Continuity, History, and Identity:

Why Bongbong Marcos Won the 2022 Philippine Presidential Election

Dean Dulay, Allen Hicken, Anil Menon, and Ronald Holmes

Abstract

In May of 2022, Bongbong Marcos won a commanding 59 percent of the vote to become president of the Philippines. His victory was, on some level, shocking to scholars and analysts of Philippine politics. As a result, a plethora of different theories have been proposed, in an attempt to explain why Marcos won. In this paper, we use nationally representative survey data to explore which factors predict (and do not predict) voting intention for Marcos. We find that, a) support for former President Rodrigo Duterte, b) positive perceptions of the late President Ferdinand Marcos and martial law, and c) ethnic (linguistic) identity are strong predictors of voting for Bongbong Marcos. On the other hand, age, education, and income are not. Consequently, theories based on continuity, coalition, history, and identity provide the most leverage on the question of why Bongbong Marcos won the election.

Keywords: Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, Rodrigo Duterte, 2022 Philippine elections, democratization, authoritarianism, historical memory, ethnic voting

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Introduction

The recently concluded Philippine elections witnessed the return of the Marcos family to the nation's highest office. Bongbong Marcos unequivocally won the presidency, garnering almost 59 percent of the vote, about double the vote share of his closest competitor. Marcos's decisive win stunned some analysts. How, they asked, could the son of the former autocrat, Ferdinand Marcos, a man who suspended elections, eroded checks and balances, curtailed media freedom, violated human rights, and engaged in rampant corruption, win office so convincingly?

Of course, the Marcos victory did not happen in a vacuum. His victory is just one instance of a broader trend of autocrats or their family members and allies returning to power, and it occurred in the midst of a global trend of democratic backsliding. Our research is thus part of a larger effort to understand why the quality of democracy is declining in many countries and why some voters support leaders who ostensibly threaten democratic norms and institutions. A nuanced understanding of why Marcos won may shed light on the deeper reasons for this long shadow of authoritarianism and the appeal of so-called illiberal politicians.

In the case of the Philippines, the search for answers has led to a panoply of different theories as to why Marcos won. Some theories emphasize the demographics of the Philippines electorate. According to these theories, younger voters, who make up the majority of the electorate,[1] were not alive during the heyday of the Marcos regime to experience or witness firsthand the abuses that took place. As a result, they are less likely to hold negative views of that era, and less inclined to hold Bongbong accountable for the excesses of his father.[2]

A related line of thought posits that educational attainment is the major factor behind Marcos's support. According to critics, the education system—in particular instruction at the elementary and secondary levels—has done a poor job of educating younger voters about the many forms of illiberalism that existed under Ferdinand Marcos's rule. This, they argue, leaves less educated voters, who are unaware of the negative effects of martial law, more susceptible to claims by Bongbong and his supporters that martial law was not only devoid of illiberal actions, but was in fact the "golden age" of

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[1] Specifically, 56 percent of voters were between the ages of 18 and 41. Inquirer.net, "Comelec: 56% of Voting Population Are Aged 18 to 41," 8 February 2022, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1551802/comelec-56-percent-of-voting-population-are-aged-18-to-41.

[2] Mikhail Flores, "Millennials Could Help Restore Marcos Dynasty," *Nikkei Weekly*, 4 May 2016, https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Millennials-could-help-restore-Marcos-dynasty;

Walden Bello, "Walden Bello Explains Why Bongbong Marcos Enjoys Trust to Lead PH," *Filipino News*, 21 December 2021, https://filipino.news/2021/12/22/walden-bello-explains-why-bongbong-marcos-enjoys-trust-to-lead-ph/.

Philippine history.[3] Particularly vulnerable are those exposed via Bongbong Marcos's savvy social media campaign.[4]

Other theories take a more structural approach, emphasizing a general dissatisfaction with the post-People Power (and post-Ferdinand Marcos) liberal democratic order, and the growing appeal of illiberal strongmen as ostensible solutions to the Philippines' longstanding problems.[5] In this telling, Bongbong Marcos's presidency can be seen not as a singular overturning of the last few decades in Philippine politics, but as a successor to Rodrigo Duterte's brand of illiberalism.[6] According to some, this disillusionment towards liberal democracy is particularly concentrated among the poorest Filipinos—those who have experienced firsthand the failure of democracy to deliver on its promises of a better life.[7] For the poor and working class, appeals to good governance and liberal democracy "smacked of the same old hypocrisy."[8]

Others argue that the story is much simpler. Marcos's victory is a product of his partnership with Sara Duterte. By joining with the Duterte family to form a ticket, with him as president and her as vice president, Marcos created a team that could command support from both northern Luzon and vote-rich Mindanao, while also benefitting from the continuing popularity of outgoing President Duterte.[9]

Each of these theories is plausible, and no doubt voters' support for Marcos is a complex mix of many factors. Our interest is in exploring which of these theories best accounts for Marcos's support, and which do not.[10] Drawing

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[3]   Chad de Guzman, "Why Bongbong Marcos, a Philippine Dictator's Son, Leads the Race for the Presidency," *Time*, 9 May 2022, https://time.com/6162028/bongbong-marcos-philippines-president-popular/.

[4]   Nicole Curato, "The Philippines: Erasing History through Good Vibes and Toxic Positivity," *Heinrich Boll Stiftung: Southeast Asia*, 28 March 2022, https://th.boell.org/en/2022/03/28/philippines-good-vibes-toxic-positivity. The examination of the role social media plays in Philippine electoral politics has been a topic of keen interest since the election of Rodrigo Duterte in 2016. See Aim Sinpeng, Dimitar Gueorguiev, and Aries A. Arugay, "Strong fans, weak campaigns: social media and Duterte in the 2016 Philippine election," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 20 no. 3 (2020): 353–374.

[5]   See https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/05/05/bongbong-marcos-philippines-election-may9-democracy-duterte/.

