

**Philippine Nationalism: An Analysis of the development of Philippine National Identity**

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## Introduction

The following historical analysis will illustrate a narrative of Philippine Nationalism through an examination of the role heroes play in constructing the perceived notion of “nationhood”. Overall, a compilation of speeches, literature, letters, news articles and interviews from their respective time and even academic lectures from as far back as the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century were examined to illustrate the formulation of the concept of nationalism and the role certain influential individuals have played in this process. The speeches, literature, and a few of the letters investigated were taken directly from the individuals analyzed in this thesis: Jose Rizal, Sultan Kudarat, Ferdinand Marcos, and Corazon Aquino [each introduced in their respective chapters]. A majority of the letters, media, and lectures were analyzed to give insight into the thoughts of Filipinos regarding the previously mentioned individuals and their role in the development of the Philippine nation. In particular, this relationship between heroes and nationalism can be attributed to Sharon Delmendo who argues:

Heroes are critical components of the identity axis of nationalism. An individual’s veneration of national heroes enhances the individual’s sense of belonging to the national collective. By creating a sense of national kinship, heroes facilitate a person’s internal allegiance to the nation, the awareness of citizenship and belonging to “the people”, an element of what Benedict Anderson has called the “imagined community” that constitutes nationalism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Delmendo, Sharon. The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred of America in the Philippines. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick:2004. P 21.

In her manuscript, The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred of America in the Philippines, Delmendo examines the role of America in the construction of Philippine nationalism. Her depiction of nationalism in combination with support from Benedict Anderson, a renowned author regarding the same concept, provided an excellent foundation for the concept of nationhood. Additionally, Greg Bankoff and Kathleen Weekley in their novel, Post-Colonial National Identity in the Philippines, explore the “theoretical and historical relationship between nation and state” and how idea of Filipino identity has developed over time. Particularly, they question the reason behind the absence of important Muslim figures from nationalistic celebrations or literature. Subsequently, this analysis attempts to provide answers for the lack of representation of the “non-traditional” Philippine heroes such as Sultan Kudarat and its effects on creating a proper representation of nationalism for the Philippines. As aforementioned, the Philippines has a diverse history and it would be unjust to selectively pick and choose which parts of the nation’s past should be recognized. In essence, there are many factors that can be attributed to the development of the Philippine’s national identity. For example, the colonial regimes of Spain and the United States undeniably have played a significant role in the development of the Philippine nation. Nevertheless, the aforementioned authors make it clear there are historians and writers who recognize the role heroes play in establishing a national identity for citizens of a nation to recognize and relate to. This analysis focuses more on the role of individuals in shaping and promoting a sense of pride in the Philippines

However, determining the individuals to label as national heroes can be a difficult task especially with the Philippines because of its long tumultuous history. There are thousands of islands but for purposes of this project, there are three major regions that will be mentioned a few

times: the Northern region of Luzon where the capital Manila resides, the Visayas are South of Luzon, and the most southern region is Mindanao. A Spanish explorer, Ruy Lopez de Villalobos, discovered the Visayan islands by accident while looking for a route to the “spice islands”. As historian Vicente Rafael points out, “like Columbus confront the islands of the New World”, took conceptual possession of these, naming them *las islas Filipinas*”. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Spain colonized the Philippines except for a brief point from 1762-1764 when Britain took over Manila due to their victory over Spain during the Seven Years’ War. Yet, for the most, Spain exercised and spread its colonial authority, political, and social influence over the entire Philippine archipelago. Then, the transition of colonial rule from Spain to the United States occurred in 1898 as a consequence of the Spanish-American War. During World War-II, the Japanese temporarily pushed U.S. forces out of the Philippines and occupied the islands until the United States were able to regain military control. Finally, the Philippines achieved “true sovereignty” in 1946 as it was granted its independence by the United States. Keep in mind, this brief historical outline of the Philippine’s history does not even include numerous “wars of independence” fought by insurgents against both Spanish and United States rule. Also, the sovereign democratic Philippine government has had to deal with communist insurgents, coup d’etats, rebel factions from Mindanao seeking sovereignty, and other conflicts aimed altering or changing the political climate of the nation. All of this shows that the Philippines has constantly been pressured for and undergone political and social changes throughout its history. Thus, it can be a daunting task to determine who and why someone should be deemed a “national hero” because that question can be answered differently depending on if

you are examining it from the Christian majority government in Manila or from the Muslim South.<sup>1</sup>

Without determining the rationale and criteria for claiming someone to be a nationalistic individual, it makes the task of constructing the notion of nationhood much more difficult. This especially holds true for the Philippines because the social, religious, and ethnic diversity of its citizens that can depend on their respective region. Furthermore, giving recognition to the wrong people or for the wrong reasons can harm the way a nation views itself. Particularly, this is important in regards to political leaders and the way their actions and policies affect the citizens they have sworn to serve. The following three chapters illustrate the role of each respective person and their effects on the Philippine national identity.

Chapter one, entitled “Heroes”, examines two individuals, Jose Rizal and Sultan Kudarat who are commonly acclaimed to be nationalistic heroes of the Philippines. There are other individuals commonly referred to as heroes of the Philippines. One example is Emilio Aguinaldo who has been recognized for his anti-colonial struggle against American forces in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> However, Jose Rizal is included in this chapter because he was constantly referred to as “the first Filipino” or “the father of Filipino nationalism”.<sup>3</sup> Thus, one aspect of this chapter is to examine the reason Rizal’s prestigious title of being the father of an entire nationality. Furthermore, Sultan Kudarat is placed in this chapter because of his firm stance and dedication against Spanish colonial forces who were attempting to take over his Muslim kingdom in

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<sup>1</sup> A majority of the historical outline in this paragraph as been taken from the following source(s): Rafael, Vicente L. White Love and Other Events in Filipino History. Duke University Press: Durham, 2000. p 2-15.

<sup>2</sup> Delmendo, The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred of America in the Philippines, p 126-127.

<sup>3</sup> Delmendo, The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred of America in the Philippines, p 23.

Mindanao. Despite the fact that his efforts were for the sovereignty of his Muslim kingdom during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the chapter discusses the importance of recognizing and applying his message for solidarity when discussing the nationhood of the Philippines. Altogether, the first chapter outlines the characteristics of both Rizal and Kadarat that contribute to their “heroic” status and in spite of their differences they both portray beliefs that contribute to the construction of a national identity for the Philippines.

Next, the second chapter focuses on Ferdinand Marcos and his twenty year presidency up until 1986 in the Philippines. In particular, the chapter demonstrates both the proposed “goals” he had for the nation versus the corruption and oppression that critics proclaimed were present during his reign. Within his biography and his speeches Marcos asserted to the Filipino people his vision for establishing a prosperous and proud “new society” in the Philippines. Yet, there are those who point out the enormous gap between the wealthy and poor that became accentuated during Marcos’ time in power.<sup>1</sup> Even further, critics such as Belinda Aquino, in Politics of Plunder: The Philippines Under Marcos, present evidence illustrating the enormous amount of the Philippine economy that Marcos utilized for himself and his own personal friends rather than for the benefit of the entire Filipino population. Therefore, this chapter explains the mistrust and grievances that arose during Marcos’ presidency regarding the Philippine government and country as a whole. Also, a combination of Marcos’ implementation of martial law to stay in power, violence to subdue his opponents, and financial fraud portrayed his regime to have same detrimental affects on the Philippine nation and its people as did colonial rule.

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<sup>1</sup> Arce, Wilfredo F. and Ricard G. Abad. “The Social Situation”. Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond. Ed. John Bresnan. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986. p 57

The third chapter describes the decrease in Marcos' influential power over the Philippines and the transition of power to Corazon C. Aquino in the 1986 elections. Oppositional political parties, Filipino citizens and even other nations came together to put an end to Marcos' corrupt regime in the Philippines. Also, Aquino's rise to political power, her campaign, and the historical "People's Power Movement" at EDSA are presented to demonstrate the enormous political and social unity it took for Marcos' political machine to finally be defeated and for the Philippines to begin its transition back to a democracy. A mixture of speeches, letters, and newspaper articles reveal the feelings of hope Filipinos had in establishing a new president and tearing down the oppressive policies of the former regime.<sup>1</sup> Also, "The People's Power Movement" which assisted in preventing a military conflict between Aquino supporters and Marcos's forces induced feelings of immense pride from Filipino citizens. Perhaps, Aquino's profound support among the Filipino people and feelings of pride evoked from the show of "People Power" at EDSA may exhibit the "heroic" role of Aquino and united Filipinos in reconstructing Philippine Nationalism during this time.

Taken as a whole, this project is not meant to be a complete historiography of Philippine history or new sociological analysis of the term "nationalism". Rather, the entire project takes the premise that "heroes are an essential aspect of formulating a national identity" and seeing how it applies to influential individuals at certain points in Philippine history. For instance, the analysis of Jose Rizal and Sultan Kudarat demonstrates how similar nationalistic convictions can exist

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<sup>1</sup> Komisar, Lucy. Corazon Aquino: The Story of a Revolution. New York: George Braziller Inc., 1987. P 122-123.



between two proclaimed “national heroes” even if they lived during entirely different regions and points in time of Philippine history. Then, studying Marcos’ time in power does more than reveal the corruption that existed during his reign. In fact, no matter how he tried to manipulate the Philippine government or use his political power to falsely illustrate himself as a heroic politician, Marcos was forced to shamefully leave the country and he left it in turmoil. More importantly, the demise of Marcos validates the value and power when people feel and take pride in their duties to their nation. Lastly, Aquino, those present at EDSA, and the supportive Filipinos throughout entire Philippine archipelago were able to begin the reconstruction of hope and pride in the Philippine nation. Hopefully, this thesis will illustrate the significance of establishing a national identity, especially in a country that has difficulty identifying a unifying concept of nationhood. In the same regard, heroes from different backgrounds, time periods, and situations provide assistance in bringing together the citizens of a state into the “imagined community” of one nation. Nationalism has proven that it can overcome any political, social, or religious differences within a nation and lead to the progression of changes that benefit the entire citizenry. In the Philippines or any nation, new techniques should attempt to be utilized instead of focusing efforts and finances on militarily putting down a “rebel insurgency”. Overall, it may be more beneficial to discover what allowed these “rebel groups” to fall out of the “imagined community” and how they can be genuinely join the national identity to prevent further conflict.

