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Do we really care about democracy in the Philippines?

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NCR Today

With a week to go before the May 10 general election in the Philippines, presidential front runner Benigno "Noy" Aquino III is ahead of his nearest rival, according to public-opinion surveys.

In a Pulse Asia poll, Aquino, the son of popular former President Corazon Aquino, held a 19-point lead over his nearest rival, Manuel "Manny" Villar, a real estate tycoon from an underprivileged background.

A Social Weather Stations (SWS) poll showed Aquino was 12 points ahead of Villar.

The two were almost neck and neck in a January SWS poll.

Loida Lewis, whose home is in New York and is head of the Philippine-American Association, has said that a 20 point or more lead will likely be necessary for Aquino, whom she backs firmly, to win, given what she expects will be widespread corruption in the election results. The incumbent government favors the Aquino rival.

Sadly, she notes, there is a good possibility that votes will not be counted properly. She has asked U.S. State Department officials to monitor the elections.

This will be the first computerized election and many are saying they expect the ballot machines "will fail." The elections could be disputed for some time to come.

The U.S., of course, is committed to spreading democracy around the world. You would think that a democratic election in Asia would be a highly watched event, on that would be high on the U.S. radar screen.

Think again. The Philippines is not a major world oil producer.

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