

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Political Illiberalism in the Philippines: Analyzing Illiberal Political Values

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Abstract: Politicians are empowered as representatives of varying visions of the public good. If inquiries are made on why disruptive actors can ascend to high positions of political and moral authority, then due focus must be given on their psychopolitical roots. Through quantitative analysis and by reverse engineering the concept of political illiberalism from recent normative theories of political liberalism, this study illustrates that political illiberalism in the Philippines is a political value system characterized by (1) support for liberal institutions qualified in favor of political leadership and (2) political intolerance. These tendencies form the psychopolitical base of disciplinarian and leader-centric tendencies that have been observed in recent studies. Moreover, in order to show that this is a sustained tendency, this study utilizes the fourth and fifth waves of the Asia Barometer Survey. Overall, many Filipinos want liberal institutions like the rule of law and representative politics to exist alongside strong leaders and political exclusion.

Keywords: illiberalism, political intolerance, political psychology, populism, political values, Philippines

Introduction

Standing at the crossroads of history with their moral fibers exposed, Filipinos are facing the vestiges of a now defunct liberal democratic regime currently slipping into an autocracy (Maxwell, 2019; Regilme Jr., 2016; Teehankee, 2021; Thompson, 2016). The lingering weakness of the liberal opposition (Teehankee & Kasuya, 2020; Simons, 2019) tied with the persistent popularity of Rodrigo Duterte (Ranada, 2021) and the recent electoral victory of Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. (Ordoñez & Borja, 2022) have sealed the fate of political liberalism in the Philippines for the foreseeable future. This apparent collapse

merits analysis beyond any specific administration (cf. Ordoñez & Borja, 2018; Regilme Jr., 2016) since support for a regime—its institutions and ideals—is directly linked with the psychopolitical tendencies of citizens—their values, attitudes, and behavior (Booth & Seligson, 2009; Dalton, 2004; Norris, 2011). Recent calls have also been made to analyze Filipino politics from the perspective of citizens (Garrido, 2021, 2022; Ordoñez & Borja, 2018, 2022; Regilme Jr., 2016, 2021). Accordingly, I will confront the psychopolitical foundations of political illiberalism in the Philippines.

What is political illiberalism? Why shift focus from populism? In a recent work on East and Southeast Asian electoral democracies, political illiberalism

has been defined as an aversion to liberal institutions tied with political intolerance (Borja, 2022). As I will illustrate later, this study focusing on the Philippines provides a modified definition in line with certain nuances. Concerning my deviation from populism, I note the following justifications. Theoretically, a recent synthetic work by Pappas (2019) excludes the Philippines as a credible case for populism. For him, if populism is to be construed more succinctly as an implication of the weakening of liberal democratic regimes, then the Philippines cannot be considered as populist because (1) liberalism has failed to take root in it (Claudio, 2017) and (2) neither a nuanced nor a broad conceptualization of populism can explain the historical and political complexities that go beyond the confines of his synthetic definition of populism. Moreover, current studies on Philippine populism have scratched the surface of more fundamental political problems. Recent works have stumbled upon nuances that require further inquiries through concepts outside of the predominant populist framework (Borja, 2018, 2022; Dressel & Bonoan, 2019; Kenny & Holmes, 2020; Pernia, 2021).

Empirically, I am responding to the following trajectories, first of which is the irreducibility of populism's success to leaders, movements, or populist performances. This deviates from what have been generally discussed in the extant literature on Duterte's politics (see Abao, 2017; Juego, 2017; McCargo, 2016; Ordoñez & Borja, 2018; Teehankee, 2016; Teehankee & Thompson, 2016). The problem with such a leader-centric approach is that it veils the impact of factors outside specific leaders. For one, Kenny (2017) argues that the success of a populist movement is irreducible to a leader. Instead, it is due, at least in part, to the breakdown of patronage party networks. This rupture creates a mass of voters that a populist can appeal to directly through emotions and charisma (cf. Teehankee & Kasuya, 2020). However, this mass voting for a populist is not inevitable as Kenny (2017) himself recognizes. This structural shift simply makes ordinary citizens more vulnerable to populist mobilization without guaranteeing the success of the latter.

From a sociological perspective, the relationship between populist leaders and citizens has been highlighted by the likes of Curato (2016), who analyzed the resonance of Duterte's populist style with the hopes and anxieties of his audience. Later

works have attempted to flesh out the interaction between the values that Duterte projects and those that his supporters hold. One points to the presence of a populist public whose votes for Duterte have been their way of exposing their sufferings, their want for more authenticity in politics, and their critique of bureaucratic inertia (Arguelles, 2019).

A similar focus on leader–citizen relations has been observed among recent psychopolitical studies. These works have considered Duterte as an object of citizens' psychopolitical tendencies ranging from emotions and attitudes to social representations of political affairs wherein they and a leader are situated (Montiel & Uyheng, 2020; Uyheng & Montiel, 2020). Kenny and Holmes (2020) have exposed the values and attitudes that might have facilitated the resonance of Duterte's hard stance on crime and promises of drug-related mass killings. The results of their quantitative analyses show a positive relationship between populist attitudes, attribution of charisma to Duterte, and support for the aforementioned policies. I elaborate on their findings later. For now, I note that these works portray the populist public as something characterized by a need for political change and an expression of intolerance towards certain sectors of the society like those involved in the drug trade.