## **Chapter 1: Heroes**

In ,1994, the Philippine government established a Secretariat Task Force the National Centennial Commission (NCC), in order to bring mass awareness to the upcoming centennial date of 1898 that marked Philippine freedom from Spanish rule. Particularly, the NCC labeled it:

*The Year of the Filipino Hero*, celebrating the centennial of the martyrdom of Jose Rizal, the outbreak of the revolution, and ‘the anniversaries of all other organized struggled design to end tyranny’...The motif for 1997 was *Propagating the Filipino Spirit*, a year ‘devoted to reinforcing the Filipino’s confidence and pride in the nobility of his race’ and commemorating the spreader of the Revolution to the Visayas and Mindanao.<sup>1</sup>

An entire year became dedicated to the recognition of Jose Rizal and his role in constructing a sense of nationhood for the Filipino citizen during Spanish Colonial rule during the late nineteenth century. Then, the following year dubbed, “Propagating the Filipino Spirit” honored the rise of the revolution’s ideals of Filipino nobility and self-sufficiency in areas of the country far removed from Manila, such as Mindanao. In response to these celebrations, historians Bankoff and Weekley argued that, “much of the care and attention lavished on the planning and organization of the centennial celebrations promoted activities that expanded the historical representation in include all peoples of the Philippines”.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the government proclaimed “Year of the Filipino Hero” only includes Rizal and lacks a significant Muslim figure such as Sultan

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<sup>1</sup> Bankoff, Greg & Kathleen Weekley. Post-Colonial National Identity in the Philippines: Celebrating the Centennial of Independence. Ashgate Publishing Company, Burlington. 1988. p 42-43.

Kudarat, who also laid the foundations for these nationalistic ideals centuries prior to the 1898 revolution. Even though he was not labeled a nationalistic hero according to these centennial celebrations, the Philippine government has made attempts to recognize Kudarat's contribution to Philippine nationalism in the past. Such an emphasis on "national heroes" such as Rizal and Kudarat reveal the role of a hero in manifesting aspects of a nation's identity. In fact, "by creating a sense of national kinship, heroes facilitate a person's internal allegiance to the nation, awareness of citizenship and belonging to 'the people', an element of what Benedict Anderson has called the 'imagined community' that constitutes nationalism".<sup>1</sup> Taken as a whole, this chapter will illustrate the historical backgrounds of Jose Rizal during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and Sultan Kudrat who reigned during the seventeenth century. Despite their large separation on a historical timeline, their similar heroic legacies provide a common foundation for nationhood that all Filipinos can attest to.

### **Jose Rizal**

Jose Rizal is commonly known as the "Father of Filipino Nationalism" and the "First Filipino", not because he helped establish an independent Philippine state (in fact, he specifically and explicitly denounced the 1896 Revolution against Spain), but because he was instrumental in the creation of the conceptualization of "Filipino" as an ethnopolitical collective – as "a people", or, in the language of nationalism "the people".<sup>2</sup> In other words, Rizal is acclaimed the father "Philippine Nationalism" for his intellectual and idealistic support for Philippine Independence. As an analysis of his works and speeches will

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<sup>1</sup> Delmendo, The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred of America in the Philippines, p 21

<sup>2</sup> Delmendo, The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred of America in the Philippines, p 15.

show, Rizal did not support violent uprisings or revolutions in calling for an independent state. He was not a war monger but rather an academic seeking as much as possible a peaceful, logical, and political solution for the independence of Filipinos from colonial rule over the political and social aspects of life in the Philippines. He preached for and encouraged Filipinos to recognize their potential as Filipino citizens and also their obligations and duty to their motherland.

First and foremost, Rizal was a strict critic of the Filipino people and how their demeanor reflected upon the motherland. In his essay entitled, “The Indolence of the Filipino”, Rizal makes the bold statement that, “Indolence in the Philippine is a chronic malady, but not a hereditary one. The Filipinos have not always been what they are, witnesses whereto are all the historians of the first years after the discovery of the Islands”<sup>1</sup>. He is not afraid to point out idleness he notices within his fellow countrymen. At the same time, he takes the position this flaw of laziness did not originate among the native Malayan people who first inhabited the Philippine islands but rather rose out of the colonial occupation of the Philippines over the past centuries. Forced labor, outlandish taxes, colonial bureaucracies, etc present themselves as a few of the misfortunes that coincide with colonial rule. Rizal ponders:

How it is strange, then, that discouragement may have been infused into the spirit of the inhabitants of the Philippines, when in the midst of so many calamities they did not know whether they would see sprout the seed they were planting, whether their field was going to be their grave or their crop would go to feed their executioner? (107)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rizal, Jose. “Indolence of the Filipino”, p 99.

Working fervently for an unsatisfying or unreliable end can deter even the most persistent laborer to theoretically decrease production or cease it entirely and this can have an adverse effect on the economy. For example, examining the Agricultural Wage in the Philippines from 1962-1986 reveals that it “declined at 1.6 per cent per year. In real (1986) U.S. dollars, it fell from roughly \$2.00/a day in 1962 to 1.40/day in 1986.”<sup>1</sup> This is detrimental to a nation dependent on agricultural laborers and in a capitalist based world economy the standard of living does not adjust to drops in average wages. As a result, Boyce shows that “nationwide the percentage of Filipino families living below the poverty lines rises from 41% in 1965 to 59% in 1985”<sup>2</sup>. Regrettably, this economic data echoes Rizal’s warnings from more than a half a century earlier that forcing an individual to labor for an unequal economic return will result in less production. There has existed a stigma in Philippine society regarding the enormous gap of wealth between the elite and the middle, working, and poor people of the Philippine islands. Rizal criticized the elite of the country for depriving the general populations of the wealth that is generated from Philippine resources. He attempted to cease the negative view of a stagnant and corrupt Philippine economy from stereotyping the entire Filipino population as corrupt and incapable. Therefore, Rizal demonstrated:

The fact that the best plantations, the best tracts of land in some provinces, those that from their easy access are more profitable than others, are in the hands of the religious corporations, whose desideratum is ignorance and a condition of semi-starvation for the native, so that they may continue to govern him and make themselves necessary to his

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<sup>1</sup> Boyce, James K. The Philippines: The Political Economy of Growth and Impoverishment in the Marcos Era. University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu, 1993. p 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> Boyce, The Philippines: The Political Economy of Growth and Impoverishment in the Marcos Era.,p 47.

wretched existence, is one of the reasons why many towns do not progress in spite of the efforts of their inhabitants.<sup>1</sup>

The elite, colonial, and governmental bureaucracies are the ones who hold the vast majority of wealth within the country. This was true during Rizal's period, during President Marcos's reign (as outlined in the next chapter) and still resonates past Marcos' tyrannical reign. For example, James K. Boyce, a researcher specializing in the economic development of the Philippines over the last few decades, reveals:

The failure of rising GNP (Gross National Product) per capita to 'trickle down' to the poor in the Philippines in 1962-1986 emerges most clearly from an examination of trends in real wages and unemployment. In both rural and urban areas, the incomes of Filipino wage laborers (middle and lower class) declined substantially. Agricultural wages (mostly lower class laborers) fell by roughly one third in the [same] 25-year period.<sup>2</sup>

Rizal made it clear that citizens of the Philippines can advance themselves economically and also raise the status of their nation. However, he recognized there are many obstacles in that exist that harm the Philippine economy and society as a whole. Thus, the prime example would be the uneven distribution of wealth between the few wealthy families and the general population that has been established during colonial rule.

Particularly, one aspect of Jose Rizal's life that stands out clearly was his extensive academic background. At the end of his studies Rizal earned two doctorates, could converse in ten languages, and produced the literature examined throughout this project. Advocates of Rizal commonly refer to him as the first Filipino because of his "role in politicizing the term Filipino

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<sup>1</sup> Rizal, Jose. "Indolence of the Filipino". P 115.

<sup>2</sup> Boyce, The Philippines: The Political Economy of Growth and Impoverishment in the Marcos Era,p 23-25.

to denote those we now recognize as Filipino citizens, thus defining the Filipino people”.<sup>1</sup>

Without a doubt, this presents itself as a major accomplishment since the inhabitants of the Philippine Archipelago have a high degree of diversity of cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds.<sup>2</sup> Rizal presented a common identity, Filipino, for those residing in the Philippine islands who have had to endure Spanish colonial rule for centuries. Nonetheless, Rizal’s role in Philippine history as a hero is not without criticism. Critics attack the sincerity of his convictions due to the allegations that Rizal was merely a puppet of the American government whose purpose was to antagonize Spain’s hold in the Philippines. For example, Sharon Delmendo, a historian probing the effects of America on the Philippine’s perceived identity, points out:

A closer look at Jose Rizal’s engagement with the United States, both during his lifetime and in terms of the U.S. posthumous promotion of Rizal as a national hero during the U.S. colonial era will reveal the multivalence of the Philippine-American entanglement, both in terms of its length (antedating 1898 as the conventional starting point of Philippine American history) and in terms of its complexity (Rizal’s co-optation of a particular version of U.S. nationalism as the basis for his own version of Filipino nationalism during his lifetime, followed by the U.S. co-optation of Rizal’s legacy for its own colonial purpose after his death).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Delmendo, The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred of America in the Philippines. p 24.

