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An Ambivalent Civil Society in Democratic Consolidation — The Case of Local Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the Visayas and North Mindanao

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Summary

Democratic consolidation in the Philippines is stagnating despite the country having a vibrant civil society. A comparative exploration of three local chambers of commerce in the Visayas and Mindanao reveals that it is the advantages of non-confrontational stances toward government that keeps the chambers from contributing to democratic consolidation. It is apparent that working within the existing clientelistic structure of the informal system of interest intermediation is the most efficient way of achieving political goals, for publicly confrontational strategies, which may be most conducive to democratic consolidation, can actually take a heavy political and economic toll.

Keywords: Philippines, civil society, interest intermediation, democratization, clientelism, chambers of commerce and industry

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