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## Attitudes Towards Welfare and Inequality

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# Attitudes Towards Welfare and Inequality

Ricardo G. Abad



Analysis of a 1987 cross-country survey on social inequality has shown that country support for welfare and income redistribution was greater in five social democracies of Europe than in the capitalist nations of Australia and the United States.<sup>1</sup> These varying levels of support, Smith (1989) argues, reflect ideological differences between the two political economies. While citizens of European nations have come to adopt an *ideology of outcome*, preferring a society with negligible differences in income and living standards, those from capitalist countries have accepted an *ideology of opportunity*, preferring to level chances for success rather than actual outcomes. These ideological differences, so the argument goes, mirror the amount and kind of welfare programs already in place in each country. The more extensive the welfare state, the greater the emphasis on an ideology of outcome, and the stronger the support for government intervention to achieve social goals. Conversely, the least extensive the welfare state, as in the Philippines, the greater the emphasis placed on an ideology of opportunity, and the weaker the support for social equality.

Is this indeed the case? To answer this question, data from a 1992 nationwide survey conducted by Social Weather Stations (SWS) were compared with selected countries that participated in the 1992 second-round survey on social inequality. Like its 1987 counterpart, the 1992 survey was initiated by the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), a consortium of twenty-five nations (which the Philippines joined in 1990) tasked to conduct an annual survey on a

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common topic. For Smith's 1989 analysis, seven of these nations were selected: West Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, Hungary, Australia and the United States. The Netherlands, however, did not run the 1992 survey, and is excluded from this analysis to permit better cross-country comparisons. For similar methodological as well as historical reasons, we shall also group post communist Hungary with other social democratic nations in obtaining averages for the European nations.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in examining data made available by the Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung, ISSP's data archive center at the University of Cologne, we first recomputed the 1987 averages reported in Smith's paper, noted any changes in the 1992 results, and compared them with the Philippine data. These comparisons were all based on unweighted data.

### **Support for Welfare Programs**

Five questions in the 1987 survey asked respondents to express how much they agreed with a range of welfare policies that included government action to provide everyone with a guaranteed basic income, grant employment for the unemployed, and reduce income differences. Three of these questions were retained in the 1992 round and the results, together with the 1987 figures, are presented in Table 1. The 1987 and 1992 pictures for the industrial nations are clear: as the averages show, public support for welfare spending is still highest in Hungary, Italy and the social democracies of West Germany and Britain, and least in the capitalist democracies of Australia and the United States. The political transformations which occurred in Hungary and West Germany between the two survey periods have not diminished the strong endorsement for welfare policies in these countries.

Table 1 also shows that for the industrial nations, levels of public support vary by type of political economy. In 1987, public support for welfare averaged 71 percent in social democracies (including Hungary) and only 35 percent in capitalist democracies. In 1992, social democratic nations retained their 71 percent average, while the capitalist nations, despite some effort to catch up, still remained distant with an average of 42 percent. Smith (1989, 62) explains the 1987 results by contending that nations with the strongest demand for welfare programs are those more likely to have such programs. This suggests that people tend to accept the types of government measures

they already have, or that where social welfare measures exist, they do so because of public demand. The 1992 patterns uphold this explanation for industrial societies. If this notion applies to developing countries as well, we should expect the Philippines—with a relatively poor welfare system—to show less support for welfare policies and income-leveling measures.

Table 1. Support for Welfare Programs by Country  
ISSP 1987, 1992 and SWS 1992 National Surveys

COUNTRY	Strongly agree/agree that the government should...							
	Average over three "welfarist" items*		Reduce income differences between the rich and the poor		Provide a job for everyone who wants one		Provide everyone with a guaranteed basic income	
	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992
Philippines	-	76%	-	57%	-	86%	-	84%
Hungary	82%	82%	77%	75%	90%	85%	78%	85%
Italy	77%	78%	81%	80%	82%	86%	67%	69%
West Germany	64%	63%	56%	66%	74%	66%	63%	58%
Great Britain	60%	62%	63%	65%	58%	56%	60%	66%
Australia	39%	44%	42%	43%	38%	39%	37%	51%
U.S.A.	31%	40%	28%	38%	44%	47%	21%	34%

\*Smith's (1989) analysis covered five welfare items. In addition to the above three were items that asked respondents to agree or disagree on whether the government should "spend more on benefits for the poor" and "provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed." These two items were omitted, however, in the 1992 ISSP survey. For this reason, the 1987 figures were recalculated to cover only three welfare items and make them parallel with the 1992 results. As well, as indicated in the text, the Philippines does not have 1987 data since the country only joined the ISSP in 1991.

This is not the case. As Table 1 shows, the Philippine average of 76 percent hews closer to the social democratic than the capitalist democratic norm. But while Philippine support for guaranteed employment and a guaranteed basic income is among the strongest in

the nations studied, its desire to reduce income differences, though greater than that observed for capitalist democracies, is less emphatic. Why this is so will be discussed later. It is enough to say for now that contrary to Smith's general argument, Filipinos are highly supportive of welfare policies despite the limitations of the state's welfare system.

### Taxation and Redistribution

Because they are more likely to support welfare measures and because welfare services are more available in their societies, social democracies—more so than capitalist democracies—can be expected to express greater approval for progressive taxation and other redistributive policies. The first six columns of Table 2 show that while this tendency exists, it is by no means a strong one.