<sup>2</sup> Rosaldo, Renato. “The Martyr and the Mayor: On the Politics of Identity in the Southern Philippines”. Cultural Citizenship in Island Southeast Asia: Nation and Belonging in the Hinterlands. University of California Press, London. 2003. p 3.

<sup>3</sup> Delmendo, The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred of America in the Philippines. p 25.

Thus, Delmendo illustrates the argument of some Rizal's critics who assert he was simply an "American-Sponsored Hero". Rizal was a well-educated individual and it is no surprise that his writings reflected the ideals of nationalism similar to those expressed by American colonialists during their Revolutionary War from England. This does not mean these nationalistic ideals were forced upon Rizal or falsely attributed to his writings. In fact, Filipinos themselves canonized Rizal even before his death and long before the critic's arguments of the American installation of Rizal as the Philippine's national hero.<sup>1</sup> Even half a century after the Philippines gained a complete autonomous government separate from American control, his message for Filipinos to take pride in them and their motherland is one that still resonates. Hence, this chapter focuses on literary works of Rizal, his messages for the Filipino people, and how assisted in creating a guideline for nationhood.

Many of Rizal's poems, letters and essays echo a sense of pride for all Filipinos to hold their nation and themselves in high regards. He illustrates the sense of duty Philippine citizens should have to their country and themselves. In his piece entitled "Love of Country", Rizal presents to the reader his convictions regarding love for one's country:

The poorer and more wretched she is, the more one is willing to suffer for her, the more she is adored, the more one finds pleasure in bearing up with her. It has been observed that the people of the mountains and wild valleys and those born on barren and dismal land are the very ones who remember more vividly their country, finding in the cities a terrible boredom which compels them to return to their native land. Is it because love of

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<sup>1</sup> Delmendo, The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred of America in the Philippines, p 25-26.



country is the purest, most heroic, and most sublime human sentiment? It is gratitude; it is affection for everything that reminds us of something of the first days of our life; it is the land where our ancestors are sleeping; it is the temple where we have worshiped God with the candor of babbling childhood...<sup>1</sup>.

Rizal alludes to the national issues that affect the country such as colonial rule to the political strife in the Mindanao islands. However, he makes it clear that the dire state of an individual's country should not discourage praise of their native soil. Instead, it should be a motivating factor to express pride and joy in one's homeland. Even those that are able to migrate from working in the fields to the major cities or even from the Philippines to work abroad, Rizal feels they should hold their original home in great reverence. Taken as a whole, Jose Rizal's literature relays the message to all Filipinos in the islands, those working abroad, and even second generation born overseas to always honor their ancestral motherland and to uphold their civic duties to their nation of ethnic origin.

Furthermore, Rizal was an intellectual promoter for Philippine nationalism as opposed to taking the violent extremist approach to opposing to foreign occupation. For example, Rizal wrote a "Letter to His Countrymen" while held as a prisoner at Fort Santiago. He was captured and imprisoned because he his name was labeled with the Katipunan revolutionaries without his consent. Even with his strong advocacy for Philippine liberty, Rizal stated:

I have given proofs that I am one most anxious for liberties for our country, and I am still desirous of them. But I place as a prior condition the education of the people that by

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<sup>1</sup> Rizal, Jose. "Love of Country". p 126.

means of instruction and industry our country may have an individuality of its own and make itself worthy of these liberties...holding these ideas, I cannot do less than condemn, as I condemn this uprising – as absurd, savage, and plotted behind my back – which dishonors us Filipinos and discredits who could plead our cause (331)<sup>1</sup>.

Rizal opposed this rebellion due to its rash methods and temporary goals achieved through violence. Rizal's desired liberation for the Philippines through diplomatically sound and socially practical methods. Agreeably Philippine historian, H. de la Costa, writes:

On many different occasions and in many different ways [Rizal] tried to bring home the point that “there would be no tyrants if there were no slaves”. If Filipinos wanted to enjoy the privileges of freedom, they had to learn how to carry its responsibilities. They had to learn how to work together; how to adopt a common plan and carry it into effect.<sup>2</sup>

Costa illustrates Rizal's reference to the tyrants as the Spanish colonial powers during Rizal's time and the slaves as the subordinate Filipino colonists. In Rizal's mind, complete independence from unwanted colonial influence could not merely come from violent uprisings. He strongly felt Filipinos needed to endure “a long period of self-training and self-discipline” in commitment to their country.<sup>1</sup> This coincided with the glorious vision he held of the Philippine archipelago. Clearly, Rizal desired to depict to its inhabitants and the other nations of the world that Filipinos are capable and deserving to have their independence and take pride in their nation.

Without a doubt, Jose Rizal's writings left him with numerous enemies as well as supporters. Yet, threats of arrest and death did not deter Rizal from delivering his controversial message during the time. Some historians agree such as Vicente L. Rafael who maintains it was

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<sup>1</sup>Rizal, Jose. “Letter to his Countrymen”

<sup>2</sup>Costa, H. de la. Readings in Philippine History. MDG Printing: Makait, 1965. p 231.

Rizal's "concern to chart the anatomy of power and its breakdown in Philippine society". Rizal kept writing despite his antagonistic message to church and state because "other Filipinos would recognize his death a kind of counter discourse with which to oppose colonial rule"<sup>1</sup>. In other words, Rizal understood that his perceptions of having the inhabitants of the Philippine Islands unite as Filipinos to ideally then politically be able to form one nation was a bold concept that extended past himself. He was not afraid to die for conveying his message for Philippine freedom because he understood he would need others to carry on his mission and that it would carry on past his death. Accordingly, it was his strong faith in the Filipino people that lead him to believe even after his death, Filipinos would continue to realize their significance as a nation and work for their right to create their own autonomous state.

Overall, Jose Rizal presents a reoccurring theme of a sense of duty to his native country, the Philippines, and its people, the Filipinos. He fervently calls for a need for Filipinos to be aware of their unique heritage and to be conscious that Filipinos can succeed separate from the customs and regulations implanted by the Spanish colonialists. In this regard, Costa discloses during Spanish colonial rule:

More prominent and more profitable offices in the Philippines were filled by Spaniards, many of the minor offices were filled by Filipinos. Therefore, when the Filipino party assumed the government for those districts which the Spaniards evacuated, the Filipinos had a system of government in which the Filipinos held most of the positions, already established for their purposes. It was but necessary to change its head and name... This

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<sup>1</sup> Rafel, Vicente L. Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule. New York: Cornell University Press, 1988. p 217

fact simplified matters for Filipinos and gave them the ground upon which they make their assertion of maintaining a successful administration.<sup>1</sup>

The smooth transition of local and national government offices from Spanish to Filipino hands exhibited the ability for a Philippine society and government to function efficiently without Spanish influence. Also, the Philippines always consisted of a diverse group of people from the mainland of Luzon to the southern Mindanao islands. Rizal viewed and preached about the thousands of Philippine islands and the convictions of its culturally diverse people as one “imagined community” of a nation for Filipinos to proudly belong to. Therefore, his messages for love of country, faith in fellow citizens, and duty to one’s country are lessons Filipinos can still adhere to in order to improve their individual lives and the Philippines as nation.

### **Sultan Kudarat**

The Philippine Government’s Ministry of Muslim Affairs established an award that was created in “recognition of extraordinary service to the cause of Filipino nationhood” and it’s awarded to those individuals who:

By upholding the ideal, espoused by Sultan Kudarat, that all Filipinos are one whatever be their faith, origin, or station in life – acting as a symbol and agent of that unity;

By proving that unity is essential in order to build the nation and resist all forms of foreign domination or aggression; By demonstrating that nationhood is founded on the

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<sup>1</sup> Costa, Readings in Philippine History, p 245.

unity and power of all the people.<sup>1</sup>

The government's endorsement of such a prestigious award in the name of Kudarat shows a common message regarding nationhood that the state wanted all Filipinos to agree to. This section of the "heroes" chapter will demonstrate how Kudarat's speeches and his political policies called for the necessity of unity among Filipinos to efficiently make the Philippines a nation that can stand on its own against unwanted foreign influence and interference.

### Background on the Sultanate System in the Southern Philippines

Located in the Southern region of the Philippine archipelago, there have always been multiple royal sultanates ruling in the southern Lanao region. In fact, there are more or less 291 sultanates with 582 to 873 sultans among the Maranaos [a term Filipinos of this region identify with] of Lanao today and even the present scholars on Maranao studies have failed to explain the mushrooming phenomenon of Lanao sultanates which, in all probability, far exceed the number of sultans and sultanates all over the world.<sup>2</sup> This fact has an interesting correlation with the Spanish failure to fully conquer and control this southern region of the Philippines. For instance, when there is one leader to remove, succeed, and an entire territory is gained. However, multiple leaders create a division of power and territory which can make it more difficult for a foreign power to conquer such a large region that is thousands of miles from home. Within this southern

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<sup>1</sup> Mastura, Michael O. "Sultan Kudarat's Role in Maguindanao." Muslim Filipino Experience: A Collection of Essays. Ministry of Muslim Affairs: Manila, 1984. p 20.