[6]   Marco Garrido, "The Ground for the Illiberal Turn in the Philippines," *Democratization* 29 no. 4 (2022): 673–691.

[7]   Manuel Mogato, "Class D Vote: Why The Poor Want Marcos Jr. To Succeed Duterte," *One News*, 14 April 2022, https://www.onenews.ph/articles/class-d-vote-why-the-poor-want-marcos-jr-to-succeed-duterte.

[8]   Bello, "Walden Bello Explains."

[9]   Cliff Venzon, "Marcos-Duterte Alliance Confirms Lead in Philippine Election Poll?" 13 February 2022, https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Philippine-elections/Marcos-Duterte-alliance-confirms-lead-in-Philippine-election-poll.

[10]   There are also potential explanations which we cannot examine in this paper, such as exposure to disinformation, the role of sexism and gender differences in vote choice, and the role of clientelism and political machines. For work on misinformation, see: Aries A. Arugay, and Justin Keith A. Baquisal, "Mobilized and Polarized: Social Media and Disinformation Narratives in the 2022 Philippine Elections," *Pacific Affairs* 95, no. 3 (September 2022): 549–573. For work on machines, see: Julio C. Teehankee, "The Legacy of the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan: Authoritarian Contamination in Philippine Party Politics," LSIG WPS no. 2022-01 (2022).

on nationally representative survey data from Pulse Asia, one of the Philippines' leading public opinion firms, we investigate the predictive power of several factors in explaining respondents' vote choice. We find that respondents who had a) a more positive assessment of former President Duterte's performance, b) hailed from the home regions of Marcos or the Dutertes, and c) felt positively towards martial law and Ferdinand Marcos were more likely to support Bongbong. These factors suggest that theories founded on continuity between Duterte and Bongbong Marcos (which also arguably represents a shift towards a growing illiberalism among voters), historical parallels between Marcos and his father, and ethnic/linguistic voting are consistent with our empirical analysis. By contrast, we find little support for theories that emphasize age or generational differences, or for those that point to educational or class differences as predictors of vote choice.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows: the next section discusses our survey design and methodology. Then, using simple descriptive statistics and correlational analyses we examine three sets of factors that appear to matter for predicting Bongbong Marcos's victory, and three factors that matter less. We next consider the relative power of each of these competing factors via a multivariate OLS regression framework, in order to control for potential confounding effects between our explanatory factors. The final section offers a conclusion.

Data Sources and Analysis

We use data from the April 2022 nationally representative survey conducted by Pulse Asia. Pulse Asia's surveys employ a multi-stage probability sampling. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, with a sample size of 2,400 respondents. Given the nature of multistage sampling, some groups may be over- or under-represented. For example, households that are located in exclusive subdivisions/condominiums that represent the most affluent classes A and B, are normally less represented inasmuch as the enumerators are proscribed from entering these subdivisions or secured condominiums. We take these considerations into account in our analysis. Descriptive statistics are displayed in table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics

Variable	Percentage
Gender:	
Female	50%
Male	50%
Age:	
18-24	10.83%
25-34	19.42%
35-44	19.96%
45-54	20.63%
55-64	17.17%
65 and over	12.00%
Region:	
NCR	11.25%
Luzon (excluding NCR)	44.58%
Visayas	20.42%
Mindanao	23.75%
Ethnicity:	
Tagalog	37.25%
Ilocano	7.54%
Pangasinense	2.04%
Kapampangan	2.46%
Bicolano	5.88%
Ilonggo	9.71%
Cebuano	24.25%
Waray	3.42%
Others	7.46%
Education:	
Up to elementary grade	22.46%
Some high school	12.00%
High school graduate	38.58%
Vocational	57.92%
Some college	10.38%
College graduate	10.79%
Class:	
ABC	7.75%
D	76.63%
E	15.63%

Source: Table generated from authors' dataset.

The first stage involves a decision on the sub-national areas and the distribution of the total sample for each of these areas. The sub-national areas are the national capital region, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

In the second stage, the team randomly selected cities/municipalities in each of these sub-national areas. For the national capital region (NCR), all the cities and the single municipality were covered in the survey. For the other sub-national areas, a total of 15 cities/municipalities were allocated to the regions in proportion to household population size. Sample cities/municipalities were selected without replacement and with probability proportional to household population size.

At the third stage, the survey team randomly selected barangays (villages) in the previously identified cities/municipalities. The allocated number of barangays were distributed among the sample cities/municipalities in such a way that each city/municipality was assigned a number of barangays roughly proportional to its household population size. However, it was ensured that each city/municipality was assigned at least one sample barangay. Sample barangays within each sample city/municipality were randomly selected without replacement.

For the fourth stage, within each sample barangay, five households were selected using interval sampling. In the sample urban barangays, a random corner was identified, a random start generated, and every sixth household was sampled. In rural barangays, the designated starting point could be a school, the barangay captain's house, a church/chapel, or a barangay/municipal hall, and every other household was sampled.

For the last stage, in each selected household, a respondent was randomly chosen from among household members who were 18 years of age and older, using a probability selection table. To ensure that half of the respondents were male and half were female, only male family members were pre-listed in the probability selection table of odd-numbered questionnaires while only female members were pre-listed for even-numbered questionnaires. In cases where there was no qualified respondent of a given gender, the interval sampling of households was continued until five sample respondents were identified.

The Three Strongest Predictors of Marcos Support: History, Duterte, and Home

We now consider three predictors that help explain Marcos's win and discuss what these predictors imply for extant theories of the Marcos victory. The first predictor of Marcos support is perceptions of his father, Ferdinand Marcos, and the martial law period that his father implemented from 1972 to 1981. Figure 1 presents the simple correlation between perceptions of Marcos Sr. and support of his son. Voters who had negative or strongly negative views of Ferdinand Marcos were much less likely to support his son:

only 17 percent of respondents who held strongly negative views of Marcos Sr. intended to vote for his son, while 33 percent with strongly negative views towards martial law were supporters of Bongbong. By contrast 90 percent of those who strongly approved of Ferdinand Marcos were likely to vote for the younger Marcos, alongside 80 percent of those who strongly approved of martial law.