Despite these contributions, their leader-centric analytical approach, though qualified by studying the sentiments and tendencies of ordinary citizens, is still limited. Such an approach can explain the reverberation of a populist narrative but falls short in fully exposing the psychopolitical factors that have received and processed such claims made on behalf of and for the people. This limitation manifests itself in one of Kenny and Holmes's (ibid.) findings. Specifically, they observe no relationship between their main factors and support for incumbent liberal democratic institutions (i.e., support for martial law and dis/trust towards judicial and legislative bodies). Consequently, they recognize that a successful mobilization of voters along populist lines does not presuppose an identical populist public. Gaps can exist between them. Even if populist leaders have illiberal and autocratic ambitions, their supporters can remain "attached to liberal democracy and liberal democratic institutions, but still favor some particular illiberal policies" (Kenny & Holmes, 2020, p. 202). Though they leave this for future inquiries, I will pick it up by deviating from a leader-centric approach (i.e., considering a leader as the primary

political object that citizens respond to) and shifting the overarching category from populism to illiberalism (Collier & Levitsky, 1997).

Why deviate and adjust? Leaders are not the only political objects that people respond to. Their values and attitudes are built upon their interaction with politics in general and a plethora of specific objects that may or may not include specific actors. Moreover, citizens judge by what they see, and how they judge depends significantly on the values they wear as lenses. Hence, key to understanding the rise and fall of strongmen are political values that have received their politicking and rhetoric.

I note further that the study of Kenny and Holmes (2020) has yielded certain results that remain as mere curiosities or deviations even if they suggest a deeper condition that predates Duterte's populism. Recent analyses of illiberalism itself have asserted its distinction from populism, with illiberalism underlying various populist tendencies (Blokker, 2021) without being reduced to the latter since it can also bring forth nonpopulist tendencies. Thus, in order to explain the seemingly contradictory tendency among citizens that Kenny and Holmes (2020) have uncovered, I go beyond leaders and populism.

Nonetheless this approach is not without precedent. Kusaka (2019) deviates from the leader-centric trend by looking further back at the moral politics that have shaped political dichotomies during past administrations. What this study notes from his analytical approach is that leaders come and go but political values do not. They are far more stable and can underpin multiple regimes and electoral cycles.

More recent works have also tried to go beyond a leader-centric approach. For Regilme (2021), illiberalism at the level of regimes refers to ambivalence or resistance towards individual freedoms and human dignity. His attempt, though admirable, still falls short at the expense of his conceptualization of illiberalism. His conceptualization is limited because it only captures political intolerance. Albeit he invokes the two-dimensional frame for regimes (i.e., ideational and procedural dimensions) and places institutional concerns under procedural authoritarianism as a category, I note that his definition stops dead at the level of regimes since taking it to a psychopolitical level requires an examination of how citizens view incumbent liberal institutions. Nonetheless, I will

pursue the trajectory that Regilme (ibid.) posits by focusing instead on the relationship between citizens and politics itself.

Recent sociological works by Webb (2017) and Garrido (2020, 2021, 2022) have contributed much to placing citizens at the center of analysis. They have shown that middle-class support for Duterte is based on a perceived need to discipline democracy and restrain freedom. These in turn are based on negative attitudes towards the EDSA regime and an openness to certain authoritarian policies. Specifically, Webb (2017) illustrates that continued support for democracy is qualified by a perceived need to restrain freedom through a strong leader. This supposed democratic ambivalence or "a negotiated response to the experience and observation of democracy" (ibid., 82) underpins an apparent nostalgia towards authoritarianism. In later works, Garrido (2021, 2022) fleshes out the aforementioned need by exposing a disciplinarian tendency towards politics. He shows that through examples within and outside the Philippines and through their own experiences of the failures of democratization, the middle class have taken a conditional support for democracy while remaining open to authoritarian policies.

Though insightful, their works have certain limitations in relation to illiberalism. For one, Garrido's (2022) attempt to analyze illiberalism in the Philippines falls short in actually analyzing the psyche of citizens (i.e., remaining at the level of attitudes and confusing the latter with values) with Duterte's administration still serving as the primary object of analysis. Hence, his definition of illiberalism, anchored primarily on Duterte's politics, is reduced to disciplinarian and leader-centric tendencies. Another is the notion of democratic ambivalence that Webb (2017) forwards as a means of making sense of the juxtaposition of authoritarian tendencies with support for democracy. As a negotiated response, the concept of democratic ambivalence begs the question of negotiation under what terms. This requires an exploration of the value system that can ensure coherence between such seemingly contradictory tendencies (Feldman, 2003; Rohan, 2000; Rokeach, 1960). Due to these considerations, these previous studies will still serve as a starting point because they have exposed social and psychopolitical tendencies that can be considered as more fundamental and predates the ascent of Duterte and Marcos to the presidency.

Thus, in line with the exclusion of the Philippines as a purely populist case, the limitations of a leader-centric approach in analyzing psychopolitical tendencies of ordinary citizens, and the contributions and limits of recent works on illiberalism in the Philippines, I am exorcising specific leaders from this study's analysis before turning to political illiberalism in the Philippines from the vantage point of citizens and their relationship with politics. In doing so, I respond to the aforementioned limits of the current literature while elaborating on the findings of Kenny and Holmes (2020). Furthermore, I will relate the findings of Webb (2017) and Garrido (2021, 2022) to shared political values among Filipinos. Through this, I can illustrate that they have pointed to the symptoms of more fundamental psychopolitical tendencies—the very political values that Filipino citizens hold.

