Peace | Buddhist monks |
| East Timor | UN-managed referendum | Indonesia occupation | FRETILIN | Xanana Gusmao |
| Indonesia | Asia Financial Crisis in the mid 1990's | Suharto regime | Student protest movements | Student protesters |
| Philippines | US offered Marcos helicopters to fly to Hawaii | Marcos regime | People Power | Corazon Aquino |
| Thailand | International reaction to Suchinda violence | Suchinda military rule | Black May street protests | King Bhumibol |

If one reads across the rows of <Table 1>, one gets a sense of events simultaneously occurring during a particular country's political shift. A purview down the columns presents patterns of similar analytical layers across countries. However, observing human phenomena in each column cannot be understood unless one lets go of disciplinary boundaries, crisscrosses columns, and observes other episodes airing simultaneously on the other columns or layers of the nested diaspora.

3.2. Proposition Two: The human landscape changes dramatically according to the different political stages of the transitioning state.

I identify at least five stages of democratic transition, as the state morphs from an authoritarian to a more open political system. When one analyzes features of a democratic transition, it is imperative to anchor one's analysis to the political stage at which data were collected, because political conditions vary significantly from one stage to the next. The details of these stages are expounded in another paper (Montiel 2010), and I summarize them here.

The first stage of transition begins during the dictatorship. Authoritarian rule is characterized by the full control of the state by one person or one political party or a combination of leader and party. Many regimes are ruled by civilian dictators, dictatorial political parties, and military generals. It is during these dark days that alliances across pro-democracy movements are formed, mental and physical traumas are experienced, and politico-personal loyalties are cemented (or fractured). The sufferings during authoritarian regimes likewise provide the psychological collective frames for massive and coordinated street protests.

Regime toppling marks the second stage of transition. This arises when the strong ruler falls, as a climax to massive protests. Regime toppling starts but does not end with the overthrow an authoritarian ruler and may be enacted by a combination of the weakening of a regime by internal fracturing (usually over access to regime resources), and by the strengthening

of external opposition forces.

I call the third stage of transition power shift. This refers to the historical moment after a regime falls and when the victorious groups consolidate their hold on the new state. Power shift is a sensitive historical moment marked by celebrative euphoria and possibilities of collective and personal vendetta by the groups who struggled to topple the authoritarian regime. New forms of negotiated power-sharing may evolve among former-opposition groups in the new state. One critical feature of a power shift is the conduct of a trustworthy electoral process. Elections provide a venue for people to decide on their leaders. This is easier said than done, in a country whose immediate past showed that street and armed power can work to remove one leader and install another, even without elections. Often, the cycle of democratic transition pendulums back to earlier forms of violence and authoritarianism due to failed electoral procedures.

After a successful power shift, a fourth stage of democratic transition emerges as leaders of the new state work toward state building. State building covers the period of re-configuring the political system and resuscitating damaged institutions. This entails making the state's executive, legislative, and judiciary branches function effectively to improve the everyday lives of ordinary people. Issues of widespread corruption and misuse of public funds capture public attention at this stage.

Finally we come to nation-building, or making ethnicities and tribes live together peacefully within a single country. Nation building involves re-defining the cultural and political identities of ethnic groups that may have been forcefully unified under the former dictatorial regime. A nation may be different from the people of a state, especially in countries where the configuration of state boundaries were defined during the colonial era without recognition of ethnic adhesions among local peoples. Nation-building has to do with building social or tribal identities in one country that respect variations in ethnicities within a state.

Each transitional stage tells a different story, and demands widely disparate political moves from the global community, state,

prodemocracy movements, and individual activists. Let us take for example, the changing public discourse on power. During a dictatorship, the political discourse among liberation groups revolves around power production, or how to produce political power to topple the state. However, during the power-shift stage, the discourse turns to power allocation, or how to distribute the newly gained power among groups and individuals who helped obtain political victory. Finally, when the new state starts to stabilize, issues revolve around power utilization, or how to use state power for the common good, rather than for corruption-saturated personal gains.