Figure 1

*Support for Marcos gauged by feelings towards Ferdinand Marcos and martial law*
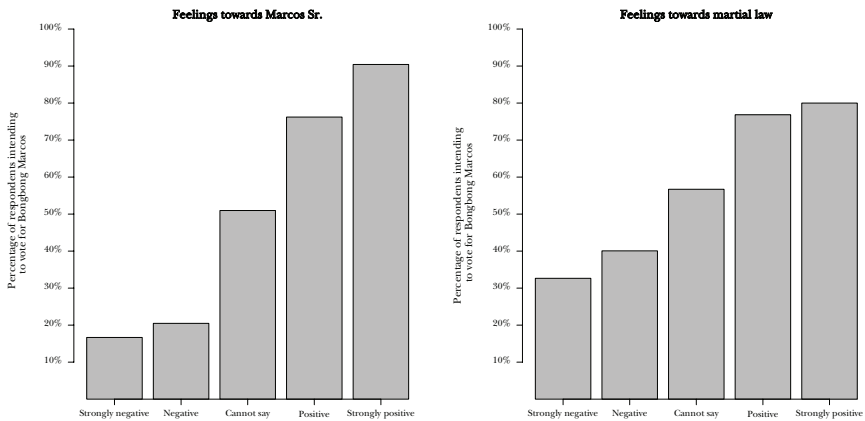
Source: Figure generated from authors' dataset.

The second predictor of Marcos support was support for former President Rodrigo Duterte. The survey data in figure 2 suggests approval for Duterte correlates closely with support for Marcos. Duterte, whose "war on drugs" and other strongman tactics have been controversial, is also the father of Marcos's running mate, Sara Duterte. Among those who strongly disapproved of Duterte, only 14 percent intended to vote for Marcos, compared to 84 percent of those who said they were strong supporters of the former president. In other words, those who strongly approved of Duterte were 6 times more likely to vote for Marcos than those who strongly disapproved of the president. Moreover, this relationship is monotonic: the more likely respondents were to support Duterte the more likely they were to say that they will vote for Bongbong Marcos.

Figure 2

Support for Bongbong Marcos measured by approval of Rodrigo Duterte
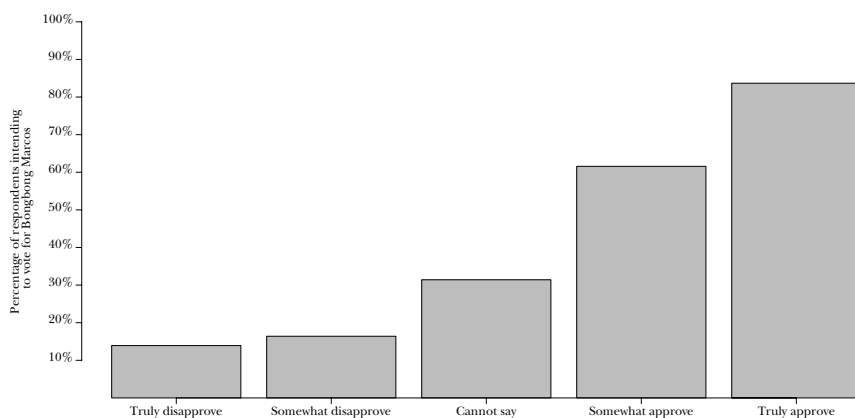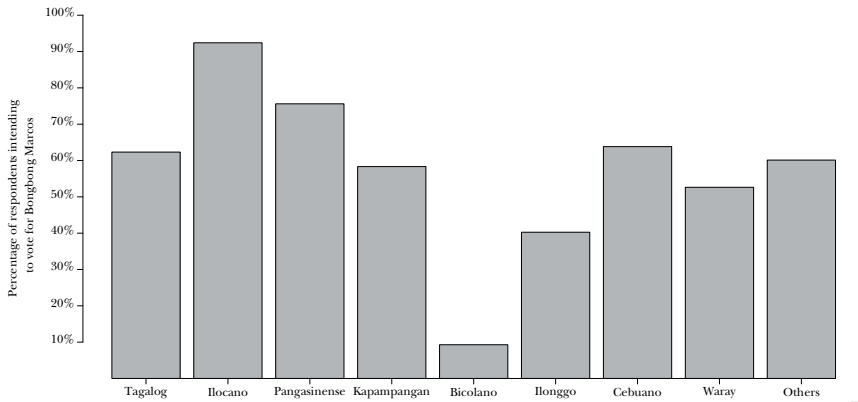

Source: Figure generated from authors' dataset.

Finally, consistent with the maxim that all politics are local, one of the strongest predictors of vote choice in the recent elections was whether the survey respondent was from the same ethnic/linguistic group as a particular candidate.[11] As we see in figure 3, by far the strongest support for Marcos comes from those who speak Ilocano—the language spoken in the Marcos family's home base in the Ilocos region. Ninety-two percent of Ilocano speakers indicated they intended to vote for Marcos; this difference is statistically significantly larger than for any other group. Speakers of Pangasinese, also from the Ilocos region, were the next strongest supporters. By contrast, the strongest opposition to Marcos came from voters in the Bicol region, home to Bongbong's chief opponent, Leni Roberdo. Only 9 percent of Bicolano speakers said they would vote for Marcos. To put this into context, an Ilocano speaker was ten times more likely to vote for Bongbong Marcos than a Bicolano speaker.

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[11]   We use the term ethnic identity in the broad sense, as defined by Kanchan Chandra. In particular, regional/linguistic groups falling as an ethnic identity is justified by (part of) her definition of ethnic identity as: "qualifying attributes for membership are restricted to one's own genetically transmitted features or to the language, religion, place of origin, tribe, region, caste, clan, nationality, or race of one's parents and ancestors" See Kanchan Chandra, "What is Ethnic Identity and Does it Matter?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (2006): 397, 419.