In line with these, I ask *what are the characteristics of illiberal political values in the Philippines?* Moreover, *how politically il/liberal are Filipino citizens?* In addressing these questions from a psychopolitical perspective, I argue that political illiberalism in the Philippines is *a value system characterized by (1) support for liberal institutions qualified in favor of political leadership and (2) political intolerance.* Moreover, *contrary to being a mere reversal of liberalism, political illiberalism in the Philippines is linked at the hip with liberalism through qualified support for liberal institutions while diverging completely with the issue of political tolerance.*

To illustrate these points, this paper proceeds as follows. The first section derives the aforementioned definition of political illiberalism from recent normative theories of political liberalism. The second section shows the details of this study's quantitative and secondary data analysis of the fourth and fifth waves of the Asia Barometer Survey (ABS). In the last three sections, this study presents its findings before conceptualizing the illiberal public and presenting areas for future inquiries beyond individual leaders and administrations and in relation to democratization.

Conceptualizing Political Illiberalism in the Philippines

What does it mean to be politically illiberal? Through a conceptual reverse engineering from

existing normative theories of political liberalism (for the importance of political philosophy and ontology on conceptualization see Hay, 2008; Pettit, 2008) and as a response to the limits of existing definitions, I define political illiberalism *as a value system characterized by (1) support for liberal institutions qualified in favor of political leadership and (2) political intolerance.* To elaborate, I would first provide a definition of political liberalism before responding to earlier attempts at defining illiberalism in general and in the Philippines.

On Political Liberalism

Political liberalism is constituted by two intertwined core values, namely, political tolerance and institutionalism. The conceptual history of liberalism shows two consistent tenets (Gray, 1995). First is the belief that history is a matter of improvement and correction and that these are only assured through liberal institutions. Second is the primacy and necessity of a universal set of basic rights. Moreover, political liberalism also strives for peaceful coexistence in the face of social diversity, through value pluralism expressed and secured through institutions like the rule of law and representative government (Gray, 2000).

Galston (2002, 2005) asserts these tenets through his notion of a liberal pluralist regime. For him, liberal commitments to pluralism and expressive liberty must be tempered by institutions policing the interaction between varying values and practices. Key to this schema are the following. First is constitutionalism as the legislation of core values promoting public order and basic decency while identifying and managing certain “evils” in order to prevent (1) the dissolution of social bonds, (2) repression, and (3) the imposition of values over others. Second is toleration as “the principled refusal to use coercive state power to impose one's views on others” (Galston, 2005, p. 4) or, conversely, to repress competing values and beliefs. This entails a commitment to moral competition through recruitment and persuasion alone.

At the level of individuals, these commitments to political tolerance and the primacy of institutions are founded on certain prepolitical psychological tendencies (Kahn, 2005; Wolfe, 2009). Specifically, political liberalism is based on certain dispositions that facilitate the creation of spaces wherein people are free to pursue their own beliefs and practices while being capable of apprehending themselves when deemed necessary. This requires a commitment

to both tolerance and openness, and an inclination towards deliberation and governance through reason. The former posits political tolerance as a core value while the latter facilitates the primacy of institutions as a manifestation of reason in governance.

Overall, at the level of both regimes and individuals, political liberalism is constituted by the intertwined values of political toleration and institutionalism. Together, they form an ideal wherein plurality is secured through toleration and a system of institutions that are meant to mediate between opposing values and practices. The rule of law and representative government serve as crucial vehicles for toleration and the preservation of value pluralism. Its shadow, political illiberalism, can thus be defined as the reversal or weakening of these two components. The succeeding section examines how earlier works have tried to analyze this before showing the value and limits of their contributions.

Defining Political Illiberalism

In a recent conceptualization, Laruelle (2022) defines illiberalism as a “new ideological universe that, even if doctrinally fluid and context-based, is to some degree coherent” (p. 309). It is further characterized as a backlash against liberalism for the sake of democratic principles through claims and policies that are “majoritarian, nation-centric or sovereigntist” (ibid.) that favors traditional hierarchies and cultural homogeneity for the sake of asserting a sense of rootedness in the age of globalization. Alongside this thick definition is a more specific conceptualization of political illiberalism as decoupling liberalism from democracy and offering a “mechanical reading of democracy limited to elections and majoritarianism, but partly denies the institutional aspect of democracy” (p. 314).