International media coverages and Western representations of power shifts in the Global South tend to dramatize the earlier stages of democratization, like dictator toppling or power shifting. Further, during state and nation building stages, human phenomena are evaluated against a comparative backdrop of stable democracies, as if the new democracies suddenly switched out of its transition process.

3.3. Merging Propositions: Observing democratic transitions scientifically entails an interactive lens of (Analytical Layers x Historicity)

Let us now fuse the two propositions. This merged proposal emphasizes the importance of defining not only the unit of analysis one is studying, but also, the democratic stage at which data is collected and evaluated. <Table 2> recommends an observation matrix for studying democratic transitions in Southeast Asia. The matrix contains 3 analytical layers and 5 stages of democratization, with a total of 15 observation categories. However, although democratic transitions research allows a variation of analytical units, the state stands as the pivotal agency around which collective and individual phenomena arise.

<Table 2> Locating Social Research on Democratic Transitions:
Analytical Layer x Historical Time

| Analytical Layers | Authoritarian Rule | Regime Toppling | Power Shift | State Building | Nation Building |
|------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| Transitioning State | Martial law | Defection of military forces to join opposition movement | <i>Bargaining during Coup Attempts (see 3.4.1.); Civilian Military Social Representations of People power (see 3.4.2)</i> | <i>Social Network Analysis of Legislator's Web of Corruption (see 3.4.3)</i> | <i>Positioning in a Muslim-Christian Peace Agreement (see 3.4.4)</i> |
| Anti-state Movement | Prodemocracy Movements/ Communist Insurgency | | Politicized Military/ Communist Insurgency | | Ethnic-based Liberation Movements |
| Politicized individual | <i>Political Trauma and Recovery of On-the-ground Prodemocracy Leaders (see 3.4.5)</i> | | | | |

Conceptually, one need not be bound by the lines that separate the rows and columns. Operationally, this implies that a researcher can ask questions crisscrossing analytical units or historical moments, but should make sure that theoretical traversion is clarified and finds equivalence in operational and methodological strategies.

3.4. Observing democratic transitions in the Philippines using the proposed interactive lens of (Analytical Layers x Historicity)

To elucidate on the abovementioned propositions, I present some research findings on a political psychology of democratic transition in the Philippines. I locate these studies in the conceptual matrix, to show that a wide range of analytical lenses and historicities can be used to observe power shifts in Southeast Asia. Allow me first to give a brief background about the

Philippine power shift.

From 1972 until 1986, the Philippines was ruled by the Marcos dictatorship. In 1986 we celebrated a successful People's Power Revolution, when millions of peaceful street protesters forced the Marcos family to flee on a US-provided helicopter to Hawaii. Between 1986 and 2003, the new democratic government under President Corazon Aquino was hounded by a dozen failed coup attempts. As the state stabilized, government turned to nation-building. From 1996 to 2014, the Christian government sponsored peace talks with Moro liberation fronts in Mindanao.

I now present a summary of five psychological researches done about democratic transition. Each study is embedded on varying analytical layers (marked by the rows on this matrix) and located across historical time, or more specifically across different stages of a transitioning political state (marked by the columns in the matrix). Note the changing anti-state movement. As transition progresses, prodemocracy movements become the new state, and may be subsequently threatened by politicized military forces. In general, the researches I highlight are thick descriptions rather than causal queries about democratic transitions. They do not explain why but rather describe the psychological what's and how's of political shifts. First we will look at intergroup negotiations during coup end-game bargaining and social representations of People's Power during power shift. Using social network analysis, I then describe how interlocking relationships among legislators can form a web of corruption during state-building. After which, I will show how Muslim-Christian peace processes during nation-building can be understood through the lens of conversation analysis and positioning theory. Finally, I will end with an activist's story of psychological trauma and recovery across the different stages of political transition.