To achieve better comparisons, columns seven to nine of Table 2 subtracted, for each country, the percentage of those who say that taxation is too high for those with low incomes from the percentage

Table 2. Attitudes Toward Taxation in Seven Countries  
—ISSP 1987, 1992 and SWS 1992 National Surveys

COUNTRY	Taxation is much too high/high for those...									
	(A)		(B)		(C)		Difference		Difference	
	... with high incomes	... with middle incomes	... with low incomes	... with high incomes	... with middle incomes	... with low incomes	C - A	C - B	C - A	C - B
	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992
<b>Philippines</b>	-	48%	-	29%	-	29%	-	-19	-	0
Hungary	17%	26%	34%	70%	53%	86%	+36	+60	+19	+16
Italy	18%	29%	61%	90%	84%	98%	+66	+69	+23	+8
West Germany	12%	8%	49%	46%	80%	86%	+68	+78	+31	+40
Great Britain	24%	18%	40%	38%	85%	82%	+61	+64	+31	+44
Australia	34%	28%	59%	54%	69%	69%	+35	+41	+10%	+15
U.S.A.	17%	18%	68%	82%	67%	75%	+50	+57	-1%	-7

of those that say taxation is too high for the those with middle incomes (C-B) and from the percentage of those who say that taxation is high for those with high incomes (C-A). The greater the positive margin, the greater the extent to which a country adopts a "progressive" or "pro-leveling" position in matters concerning taxation.

Using these margins, Smith (1989, 64) found relatively strong national differences related to the political system when assessing 1987 data on taxing the middle class (C-B). The 1992 figures retain this pattern, with the social democracies having an average margin of 27 percentage points and the capitalist democracies having a much lower average margin of 4 points.

Large differences also surface in comparing perceptions of the tax burden between those with high and low incomes (C-A). The 1987 figures shows that all industrial nations look progressive: the percentage believing that the poor carries a larger tax burden than the rich is higher in social than capitalist democracies. But the percentages for the United States and Hungary are notable outliers, tending to obfuscate the results. The patterns are clearer in 1992. Again, all nations appear to be progressive, and more so compared to 1987. This time, however, the social democracies are more consistently pro-leveling—their average margin is around 68 percent—while the capitalist democracies (despite gains in their pro-leveling stance) appear less progressive with an average margin of 49 percent. On the whole, social democracies do not only tend to endorse welfare and income-leveling measures more strongly than capitalist democracies, they are also more likely than Australia and the United States to view taxation as a way to promote social equality.

This is not the case for the Philippines where we find mixed support for welfare policies (stronger for assistance to the needy than with income redistribution) and a reluctance to view taxation as a means to promote social equality. In fact, the Filipinos appear to be the least progressive among the seven countries studied. Table 2, for example, shows that while many people in the industrial nations believe that the lower class is taxed more heavily than the upper and middle classes, Filipinos take the opposite stance: nearly half (48 percent) say that the rich are taxed much too high or too high, while only 25 percent report similar tax burdens for the poor and the middle class.

These views arise in a country where income tax payments are done mostly by better-income (though not necessarily large-income) earners rather than by the poor majority. This is not to say that the

amount of state revenues generated from better-income earners are substantial, or that large-income earners pay the correct amount of taxes. The point simply is that despite imbalances in taxation payments, better-income earners are more likely to pay income taxes than the poor, many of whom do not file income tax returns. Moreover, because of the lack of transparency in the country's system of indirect taxation, many people, especially the poor, may be unaware of taxes being passed on to them. For this reason, Filipinos can be expected to perceive that taxation is more burdensome for those with higher incomes than for those with low or middle incomes.

It is a burden many Filipinos accept. Asked more directly whether "people with high incomes should pay a larger share of their income in taxes than those with low incomes, the same share or a smaller share," 63 percent of the Filipinos reply that the rich should be taxed more heavily than the poor (see Table 3). But while the proportion is high in absolute terms, it is lower than the 1992 averages of 85 percent for social democracies (no data for Great Britain), and 73 percent for capitalist democracies. Again, differences by type of political system surface, with the 1992 pattern slightly stronger than the 1987 results. These differences, however, should not conceal the fact that something approaching an international consensus appears in

Table 3. Attitudes toward Progressive Taxation and Redistribution  
ISSP 1987, 1992 and SWS 1992 National Surveys

COUNTRY	Supports progressive taxation		Favors government action to reduce income differences	
	1987	1992	1987	1992
Philippines	-	63%	-	57%
Hungary	69%	81%	77%	75%
Italy	77%	86%	81%	80%
West Germany	73%	87%	56%	66%
Great Britain	75%	-	63%	65%
Australia	63%	71%	42%	43%
U.S.A.	64%	74%	28%	38%

these figures. About two-thirds to three-quarters of the respondents in 1987—and between two thirds to around four-fifths of the respondents in 1992 (including the Philippines)—agree that high income earners should be taxed more heavily than low income earners.

The finding that social democracies are more supportive of progressive taxation means that European nations would also be more favorable to income redistribution schemes than would capitalist democracies and the Philippines. Table 3 supports this proposition. In 1987, an average of 68 percent of the citizens of social democracies said that they favor government action to reduce income differences; the average for capitalist democracies was only 35 percent, or a margin of 33 percentage points. In 1992, the margin was a slightly lower but still substantial 31 percentage points, with European nations averaging 72 percent and capitalist democratic nations only 41 percent. The Philippine figure of 57 percent stands midway between these two types of political systems, but is closer to the norm of capitalist democracies.

### **Perception of Inequality and Social Mobility**

Smith (1989, 65) hypothesizes that the differences between socialist and capitalist democracies are linked to people's perceptions of their own socioeconomic conditions. One such perception is the extent to which people believe that "income differences in their country are too large." It is expected that citizens of capitalist societies, because they perceive that income distributions in their country are already more equitable, would be less supportive of welfare programs than citizens of social democracies.

The 1987 survey results upheld this hypothesis, and so do the 1992 findings. In 1987, see Table 4, an average of 57 percent in capitalist democracies compared to a higher average of 77 percent in European countries believe that income differences in their country were too large. This 20-point margin declined to a still substantial 15 points in 1992, with averages of 70 percent in capitalist countries and 85 percent in social democratic countries. In turn, the Philippine figure of 59 percent is the lowest among all nations in 1992 and about at par with the 1987 figures of capitalist democracies. Like citizens of Australia and the United States, therefore, Filipinos do not see income differences in their country as too large and as such, are also less inclined to support progressive taxation and less likely to favor

government action to reduce income differences. But unlike citizens of capitalist democracies, the Philippines is a stronger supporter of welfare policies to help the needy and establish a guaranteed income. Why then would Filipinos show substantial support for welfare measures when they do not perceive income differences as too large at the outset?