Though an entire article is necessary in assessing Laruelle’s (2022) conceptualization, I posit the following points for the purposes of this study. First, defining illiberalism as an ideology frees it from the constraints of regime-level analysis (cf. Smith & Ziegler, 2008; Zakaria, 2007) and facilitates analyses from a psychopolitical perspective. Second, Laruelle’s (2022) definition of political illiberalism is problematic because it implies a necessary and harmonious relationship between democracy and liberalism—something already criticized by previous analyses (see Barber, 2003; Mouffe, 2000). Consequently,

her definition refers more to illiberal democracy (cf. Smith & Ziegler, 2008; Zakaria, 2007) than to political illiberalism itself. Third, her argument that “illiberalism does not automatically require a charismatic leader, which is often seen as a necessary condition for populism” (ibid., p. 319) stands on a haphazard exclusion of fascism as nonliberal (cf. Borja, 2020) and a lack of appreciation that the primacy of institutions over political leadership is an essential tenet of liberalism (Gray, 1995). Overall, instead of providing a more general definition that can encompass more specific tendencies, it seems that Laruelle (2022) created a thick umbrella term that mixes various tendencies—a contradiction to her avowed approach to construe illiberalism as a thin ideology.

Hence, I consider the recent conceptualization of Sajó and Uitz (2021) as a more appropriate starting point since it is more concise, general, and multidimensional while being sensitive to the complicated relationship between liberalism and illiberalism. Specifically, Sajó and Uitz (ibid.) defines illiberalism as “a social, political, cultural, legal, and mental phenomenon (or a set of such phenomena) that reflects liberal practices and related beliefs negatively, but not necessarily by negating them” (p. 975). I pursue this definition in the sphere of political psychology by defining political illiberalism as a contradiction of the core values of political liberalism, namely, tolerance and institutionalism (cf. Borja, 2022). In order to flesh this out, I review earlier works on the political psychology of intolerance and the relationship between illiberalism and incumbent liberal institutions.

Concerning political intolerance, previous psychopolitical analyses have characterized it as something that transcends ideological lines (Brandt et al., 2014; Crawford & Pilanski, 2014). Regardless of a citizen’s ideological-partisan alignment, political intolerance affects both reasoning and one’s behavior towards a target. It entails both an aversion to opposing views on political matters and a selective understanding of information. These tendencies solidify bias by keeping a person away from differing perspectives. Political intolerance is an aversion to the multiplicity of differing political views that in turn can lead to a person supporting political repression for the sake of social harmony and ideological monism.

Regarding the relationship between illiberalism and incumbent liberal institutions, the conditions are more

complex than a mere reversal of institutionalism or the outright dismantling of such institutions. The key issue here is the survival of illiberal actors and tendencies within a liberal regime. This problem is embodied by the liberal paradox as a contradiction between the principles of state neutrality and political toleration leading to the problem of tolerating intolerance (Alexander, 2002; Furnam, 1997; Morgan, 2001; Stears, 2001; Stolzenberg, 2002).

In practice, a liberal regime can provide a legal space (i.e., the private sphere and the “free market” of ideas) for the very actors and tendencies vying for its weakening if not demise. Consequently, illiberal politicians are enabled to hijack liberal institutions for illiberal ends (see Edmunds, 2009). This in turn entails the crippling and manipulation of these institutions for the sake of political intolerance and leader-centric interests like the aggrandizement of the executive branch of government at the expense of the other branches (Bustikova & Guasti, 2017).

Thus, it appears that illiberal anti-institutionalism is an aversion to liberal institutions that need not entail support for the latter’s abolition. Instead, it refers to a qualified support for liberal institutions to achieve illiberal ends like empowering leaders at the expense of institutions and/or institutionalizing political intolerance. The succeeding section elaborates how this study measures political illiberalism in order to expose the nuances of its two dimensions.

Political Values and Contextual Analysis

Between Webb (2017) and Garrido (2021, 2022) are two supposed intertwined characteristics of illiberalism in the Philippines, namely, disciplinarian and leader-centric tendencies. By contextualizing these two upon shared political values among Filipinos, I will illustrate that these tendencies are founded on illiberal political values. Why study the psychopolitical context of their insights? For Tilly and Goodin (2008), context matters in effectively identifying and analyzing the array of determinants shaping a certain event or process. McGraw (2008) adds that understanding context requires an analysis of both the environment and the psychopolitical tendencies of individuals.

My focus on political values is due to their relative stability in comparison to beliefs and attitudes. This in turn allows inquiry to posit the persistence of such

values through history, consequently facilitating the prediction of behavior. To elaborate, values are concerned with abstract and trans-situational issues, that is, with ideal conditions (i.e., what individuals wanted to be realized) held and projected by an individual either as goals or the means to achieve the latter. Consequently, they are deemed more stable than all the aforementioned components of a cognitive process (Cottam et al., 2004; Feldman, 2003; Rohan, 2000). A value system in turn is something based on an internal schema of prioritization among different and even contradictory values (Rohan, 2000).

Applying these to politics, political values provide normative agreement on issues revolving around the rights and responsibilities of both citizens and its government (Bozeman, 2007). Simply put, political values answer the basic question of how politics “should be” as well as other more specific questions tied with the realization of such ideals.

To reiterate, I posit that political illiberalism in the Philippines *is a value system characterized by (1) support for liberal institutions qualified in favor of political leadership and (2) political intolerance*. In operational terms, political intolerance takes the form of understanding political rights from an exclusionary perspective anchored on the ideal of social harmony. In other words, social and political diversity must be subservient to an ideal social harmony. Qualified support for liberal institutions refers to an emphasis on the primacy of personal leadership without abolishing incumbent liberal institutions.