<sup>2</sup> Tawagon, Manuel R. "The Multiple Royal Sultanates of Lanao: A Historical Analysis". Eleventh Regional Semonar-Workshop on Oral and Local History. August 13-14, 1998. Notre Dame University: Cotabato City, Maguindanao Philippines. p 48

region, historians held a common belief that any local ruling party with the support of the ruling colonial power would be a formidable opponent for other neighboring powers to deal with. Yet, in the Lake Lanao region long-standing Spanish influence and control did not exist during Spain's colonial reign over the Philippines. Hence, it was difficult for the Americans, inheriting control of the Philippines after Spain, to apply a strategy of "divide and conquer" in the Lake Lanao section of the Philippine islands. The Americans attempted to establish a proxy sultanate government to advance their influence in the region. However, there was a lack of American policy, influence, and control to ultimately institute one "colonial puppet" sultanate in this region.<sup>1</sup> A colonial power's strategy to divide up the native inhabitants of a land in order to decrease solidarity and make a takeover easier did not easily apply to the Mindanao islands of the Philippines. Ultimately, Mindanao's numerous sultans in power made it difficult for the Spanish or the Americans to disrupt the solidarity of this region's inhabitants.

#### Kudarat's Role as a Symbol of Unification

Sultan Kudarat's was an influential sultan and also an overarching symbol of unity in the Philippines. In 1633, Cachil Kudarat inherited from his father, King Buyson, the title "the most powerful Sultanate of Mindanao". Along with the kingdom, Kudarat also inherited from his father a fervent detest of the Spaniards who were utilizing force to attempt to gain control and

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<sup>1</sup> Tawagon, Manuel R. "The Multiple Royal Sultanates of Lanao: A Historical Analysis". Eleventh Regional Semonar-Workshop on Oral and Local History. August 13-14, 1998. Notre Dame University: Cotabato City, Maguindanao Philippines. p 57.

convert to Christianity the Islamic Mindanao region of the Philippines. Mig Alvarez Enriquez illustrates the perspective of those who lived through Kudarat's reign and writes how:

The Spaniards were in awe of him for his intrepidity and ferociousness, but considered him nothing more than a religious fanatic and a ruthless brigand. The Mindanaoans, however, the Moslems in particular, looked up to him as a valiant defender of his faith and champion of his people.<sup>1</sup>

Even though the Spanish viewed him as an insignificant individual, his image as a "valiant defender" and "champion of his people" are what make Kudarat stand out in Philippine history as a prominent national hero. Thus, it is essential to examine why those who inhabited Mindanao held Kudarat in such high regard. First, as head of a major sultanate during the seventeenth century in Mindanao, this leader and warrior set about passionately contending the takeover of his people's government and faith by the Spaniards<sup>2</sup>. He gave speeches and wrote literature imploring his fellow Muslim brothers to realize that they are in the same united fight against the colonial oppression of the Spanish as the Christian Filipinos in the North. During a siege of Spanish forces at Lake Lanao, Kudarat cried out:

Look at the Tagalogs and the Visayans! Are you better than they? Do you think the Spaniards consider you better stuff? Have you not seen how Spaniards trample them under their feet? Do you not see how they are obliged to work at the oars and the factories with all their rigors? Can you tolerate anyone with a little Spanish blood to beat

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<sup>1</sup> Enriquez, Mig Alvarez. "Cachil Kudarat: A Play in Three Acts". Three Philippine Ethnic Hero Plays. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1991. p 99

<sup>2</sup> Enriquez, "Cachil Kudarat: A Play in Three Acts", p 95.

you up and grasp the fruits of your labor? Allow yourselves to be subjects [today] and tomorrow you will be at the oars.

Not only did Kudarat present himself as a Muslim leader, Kudarat preached for the freedom and nationhood for all Filipinos whether they were Christian from the North or Muslim from the South. He made it clear that the Spanish colonial powers were going to enslave all of the inhabitants of the Philippines despite the regional, linguistic, or religious differences among Filipinos. Essentially, he did not hate the Spaniards for their religion. Rather, Kudarat detested Spain's oppression and the forceful attempts to convert his people. The above delivered speech shows that whether Kudarat was Muslim or Christian and whether he resided in the Northern Luzon islands or Southern Mindanao Islands of the Philippines, he would convey the same unifying message for freedom from tyranny. Even after Spanish forces drove Kudarat from his kingdom, he never conceded to Spain's claim for sovereignty in his land or to their Christian beliefs.<sup>1</sup> As previously mentioned, though the Spanish and Christians viewed Kudarat as a "religious fanatic and ruthless brigand"<sup>2</sup>, his steadfast defense of his people, land, and faith molded his persona to fit the characteristics of a national hero seeking to unify his people and all Filipinos under the goal of freedom.

Despite Kudarat's reign taking place during the distant 17<sup>th</sup> century, he still currently remains an important national figure. As Michael Mastura writes:

There is demand from the present generation of Filipinos for the lifting up of a Muslim personality who can represent our national character and evoke the respect of the whole

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<sup>1</sup> Enriquez, "Cachil Kudarat: A Play in Three Acts" p 96.

<sup>2</sup> Enriquez "Cachil Kudarat: A Play in Three Acts", p 99



national community. There is reason to feel that Sultan Kudarat is such a personality and is well deserving of recognition as a national Filipino hero.<sup>1</sup>

Kudarat depicted sincere sentiments to maintain the sovereignty of his kingdom from foreign control. His steadfast dedication and faith in Philippine sovereignty and independence are qualities the Philippine government attempts to promote through its recognition of Kudarat through the aforementioned awards and celebration. For example, Arnold Molina Azurin writes:

Colonial cities such as Manila or Vigan were utilized as base of operations in the subjugation of other regions. And as you very well know the effects of this colonial experience centuries back are still strongly felt up to this day, as regions far from Manila now charge this metropolitan center of politics and commerce with “internal colonialism”.<sup>2</sup>

Even after Philippine independence, a common notion fear and mistrust existed regarding the officials in the capital, Manila, handling of the countries affairs because as Azurin argues, “Manila still imposes its will and worldview upon other regions, in much the same way the conquerors had imposed their might and culture”<sup>3</sup>. In other words, those who would agree with Azurin felt the Filipinos holding the seats of power of the independent Philippine government in Manila were demonstrating the same oppressive and forceful policies of previous colonial regimes. Thus, to some it appeared the Philippines remained under foreign influence in its domestic and international affairs. Yet, an examination of Kudarat provides a prime example of

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<sup>1</sup> Mastura, Michael O. “Sultan Kudarat’s Role in Maguindanao.” Muslim Filipino Experience: A Collection of Essays. Ministry of Muslim Affairs: Manila, 1984.

<sup>2</sup> Azurin, Arnold Molina. Reinventing the Filipino Sense of Being and Becoming. Second Edition. University of the Philippine press: Quezon City 1995. P 66-67.

<sup>3</sup> Azurin, Reinventing the Filipino Sense of Being and Becoming, p 67.

a Filipino firm leader who did not need to succumb to foreign influence to be successful. Also, he presented himself as a great unifying leader looking to advance his nation. Historians, such as Michael Mastura grant Kudarat credit for having established the most extensive political entity governed by native rule in the Philippines until the formation of the Philippine republic. Furthermore, Mastura praises Kudarat for his historical maintenance of relationships of trade and allegiance with neighboring Malay nations that has led to current Philippine vital alliances such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).<sup>1</sup> The sultan understood that maintaining the independence of the Filipino people was important and necessary in order to develop beneficial relationships with neighboring countries as well. His actions correspond with Jose Rizal's message to his fellow countrymen in which he proclaims, "People and governments are correlated and complementary: a fatuous government would be an anomaly among righteous people, just as a corrupt people cannot exist under just rulers and wise laws. Like people, like government, [I] will say in paraphrase of a popular adage".<sup>2</sup> Even centuries before Rizal's time, Kudarat knew illustrating the ability to resist colonial influence and corruption would affect the way potential allies and trading partners viewed his kingdom and its people. Hence, Kudarat resisting Spanish bribes, opposing forceful religious influence and maintaining strong alliances with other sultan's in Mindanao and other neighboring Malay nations are a few examples of the Sultan acting not to benefit himself but rather his kingdom and the Filipino nation as a whole. Clearly, Kudarat illustrated himself as an individual protecting the interests of his nation and can be attributed to the construction of nationhood in the Philippines.

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<sup>1</sup> Mastura, "Sultan Kudarat's Role in Maguindanao.", p 24.

<sup>2</sup> Rizal, "Indolence of the Filipino", p 118-119.

In contrast, there are Muslim Separatists in the Philippines, such as the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front), who use a historical Muslim figure such as Sultan Kudarat to promote in their view, “a nationalistic struggle that had as its goal the establishment of a single independent homeland for the three major and ten minor ethno linguistic groups that compromise the Muslim peoples of the Philippines”.<sup>1</sup> The MNLF overarching mission is to establish an autonomous government for the Filipinos in the Southern Philippines who in their view are geographically, linguistically, religiously, and view politically far removed from the Christian based government located in the Philippine’s capital, Malacanang, in Manila. The MNLF’s rationale for self-determination dates back to Treaty of Paris in 1898, which involved the sale of the entire Philippine Archipelago to the United States for twenty million dollars. This infuriated the people of Mindanao because “they knew in their hearts they were never ‘conquered’ by the Spaniards. Thus, they were not part and parcel of the ‘conquered Philippines’ that was to be sold”.<sup>2</sup> The MNLF and its sympathizers argue that prominent Muslim leaders such as Kudarat fought to preserve the independence of Mindanao from any external control whether it is Spain, the United States, or a Philippine democracy who the Mindanao populace feel does not adequately represent their needs. Nur Misuari, the head of the MNLF, asserts:

They [Christian Filipinos] shamelessly branded our people “Filipinos” despite the fact that our forebearers had fought for three centuries to forestall the imposition of such [a] colonial label. But as a sign of our people’s continuous refusal accept such colonial

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<sup>1</sup> McKenna, Thomas M. Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines. University of California Press: Los Angeles, 1998. p 164.