3.4.1. Military movements during power shifts: End-game coup bargaining.

The first study took a closer look at end-game bargaining during three of the biggest coup attempts in the Philippines—Operation

Noel or No Elections in 1987, a bigger attempt in 1989, and an attempted power grab called Codename Freedom in 1990 (Montiel 1995). We asked: What psychological features mark the different stages of bargaining for a peaceful termination of coup attempts? We collected our data from television news coverage, newspaper reports, and government documents. We also interviewed the government mediators.

My study identified five stages of end-game coup bargaining, namely: (1) the start of coup; (2) feelers being sent by coup leaders to negotiate with the government; (3) the start of 3rd party negotiations; (4) the end of 3rd party negotiations; (5) military rebels departing from captured buildings. Our findings showed that coup leaders decided to negotiate and negotiated swiftly as government troops successfully surrounded rebel strongholds, and as an ultimatum from the government approached.

I further broke down the end-game negotiations into smaller stages of bargaining, and identified collective emotions of both the military rebels and government negotiators. The negotiation process has this emotional picture: As the rebels contact the third party, there is apprehension and hope. Mediators enter rebel-held territory and both parties express solidarity with each other. Then peace bargaining starts and rebels are very angry as they gripe against the government. When griping subsides, the coup leaders present their demands for peaceful termination. At this stage, they are still angry, but also say that they fear government retaliation after surrender. Government mediators then respond to the coup leaders' demands with sympathy and firmness. When the two sides of the conflict reach an agreement, they are both relieved and exhausted. As coup participants exit out of their captured buildings, they hold feelings of relief and fear. There is some kind of public face-saving ritual or speech or street march by the coup participants, as they publicly show their relief and celebrate their so-called victory. For example they are allowed to give press interviews to announce that that they are merely returning to barracks without surrendering.

After this first study on coups, I ran a second study,

wondering what psychological representations may be fueling these military grabs. I suspected that it had something to do with the military's understanding that they were once part of the overthrow of the Marcos regime and therefore deserved central powers in the new democracy.

3.4.2. Social memories of regime toppling: Civilian-military social representations of People Power.

My second study looked at civilian-military social representations of the 1986 People Power (Montiel 2010). The sample consisted of graduates from key military and civilian academic institutions that participated in the 1986 People Power democratic shift. The research included graduates from the Philippine Military Academy and Ateneo de Manila University, from two cohorts that were 20 years apart. I asked survey participants what they thought was the most important event during the 1986 People Power Revolution. Results showed that both civilians and military agreed that the unity among all sectors during People Power toppled Marcos. But the intergroup agreement stopped there. Civilians claimed that the previous assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino Jr. triggered the mass protests, while military participants believed it was their institution's withdrawal of support for the dictatorship that caused the downfall of Marcos.

One part of the survey asked participants to describe their social representations of the power shift, by asking them to *Please describe People Power One with the help of the following set of adjective pairs*. Findings showed starkly different social representations of People Power in civilian and military institutions, even 20 years after the power shift. Our discriminant analysis classified 98.5% of the groups correctly into two groups. Civilians represented People Power as courageous, successful, strong, admirable, and good; while military personnel saw People Power as cowardly, unsuccessful, weak, not admirable, and bad. Further, the civilian set of representations was what was circulated on international media, while the military representations fueled coup attempts.

3.4.3. Government corruption during state building: Social network analysis of state corruption.

As the dust settled, our new democracy turned to state building or to strengthening the effectiveness of government. One issue was the misuse of government funds and widespread corruption among those who enjoyed state power. A study on Philippine corruption used social network analysis to map out relationships among legislators who allocated public funds to fake non-government organizations. This study analyzed corruption as a social system rather than as an individualized behavior.

The research showed that legislators and fake organizations formed a social network that covered the same communities or clusters in one overlapping web of corruption (Sison, Pasion, and Tapang 2013). One central hub included our former senate president and at least two other current senators. All three senators have been charged in court. As of this writing, two remain in detention, while one has just been released from detention due to his frail health.