Table 4. Perception of Income Differences by Country  
ISSP 1987, 1992 and SWS 1992 National Surveys

COUNTRY	Strongly agree/agree that income differences are too large	
	1987	1992
Philippines	-	59%
Hungary	74%	84%
Italy	86%	90%
West Germany	72%	84%
Great Britain	75%	81%
Australia	58%	63%
U.S.A.	56%	77%

Part of the answer lies in how people perceive the magnitude of these income differences. Studies have shown, for example, that the Filipino poor's estimates of the monetary differences between them and the non-poor are not great. When a 1986 public opinion survey asked Filipinos who rated themselves as poor how much their families needed "for home expenses each month in order not to feel poor anymore," the answer was an average of P1,500 a month; among those who rated themselves as non-poor, the average was only P500 higher (Mangahas 1986). Similar self-rated poverty estimates, Mangahas (1993) finds, have remained consistent for nearly a decade. In addition, more specific inquiries on the perception of income inequalities show that "Filipinos tend to have liberal attitudes towards sources of income differentials" (Mangahas 1977, 180). Many sources—among them differences in rank, educational attainment, job

seniority, occupation and ability—are regarded as socially acceptable, leading one to infer “that a significant portion of overall income inequality, however it may be measured, is socially acceptable” (Ibid.). If one accepts this view and its corollary—namely, that only unacceptable inequalities constitute inequity, and to many Filipinos, these unacceptable grounds are few—it becomes understandable why Filipinos do not tend to perceive that income differences among themselves are large. It is an issue we shall return to in the conclusion of this paper.

Another indicator of the perception that one’s socioeconomic conditions are equitable is the way people locate themselves on one of ten rungs of a ladder representing different positions in the class structure. Following Smith’s argument, we would expect more respondents from capitalist than social democracies to place themselves in the higher rungs because they see themselves as relatively better off than their neighbors. Because they are better off, so the reasoning goes, citizens of capitalist democracies will be less inclined to endorse welfare and income-leveling measures. In contrast, because Filipinos are avid supporters of welfare, they would rate themselves more like citizens of social democracies than capitalist societies.

Table 5 offers minimal support to this argument since differences by type of political system are not marked. In 1987, an average of 14 percent of respondents in Australia and the United States place themselves at the top three rungs of the social ladder; the corresponding average for social democracies is 8 percent, or a margin of only 6 points. In 1992, the same pattern emerges with an average of 12 percent for capitalist democracies and 6 percent for social democracies. The Philippines’ 5 percent is, as expected, close to the social democratic norm. But the seven-point margin with capitalist nations is too small to spell a meaningful difference.

A comparison of those who rated themselves in the lowest three rungs of the ladder seemingly yields larger differences. In 1992, the average for capitalist democracies was 10 percent compared to a larger 31 percent for social democracies. Again, the Philippines’ 30 percent is close to the European norm. But while this margin is large, the Hungarian data skews the social democratic norm upward; without it, the 1992 average for social democracies would only be 15 percent (against the 10 percent found for capitalist democracies), or a margin of a mere 5 points. In 1987, and with the Hungarian figure again excluded, the margin would only be 3 percentage points. Thus, when Hungarian data are held constant, differences by type of politi-

cal economy become muted and do not help explain why capitalist democracies do not endorse welfare measures as much as socialist democracies.

Table 5. Ladder Ratings in Seven Countries  
ISSP 1987, 1992 and SWS 1992 National Surveys

COUNTRY	Percent placing themselves in...					
	Top three rungs		Fourth to seventh rungs		Eight to tenth rungs	
	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992
<b>Philippines</b>	–	5	–	65	–	30
Hungary	3	1	74	60	24	39
Italy	10	4	84	76	7	20
West Germany	10	10	81	81	9	9
Great Britain	8	8	75	76	17	16
Australia	10	10	84	84	6	6
U.S.A.	18	13	72	73	10	14

More sizable differences appear on the third indicator of people's perception of their socioeconomic condition, namely people's assessment of their chances of improving their standard of living. To repeat the overall argument, it is expected that citizens of capitalist democracies will show less support for welfare programs, particularly income-leveling schemes, because they are more optimistic about their own chances of success compared to citizens of social democracies. Table 6 shows that in both 1987 and 1992, more Americans and Australians than citizens of European socialist democracies did agree or strongly agree that "people like me have good chances of improving one's standard of living." In 1987, the capitalist democracies averaged 65 percent and the European nations 37 percent, or a margin of 28 percentage points. In 1992, the margin was a smaller but still sizable 22 points with 52 percent for capitalist countries and 30 percent for the European nations. Towering above these nations is the Philippines where 70 percent believe that their chances of improving their standard of living are high.

Table 6. Perceptions of Upward Mobility in Seven Countries  
ISSP 1987, 1992 and SWS 1992 National Surveys

COUNTRY	Strongly agree/agree that people like me have good chances of improving standard of living		Level of own job much higher/higher than father's		Level of own education much higher/higher than father's	Level of own income much higher/higher than father's
	1987	1992	1987	1992	(1992 only)	(1992 only)
Philippines	-	70%	-	33%	44%	44%
Hungary	33%	11%	57%	42%	51%	64%
Italy	43%	43%	37%	47%	73%	72%
West Germany	36%	34%	25%	40%	71%	71%
Great Britain	36%	30%	47%	49%	72%	67%
Australia	58%	49%	46%	51%	81%	81%
U.S.A.	71%	55%	47%	55%	58%	74%

But then the Philippines is also a strong supporter of welfare policies. Thus, while capitalist democracies show a "low welfare support-high optimism" pattern, and European nations a "high welfare support-low optimism" pattern, both of which are consistent with Smith's argument, the Philippines exhibits a "high welfare support-high optimism" pattern that needs further explanation.