To illustrate these contentions, this study utilizes the fourth and fifth waves of the ABS because its items had the potential to form an encompassing measure for political illiberalism. Also, its fourth-wave survey is proximate to the 2016 national elections while the fifth wave is proximate to the 2019 elections; both events saw the defeat of the liberal opposition at the national level. It must be noted that the ABS utilizes a randomly selected sample of $N = 1,200$ with a margin of error of ± 3 . Regarding the demographic background of the sample, the sample is equally divided between male and female respondents. The samples are constituted by mostly middle-aged respondents. Regarding their socioeconomic status, most of the respondents have primary and secondary educational backgrounds while their employment status is almost evenly distributed with only slight differences between the employed and unemployed.

Recognizing the limits of survey data in providing a more nuanced reconstruction of narratives (see Webb, 2017), my task is to take the issue of political illiberalism at a more general level while opening up inquiry for deeper psychopolitical analyses in the future. Table 1 below shows the questions measuring illiberal political values.

Answers to Q1, Q2, and Q3 suggest either support or aversion to the possibility of replacing representative institutions with either a strong leader (Q1), a technocratic regime (Q3), and/or martial law (Q2). Agreement with these items marks support for the abolition of legislative representation. Q4 refers to the liberal principle of checks and balances between the executive and legislative branches in relation to the former “achieving great things.” A political liberal disagrees with Q4 and the contrary is true for an illiberal who gives primacy to personal leadership over an institutionalized system of checks and balances. Q5 measures an individual’s tendency towards the rule of law in times of crisis. The rule of law is one of the hallmarks of liberal institutionalism, and agreement

with Q5 indicates a willingness to abandon this principle, at least during a perceived crisis.

Alongside these measures on maintaining the integrity of liberal institutions is an individual’s openness to the idea of giving absolute power to leaders (Q7 and Q6). Specifically, agreement with these statements indicates a willingness to give absolute power to a leader along moralistic lines (Q7) and/or paternalistic lines (Q6). These indicate a deviation from liberal institutionalism by giving primacy to political agency (i.e., leadership) and arbitrary power at the expense of institutions.

Regarding political intolerance, the following questions tackle an individual’s values towards the political rights of other citizens in terms of ideal and practical plurality. Q9 and Q11 measure how an individual sees the basic liberal right of freedom in thoughts and belief vis-à-vis social harmony. Agreement with Q9 indicates a politically illiberal tendency to support government control over the circulation of ideas in society. Agreement with Q11 indicates an individual’s tendency to conflate plurality

Table 1

Items

Illiberal Political Values (IPV)*	
We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things.	Q1
The army (military) should come in to govern the country.	Q2
We should get rid of elections and parliaments and have experts make decisions on behalf of the people.	Q3
If the government is constantly checked [i.e., monitored and supervised] by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things.	Q4
When the country is facing a difficult situation, it is ok for the government to disregard the law in order to deal with the situation.**	Q5
Government leaders are like the head of a family; we should all follow their decisions.	Q6
If we have political leaders who are morally upright, we can let them decide everything.	Q7
Only one political party should be allowed to stand for election and hold office.	Q8
The government should decide whether certain ideas should be allowed to be discussed in society.	Q9
Harmony of the community will be disrupted if people organize lots of groups.	Q10
If people have too many different ways of thinking, society will be chaotic.	Q11

Note.

* The scale used goes as follows: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = somewhat agree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = strongly disagree. Moreover, all invalid answers, “can’t choose,” “don’t understand,” and “decline to answer” were also considered as missing values.

** Item not included in Wave 5.

with social conflict and chaos. In other words, Q11 measures how an individual understands the ideal relationship between social harmony and social plurality. A political liberal does not see conflict between these two while the contrary is true for the politically illiberal.

Q8 and Q10 tackles practical/organizational plurality. These questions measure how an individual sees the ideal of organizational multiplicity in relation to partisan politics (Q8) and social conflict (Q10). Agreement with these four items indicates a tendency towards political intolerance that can serve as a base for either support for or acquiescence to political repression. The succeeding section tackles the results of this study's quantitative analysis.

Political Illiberalism in the Philippines: *Intolerant Citizens and Strong Leaders*

Within a defective democracy wherein dysfunctional government institutions and an adaptive oligarchy undermined liberal democratization in terms of electoral politics and civil society dynamics (Dressel,

2011; Teehankee & Calimbahin, 2020), are Filipinos politically illiberal? In general, they are not, but those who have strong tendencies. Results suggest that political illiberalism was founded on political intolerance and support for incumbent representative institutions qualified by the primacy of a strong leader. Their political tendencies exhibit a general tendency away from political illiberalism except for items Q4, Q7, Q9, and Q11. I note the following results from Table 2 below.

Most of the respondents disagree with abolishing parliament in favor of either a strong leader (Q1) or a group of experts (Q3). Most are also averse to the possibility of martial law (Q2) (albeit there has been an increase during the fifth wave) and the abandonment of the rule of law during times of crisis (Q5). The results for these items indicate a tendency towards political liberalism in terms of defending incumbent representative institutions and the rule of law.

Nevertheless, this defense is qualified by the primacy of strong leadership. Filipinos exhibit a clear willingness to give absolute power to a leader along moralistic and paternalistic lines (during the fifth wave) and for the sake of achieving "great things."