Figure 3

Support for Bongbong Marcos by ethnic group

Source: Figure generated from authors' dataset.

Discussion

How do these results speak to the theories of Marcos's victory outlined earlier? There is clear support for the idea that regional/ethnic ties were an important factor in vote choice. Respondents tended to favour candidates from their home region, and through their tandem candidacy, Marcos and Duterte produced a potent coalition of supporters from both the North and South. Ilocanos voted for Marcos because he was from Ilocos (and thus they shared an identity with him), and 84 percent of Bicolanos voted for their favourite daughter, Leni Robredo. This is consistent with other work which underscores the importance of ethno-regional identities in Philippine politics.[12]

The results are also consistent with the notion that attitudes towards martial law and Marcos Sr. were important drivers of vote choice. Respondents who held favourable views of the Marcos era were much more likely to support Bongbong. (In the next section we will investigate whether younger or less educated voters are more likely to hold positive views about Marcos Sr. and martial law, as some claim.) These results also dovetail with theories espousing the savvy use of social media campaigns to reframe the Marcos dictatorship as the golden era of Philippine society. The standard history of martial law is that it was a period of democratic collapse, high corruption, and general economic malaise. The Marcoses have worked for years to recast this narrative, focusing particularly on using social media to portray the Marcos years as the apex of political, economic, and social history, rather than the nadir.

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[12]   Dean Dulay, Allen Hicken and Ronald Holmes, "The Persistence of Ethnopopulist Support: The Case of Rodrigo Duterte's Philippines," *Journal of East Asian Studies* (forthcoming).

Arguelles notes the effect of this strategic narrative:[13]

> Many of [the Marcos-Duterte] voters think that the Philippine Martial
> Law years was the country's golden era, that the Marcos legacy is that of
> the public infrastructures people enjoy today, and that the plunder of
> state resources the conjugal dictatorship and their cronies committed
> were nothing but black propaganda.

What do we make of Duterte support as a predictor of support for Marcos?
We contend that this is indirect evidence of the disillusionment with
Philippine democracy that several scholars have noted, tracing support for
Duterte to voter frustration with the fruits of liberal democracy, particularly
as it relates to poor and vulnerable Filipinos.[14] Emblematic of this line of
argument is Garrido,[15] who contends that citizens' repeated disappointments
over the shortcomings of the post-Marcos order's ability to reform democracy
has led them to be more open to an illiberal form of democracy where
discipline and order are the name of the game.[16] Duterte, for many voters,
filled the desire for a strong leader who could deliver the desired order and
discipline. The fact that Duterte supporters were also highly likely to vote
for Marcos suggests that they perceive Bongbong in a similar role—the latest
manifestation of the sort of "strong" leader for which Filipinos still yearn.
That Marcos was seen as the successor to Duterte is clear, according to Cleve
Arguelles[17]:

> [President Rodrigo Duterte's] popularity also drove demand for a
> presidential candidate who can do a Dutertismo 2.0. In a WR Numero
> survey, around 55% of the voters prefer 'partial continuity' while 30% of
> them say they want 'full continuity'. Only 16% of the surveyed are looking
> for a president who will represent a total change from Dutertismo. The
> Marcos-Duterte tandem have clearly positioned themselves as the
> continuity candidates, and in fact perceived by voters as such.

In summary, the results from our analysis thus far are consistent with
theories emphasizing the importance of citizens' historical memory of

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[13] Cleve Arguelles, "The Triumph of the Marcos-Duterte Leviathan," (2022), https://medium.com/@clevearguelles/the-triumph-of-the-marcos-duterte-leviathan-f8b8165b9759.

[14] Cleve V. Arguelles, "'We are Rodrigo Duterte': Dimensions of the Philippine Populist Publics' Vote," *Asian Politics & Policy* 11, no. 3 (2019): 417–437; Nicole Curato, "Politics of Anxiety, Politics of Hope: Penal Populism and Duterte's Rise to Power," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 35, no. 3 (2016): 91–109; Wataru Kusaka, "Bandit Grabbed the State: Duterte's Moral Politics," *Philippine Sociological Review* 65 (2017): 49–75.

[15] Garrido, "The Ground."

[16] This argument is very similar to that of Mark Thompson, who identified early in Duterte's presidency the illiberalism—with respect to the discrediting of checks and balances—which appealed to voters. See Mark R. Thompson, "Bloodied Democracy: Duterte and the Death of Liberal Reformism in the Philippines," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 35, no. 3 (2016): 39–68.

[17] Arguelles, "The Triumph."

Ferdinand Marcos and martial law, continuity with Duterte (and perhaps of a growing desire for "strong" leaders), and ethno-regional ties. However, it is worth noting that these theories are not mutually exclusive. For example, the reinterpretation of martial law as the "golden age" brings the failures of the post-martial law political order into much starker (and much more negative) contrast. Finally, it is also worth noting that multiple factors can be at play simultaneously. Historical revisionism and nostalgia, ethnic voting, and dissatisfaction with liberal democracy likely worked together to give Marcos an advantage. In the final section of this paper we will explore each of these explanations in relation to each other, but first we turn to some of the other common explanations for Marcos's victory that appear to have less empirical support.

Three Factors That Matter Less

We have thus far shown that history, continuity, and ethno-regional identity all matter as predictors of Bongbong Marcos's success. We now turn to a variety of other factors that have also been theorized as important drivers of support for Marcos: age, education, and class. We show that despite their obvious appeal as potential explanations, they are not strong predictors of Marcos support.