In the meantime, one can test if Filipino optimism, like those of the Australians and Americans, has an objective basis. Several survey items sought to measure actual improvements in status by asking respondents to compare the levels of their present job, educational and income statuses with those of their fathers. Table 6 presents the results and of these, only columns 3 and 4 contain both 1987 and 1992 data. Smith did not include figures on educational and income mobility in his analysis.

These two columns show that among industrial countries, Australia and the United States experience more occupational mobility compared to the European countries. But the average margins are unimpressive: 5 percentage points in 1987 and 8 points in 1992. These small differences also surface in 1992 data on educational and income mobility, and given these, not much of an objective basis in past performance can be said to underlie the optimism of Australians and Americans.

And for Filipinos as well. In all three mobility indicators, the Philippines scored the lowest of all nations—33 percent for job status, 44 percent for education, and 46 percent for income. As in the other countries, perceptions of educational and income mobility have fared better over two generations compared to perceptions of occupational advancement. Still, the relative percentages are low enough to show that Filipino optimism, like those of the Australians and Americans, is not strongly grounded in past performance.

### **Beliefs About Opportunity and Mobility**

If not based on past performance, would perceptions about the openness of one's society account for differences in egalitarian optimism? The ISSP/SWS surveys asked respondents to judge what they considered to be the most important items influencing social mobility. These items were grouped into four factors: personal characteristics, parental characteristics, political influences and ascribed characteristics. To restate the overall argument, Australians and Americans—being less supportive of welfare measures and redistributive schemes and more inclined to be optimistic about their future—would also see their society as more open, i.e., that personal or achieved characteristics are more influential in "getting ahead in life" than parental and ascribed characteristics. In contrast, Filipinos like the Europeans, will generously support welfare programs because they see their society as less open than the Australians and Americans.

The data fail to support this argument, at least for industrial nations: whether capitalist or socialist democracies, all industrial nations concede that their societies are relatively open. Table 7 presents the rank orders of the thirteen items, grouped into four factors, and shows that in both 1987 and 1992, industrial countries rated achieved or personal characteristics (hard work, ambition, good education, natural ability) as among the most important items influencing social mobility. There are, of course, some variations in specific ranks. But as the Spearman rank-order correlations indicate, little differences are seen in the ratings of industrialized countries between 1987 and 1992. As such, they do not explain why capitalist democracies tend to endorse welfare policies more strongly than do the European nations.

The Philippine pattern appears, at first glance, to follow the trend set by the six industrial nations. Like these nations, Filipinos rank achieved or personal characteristics as the highest factor influencing social mobility. And like the Italians and West Germans, a good education is rated as the most salient item affecting social mobility. What prevents Filipinos from joining the industrial bandwagon, however, are the ranks they give to parental and ascribed characteristics, sets of factors which lie outside one's personal control.

In 1992, see Table 8, all countries (the Philippines included) rated personal or achieved characteristics as the most important set of factors influencing getting ahead in life. Parental and ascribed characteristics (race, gender, religion and part of the country), however, were rated as least important in all countries except the Philippines. Fifty eight percent of the Filipinos, for example, ranked parental characteristics as the second most important factor in influencing mobility compared to a range of 22-38 percent in the industrial nations. The gap is larger for ascribed characteristics where 52 percent of the Filipinos rated it as essential compared to a range of only 8-15 percent in other countries. The effect of political influences is judged as the least important in the Philippines, while ranking first or second in industrial nations. The result is not surprising when one considers that by and large, state politics exert minimal influence on the citizen's everyday life (Pertierra 1995). The overall point, however, is that in comparison to citizens of industrial nations, Filipinos perceive their society as relatively more closed. This is perhaps one reason why Filipinos are avid supporters of welfare policies.

### **Explanations of Inequality**

Would capitalist and social democracies, as well as developing countries like the Philippines, differ in the proportions of people who agree or disagree with various explanations of inequality? And would these differences help to explain varying levels of support for welfare and income-leveling measures? The ISSP/SWS surveys included eight possible explanations of inequality which were grouped into three categories: "financial incentives," "class conflict" and "general prosperity." Tables 9 to 11 summarize the data, listing the individual and average percentages for each factor.

Table 7. Rank orders of items influencing "getting ahead in life" by Country  
ISSP 1987, 1992 and SWS 1992 National Surveys

FACTORS/ITEMS	Philippines		Hungary		Italy		West Germany		Great Britain		Australia		U.S.A.	
	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992
<b>Personal characteristics</b>														
Hard work	-	2	3	4	4	5	4	5	1	1	2	2	1	2
Ambition	-	3	1	3	6	4	2	2	3	2	1	1	2	1
Good education	-	1	5	7	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	3	3
Natural ability	-	4	2	2	3	3	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
<b>Parental characteristics</b>														
Well-educated parents	-	5	8	8	7	7	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Wealthy family	-	11	6	6	8	8	7	7	7	8	7	7	7	8
<b>Political influences</b>														
Knowing right people	-	7.5	4	1	2	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
Political connections	-	13	7	5	5	6	9	9	11	10	8	9	8	7
Political beliefs	-	12	9	10	9	9	11	10	13	11	13	12	12	12
<b>Ascribed characteristics</b>														
Race	-	9	n.d.	9	13	12.5	8	7	8	7	9	8	9	10
Gender	-	7.5	10	12	10	10	10	11	9	9	10	10	10	9
Religion	-	6	11	13	10	12.5	12	12	12	13	11	13	11	11
Part of the country	-	10	12	11	12	11	13	13	10	12	12	11	13	13
Spearman's rho	-		.91*		.96		.98		.96		.98		.98	

\*Excludes item on race.