Table 2

Frequency Percentages—Waves 4 and 5 (Institutionalism)

Item	Wave	S.A.	SM.A.	SM.D.	S.D.	Inv.	Total	Mean	SM.D.
Q1	4	9.3	23.3	32.3	34.6	0.5	100	2.91	0.995
	5	11.5	29.5	36.9	21.0	1.1	100	2.68	0.935
Q2	4	7.8	20.2	30.5	40.8	0.8	100	3.03	0.997
	5	12.5	30.8	36.3	19.7	0.7	100	2.64	0.938
Q3	4	3.8	14.6	32.4	48.6	0.6	100	3.25	0.882
	5	6.4	15.8	46.6	30.3	1.0	100	3.02	0.851
Q4	4	14.7	41.7	29.3	12.8	1.7	100	2.37	0.939
	5	21.8	41.3	23.2	11.6	2.1	100	2.25	0.933
Q5	4	10.2	29.7	30.8	28.4	1	100	2.75	1.009
Q6	4	14	30.6	38.1	16.8	0.5	100	2.57	0.945
	5	20.9	34.6	23.8	20.3	0.4	100	2.44	1.037
Q7	4	22.5	38.9	25.8	12.4	0.3	100	2.27	0.958
	5	33.3	35.5	18.9	11.7	0.6	100	2.09	0.994

Note. S.A. = strongly agree, SM.A. = somewhat agree, SM.D. = somewhat disagree, S.D. = strongly disagree, Inv. = invalid, S.D. = standard deviation.

Specifically, responses to Q4 indicate a preference for strong executives in relation to the liberal ideal of checks and balances (i.e., its relationship with the legislature). Most of the respondents considered this schema between executive and the legislature as detrimental to the capacity of the former to “accomplish great things.”

Furthermore, most agree with the notion of giving absolute authority to leaders who can be considered as morally upright (Q7). They consider moral uprightness and eventually paternalism during the fifth as standards for gaining absolute legitimate authority. These results suggest a strong attachment to a strong executive that reflects an already existing understanding of Philippine politics (Agpalo, 1999; Teehankee, 2016; Teehankee & Thompson, 2016). Overall, these items indicate support for liberal institutions qualified by a need for a strong leader.

Concerning political intolerance, there is clear a tendency against plurality. I note the following from Table 3 below. First, most of the respondents disagree with the notion of a single-party state (Q8). However, this is qualified by the fact that weak political parties populate the political arena to begin with (Rivera, 2016). Second, most of them agree with the idea that social harmony is threatened by the multiplicity of ideas and ways of thinking (Q11) and eventually among organizations as well (Wave 5 Q10). Consequently, it is not surprising if most of them also prefer government control over ideas circulating and forming within the polity (Q9). Simply put, the political intolerance of

the respondents is more pronounced than their limited support for liberal institutions.

Concerning the nature of political il/liberalism as a value system, Tables 4 and 5 below show that most of the items have positive though weak relationships. As whole, however, they can form a composite variable since the proposed measures was internally reliable (Wave 4 $\alpha = 0.678$; Wave 5 $\alpha = 0.635$). Moderately strong relationships are observed between Q8 and three measures on institutionalism (Q1, Q2, and Q3). This indicates a preference for centralized power in both institutional and partisan terms, the former referring to the breakdown of representative institutions and the latter to a move towards a single party state. Moreover, strong relations between the indicators of institutionalism (Q1, Q2, and Q3) indicate consistency among il/liberal political values on representative institutions.

However, there are instances of inverse relations, most of it between item Q11 (If people have too many different ways of thinking, society will be chaotic) and the indicators for institutionalism (Q1, Q2, Q3), intolerance (Q8), and leader-centric tendencies (Q6). Though these relations are weak, this can be a subject for future inquiries especially the inverse relationship between Q11 and Q8 that indicates an intolerance to diverse ideas tied with a preference for a pluralistic party system. This suggests a qualified support for political toleration if plurality eventually boils down to a unified schema of ideas and values.

Table 3

Frequency Percentages—Waves 4 and 5 (Pluralism)

Item	Wave	S.A	SM.A.	SM.D.	S.D.	Inv.	Total	Meand	S.D
Q8	4	7.7	20.5	37.9	33.4	0.5	100	3.01	0.968
	5	11.4	29.7	38.5	19.5	1.1	100	2.67	0.920
Q9	4	18.2	40.9	29.3	10.6	1.1	100	2.30	0.923
	5	26.0	41.8	20.3	10.7	1.3	100	2.16	0.936
Q10	4	14.9	34.3	34	16	0.8	100	2.49	0.959
	5	18.8	32.4	26.1	21.4	1.3	100	2.51	1.032
Q11	4	26.1	38.2	25.2	9.8	0.8	100	2.17	0.953
	5	30.3	33.2	21.2	14.8	0.6	100	2.21	1.035

Note. S.A. = strongly agree, SM.A. = somewhat agree, SM.D. = somewhat disagree, S.D. = strongly disagree, Inv. = Invalid, S.D. = standard deviation.