<sup>2</sup> Ramierz, Edgardo B. “A Historical Account of the Mindanao Peace Process in Southern Philippines”. Eleventh Regional Seminar-Workshop on Oral and Local History. August 13-14, 1998. Notre Dame University: Cotabato City, Maguindanao Philippines. p 35.

designation, the term 'Filipino' is up to the present days till loathsome to the task of our [Moro] five million people.<sup>1</sup>

Misuari perceives Kudarat as a national hero strictly for the Moro people. In fact, the MNLF drafted the usage of the label Bangsa Moro, community of Muslims, because they wanted an identity that would only refer to Muslims in the Philippines.<sup>2</sup> They wish to establish their own national identity based on their geographical and religious differences from the Christian majority democratic government. There are individuals such as the MNFL's Misuari who view the Philippine Republic's control over the Moro people of Mindanao in the same light as a colonial oppression. Therefore, Misuari and his supporters proclaim:

We need the regional autonomy because we have problems we alone fully understand and we alone, united and determined, can solve. From the time of the Americans, it has always been Manila and the people in Manila telling us what our problems are and how to solve them. Our problems have remained unsolved.<sup>3</sup>

In their view, Sultan Kudarat's mission is not finished until the Moro people of the Philippines are able to establish and run an autonomous government separate from the influence of the politicians in Manila.

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<sup>1</sup> Horavitch, Patricia. "The Martyr and the Mayor: On the Politics of Identity in the Southern Philippines". Cultural Citizenship in Island Southeast Asia: Nation and Belonging in the Hinterlands. Ed. Renato Rosaldo. University of California Press, London. 2003. p 25.

<sup>2</sup> Horavitch, Patricia. "The Martyr and the Mayor: On the Politics of Identity in the Southern Philippines". Cultural Citizenship in Island Southeast Asia: Nation and Belonging in the Hinterlands. Ed. Renato Rosaldo. University of California Press: London, 2003. p 24

<sup>3</sup> Mastura, Michael O. "MNLF's Path to Parliamentary Struggle". Muslim Filipino Experience: A Collection of Essays. Lecture given on June 25, 1980 in Manila.

*Rizal and Kudarat: Similar Views Regarding the Approach to Nationhood*

There needs to be a more open interpretation of Kudarat's actions and concepts in regards to unity. The Philippines is a nation full of a culturally and religiously diverse populace. Evidently, there are religious differences such as Christian or Moro and cultural differences based on residency in Northern Luzon, Southern Mindanao islands, or other parts of the Philippine archipelago. However, it is vital to also note the larger historical connections that connect these thousands of islands as the Philippine Archipelago and its respective inhabitants. Thankfully, similarities between the convictions of Jose Rizal and Sultan Kudarat allow Filipinos to have an agreeable and practical outline for nationhood.

For example, Kudarat's message for his Muslim followers to struggle against the Spanish invaders mirrors the Rizal's idealistic view for Filipinos to recognize their prominence and resist outside control. As previously noted, Rizal objected rash and violent means to achieve Philippine political freedom. On the other hand, Kudarat has been documented to destroy churches and desecrate Christian symbols of worship such as Jesus Christ on the crucifix. This caused the Spanish soldiers to, "fear him for his intrepidity and ferociousness. [Even] the [Spanish] friars stood in terror of him for his virulent hostility against Christianity".<sup>1</sup> However, the non-Christian Filipinos who were victimized by the atrocities committed of the Christian Spaniards during this time, viewed Kudarat's acts of violence as heroic and liberating. For example, a play based on Sultan Kudarat and his struggle with the Spanish sheds some light on how the Sultan's

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<sup>1</sup> Enriquez, "Cachil Kudarat: A Play in Three Acts", p 99

followers viewed him. A conversation between captured Moro soldiers and Spanish conquistadores and priests seeking to convert Kudarat's kingdom demonstrate the reverence and respect Kudarat's men had of him:

Abul [Muslim Warrior]: The conversion of Sultan Kudarat? You must be crazy. Rather make a salamander live in water. He has sworn to kill all priests who set foot anywhere on his land. If it is known I am a convert, he will have me skinned alive and roasted.

Moro Warrior No. 3: Go ahead [Spaniards], kill us. We would rather die than be like you (*spitting the word out hatefully*) – Christians!<sup>1</sup>

The Sultan's men whole-heartedly believed in his severe anti-Christian policies and would even sacrifice their own lives in the name of their faith and freedom. As a prominent leader of an entire region and its people, Kudarat utilized violence to convey to the Spanish conquistadores his firm and resolute resistance to their control and attempts at religious conversion.

However, Sultan Kudarat's actions were not meant to justify acts of terrorism that have occurred in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the Philippines. These "rebellious acts of terror" many accredit to the modern movement for Muslim separatism. In summary, Thomas M. McKenna, a historical expert on Muslim Rebels and Rulers, writes how this separatist movement:

Originated among a set of Philippine Muslim students and intellectuals in the late 1960s.

It gained popular support after the eruption of sectarian violence in Cotabato in 1970 and emerged as an armed secessionist front in response to the declaration of martial law by

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<sup>1</sup> Enriquez, "Cachil Kudarat: A Play in Three Acts", p 112

Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos in 1972. Muslim separatist rebels, numbering as many as thirty thousand armed insurgents, fought the Philippine military to a stalemate obliging the Philippine government to negotiate a cease-fire and peace treaty in 1977. Muslim civilians overwhelmingly supported the separatist insurgent and suffered cruelly at the hands of the Philippine military.<sup>1</sup>

It would be unjust and biased to compare Kudarat's violent techniques in history, with the bombings, sabotage, and other acts of terrorism utilized by extreme Muslim separatists in the south to achieve their goals of self-determination from the Congress established in Manila.

Kudarat laid the groundwork not simply just for Muslim ethnic consciousness but for Filipinos as a whole. Similarly, as historian Patricia Horavitch asserts:

[The important] role of Sultan Mohammad Dipatuan Kudarat of Maguindanao in the development of our national consciousness. The case for national consciousness here is not synonymous with the concept of nationalism, but is an instance of the collective thinking of knowledge groups in our society. It implies an awareness of the problems and affairs of the Filipino national community in a collective sense rather than an isolated viewpoint of Maguindanaons only.<sup>2</sup>

Rather, Kudarat's steadfast defense and willingness to do what it takes to uphold the integrity of his people are principles Jose Rizal has been illustrated to endorse as well.

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<sup>1</sup> McKenna, Thomas M. Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines. University of California Press: London, 1998. p 3.

<sup>2</sup> Horavitch, Patricia. "The Martyr and the Mayor: On the Politics of Identity in the Southern Philippines". Cultural Citizenship in Island Southeast Asia: Nation and Belonging in the Hinterlands. Ed. Renato Rosaldo. University of California Press, London. 2003. 16-43.

Additionally, it was earlier mentioned that there are those who hold a strict interpretation of Kudarat's resistance to oppression to mean that Moro Filipinos cannot share the same national sentiments as those who support the Christian majority government. Hence, they feel Moro Filipinos need to establish their own unique government and national identity. It is true that at times the Christian majority government and Philippine populace unfortunately forget the specific needs of their Moro brothers to the south. Yet, these inadequacies and proposed solutions are often exaggerated by extremists or separatist's movements to propel their cause. Both the Philippine Congress and Executive Branch that convene at Malacanang have been aware of the need to address pressing and particular issues that affect Moro Filipinos. The regimes of President Marcos, Aquino, and Ramos all passed numerous legislations attempting to satisfy and quiet the rising rebel sentiments in the southern Philippines.<sup>1</sup> These numerous pieces of legislation were needed because dealings with the Moro Filipinos of the south were not properly handled during the establishment of the independent Philippine nation.

Correspondingly, T.J.s. George points out that:

In retrospect it would seem that the founders of the first republic were not as keenly sensitive to the South and its background as their feelers to co-operation might have suggested. They were clear in their minds about the national integrity of the Philippine archipelago, unclear about how to build it up. The weight of numbers had already made the leaders at the national level think primarily of the Christian majority. They were not

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<sup>1</sup> Ramirez, Edgardo B. "A Historical Account of the Mindanao Peace Process in Southern Philippines". Eleventh Regional Seminar-Workshop on Oral and Local History. August 13-14, 1998. Notre Dame University: Cotabato City, Maguindanao Philippines. p 38-42.



religiously inclined and had none of the ruler's animosity towards Muslims, but they had no particular awareness of Muslim problems either.<sup>1</sup>

Agreeably, George appears to make a sympathetic argument for the shortcomings of the Philippine government in its proper recognition and care of the Moro Filipinos. He argues Malacanang does not purposely exhibit religious or cultural animosity against those who reside in Mindanao. To be more precise, there exists a lack of knowledge and experience in the government's dealings with these Filipinos who undoubtedly have a different historical, religious, and social background from the Christian majority population of Luzon to the north.

Perhaps, the solution is not to utilize Kudarat as an inflammatory figure for Muslim Filipinos take up arms to politically establish themselves as a separate nation. One approach Moros could take in order is to establish their national identity in order to stress the accomplishments of national champion of unity such as Sultan Kudrat. It allows Moro Filipinos to assimilate their unique history into the Filipino identity as a whole. In fact, this is message given by Michael Mastura a direct descendant of Sultan Kudarat. In 1981, he was the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Muslim affairs and project leader for the President Commission for the Codification of Muslim Laws. In a public speech, Mastura contends:

The tacit recognition of Sultan Kudarat of Maguindanao as a Muslim personality evoking admiration, veneration and emulation to correspond to [Christian Filipino Heroes]

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<sup>1</sup> George, T.J.S. Revolt in Mindanao: The Rise of Islam in Philippine Politics. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1980. p 75.