Table 8. Average percentages of factors on "getting ahead in life" by Country  
ISSP 1987, 1992 and SWS 1992 National Surveys

FACTORS	Philippines		Hungary		Italy		West Germany		Great Britain		Australia		U.S.A.	
	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992
Personal characteristics	-	87%	60%	53%	52%	66%	67%	64%	74%	73%	75%	75%	78%	72%
Parental characteristics	-	58%	43%	25%	43%	38%	31%	26%	24%	22%	19%	27%	30%	30%
Political influences	-	46%	66%	52%	66%	62%	41%	35%	24%	21%	23%	32%	24%	31%
Ascribed characteristics*	-	52%	14%	8%	14%	15%	16%	13%	9%	9%	8%	11%	9%	13%

\*Excludes item on race for 1987 data on Hungary.

Explanations based on financial incentives, as Table 9 shows, vary by country in both 1987 and 1992. In 1987, the majorities of all countries, a range between 59 and 81 percent, shared the belief that at least some pay inequities are needed to motivate people to take extra responsibility, acquire skills and study for a vocation or profession. The 1992 figures reproduce this pattern for the industrial nations where between 61 to 80 percent believe that financial incentives justify pay inequalities. It is the most popular of the three explanations of inequality included in the survey.

Table 9. Financial Incentives as Explanation for Inequality  
ISSP 1987, 1992 and SWS 1992 National Surveys

COUNTRY	Strongly agree/agree that financial incentives are needed if people are...							
	Average of three items*		...to take extra responsibility		...to get skills and qualifications		...to study for a vocation	
	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992
<b>Philippines</b>	-	58%	-	56%	-	55%	-	63%
Hungary	59%	61%	60%	63%	61%	59%	55%	60%
Italy	72%	80%	77%	85%	73%	81%	67%	73%
West Germany	74%	79%	64%	72%	74%	77%	85%	88%
Great Britain	73%	71%	82%	78%	69%	64%	69%	71%
Australia	81%	78%	82%	78%	81%	78%	81%	81%
U.S.A.	65%	64%	70%	66%	57%	66%	68%	70%

\*Smith's (1989) analysis used four items: all three above plus an item on financial incentives to work hard. But this item was excluded in the 1992 ISSP survey. Thus, the 1987 figures were recomputed to include only the above three items and make them comparable to the 1992 data.

Minor differences by political system have also remained over time. In 1987, an average of 70 percent of the people in European nations justified social inequalities in terms of financial incentives; the comparative figure for capitalist democracies was a slightly higher 73 percent. In 1992, the averages are reversed: 73 percent for social

democracies and 71 percent for capitalist countries. The percentage difference, despite the reversal, is much too small to mean anything significant. As it stands, capitalist democracies still do not differ from European nations in accepting an explanation based on financial incentives. The Philippine figure of 59 percent is lower than these averages, and suggests that Filipinos are not as convinced as citizens of industrial nations that pay inequities justify social inequality.

How about explanations of inequality based on class conflict? Table 10 shows that in 1987, between 49-52 percent in most countries agreed that inequality is perpetuated because it benefits the rich and powerful and that ordinary people don't join together to get rid of it. In 1992, the proportions of people who agreed or strongly agreed to this explanation increased for all industrial nations. But the extent of agreement, now between 45 to 61 percent, remains close to the 1987 figures and still shows that European countries only have a slight edge over capitalist democracies in accepting the class conflict explanation. The Philippines' 51 percent lies within the range found for most nations. But while the industrial nations rank class conflict as the second most popular explanation of inequality, the Philippines rate it the lowest.

Table 10. Class Conflict as Explanation for Inequality  
ISSP 1987, 1992 and SWS 1992 National Surveys

COUNTRY	Strongly agree/agree that inequality continues to exist because...					
	Average of two items		...it benefits the rich and powerful		...ordinary people don't join together to get rid of it	
	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992
Philippines	-	51%	-	52%	-	50%
Hungary	32%	44%	36%	52%	28%	35%
Italy	67%	71%	74%	75%	61%	67%
West Germany	52%	61%	63%	75%	40%	47%
Great Britain	49%	53%	59%	64%	40%	41%
Australia	44%	45%	55%	59%	32%	30%
U.S.A.	44%	54%	46%	58%	42%	49%

The third justification of inequality—one based on the promotion of general, as opposed to individual, prosperity—is the least popular of the explanations in almost all industrial countries. Table 11 shows that in 1987, an average of only 32-41 percent endorsed the two items under this category. That the Hungarians in 1987 ranked general prosperity higher than class conflict seemed to be decisive rejection of a "Marxist" view of the world in the former communist state. In 1992, however, Hungarians joined the other industrial nations in relegating the general prosperity theme as the least popular explanation of inequality.

Table 11. Promotion of General Prosperity as Explanation for Inequality  
ISSP 1987, 1992 and SWS 1992 National Surveys

COUNTRY	Strongly agree/agree that...					
	Average of two items		large differences in income are necessary for general prosperity		allowing businesses to make good profits is best way to improve everyone's standard of living	
	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992
Philippines	-	53%	-	59%	-	47%
Hungary	39%	34%	25%	21%	54%	47%
Italy	37%	48%	18%	32%	57%	63%
West Germany	32%	31%	24%	21%	40%	41%
Great Britain	40%	33%	26%	19%	53%	46%
Australia	41%	38%	28%	25%	53%	51%
U.S.A.	39%	37%	31%	26%	46%	48%

Variations by type of political system, small to begin with, have nearly disappeared on this item over time. In 1987, an average of 40 percent in capitalist democracies supported an explanation of inequality based on the theme of general prosperity; the comparable figure for social democracies is 37 percent, or a margin of 3 points. In 1992, the averages are 38 percent for capitalist democracies and 37 percent for the European nations, or a margin of only one percentage

point. The Philippines' 53 percent is higher than these percentages, suggesting that Filipinos are more likely than citizens of European and capitalist nations to accept social inequalities when they arise from the need to satisfy long-term goals. Filipinos rank this explanation, however, as second only to financial incentives.