We begin with age. As discussed earlier, more than 30 years after the People Power revolution brought the Marcos dictatorship to an end, a common narrative suggests that younger voters seemed especially keen to elect his son as president.[18] Driving this purported advantage with younger voters is a supposed generational divide: younger voters didn't directly experience the violence, corruption, and instability of the Marcos dictatorship and so are less likely to condemn the Marcos family.[19] The educational system, some Filipinos argue, has also done a poor job of educating younger voters about martial law and Marcos's rule.[20] Pundits likewise note the savvy targeting of younger voters via social media by the Marcos campaign.[21] If any of these arguments are true, we would expect to see much higher levels of support for Marcos among younger compared to older generations of voters.

But how different was the voting of younger citizens? Figure 4 displays the results. At first glance, age would appear to be a modest predictor of support for Bongbong Marcos, consistent with our theoretical expectations. Voters 65 or older were the least likely to say they would vote for Marcos (this difference is statistically different from every category except those aged 35–44). Younger voters—particularly those under age 25—were not

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[18]   Flores, "Millenials."
[19]   Bello, "Walden Bello Explains."
[20]   De Guzman, "Why Bongbong."
[21]   Curato, "The Philippines."

statistically more likely to support the former autocrat's son.[22] More than 50 percent of respondents in every category, except for the category of respondents aged 65 and above, expressed support for Marcos. Moreover, the correlation between age and support for Marcos was only -0.09.

Figure 4
*Support for Bongbong Marcos by age group*
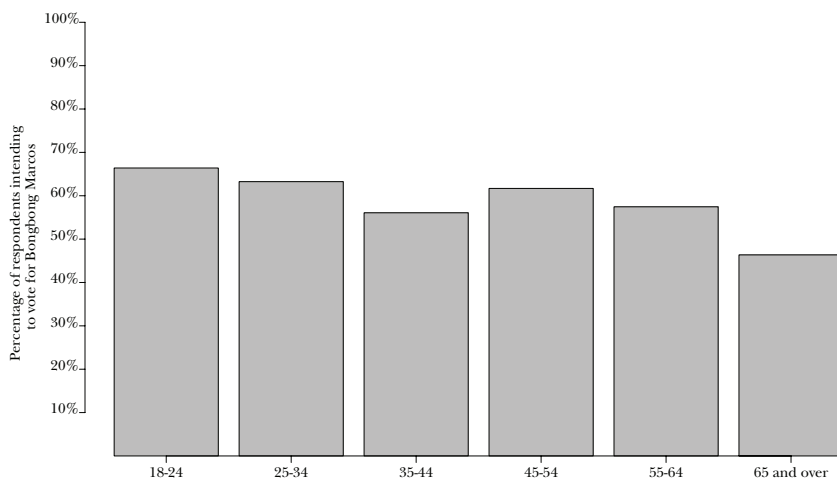
Source: Figure generated from authors' dataset.

We can also examine, directly, a key mechanism behind the age argument: views about Ferdinand Marcos and martial law. If the theory is operating as hypothesized, we would expect older respondents to have more negative views of Marcos/martial law compared to younger respondents. This is not born out in the data, however. Instead, those who were of age during Marcos's presidency tended to have the most favourable views of the period (figure 5a) and of the former president (figure 5b). Nonetheless, we do find that ambivalence towards martial law and the former president increases as we move from older to younger voters.[23]

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[22]   The one exception is between voters below the age of 25 and voters above 65 years of age. There is a statisticaly significant difference between these two groups.
[23]   Dulay, Hicken, Holmes, "The Persistence."

Figure 5a
*Feelings towards Ferdinand Marcos by age group*
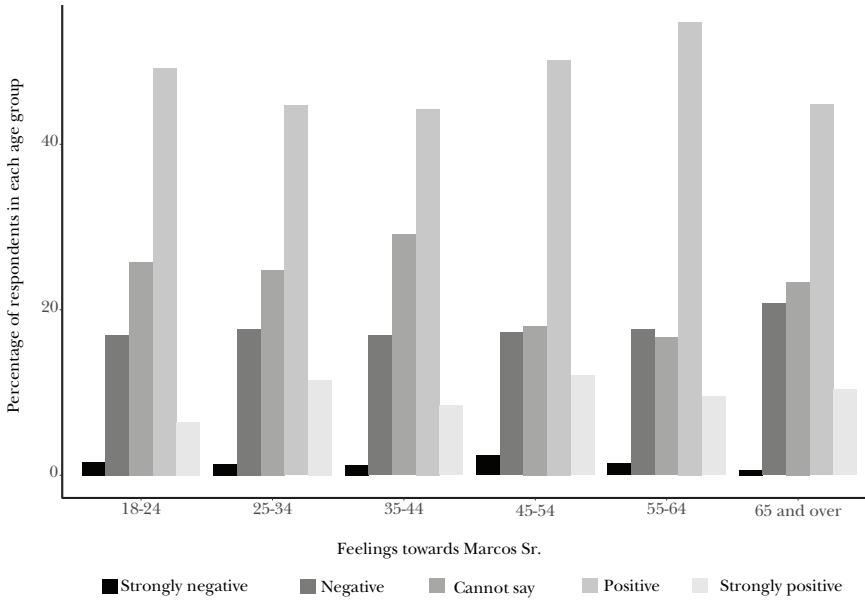
Source: Figure generated from authors' dataset.

