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Abstract

Die philippinische Demokratie zwischen Populismus und Reform

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"Insiders" and "outsiders" have diverged sharply in their judgment of the overthrow of Philippine President Joseph Ejercito Estrada in January 2001. Philippine journalists, academics, and middle class reformers speak of "people power II" while foreign observers warn that such a "soft coup" weakens Philippine democracy. In this article, it is argued that democratic consolidation in the Philippines faces populist and reformist challenges. The return to "cacique democracy" after the fall of Marcos has been only partial. At the national level, Estrada revived the populist claim to represent the masses against the "oligarchy." But the corruption of his administration led to the revival of a reformist coalition of big business, the Catholic Church hierarchy, opposition politicians, and the so-called middle forces (with the significant addition of Manila students and the Philippine left). This movement, which parallels those in several other Southeast Asian countries, violated democratic rules in order to restore good government. While governance has improved under the new administration of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the precedent set by regime change through popular protest can destabilize Philippine democracy, as the riot by pro-Estrada demonstrators on May 1st demonstrates.