Gabriela Salang and Pio del Pilar. Together they [all three] now stand in Makati as a triangular movement of our national unity and solidarity.<sup>1</sup>

Mastura realizes endorsing Kudarat and his undertakings for freedom in the same light as the Christian majority's traditional national heroes extensively benefits the Muslim cause for sovereignty and recognition. Allowing Kudarat to support nationhood for only the benefit of Moro Filipinos and using such a famous figure to revolutionary violence achieves reforms that in Jose Rizal's words, "come from below [and] are irregularly gained and uncertain".<sup>2</sup> Taken as a whole, Kudarat assists the Moro cause for establishing a national identity through his ability to bring awareness to all of the inhabitants of the Philippine islands the unique history of the Muslim Filipino but also their common place in Philippine solidarity. This education of the people and the government will lead to a more Muslim sensitive government in Malacanang and ensure a proper and significant place for the Moro Filipino in not just the Philippines but the entire global historical perspective.

In addition to Kudarat, Rizal was also persecuted by the Spanish elite and corrupt Philippine officials for his literature and scholarly works that blamed many of the nation's hardships on Spain's colonial rule. He preached the necessity for Filipinos to be aware of their rights to desire and achieve freedom from colonial overseers. Not only did he promote the right for Filipinos to pursue their own republic but Rizal firmly believed that Filipinos working together could bring their nation to greater glory than any colonial superpower ever could. Otherwise, Rizal felt the lack of national sentiment in the colonized Philippines is a major factor

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<sup>1</sup> Mastura, Michael O. "Sultan Kudarat's Role in Maguindanao." Muslim Filipino Experience: A Collection of Essays. Ministry of Muslim Affairs: Manila, 1984. p 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> Rizal, Jose. "Letter to His Countrymen". p 30.

in the indolence of its people and the “nation” as a whole. In his essay, “The Indolence of the Filipino” Rizal goes on to say:

A man in the [colonial] Philippines is only an individual, he is not a member of a nation. He is forbidden and denied the right of association [with his people and nation], and is therefore weak and sluggish. The Philippines are an organism whose cells seem to have no arterial system to irrigate it or nervous system to communicate its impressions...In the view of some this is expedient so that a colony may be a colony; perhaps they are fight, but not to the effect that a colony may flourish.<sup>1</sup>

Rizal did not believe the Philippines nor could the Filipino individual never reach its full potential for prosperity and success while under colonial influence. His intellectual prowess emulates his pacifist approach towards Philippine autonomy. Rizal’s weapon for change and unity revolves around his essays, poems, and speeches that outline the duty he feels all Filipinos owe to themselves and their country to seek not only freedom but progress. He firmly believes in the glory of the Philippines and attempts to pass on those same prideful sentiments to his fellow countrymen. In a letter titled, “Letter to the Filipinos”, Rizal writes:

If I thought that I were the only resource for the consummation of a policy of progress in the Philippines and were I convinced that my countrymen were going to make use of my services, perhaps I should hesitate about taking step; but there are others who can take my place, who can do my work to advantage.<sup>2</sup>

Rizal understands that his goals in creating a united and proud image of the Filipino and the Philippines as a whole extend beyond himself as an individual. He did not wish to be labeled a

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<sup>1</sup> Rizal, “Indolence of the Filipino”, p 121.

<sup>2</sup> Rizal, Jose. “Letter to the Filipinos”.

hero but rather desired others to remember and continue his nationalistic teachings. His literary works, letters, and lectures provide the groundwork and the history necessary for others to carry on his celebration of Filipinos and their motherland.

To sum up, despite their different places and roles in Philippine history, both Kudarat and Rizal dedicated much of their lives resisting foreign influence and preaching to their fellow country men that the nation of the Philippines to which they belong is one they should revere and treat with great pride. As Sultan of a large Muslim region, Kudarat's violent actions and condemning speech against foreign oppression reflect his first-hand experience of having to deal with the Spanish attempts to directly take control of his land and its people. His firm opposition to foreign subjugation can provide platform of strength and dignity for Filipinos to unite under. Rizal as a well-educated individual had to consider the abstract notion of nationhood and the loss of Filipino pride due to colonial domination for centuries. This depiction of an absent national identity due to the detrimental effects of colonialism was a strong manifesto for nationalism that people could relate to. It gave people a sense of pride but also hope that it is possible to come together and work hard to bring the Philippine State out of the classification as a colony and into the world scene as a powerful and self-sufficient nation. Therefore, the previously mentioned National Centennial Commission's (NCC) objective behind the June 12, 1998 Centennial Parade was to "display [the] historical vignettes commemorating the principal actors and events in the development of the nation" and some floats "celebrated the variegated Muslim heritage".<sup>1</sup> The NCC knew it was vital to reveal the unmistakable and vital role Kudarat and the Moro

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<sup>1</sup> Bankoff & Weekley, Post-Colonial national Identity in the Philippines, p 45.

Filipinos played in the revolutionary history of the Philippines. To say that Moro Filipinos do not share the same national identity as the Christian majority would entail cutting them out of the historical outline of the Philippine archipelago. The immense linguistic, cultural, regional, and religious diversity of a state made up of thousands of islands is the beauty of the Philippine nation, its people, and history. It is this beauty in the Philippine nation that both Rizal and Kudarat realized, preached, defended, and died for despite their cultural, geographic, and religious differences. In their respective eras, both men encouraged Filipinos to unite under a banner of nationhood to oppose the outside powers seeking to exploit the inhabitants of the Philippine Archipelago and also to work to improve the status of the Filipino people and their state. In the end, Jose Rizal and Sultan Kudarat are considered national heroes because their names continue carry with them their respective ideals of Filipino dignity to convey to Filipinos and the world for generations to come.

Subsequently, the next two chapters examining the Marcos and Aquino Administrations can provide more insight for how these two individuals have affected the establishment of Philippine nationhood.

## **Chapter 2: Philippine President & Dictator: Ferdinand Marcos**

### Brief Narrative and Introduction

One thing to take from both Jose Rizal and Sultan Kudarat in the previous chapter is that neither of them solely dedicated their efforts towards being recognized as heroic or important figures. Their ideology and actions were mainly to benefit the Filipino people and the Philippines as a nation rather than themselves. To take this point further, a “state” refers to the politically drawn borders of a country that constitute the area of a country, whereas a “nation or national identity” is the “sense of awareness and belonging to the ‘imagined community’ ”<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the nationalistic exploits of Rizal and Kudarat gave Filipinos a concrete example of how to contribute and belong to the Philippine nation. Correspondingly, Bankoff and Weekley argue:

Ideological Hegemony [i.e. national identity] is not reproduced simply as a set of ideas; those ideas must infiltrate people’s lives in material forms in order to constitute the reality they are supposed to represent. The most politically stable nation-states are those whose nation-making is also state-making, where the citizens daily live a connection with the material rewards of their imagined community.<sup>2</sup>

Despite their differences, Rizal and Kudarat did not advertise themselves as “national heroes” but rather presented Filipinos with ideals and a model of how to identify and benefit from the Philippine national identity. However, Ferdinand Marcos appeared to be quite the opposite.

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<sup>1</sup> Referenced in Introduction and Chapter 1

<sup>2</sup> Bankoff & Weekley, Post-Colonial National Identity in the Philippines, p 18.

During his political career, he made it a priority to exemplify his proposed heroism. For example:

Late in 1968, a group of Marcos's golfing parents put together a movie company to help the president's campaign. Their plan was to make a full-length Hollywood feature film about Marcos the war hero. It could be on the nation's screens before Election Day in November 1969. Their aim: a money-maker, a myth maker, a vote-maker.<sup>1</sup>

The "heroics" of President Ferdinand Marcos were not advertised to the Filipino people to benefit them or build their sense of nation. Rather, political propaganda such as the aforementioned movie was created to benefit Marcos and his regime. Marcos wanted to instill within the minds of Filipinos that he would be as much a hero and national figure of pride to the Philippines as Jose Rizal or Sultan Kudarat. Therefore, while dedicating a Philippine postal stamp to Sultan Kudarat in 1975, President Ferdinand Marcos proclaimed to the Filipino people:

Under the [Marcos] New Society, we have recognized Sultan Kudarat as a national hero, but not just a hero of the Muslims but a hero of the entire Filipino race, the Malay race. Sultan Kudarat is recognized not only in the commemorative stamp. Upon my degree, he is recognized as a hero befitting the highest decorations and orders of the Republic of the Philippines and this is the Order of Sultan Kudarat.<sup>2</sup>

Marcos utilized Sultan Kudarat and his unifying message for Filipinos to resist oppressive foreign influence in the affairs of Filipinos. His speech during this commemorating ceremony

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<sup>1</sup> Rempel, William C. Delusions of a Dictator: The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in His Secret Diaries. Little Brown and Company: Toronto, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Mastura, Michael O. "Sultan Kudarat's Role in Maguidiano". Muslim Filipino Experience: A Collection of Essays. Ministry of Muslim Affairs: Manila, 1984. p 23.

represented Marcos' endeavor to parallel his rule and presidency alongside a historical figure such as Kudarat. Why does Marcos publicly illustrate such reverence for a historical figure from centuries ago? Some argue President Marcos wanted to his regime to be etched into Philippine history with the same nationalistic prestige that follows Sultan Kudarat. As Michael Mastura points out:

Indeed, the Muslim Filipinos were the only Filipinos who had successes in forming what could be called "states" prior to the Spanish arrival in the Archipelago. The process continued even after the Spaniards came – and indeed was accelerated by the challenge of their incursion. The greatest achievement along this line was the Sultunate created by Kudarat who at the height of his power presided over the most extensive political entity governed by a native rule in the Philippines until the formation of the present republic.<sup>1</sup>

As examined in the previous chapter, Kudarat was deemed a nationalistic hero because of his constant opposition to the Spain's military and social colonial forces. Mastura also discusses how there was an award created by the Philippine Government, "in recognition of extraordinary service to the cause of Filipino nationhood" and this is the award's citation: "by holding the ideal espoused by Sultan Kudarat, that all Filipinos are one whatever be their faith, origin, or station in life – acting as a symbol and agent of that unity"<sup>2</sup>. Mastura describes these awards in the name of Sultan Kudarat established during Marcos's reign to reflect his desire to identify with the nationalistic and heroic characteristics of a figure such as Kudarat .