We now examine the education argument. As stated in the introduction, proponents of this argument posit that more educated respondents are more likely to have been exposed to information about the negative effects of martial law, and thus are less likely to vote for Bongbong Marcos. If this theory is correct, we would expect to see a clear negative relationship between educational attainment and intention to vote for Bongbong Marcos.[24] Figure 6 shows that there does not appear to be a connection between years of education and voter attitudes—overall, the correlation between education level and support for Marcos was only 0.07. And if we consider only the tails, the correlation runs in the opposite direction from what the conventional wisdom would lead one to expect. The difference between groups with the most and least education was statistically significant. But those least likely to vote for Marcos were voters with less than a high school education (50.5

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[24]   Years of schooling is a good proxy if we assume that it is positively correlated with quality of education and overall political knowledge. It is also consistent with extant work that uses years of schooling as a proxy for political knowledge. Standard measures of quality of education such as test scores are difficult to procure and unfortunately not available.
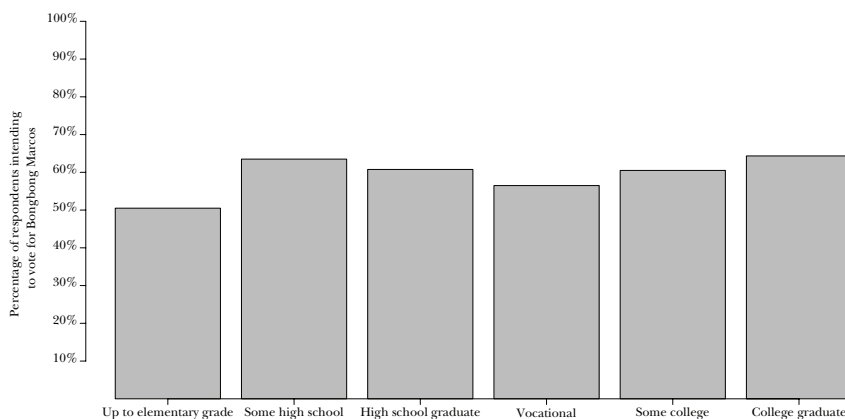
Figure 5b
Feelings towards martial law by age group
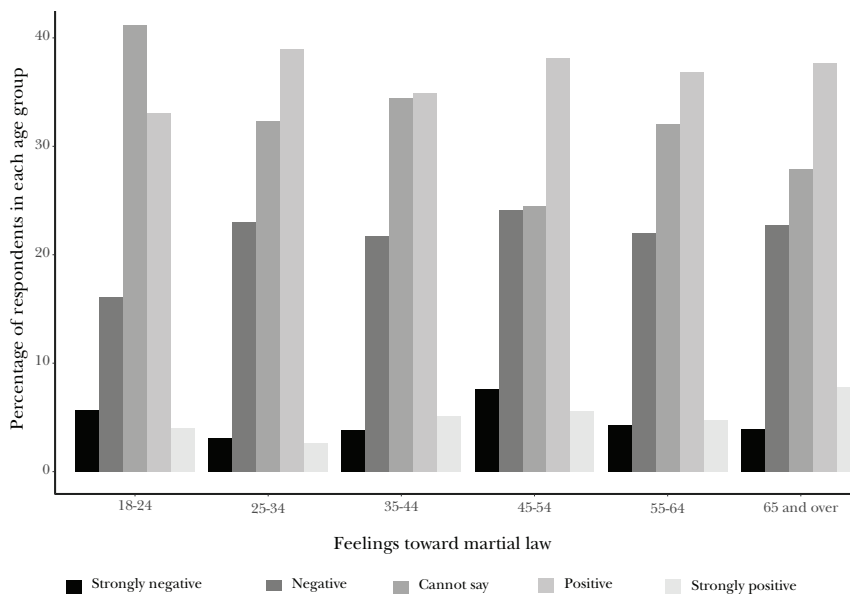
percent). Support for Marcos was instead highest among the most educated, those with college educations (64 percent). The fact that Marcos's support was lower among voters with less than a high school education suggests that not only has education done a poor job of educating voters; if anything, education may have made things worse.

A third factor that does not seem to matter much is class, at least in the socioeconomic sense. Socioeconomic class is not always a reliable predictor of vote choice in the Philippines. In part this reflects a lack of ideological or programmatic differentiation among political parties. To what extent are socioeconomic divisions driving voting intention for this election? Recall, the expectation is that poorer citizens are more dissatisfied with the current state of affairs, and hence would be more willing to vote for a strongman candidate—first Duterte, then Marcos. But this is not the case, as figure 7 shows. Socioeconomic status in the Philippines is measured as membership in one of the five socioeconomic categories: A, B, C, D, or E, with classes A and B roughly corresponding to high-wealth individuals, class C corresponding to middle-class individuals, and classes D and E corresponding to low-wealth individuals. Since the populations of classes A and B are very small and difficult to survey, researchers and survey firms typically combine classes A,

Figure 6

*Support for Bongbong Marcos by educational attainment*

B, and C to correspond to higher-wealth individuals versus the lower-wealth classes D and E. We do the same here. When we compare the voting intentions of the ABC group, to the D and E groups, we don't observe substantial differences.[25] D class voters were the most likely to support Bongbong, at 60 percent, but this was not much more than the support from E class voters (57 percent) or ABC class voters (58 percent). Moreover, the correlation between socioeconomic status and intention to vote for Marcos is small and not significant.

So where do these results leave us? First, the empirics do not support theories which posit that the Marcos victory was driven by young people who view martial law more favourably because they did not experience how bad it was in reality. Personal exposure to martial law is mildly correlated with less support—support was lowest among the oldest age group of over 65-year-olds, and the likelihood of voting for Marcos was somewhat higher among younger cohorts. But it is worth noting that even among the oldest cohort (those least likely to vote for Bongbong), he commanded almost a majority of the votes. In addition, if there is a generation gap, it is not because younger voters have more favourable attitudes towards martial law compared to their

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[25]   The Philippines divides citizens into five socioeconomic status groups—A thru E. A and B classes are comprised of the wealthy and make up only around 1 to 4 percent of the population, and are almost entirely absent from Pulse Asia's surveys. Class C, about 6 to 11 percent of the population, roughly represents the middle class. The largest number of Filipinos fall into D class—roughly 70 to 80 percent. Finally, the poorest voters, Class E, make up around 15 percent.