Table 4*Interitem Correlation—Wave 4 (Spearman's ρ)*

	Institutionalism							Pluralism			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11
Q1		.394**	.526**	.062*	.167**	.168**	.111**	.580**	.092**	.145**	-0.039
Q2	.394**		.491**	.083**	.112**	.184**	.101**	.493**	0.05	.079**	-.089**
Q3	.526**	.491**		0.044	.208**	.169**	.115**	.537**	0.045	.129**	-.072*
Q4	.062*	.083**	0.044		.124**	.144**	.205**	.120**	.125**	.163**	.104**
Q5	.167**	.112**	.208**	.124**		.131**	.153**	.162**	.093**	.138**	.119**
Q6	.168**	.184**	.169**	.144**	.131**		.201**	.237**	.269**	.137**	-0.011
Q7	.111**	.101**	.115**	.205**	.153**	.201**		.141**	.226**	.122**	.127**
Q8	.580**	.493**	.537**	.120**	.162**	.237**	.141**		.117**	.151**	-.092**
Q9	.092**	0.05	0.045	.125**	.093**	.269**	.226**	.117**		.179**	.141**
Q10	.145**	.079**	.129**	.163**	.138**	.137**	.122**	.151**	.179**		.179**
Q11	-0.039	-.089**	-.072*	.104**	.119**	-0.011	.127**	-.092**	.141**	.179**	

Note.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Table 5*Interitem Correlation—Wave 5 (Spearman's ρ)*

	Institutionalism						Pluralism			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11
Q1		.318**	.399**	.111**	.172**	0.024	.433**	0.054	.128**	-0.021
Q2	.318**		.358**	.119**	.162**	.104**	.344**	.132**	.067*	-0.026
Q3	.399**	.358**		.082**	.221**	0.042	.377**	.067*	.105**	-.086**
Q4	.111**	.119**	.082**		.222**	.251**	.111**	.203**	.164**	.160**
Q6	.172**	.162**	.221**	.222**		.250**	.189**	.288**	.147**	0.026
Q7	0.024	.104**	0.042	.251**	.250**		.092**	.223**	.104**	.148**
Q8	.433**	.344**	.377**	.111**	.189**	.092**		.073*	.094**	-.105**
Q9	0.054	.132**	.067*	.203**	.288**	.223**	.073*		.106**	.120**
Q10	.128**	.067*	.105**	.164**	.147**	.104**	.094**	.106**		.185**
Q11	-0.021	-0.026	-.086**	.160**	0.026	.148**	-.105**	.120**	.185**	

Note.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

In summary, there is a juxtaposition between political intolerance and qualified support for institutions. Filipinos have a clear attachment with representative institutions without sharing other liberal ideals like the primacy of institutions over personal leadership, a balance of power between the executive and the legislature, and a clear sense of political tolerance. Moreover, weak correlations among illiberal political values indicate an ambivalent value system (see Dressel & Bonoan, 2019; Webb, 2017). The succeeding section fleshes this out by positing what can be termed as the illiberal public.

The Illiberal Public

Those who are politically illiberal want to preserve the very institutions that they are willing to surrender to a leader. Their intolerance is characterized by a willingness to let the government regulate the flow of ideas in society for the sake of social harmony. It is also plausible that they are willing to deprive those they deem as unworthy of the very political rights that they enjoy.

How to make sense of these seemingly contradictory tendencies? What are the implications of deep political intolerance? What is the nature and possible impacts of their limited support for the preservation of liberal institutions? I take my cue from Milton Rokeach (1960), who argues that in analyzing psychopolitical tendencies, one must focus on internal coherence rather than a person's adherence to an external logic. Through this, I can admit Webb's (2017) findings without claiming ambivalence. Hence, I sort these tendencies by reconstructing a picture of an illiberal public as something based on a coherent illiberal political value system.

As a heuristic device, I ask, what if support for institutions and the rule of law are the actual deviations from the norms of leader-centrism and arbitrary rule? In their empirical analysis of public opinion and support for Duterte's criminal policies and authoritarian overtures, Kenny and Holmes (2020) find no positive relationship between support for Duterte's charismatic leadership and penal policies and (1) belief in the necessity of martial law or (2) dis/trust towards liberal institutions (i.e., the supreme court and congress). They conclude that Filipinos in general are still attached to such liberal institutions even if they support illiberal

policies. This has been echoed in the works of Webb (2017) and Garrido (2021, 2022). They illustrate how restraining freedom and upholding the primacy of strong leaders are situated by their respondents under democracy.

Their findings expose an unusual cause for the preservation of such institutions. I hypothesize further that political illiberalism (i.e., its leader-centric approach to institutions) might have contributed to the persistence of liberal institutions even if it can facilitate their decline and crippling in favor of strongman politics. It is also plausible that the leader-centric component of illiberalism forms the foundation of a challenge that focuses more on agents within institutions rather than the institutions themselves. This can explain why public criticism in the Philippines, like its personality politics, is focused more on specific agents rather than institutions. From vitriolic attacks against politicians to online bullying by netizens against each other, specific actors are the common targets. This suggests that for citizens, sociopolitical problems are caused not by the lack of laws and institutions but by human error, corruption, and weakness, thus sparing the former.

Concerning political intolerance, the willingness to deprive others of the same political rights that one enjoys and the general willingness of many to let the government regulate the circulation of ideas in Filipino society are the roots of political aggression in public spaces, especially within social media. I posit that for most Filipinos, exclusion frames the value of political rights. Consequently, political rights are secondary to an exclusionary notion of social harmony.