Overall, the three justifications of inequality do not show sharp distinctions by political system. They do not help, therefore, in explaining why capitalist and social democracies differ in their levels of support for welfare and income redistribution policies. Even the Philippine endorsement of welfare policies, which leans closer the European norm, does not show results that consistently echo the social democratic pattern. In fact, the Philippine figures—averages of 58 percent for financial incentives, 51 percent for class conflict, and 53 percent for general prosperity—are too close to one another to be able to pinpoint which justification of inequality Filipinos support most strongly.

### **Assessments of Social Conflict**

If only to underscore these points, it is useful to consider how nations perceive the intensity of social conflicts between social groups within their nations. The five groups are: poor people vs. rich people, management vs. workers, the unemployed vs. people with jobs, farmers vs. city people and the working class vs. the middle class. Table 12, however, repeats the pattern seen earlier in comparing levels of support for various explanations of social inequality. In 1987, the proportions of respondents who perceived strong or very strong social conflicts in these five groups ranged from 30 to 47 percent. The average for capitalist democracies was 42 percent, that for European nations 39 percent, or a margin of only 3 percentage points. In 1992, perceptions of social conflict increased in four of six industrial nations (especially in Hungary and the United States), but the margin disappeared: the averages for capitalist and socialist democracies both stood at 42 percent. Even the Philippine figure of 45 percent comes close to these averages. It seems that perceptions of social conflict over time have become more similar for all countries, including the Philippines.

Table 12 also shows which pairs of groups are perceived to experience strong social conflicts. In both 1987 and 1982, all countries (including the Philippines) report greater conflicts between economic

groups (poor vs. rich, management vs. workers) than between social classes (the unemployed vs. people with jobs and the working-class vs. the middle class) or between farm vs. city people. Average differences by political economy and with the Philippines are, however, slight, indicating once more some cross-national consensus on these matters.<sup>3</sup>

### **Welfare, Inequality and Class**

Smith's reading of the 1987 results, shown in Table 13, makes three points about the relationship between these attitudes and social class. First is that while class is positively related to attitudes towards welfare and social inequality, the correlations are not particularly strong. Second is that associations with class are relatively stronger for items that showed large cross-country differences (e.g. social welfare policies) and weaker for items that revealed greater agreement across nations (e.g. class conflict). Moreover, while the lower classes are more likely than the upper classes to attribute social inequality to social divisions, the associations are unimpressive. Third is that the average correlations tend to be quite similar among industrial nations and do not vary much by type of political system. Thus, cross-country differences are related to something other than the class structure within nations.

The unavailability of 1992 data suitable for correlational analysis precludes judgment on the validity of these points over time. Moreover, because Smith's attitude indices and class indicators were difficult to replicate for the Philippine data, we devised what we thought to be the best approximations of these measures. Given these limitations, the results show that the Philippine class structure also appears unrelated to attitudes towards welfare and social inequality. While the positive signs of the coefficients in Table 13 suggest that upper class Filipinos are more likely to support welfare or to hold that social inequalities arise from class conflicts, the sizes of the average coefficients are very low to be taken seriously.

It can be argued that a great deal of consensus exists in the Philippines on matters pertaining to welfare and income redistribution. Regardless of socioeconomic position, Filipinos seem to share similar views on welfare and income-leveling policies. Is it because people in various classes have come to accept class and status disparities as facts of life? It is a point to ponder as we assess the results of this seven-nation study.

Table 12. Perceptions of Social Conflict in Seven Countries  
ISSP 1987 and SWS 1992 National Surveys

COUNTRY	Perceiving very strong/strong social conflicts between...											
	Average		poor and rich		management and workers		unemployed and people with jobs		farmers and city people		working class and middle class	
	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992	1987	1992
<b>Philippines</b>	-	45%	-	55%	-	53%	-	43%	-	37%	-	36%
Hungary	40%*	48%	54%	70%	41%	64%	n.d.	46%	26%	30%	37%	29%
Italy	47%	46%	59%	58%	51%	50%	57%	55%	24%	23%	45%	44%
West Germany	30%	31%	36%	39%	52%	50%	36%	41%	11%	11%	13%	12%
Great Britain	38%	43%	52%	60%	54%	51%	39%	46%	26%	34%	20%	26%
Australia	40%	34%	43%	36%	51%	44%	46%	36%	42%	39%	18%	13%
U.S.A.	43%	50%	59%	69%	53%	65%	46%	53%	36%	26%	20%	29%

\*Average for Hungary excludes item on conflicts between "unemployed and people with jobs."

Table 13. Socioeconomic Status and Attitudes to Inequality:  
Average gamma values—ISSP 1987 and SWS 1992 National Surveys

COUNTRY	Average degree of association (Gamma)						
	All items <sup>a</sup>	Income differences too large	Index of class interests <sup>a</sup>	Index of class conflict <sup>b</sup>	Social welfare index <sup>c</sup>	Reduce income differences	Progressive taxation
Philippines	.054	.077	.059	.046	.052	.051	.035
Italy	.147	.201	.071	.155	.209	.128	.094
West Germany	.133	.184	.149	.059	.141	.212	.141
Britain	.193	.191	.256	.215	.263	.255	.164
Australia	.150	.183	.190	.104	.175	.189	.029
U.S.A.	.175	.116	.230	.133	.261	.239	.085

\*Correlations for the Philippines are based on 1992 survey data, all others are based on 1987 data and reported in Smith (1989). Hungary was excluded from this table owing to the amount of missing data.

<sup>a</sup>The "index of class interests" was derived from two items. See Table 10. Since Smith's (1989) paper did not indicate the cut-off points of this and other indices for crosstabulation purposes, this analysis divided the index scores in 2 categories. Chi-square was used as the measure of inference for the Philippine data; the inferential test used in Smith's paper was not also indicated. Figures in parentheses represent non-statistically significant correlations.