Similarly, William Rempel writes that from the Marcos's reign on December 30, 1965, the newly elected Ferdinand Marcos delivered:

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<sup>1</sup> Mastura, "Sultan Kudarat's Role in Maguidiano", 24.

<sup>2</sup> Mastura, "Sultan Kudarat's Role in Maguidiano", 20.



Stirring oratory that American guests compared to John F. Kennedy's. Marcos declared that the country had given him a 'mandate for greatness'...[Marcos's family] were, trumpeted the press, 'the Kennedys of the Philippines'.<sup>1</sup>

Rempel reveals that Marcos sought to establish his regime's legacy with the same "greatness" that the Kennedys were revered in America. Likewise, it appears the Philippine press and citizens believed and supported Marcos during his first term because, "as he approached midterm, Marcos was riding a crest of unprecedented popularity and power".<sup>2</sup>

Yet, the notion that Marcos was a unifying and heroic figure for the Philippine nation would change. Even at the early stages of his presidential reign, "Marcos had neglected his country's wellbeing in order to prepare for a more important task, that of perpetuating his dynasty. He had already begun putting together a political machine that would help perpetuate his rule".<sup>3</sup> While his efficient political machine kept Marcos in power for almost two decades, it was the same deplorable politics that lead to his demise. His regime's policies began to reflect the oppressive and self-interested procedures of the colonial powers that have dominated the Philippines for centuries prior. Taken as a whole, this chapter gives a brief background of Marcos's life, examines his political career, and examines his claims of his achievements and goals for the Philippines versus the wide-spread corruption and repression that actually occurs. In the end, rival political factions and the Filipino citizens did not unite under Marcos but rather against him.

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<sup>1</sup> Rempel, Delusions of a Dictator, p 18.

<sup>2</sup> Rempel, Delusions of a Dictator, p 21.

<sup>3</sup> McDougald, Charles C. The Marcos File: Was he a Philippine Hero or a Corrupt Tyrant. San Francisco Publishers: San Francisco, 1987. p 120.

Without a doubt, Ferdinand Marcos led a colorful and eventful life. However, many aspects of it are criticized as exaggerated and even fabricated. Marcos was born September 11, 1917.<sup>1</sup> He joined the Philippine Army November 1941 and served until February 1946 as a third lieutenant, a middle ranking officer. Then during the construction of his political career eighteen years later, Marcos pronounced that he was the most decorated Filipino soldier during World War II. His biography, For Every Tear a Victory, released during his 1965 presidential campaign trumpeted his wartime exploits. However, Charles McDougald points out:

Of all the medals he claims [32-34 depending on the source], some are duplicates, but almost all have been disputed. Three things are noteworthy about his awards: first, all after based on affidavits after-the-fact; second, no source documents of that period can substantiate his claims; and, third, there are people and documentation that dispute his claims.<sup>2</sup>

Usually, during times of war heroic figures were made famous for their courageous and extraordinary acts. Particularly, proper recognition for acts of bravery or wounds from battle was awarded quickly following the extraordinary event but Marcos was not granted his “awards” until almost two decades later.<sup>2</sup> . The eighteen year delay for “Marcos’ medals” had no other purpose but bring Marcos publicity in novels and the media for his 1965 presidential election. Additionally, Belinda Aquino writes how Marcos understood the ramifications of being labeled a military hero, “because of its public image as the protector of national security, or as the “hero”

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<sup>1</sup> McDougald, Charles C. The Marcos File: Was he a Philippine Hero or a Corrupt Tyrant. San Francisco Publishers: San Francisco, 1987. p 3.

<sup>2</sup> McDougald, Charles C. The Marcos File: Was he a Philippine Hero or a Corrupt Tyrant. San Francisco Publishers: San Francisco, 1987. p 13.

of independence struggles, the military establishment usually has a privileged position in society”.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it appears almost everything Marcos did during his political and presidential career was to further his personal interests and prolong his seat in power. This is just the beginning regarding the actions Marcos is willing to take to gain and retain power in the Philippines.

In fact, Marcos’ has been labeled a corrupt official long before his acquisition of the presidency. As a Congressman, when he had become involved in scandal Marcos was not afraid to utilize his “powerful friends”. For instance, Harry S. Stonehill, an American tobacco business man, was investigated by the National Bureau of Investigation. In the end, a “blue book” was found in his possessions that included the name of several politicians, such as Ferdinand Marcos, who would receive special treatment if they ever decided to travel to NY. They were ready to testify in Congress about the matter but all of a sudden the issue disappeared from Congress’s agenda. Clearly, Marcos had powerful friends even then.<sup>2</sup> This example of favoritism and a government cover up is just one of the countless cases that involve Marcos throughout his political career. He continues to utilize his numerous and powerful connections for personal gain even during his time as president of the Philippines.

Then, in the year 1965 President Ferdinand Marcos stepped into the Philippine presidential office for the first time. A CIA memorandum entitled “Philippine Elections” illustrates the social sentiment in the Philippines during this election period:

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<sup>1</sup> Aquino, Belinda A. Politics of Plunder: The Philippines Under Marcos. University of the Philippines College of Public Administration: Quezon City, 1987. p 26.

<sup>2</sup> McDougald, Charles C. The Marcos File: Was he a Philippine Hero or a Corrupt Tyrant. San Francisco Publishers: San Francisco, 1987. p 117.

There is a generalized condition of discontent and lawlessness in the Philippines that is fed by several basic and interrelated factors: widespread rural poverty; deep social and economic cleavage between upper and lower classes; extensive unemployment and underemployment; widespread graft, corruption, and favoritism in the government and in business. In the cities, especially among the youth, there is frustration over the lack of political and economic opportunity.<sup>1</sup>

Both President Marcos and the United States were aware of this discontent among the citizens regarding the Philippine political system. This CIA report provides further proof that Filipinos knew both local and international officials were aware of the political and socioeconomic situation in the Philippines that only benefited the elite while the general population suffers. Agreeably, Wilfredo Arce and Ricardo Abad illustrate in their work, "The Social Situation", these two sectors of Philippine society, the few rich and the majority of people who are poor:

There is a relatively small but significant and powerful sector that derives its livelihood by controlling much of the nation's resources and heading the country's public and private bureaucracies. The population in this sector includes government and business leaders, and other "influentials". These people and their families were affluent.<sup>2</sup>

The population of this sector included government and business leaders, and other "influentials". These people, and their families were affluent and they lived largely in the country's urban areas and the lifestyle they follow is modeled largely after that of people living in developed Western Nations. This is exactly the aspect of Philippine society that Marcos, his family, political allies,

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<sup>1</sup> McDougald, Charles C. The Marcos File: Was he a Philippine Hero or a Corrupt Tyrant. San Francisco Publishers: San Francisco, 1987. p 118.

<sup>2</sup> Arce and Abad, "The Social Situation", p 56,

and underground cronies held and flourished at the expense of the Filipino people during his reign. With an elite few controlling and consolidating much of the wealth in the Philippines, it is no wonder people felt, “they do not have the power or the resources to accumulate more resources and thus become less poor”.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the general population felt the government did little to try and improve their socioeconomic situation:

[The disadvantaged sector] are poor because they are unemployed or because the material rewards they command do not allow more than a mere sustenance level of living. They do not have the power or the resources to accumulate more resources thus become less poor. Another equally important characteristic is their adherence to a traditional style of life.<sup>2</sup>

Jobs are hard to come by and even if one is employed the meager wages they earn are barely enough to survive. One reason for the segregation of wealth was that the wealthy Filipinos could afford to go to a prominent school and they had the funds and connections to obtain a well-paying job. Similarly, James K. Boyce explains how the “rural” elite spend their household income:

They invest in their children’s education so as to give them access to urban salaried jobs, often saving to put the first child through school, who then finances the education of the second, and so on. With the declining profitability of rice production in the 1980s, many have also diversified into local services and trading activities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Arce and Abad, “The Social Situation”, p 57.

<sup>2</sup> Arce and Abad, “The Social Situation”, p 56-57.

<sup>3</sup> Boyce, James K. The Philippines: The Political Economy of Growth and Impoversihment in the Marcos Era. University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu, 1993. p 143.

Even Filipinos who were financially stable understood the importance of education for their children in order to increase their probability of receiving a well-paying job. Those who could not afford to an education to leave the declining rice production industry were forced to remain laboring in that sector. Thus, in the end the economically disadvantaged and undereducated Filipinos were forced into low paying agricultural or service labor in order to survive day by day rather than advance themselves and their family.