To elaborate, Untalan (2017) illustrates how toxicity and lack of civility have emerged as the dominant trend. For her, the rise of the Diehard Duterte Supporters (DDS), infamous for their online aggression, is due at least in part as a retaliation against an earlier mockery of the supposedly irrational and uneducated sectors of the populace. This new public sphere is now a manifestation of political intolerance. Moreover, echoing Juego's (2017) observation, I assert that Duterte's regime merely amplifies already existing challenges to the liberal democratic paradigm and that social media toxicity is a result of this. Hence, it is plausible that all the sides involved come from the same widely shared political intolerance among Filipinos.

Furthermore, in response to Webb (2017) and Garrido (2021, 2022), I posit that the disciplinarian

tendencies they have observed can be traced back at least in part to political intolerance. Webb (2017, p. 90) observes that for her respondents the “onus of compliance is on the individual citizen, to stay within certain boundaries of ‘moral’ behavior; but also, to stay within the boundaries of acceptable political participation.” I hypothesize that this perceived need for compliance is based, at least in part, to an antipluralistic view of social harmony and an openness to regulate the circulation of ideas in a society (cf. Pernia, 2021). I also entertain the possibility that it might also be due to political values on moderation. I leave more detailed explorations on this matter for future inquiries.

Overall, political illiberalism in the Philippines might look counterintuitive, ambivalent, or even schizophrenic at first glance. However, the source of coherence for these conflicting tendencies is the primacy of political agency (leadership and citizenship) over preserved institutions tied to a strong sense of political intolerance.

I contend further that it is high time for scholars to focus on how Filipino citizens relate with one another in line with politically illiberal values. I merely scratch the surface of a deeply embedded and sustained phenomenon. Future inquiries can shed further light on ordinary citizens who value their own liberty without promoting its universality while supporting both the maintenance of institutions and the possibility of its demise on the hands of a leader with absolute power. Therefore, I add the concept of illiberal public as a means of exposing deep-seated political intolerance and a leader-centric understanding of institutions.

Concluding Remarks: Looking Ahead

Through the third wave of democratization from 1974 to the early 90s, enthusiasm towards liberal democratization has been tied with warnings from various scholars (Huntington, 1991; Schmitter, 1994). Today, political liberalism and its troubled marriage with democracy (see Barber, 2003; Mouffe, 2000) are facing multiple challenges emerging from illiberalism. Like the body of a mythical hydra, political illiberalism keeps on generating new heads every time an old one is struck down. Simply put, from fascism to populism, political illiberalism can generate variations of the same theme.

What are the characteristics of this basic theme? What are the threats that political illiberalism levels against liberalism and its tenuous ties with democratic principles? The problem lies not with the mere reversal of liberal values nor with the outright abolition of liberal institutions. Instead, political illiberalism is dangerous because it imbues liberal forms with its own substance. From institutions to public spaces, it can inject intolerance and leader-centric tendencies into these political artefacts. This study provides a psychopolitical framework that contributes to the analysis of this phenomenon at the level of political values.

Is this study replicable? Can the measures of political illiberalism travel to other cases? The results of the same reliability tests with the cases of Indonesia and Malaysia (Wave 4 of the ABS) are promising (Indonesia with $\alpha = .670$ and Malaysia with $\alpha = .710$). Their citizens have shown similar psychopolitical tendencies in comparison to their Filipino counterparts (cf. Borja, 2022).

Concerning the relationship between democratic de/consolidation, I assert the necessity of reassessing the relationship between il/liberalism and democracy instead of merely assuming their interdependence. One cannot speak adequately of liberalism without considering its relationship with democracy because their historical and theoretical development in the modern age is intertwined (Bova, 2001 Plattner, 2001). Hence, I posit the following points for future inquiries.

First, a gap can appear between this liberalism and democracy since they are not necessarily harmonious to begin with (Mouffe, 2000). Suffice to say that illiberalism can replace liberalism and serve as the source of goals and values for democratic practices. Hence, this study asks, *why do illiberals have a qualified support for liberal institutions? Under what conditions are they willing to defend or abolish such institutions? Is this a manifestation of instrumentalism being turned against liberalism? What is the nature of their support or aversion towards the institutionalization of universal human rights?* Future inquiries can examine how this conflict and/or replacement occurs.

Second, the relationship between illiberalism and liberal democracy is as deep as the political psychology of citizens. I have assumed that political agency and empowerment of citizens lie at the core of democratization (Linz & Stepan, 1996; Schmitter, 2015; Schneider & Schmitter, 2004). For this reason,

democratic values must be considered to be as important as structures and institutional design with citizenship serving as the fundamental issue. Hence, this study also contributes to the literatures on democratic support (see Norris, 1999, 2011) and values (see Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007; Shin & Kim, 2018) by asserting the need to integrate the resurgence of illiberalism in the development of future measurements that can identify “democrats with adjectives.”

Hence, returning to the case of Philippine democratization, this study asks, *where is the Philippines heading to with the curious nature of its own political illiberalism? What are the implications of political illiberalism on the public’s understanding of both democracy and authoritarianism? How do Filipinos understand liberty itself? Is the Philippines experiencing an ideological limbo wherein political values are founded on exemptions rather than absolutes, on excuses instead of demands?* These are some questions that I leave for future inquiries on the political psychology of Filipino citizens beyond specific leaders or administrations.

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