3.4.4. Ethnic liberation movements during nation-building: Positioning in a Muslim-Christian peace agreement.

Systemic government corruption is an endemic issue during state-building. On the other hand, during nation-building, the concern is for some semblance of social peace among peoples or tribes with varying ethno-religious identities. In 2008, the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front signed a Memorandum of Agreement or MOA. This agreement was eventually nullified after protests, military attacks, and counter-attacks. We studied the procedural failure using positioning analysis, a kind of conversation analysis that can study intergroup conversations that change rapidly across time (Montiel & de Guzman 2011).

Our result plot contained conversational storylines across political layers and historical episodes of the peace talks. We

identified four storylines about the public meaning of the agreement, namely that it was (a) for peace and development, (b) a threat, (c) victimizing certain groups, and (d) terrorizing other groups. Our main finding for this study points to the President as the conversation changer. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo changed her political position midstream, perhaps to appease the Christian legislators. In this research, we likewise discovered that the *meaning* of a peace agreement varies across different social actors, and even within one collective actor such as the state. We also noted that it changes within the same social actors, across time, as the public debate intensifies.

3.4.5. *Gendered trauma during democratic transition.*

As a final psychological feature of democratic transition, let us now focus on political trauma. Trauma and recovery among prodemocracy activists arise on the individual level, but are anchored on the changing conditions of one's liberation movements and the shifting state. Although trauma is acquired during the authoritarian regime, its healing and recovery take place largely after the political chaos subsides, and the state settles down.

This is my story, up close and personal (Montiel 2015). I was then married to a political organizer Boyet, who was detained thrice on charges of subversion. During Martial Law, I founded and led *Lingap Bilanggo* (Care for Prisoners) a nationwide movement to free all political detainees. I likewise organized political education workshops on social change and nonviolence, for the Pilipino Democratic Party – Lakas ng Bayan (Nation's Strength), a political party that challenged Marcos in open elections.

Here are examples of some traumas I experienced during Martial Law: sexual transgressions during sexualized body searches before entering the detention center; hypervigilance, for 14 years of Martial Law; continuous fear and paranoia for possibly being followed or kidnapped by intelligence agents; stopping all emotions because “Ang emosyon ay sagabal sa rebolusyon” (“Emotions are obstacles to the revolution.”). Further, many of

my women friends likewise suffered mentally because they had to part with their little children in order to go underground or let their children be cared for by relatives or a collective, especially the little ones.

After Martial Law, my panic disorder erupted. I had nightmares of being chased by intelligence agents, waking up in the middle of the night sweating, and with rapid heart palpitations. When I would see military forces on television or hear about others' political sufferings, I would weep and vomit uncontrollably. I also had difficulty breathing and suffered from high blood pressure. Today I am better, and I attribute my emotional improvement to a mix of western and eastern therapies.

Allow me to add to current ideas about political trauma and healing, especially during democratic transitions. Firstly, the duration of trauma infliction is not always brief but may also be experienced over many years. Secondly, context is not only a source of trauma but also a source of healing, as when a dictatorship falls. Thirdly, recovery does not take place in war-free and comfortable places but in continuously unsafe and impoverished conditions. And finally, those who are traumatized are not only victims but more often agents of change as they continue to lead their society through democratic transition after the regime is overthrown (Montiel, 2000).

IV. Conclusion

As demonstrated in this paper, the scientific study of massive and dynamic democratic transitions can be conducted through considering varying analytical layers located in historical time or different stages of a transitioning political state. Hence, I end this essay with an invitation to continue studying democratic transitions, adding larger or smaller analytical layers beyond one's disciplinary lenses, and considering political historicity of democratic-transition phenomena. I call on scientists from the fields of international relations and political science to consider smaller analytical units like pro-democracy movements and

individual mentalities. Likewise, sociologists and psychologists may want to broaden their views to see what and how things happening in the state and global arena interface with collective movements and individual lives. For more solid and deeper social changes especially in our region and the Global South, we may need to use new lenses, and new methods. The future of a social science on democratic transitions lies in other intellectual areas that remain unexplored.

This 2015, we celebrate the official establishment of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations or the ASEAN community. Let us study our political histories together, as our new states transit out of authoritarian regimes and into democracies that will need to define their own political trajectories, based on local human landscapes.

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