Figure 7
Support for Bongbong Marcos by socioeconomic class
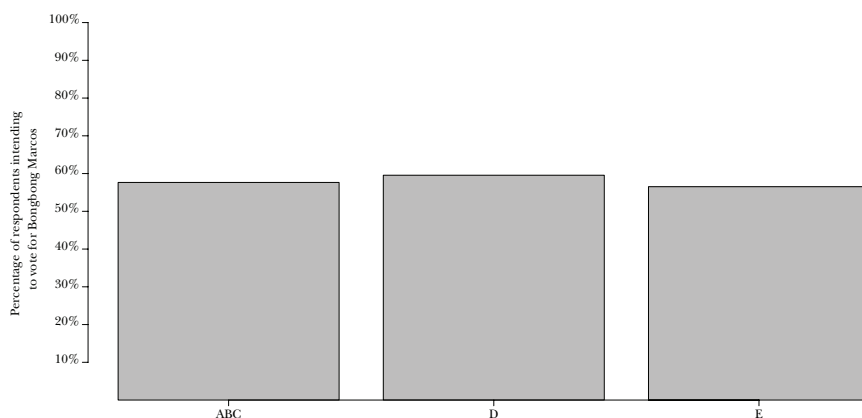
elders. In fact, positive views of the Marcos period were as common among older as younger voters, if not more so. The strong plurality of respondents in the younger cohorts were ambivalent towards the martial law period. The fact that ambivalence increases as cohorts become younger is itself an interesting finding.[26] The plurality of younger voters had no firm opinion about martial law, suggesting, perhaps, that they are open to persuasion.

A related logic undermines some variants of the "lack of education" argument. A simple version of this argument posits that less educated voters are more likely to vote for Marcos because they have had fewer opportunities to learn about the negative effects of martial law. This is clearly not true. Indeed, respondents with less than a high school education were the least likely to vote for Bongbong Marcos. Schooling by itself does not seem to be the answer. Still, it is plausible that some other form of education-based argument may be at play. In particular, there may be room for more educational material about the negative impacts of martial law, given that most younger respondents do not hold firm opinions about this period in time.

Finally, there does not appear to be any straightforward connection between class and voting for Marcos. This result suggests that Marcos's victory was not a victory for the "middle class," or an expression of the lower-income citizens' underlying frustration with their economic status, but is rather a phenomenon whose primary explanation seems to cut across socioeconomic class.

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26   Dulay, Hicken, Holmes, "The Persistence."

Which Factors Matter Most?

In the preceding analysis we considered several factors hypothesized to predict support for Marcos, examining each in isolation. We found strong correlations between support for Bongbong and a) ethno-regional ties, b) support for Duterte, and c) a respondent's attitudes towards martial law and Ferdinand Marcos. The associations between age and support, education and support, and income/class and support were, on the whole, much weaker.

While these simple bivariate correlations are useful heuristics, they don't allow us to directly assess the relative impact of each factor, controlling for other predictors. By including all of these factors together in a more complex statistical model we can see which factors are the strongest predictors of support for Bongbong.

To examine the relative impact of these variables we regress measures intended to capture the various explanations detailed above on respondent intention to vote for Marcos (1 if intending to vote for Marcos, 0 otherwise). Respondent gender is coded as a binary variable, 1 if male and 0 if female. Age is coded as a binary measure: 1 if a respondent is 45 or older, 0 otherwise.[27] This categorization captures the distinction between those who were 10 years or older during People Power, and those who were not. The underlying assumption being that respondents who lived through People Power would think differently about the Marcos years than those who did not experience it. The results are unchanged using a categorical age variable. A binary measure (1 if urban, 0 if rural) captures whether respondents are situated in an urban location. Respondent ethnicity is coded as a categorical variable, measured based on the primary language spoken at home, with Tagalog as the reference category. Education is coded as a categorical measure, with "up to elementary" education being the reference category. Again, we employ the standard measure of socioeconomic class used in other studies of Filipino public opinion, ranging from A (most affluent) to E (least affluent). Similarly, given the relatively few respondents in groups A and B, the class measure provided by Pulse Asia groups together respondents in categories A, B, and C, which serves as our reference category. Respondent disapproval/approval of Rodrigo Duterte's performance in office is coded as a continuous variable, increasing in approval. Similarly, respondent opinion towards Ferdinand Marcos is coded as a continuous variable, increasing in approval.

Figure 8 displays the results, with confidence intervals at the 95 percent confidence level. The inferences we draw from this analysis are similar to our conclusions from the bivariate discussion, and are strongly supportive of our argument thus far. The strongest predictors of a vote for Marcos

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[27]   The results do not change if we break down age into the original set of age groups, as in figure 4.

remain support for Duterte, support for Marcos Sr., and region/ethnicity. On the latter, Ilocano speakers from the North and Cebuano speakers from the Visayas and Mindanao were much more likely to support Marcos compared to Tagalog speakers, while Bicolano speakers were much less likely to support Marcos. Moreover, the magnitude and precision of the point estimates on support for Duterte and perceptions of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. also allude to the importance of these determinants. A one-unit increase in approval of Duterte's performance in office is associated with a 14-percentage point increase in the probability of voting for Bongbong Marcos ($ß = 0.14$). Similarly, a one-unit increase in positive feelings towards Ferdinand Marcos is associated with a 17-percentage point increase in the probability of voting for Bongbong Marcos ($ß = 0.17$). By contrast class and age appear to have no significant or substantive relationship to vote choice. In terms of education, contrary to what some have supposed, there is a small but statistically significant positive effect of education for those with a college education relative to those with less than a high school education.

Conclusion

Bongbong Marcos's victory in the 2022 Philippine presidential election sent shockwaves through the academic and international community. How could it be that the son of an ousted autocrat could win the presidency so convincingly? Yet his dominant win suggests that a majority of Filipinos voted for him for a reason, and it is worth understanding why.

