

## Chapter 73

# Social Media's Role in Alleviating Political Corruption and Scandals: The Philippines During and After the Marcos Regime

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter is an attempt to show how the use of social media in one country, the Republic of the Philippines, has grown and has been used to encourage political awareness and participation among the Filipino masses. The country is ranked among the most technologically savvy in the world but ironically is also considered one of the most corrupt countries as well. The authors believe that, as a result of the showings Filipinos have made when called upon via social media to oust corrupt officials, there is a method whereby such knowledge can be harnessed for the good thus alleviating scandals and ultimately corruption in the country. This research points to the direction the country, and various other countries in the world in similar situations, may take in order to combat corruption through greater citizen participation.*

### INTRODUCTION

Data indicate that the Philippines is among the first countries to have rapidly embraced the use of social media via the Internet and cell phones. It ranks among the top countries when it comes to cell phone, Internet and social media usage. At the same time, the Philippines has been plagued by decades of political corruption and scandals which accelerated during the regime of Ferdinand Marcos and continues

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to the present. It ranks as one of the most corrupt countries in the world based on its placement in the Corruption Perception Index.

It is also true that historically, the Philippines has been able to effect regime changes in a relatively peaceful and non-violent manner as shown by the overthrow of Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 after more than 20 years of his “benevolent dictatorship” via the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) People Power Revolution/Movement from February 22-25, 1986. This led to the eventual installation of Corazon (Cory) Aquino as the legitimate president of the country after a much contested election. People Power 2 or the second EDSA revolution also known as EDSA II (or EDSA 2) led to the ouster of Joseph “Erap” Estrada, the corrupt president who succeeded Fidel Ramos, the successor to Aquino. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (GMA), who succeeded Estrada and is rumored to have exceeded Estrada’s corruption, was herself driven from office by widespread unrest and protests.

A case may be made that the quick and widespread use of social media in the Philippines and the success of Filipinos in getting rid of corrupt regimes are related phenomena. Political mobilization is made possible by social media, along with the spread of relatively cheap communications like texting. Aside from facilitating the flow of information among the population, the logistics of deploying the masses once the movement for the overthrow of regimes begins is made easier by social media.

However, it is ironic and even tragic that the forces of social media that contribute to the overthrow of corrupt regimes have not yet been able to alleviate the high level of corruption that continues to plague the Philippines. The chapter proposes to examine the extent of the relationship between social media and corrupt regime change in the Philippines during the last three decades. This chapter also proposes to explore the possible ways that social media can alleviate corruption in a country, and the reason why these have not been effective in the Philippines. It is hoped that through the examples and suggestions proposed herein some semblance of domestic policy and even international policy can be effected that can help transform the politics of individual nations and maybe even the international system.

A note of optimism surrounds our initial assessment of the Philippines. Even with such a poor record of corruption, the authors consider the Philippines as a case of a Third World country that, partly through the spread and increasing sophistication of social media, is starting to be transformed during the past 30 years from a highly corrupt country into one that is making great political and economic strides that could still erase its reputation for corruption and economic malaise. In the recent past, it has performed among the best in Asia in two measures – economic growth and stock market returns. Authors thus consider what factors may be responsible for its continuing transformation.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Republic of the Philippines has been called the “promise of Asia” and the “sick man of Asia” alternately ever since its search for stability, prosperity and development began in the 1940s. After centuries of Spanish rule and half a century under American tutelage, the Philippines has struggled with its attempts at political and economic development since 1946. Right after the Second World War and independence from the United States, it was thought that the democratic institutions that had been installed during American colonization would lead the country to the road to economic prosperity as well. And by the 1960s, it seemed that she would be on the right path because at that time the country was considered one of the fastest growing economies in Asia.

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