<sup>b</sup>The "index of class conflict" was derived from four items. See Table 12. Index scores for the Philippine data were grouped in 2 categories.

<sup>c</sup>The "social welfare index" was derived from 3 items. See Table 1. Index scores were grouped in 2 categories.

## Summary and Conclusion

This report has shown that between 1987 and 1992, citizens of social democracies like Italy, West Germany, Great Britain and Hungary have retained their strong support for welfare benefits and income redistribution compared to citizens of such capitalist democracies as Australia and the United States. Changes over time have been minor, and many of them show a slight narrowing of the gap separating these two political economies. But since these declines have not been dramatic, the overall finding remains that cross-

national preferences for welfare support differ by type of political economy.

In both 1987 and 1992 as well, attitudes toward social inequality and social conflict have not been shown to explain variations in welfare support. Personal qualities such as hard work, ambition or a good education are widely seen as important influences for getting ahead in life. Likewise, similar proportions of people in all industrial countries endorse various explanations of inequality, giving more weight to explanations based on financial incentives than those based on class conflict or general prosperity. Similar proportions in both types of political systems also perceive conflicts between social groups, though slightly more so for economic groups (e.g. rich vs. poor) than those divided by class or place of residence. However, none of these attitudes toward inequality, conflict and welfare support are strongly associated with indicators of social class. Thus, neither a nation's class system nor its attitudes toward social inequality and conflict explain differences in public support for welfare. The key factor remains the type of political economy.

Two reasons have been advanced to explain the salience of the political economy factor. The first relates to the public legitimacy of a nation's welfare system; the second to the welfare ideologies associated with each political economic system—specifically, the ideology of outcome as applied to social democracies and the ideology of opportunity as found in capitalist societies. That these reasons apply to both the 1987 and 1992 findings testify to the relative stability of attitudes despite the major economic and political transformations that occurred in many industrial nations over the two survey periods.

None of these explanations, however, explain the Philippine pattern. The argument of public legitimacy suggests that citizens of industrial nations have come to expect and accept their own welfare system country as most appropriate. This would imply that Filipinos will be least supportive of welfare because their country does not have a welfare system as extensive as those found in industrial nations. But the results show otherwise. In fact, Filipinos endorse welfare policies as much as citizens of European social democracies. In short, strong support for welfare policies do not rest solely on the notion of public legitimacy; as the Philippine case shows, this support also appears even when the demand for welfare services exceeds what a country's welfare infrastructure can supply.

Note, as well, that the similarity between the Philippines and European nations only holds for policies which assist the needy (e.g.

guaranteed employment) and not for those that level incomes (e.g. progressive taxation or government action to reduce income differences). Thus, it cannot be said that Filipinos, like the Europeans, adhere to an ideology of outcome, i.e., a belief that an ideal society is one having negligible differences in income and living standards. Indeed, on the issue of redistribution, the Philippine pattern follows capitalist lines in its weak endorsement of income-leveling measures.

Neither do Filipinos completely subscribe to an ideology of opportunity, or the belief that actual levels of success in one's society are in fact equal because people have been given the same chances to succeed in life. True, Filipinos share some features of the egalitarian optimism held by citizens of capitalist democracies. Similarly, the proportions of Filipinos who agree that income gaps in their country are large and that their chances of future success are great parallel the rates found for Australians and Americans.

But Filipinos know that they are poorer compared to Americans and Australians. Only a modest percentage of them, for example, can claim that their present socioeconomic positions are much better than those of their fathers. Fewer Filipinos also place themselves in the top three rungs of the social ladder; a greater proportion locate themselves at the bottom three rungs of the social hierarchy. And while Filipinos, like Australians and Americans, see achieved characteristics as the most important factors for getting ahead in life, their social mobility is more affected by parental influences and such ascribed characteristics as religion and gender. On these counts, Filipinos cannot be said to reproduce the same sense of egalitarianism found among Australians and Americans. Yet Filipinos remain optimistic, even more so than Australians and Americans, despite the unfavorable material and structural conditions of their everyday life.

It seems futile to explain the Philippine pattern in terms of the reasons advanced for industrial nations. What appears to prevail is neither public legitimacy nor the ideologies of outcome and opportunity, but the structure and ideology of patronage. From this perspective, Filipinos do not see welfare policies as obligations performed by an impersonal state for its citizens, but as a set of rights and duties expected between patron and client. Patrons assist and protect clients in exchange for their loyalty and support: the arrangement is reciprocal, and the ties personal and binding. As Carroll (1966, 387) puts it: "To a greater degree than in American society, predictability of (Filipino) behavior is based not on impersonal rules but on personal ties." As such, Carroll continues, "membership in abstract categories—

being a "student," "taxpayer," or "citizen"—carries with it fewer enforceable rights and obligations than such membership would in certain other societies." This practice, which has been likened to a relationship between father and son (J. Scott 1986), reaches deep into the Philippine pre-Hispanic past (Lynch 1975; W.H. Scott 1979, 1991), and shapes the style of leadership in modern Philippine political life (Hollnsteiner 1963; Lande 1968; Wolters 1984; Wurfel 1988).

A patronage system operates in a way that ensures a flow of benefits for patron and client. As patron, the government is obliged to support her needy clients. If that support falters or fails, clients can ask the state to deliver these services. This may entail adopting measures, like progressive taxation for example, which will place extra demands on those who already carry the country's tax burden. But these demands are not akin to the European's endorsement of substantive equality. In fact, the European ideology, with its strong endorsement of income-leveling measures, is inconsistent with patronage because income redistribution schemes would blur class distinctions and eventually undermine the system of mutual obligations. The point is to solicit income from the rich, not to even up incomes between rich and the poor.