Using nationally representative data from Pulse Asia we have shown that three major predictors of Marcos support are support for former President Duterte, support for former President Ferdinand Marcos and martial law, and ethnic/linguistic identity. The variation in each of these factors is massive. For example, those that strongly supported Duterte were five times more likely to support Bongbong Marcos than those who strongly opposed Duterte. These predictors, in turn, are consistent with a set of theories as to why Marcos won. First, support for Duterte and support for former President Marcos and his martial law are consistent with Garrido's argument that Filipinos are gravitating towards an illiberal form of democracy, and hence towards authoritarian leaders that can make this happen. This result may also explain why demands for continuity (and thus support for Marcos Jr.) remain high in spite of the "democratic backsliding" that marked Duterte's tenure as president.[28] Second, it is consistent with arguments that posit social media misinformation, such as claims proclaiming martial law as the "golden age" of Philippine society, played a role in swaying citizens to vote for

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[28]   Sol Iglesias, "Violence and Impunity: Democratic Backsliding in the Philippines and the 2022 Elections," *Pacific Affairs* 95 no. 3 (September 2022): 575–593.

Figure 8
Predictors of support for Bongbong Marcos
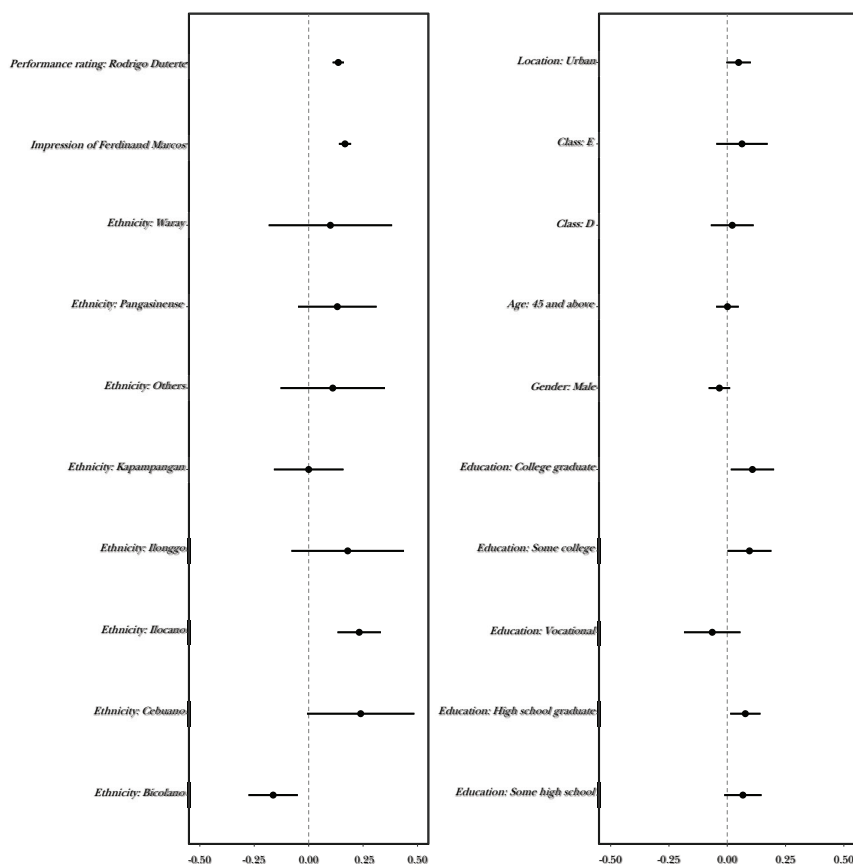
Source: Figure generated from authors' dataset.

Bongbong.[29] Third, huge variation in terms of ethnic/regional identity in voting for Bongbong Marcos is consistent with arguments that the Philippines has, at least recently, clearly engaged in ethnic/regional voting. That is, Filipinos vote for people that share the same ethnic or regional identity as they do, because they consider co-ethnics their in-group. Overall, these

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[29]   Aries A. Arugay, and Justin Keith A. Baquisal, "Mobilized and Polarized: Social Media and Disinformation Narratives in the 2022 Philippine Elections," *Pacific Affairs* 95 no. 3 (September 2022): 549–573.

theories highlight the role of continuity, history, and identity as underlying drivers of Marcos support.

On the other hand, three other potential predictors—age, education, and income—do not seem to strongly predict support for Bongbong Marcos. That is not to say that these factors have zero predictive power. For example, vocational degree holders are 15 percentage points more likely to vote for Bongbong Marcos than those with less than a high school education. Yet these differences pale in magnitude to variation in Marcos support for the more relevant factors mentioned above. In turn, the low predictive power of these factors suggests that certain other theories as to why Marcos won are not strongly supported by the data. The relative lack of variation in Marcos support across age groups negates arguments that posit that Marcos won because the younger generation was unable to witness the negative impacts of martial law. Marcos support was at least close to a majority across all age cohorts. Second, arguments that a lack of education among voters was the reason why Marcos won also does not seem to be supported by the data. Indeed, voters with less than a high school education were the least likely to vote for Bongbong Marcos. While the regressions results show a mild positive relationship between some educational categories and support for Marcos, it is clear that there is no simple linear relationship between education and vote choice—in fact higher-educated voters were more likely to support Marcos than the least-educated voters. Future work can tease out this complex relationship more fully. Finally, the lack of variation across income groups does not support theories that it is lower-income citizens who were more willing to vote for Marcos.

This paper is simply the first step in understanding why Bongbong Marcos won the 2022 Philippine presidential election. Future work can fruitfully build upon the broad picture we have laid out to further tease out the internal dynamics and logics by which the factors we have outlined above led to support for Marcos Jr. Beyond its obvious importance to understanding Philippine politics, a deeper understanding of why Bongbong Marcos won (and consequently how the Marcos family regained power) is instructive for scholars who wish to understand the global trend often referred to as democratic backsliding. The appeal of strongman leaders clearly comes from somewhere, and those underlying factors may be shared by citizens across the world, all enamoured by the appeal of illiberalism and disenchanted with the promises of liberal democracy. The case of Bongbong Marcos may thus be more broadly instructive as we seek to understand these dynamics.

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