Two qualitative studies illustrate this view. Zialcita (1989), for example, compared three normative traditions relative to Filipino notions of justice. The only notion he found consistent in all three traditions—indigenous culture, the Philippine legal system, and traditional Christianity—was one related to "recognition of status," i.e., of giving due respect to a person's social position. This implies deference to the rich and highly placed as well as protection and succor for the poor and lowly placed. Another study, Kerkvliet's (1977) analysis of the causes of the Huk rebellion, makes a related point. Peasants did not challenge landlords on the basis of an objective and impersonal norm of distributive justice; what affronted them were landlords who began to shed away their paternalistic obligations in favor of commercialism and mechanization in the farms. As Zialcita (1989, 83) puts it, "(the peasants) did not seek the abolition of the landlord system...they only wanted kinder landlords." In both studies, Filipinos expect a harmonious asymmetry of ranks rather an equality of positions.

In Philippine society, then, income disparities are allowed to remain as long as people's basic needs or rights are met. In fact, income and even status disparities may be taken as inevitable when these are thought to arise from forces like fate, luck or divine provi-

dence, all of which are beyond anyone's control. As well, the usual sources of income inequalities—among them differences in social rank, educational attainment, and occupation—are judged as “acceptable inequalities” and not considered as social inequalities in the strict sense. For this reason, Filipinos can be strong advocates of welfare measures, especially when many of them are poor and state support is limited, but will stop short at giving overwhelming support for leveling schemes because they do not see income inequalities as immense or undesirable in the first place.

It follows then, as earlier results show, that Filipinos are not passionate advocates of class conflict as an explanation of inequality and do not perceive sharp divisions between social groups. Moreover, the fact that attitudes toward welfare and inequality do not correlate with socioeconomic status suggests that both the rich and the poor, bound together by ties of patronage, generally accept the traditional social arrangements. The greater these arrangements are reproduced and legitimated, the more difficult it will be to initiate structural change.

A broad historical perspective deepens this understanding and concludes this essay. The Philippines started out as a conglomeration of scattered villages which was artificially welded together as a state during its long colonial period. It did not start out, as did Australia and the United States, as self-made nations that grew up as immigrant nations—democratic, capitalist, and unconstrained by monarchical traditions and a feudal system. The sense of noblesse-oblige, which partly shaped the European welfare system, has parallels in Philippine colonial history. But the largess drawn from the Spanish, and later American, colonial governments was monopolized by the state, the church and the elite (Connolly 1992; Owen 1984), and has remained relatively unchanged to date.

All three groups have thus managed to maintain their wealth, status and power despite the rise of the middle-class, the liberalization of democratic space, and efforts at structural reform (Gutierrez et al. 1992; Wurfel 1988; Mangahas 1986). While the Church's power has been reduced compared to that which it held in colonial times, it still exerts moral legitimacy in a predominantly Catholic country by being at the forefront of many attempts at social reform (Schumacher 1984). But tensions and divisions within the Church, as well as its subscription to a strategy of change that deals mainly with moral suasion and a conversion of heart, point to the Church's weakness as a political force (Carroll 1984). In contrast, the state and the Filipino elite have been particularly influential, working together to forge rent-

seeking arrangements that have kept them in control of the nation's economic and political life, their power often backed up by a military or quasi-military force (McCoy 1994). An economic policy that emphasized growth rather than equity has further aided this alliance of economic and political elites in running the nation (Mangahas 1986).

*Realpolitik* attempts to appease the working class as well as pressures from labor groups have also molded European welfare systems. But similar pressures in Philippine history—among them, the local insurgencies that culminated in the 1896 Philippine Revolution against Spain, the struggles of labor unions and student movements, the militancy of communist rebels and Islamic fundamentalists, and even the famous 1986 People's Revolution—have achieved only brief and limited successes in making the state responsive to the needs of the poor majority. By and large, the "compadre colonialism" which characterized the state during American rule (Owen 1971) has persisted to date as a "colonial democracy" (Paredes 1988) or a "cacique democracy" (Anderson 1995). It is a state which has perpetuated the wealth of the few and the immiseration of many.

But as the theory of the "weak state" suggests, the absence or limited presence of state influence in local life—as well as the state's limited ability to accomplish social reform (Pertierra 1995; Rood 1993)—has prompted citizens to take control of their lives by adopting practices that ensure their survival and well-being (McCoy 1994). This means, by and large, a reliance on the toughness and supportive nature of family and alliance groups (Carroll 1966, 1984) where social relations operate under the rules of patronage. These rules, as stated earlier, permit strong support for welfare policies that enhance, but do not sever, the symbiotic union between leader and follower. Thus, despite the presence of a reform-minded constitution, despite encouraging trends in the economy, and despite trail-blazing efforts in social development by non-government organizations, the nation as a whole still struggles against the fetters of its colonial past. Yet Filipinos remain optimistic, more so in fact than citizens of any industrial nation. Surely the hope that the system will become more benevolent is one reason for optimism (Licuanan 1993). But this is not all. Because Filipinos are among the most religious people in the world (Abad 1994) and are imbued with a strong sense of romance (Reyes 1991), their strong faith in God and the assurance that good always triumphs over evil—in short, the belief in a divine power who will defend the dispossessed against damnation—also inform their optimism in the face of much material adversity.

### Notes

1. The analysis appears in Smith (1989). For related works, see Smith (1987, 1990). For an overview of the Philippine data set, see Guerrero (1993).
2. This division between socialist and capitalist countries should not conceal differences in welfare support within each type of political economy. For a detailed analysis of these differences, see Haller, Hollinger and Raubal (1990).
3. The observed difference between groups cannot be overly emphasized because the pairs under consideration may simply reflect the fact that the social distance between economic groups is seen as greater than the distance between social classes. As Smith (1989, 72) notes, "if the class terms have been widened (for example, upper vs. lower class) or if the economic terms have been narrowed (for example, average income vs. lower than average income), we suspect that the level of perceived conflict would have been similar for class and economic groups."

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