Correspondingly, Marcos began his second term the same way he did his first. He was not putting any noticeable effort to alleviate the country's problems of poverty, corruption, and economic strife. In fact, most of his efforts were targeted towards reforming the Philippine Constitution and government to fit his desires to run for a third term. In a historical analysis of President Marcos's diaries retrieved after his flight from the Philippines in 1986, William C Rempel writes:

Already plans for a constitutional convention were well under way, and it seemed likely that a new national charter would be drafted sometime during his second term, a document that could simply eliminate the current limit in time for Marcos to campaign again in the 1973 election...Barely inaugurated to his second term, Marcos again was thinking ahead to reelection.<sup>1</sup>

His obsession to control power in the Philippine government was never ending. At the beginning of his second in 1970 term, Marcos was presented with the same dire socioeconomic problems

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<sup>1</sup> Rempel, William C. Delusions of a Dictator: The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in His Secret Diaries. Little Brown and Company: Toronto, 1993. p 31.

that he had during his first presidential term.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, those issues were a priority on his political agenda. As extreme as it sounds to single handedly alter the Philippine Constitution, it did not stop him at all. In fact, he did everything he could to influence its writing to benefit his regime, including bribery; “in what became known as the “Payola Expose,” Imelda was caught distributing envelopes of cash to delegates who might be convinced to write a Marcos version”.<sup>2</sup> Marcos’ had many supporters in the Philippine elite and government because his allies knew as long as he was in power he would make sure they were well taken care of. Thus, some experts argue that part of the imbalance of the distribution of the Philippine’s wealth was because of Marcos’ monopolization of many of the Philippines major industries and sectors of the economy. As aforementioned, a majority of the Philippine’s wealth has been held in elite and “influential” families. Yet, Marcos desired to further condense the distribution of the Philippine’s funds for himself and his allies. For instance, Eugenio Lopez Sr., a prominent Philippine business owner, was in the U.S. when martial law was declared in September 1972. Marcos took the opportunity to have his son imprisoned, family threatened, and thus allowed Marcos to gradually take over the business empire owned by the Lopez family. Their business empire consisted of the nation’s largest corporation, six televisions and twenty-one radio stations, one of the leading newspapers, and the Benpres Corporation, which had several investments in various companies around the country.<sup>3</sup> Finally, after two years the elder Lopez reveals:

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<sup>1</sup> McDougald, Charles C. The Marcos File: Was he a Philippine Hero or a Corrupt Tyrant. San Francisco Publishers: San Francisco, 1987. p 119.

<sup>2</sup> McDougald, The Marcos File, pg 120.

<sup>3</sup> Aquino, Belinda A. Politics of Plunder: The Philippines Under Marcos. University of the Philippines College of Public Administration: Quezon City, 1987. p 37.

Our properties were given to the Marcos family through its ‘front men’ in exchange for the release of my son and the safety of our family. Some of our properties are now owned and/or operated by the ‘front men’ through some ‘artificial agreements’ and some of them have been taken over without any type of agreement, legal or illegal.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, Marcos was not afraid to exercise his power and even threats of violence to meet the economic gains he desires. It was no mystery that during Marcos’ reign most of the economy came under the control of Marcos and his associates. Another example, Roberto Benedicto, one of Marcos’s right hand men, monopolized the sugar industry. He also shared control of the mass media along with other Marcos cronies such as Benjamin Romualdez, Eduartdo Conjuangca and Juan Ponce Enrile. Jose campos another loyal crony was undisputed leader of the pharmaceutical industry.<sup>1</sup> This list continues to includes Marcos’ allies in multiple and vital parts of the Philippine economy such as real estate, oil and energy, tobacco, Philippine Airlines (PAL), and even the gambling industry. Then, to ensure his protection and ability to use force when necessary, Marcos obtained military allies, “notably General Ver, likewise became visible figures in the palace circle of cronies. Largely excluded from the traditional elite, ‘the generals’ gained a new prominence with their lavish mansions, frequent trips abroad and changing lifestyles”.<sup>1</sup> Overall, Marcos’s monopolization of sectors of the economy, the military, and various other governmental organizations allowed him to firmly control the Philippines’s finances, media, and military all for his own personal gain. Marcos’s complete and self-interested domination of the Philippine’s economic and social components eerily mirrored the constraints placed on the Philippines from its previous foreign overseers, Spain, Japan, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Aquino, Belinda A. Politics of Plunder: The Philippines Under Marcos. University of the Philippines College of Public Administration: Quezon City, 1987. p 39.



United States. Furthermore, the following examination of Marcos's establishment of Martial Law in the Philippines illustrates the similarities between his regimes and past colonial policies in the Philippines.

### **Martial Law: Re-creation of a "Colonized Philippines"**

In addition, Marcos's arms did not just reach into the economy, the military, but also into the nation's constitution, the supposed governing body of law. Marcos sought not only to manipulate the Constitution to remain in power but also to increase his authority. To the dismay of many, he achieved this through the declaration of martial law. Marcos states his reasoning for declaring martial law:

On September 21, 1972 I declared martial law throughout the Philippines. I did so in accord with our Constitution as a last defense against two grave dangers to the state. One was a rebellion mounted by a strange conspiracy of leftist and rightist radicals. The other was a secessionist movement supported by foreign groups. The decision was easy to take.

For I did not become President to preside over the death of the Philippine Republic.<sup>1</sup>

He contends martial law was essential towards preserving the Philippine State. Declaring martial law allowed Marcos to systematically dismantle the newly established, sovereign Philippine Democracy. When Marcos presented the declaration for martial law, he also outlined his regime's purpose:

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<sup>1</sup> Marcos, Ferdinand E. Revolution from the Center: How the Philippines is using martial law to build a New Society. Raya Books: Hong Kong 1978. p 1.

We will eliminate the threat of a violent overthrow of our Republic. But at the same time we must now reform the social, economic, and political institutions in our country...to remove the inequities of that society, the cleanup of government of its corrupt and sterile elements, the liquidation of the criminal syndicates, [and to encourage] the systematic development of our economy.<sup>1</sup>

His words calling for reforms to the Philippines refer to the previously mentioned changes he was making to expand his power and influence across the major government agencies and corporations. Martial law further supported Marcos's accumulation of power because it allowed him to quickly and efficiently deal with those opposed to his policies. Agreeably, Lela Noble argues that Marcos's:

First step was the "removal of anarchy and the maintenance of peace and order," a goal that in practice meant the demobilization of any individuals or groups willing and able to take autonomous action. Thousands were arrested: members of the oligarchy accused of the conspiracy; politicians associated with private armies or outspoken opposition to Marcos; journalists; members of labor, student, or peasant organizations; petty criminals. Equally important in terms of effect were restrictions on labor organization and action, and on travel outside the country. Congress was suspended. Approximately 500,000 guns were collected. A curfew was imposed.<sup>1</sup>

Criminals and those outwardly opposed to Marcos were treated one in the same, they were sent to prison. Furthermore, martial law allowed Marcos to reformulate restrictions, guidelines, and other essential factors of government departments, agencies, and major Philippine businesses. In

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<sup>1</sup> Noble, Lela Garner. "Politics in the Marcos Era". Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986. p 85.

this manner, his regime emulated the colonial regimes Filipino citizens have dreamed of escaping from for centuries. Take Vicente Rafael, illustration of Spain's restructuring of Philippine society and politics during the sixteenth century. In order for Spain to have started the Christian conversion of the Philippine's inhabitants, Rafael notes how the Spanish colonial regime understood:

To sustain evangelization, Tagalog society and politics similarly had to be reformulated.

An examination of this process of recasting – translating, as it were – native society into a different grid of social relations may help us understand why submission – to the extent of real conversion – may have seemed a desirable alternative to some Tagalogs.<sup>1</sup>

This excerpt from Rafael's work describes Spain's restructuring of certain aspects of Philippine society and government to advance its goals of religious conversion. In the same respect, Marcos tore down the democratic foundation that the Philippines began to build following World War II to proceed with his own political agenda. Immediately after the declaration of martial law:

Marcos used the first hundred days of martial law to establish his grip firmly not only on the Supreme Court, but on all the centers of power. Doors to the Senate chambers were padlocked. The military, his key to control, received a series of pay raises and bonuses. He handed out distinguished service medals to every member of the armed forces. The constitutional convention, with its most ardent anti-Marcos delegates either imprisoned at Camp Crame or feeling to exile, not surprisingly approved a new charter tailored precisely to the president's demands.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rafael, Vicente L. Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule. Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1998. p 137.

<sup>2</sup> Rempel, William C. Delusions of a Dictator: The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in His Secret Diaries. Little Brown

Marcos consolidated the economy under his control, and here it is evident that martial law gave him the ability to assert his influence over the law making and law enforcement body of the government to fit his needs. His financial backing and indulgence of the military allowed him to intimidate or forcibly remove his opponents from sight. The Philippines was no longer a colony, a democratic nation, but now under the control of a dictator who had no remorse in utilizing his presidential powers to silence his enemies. In fact, an examination of an excerpt from one of Marcos's private diaries reveal Marcos believed God himself supported his desire for utilitarian control:

“This is your principal mission in life – save the country again from the Maoists, the anarchists, and the radicals.” This is the message that I [Ferdinand Marcos] deduce from the visions that I see asleep and awake. “Subordinate everything to this,” God seems to be saying to me. “And you are the only person who can do it,” He says. “Nobody else can. So do not miss the opportunity given you, [because] if you do, it will mean not only your death but that of your wife and children and of the wives, children, and friends of men of equal persuasion.<sup>1</sup>

Here it is apparent Marcos felt it was his “God given” responsibility and right to begin the societal and political reformation of the Philippines. In a further examination of this journal entry, Rempel argues:

Marcos was dreaming of dictatorship. God's voice was calling him to declare martial law. What had been a flirtation with options for authoritarian rule a year evolved into

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and Company: Toronto, 1993, p 190.

<sup>1</sup> Rempel, Delusions of a Dictator, p 101-102.

obsession through the first half of 1971. The dream occupied his sleep, his contemplations, his work, and his diary.<sup>1</sup>

Unmistakably, Marcos felt he and he alone knew what was best for the Philippine nation and could properly run the entire country. These fervent personal beliefs combined with his thirst for power are significant factors behind his establishment of martial law and absolute rule of the Philippine government.

Of course Marcos did not wish to ruin the Philippine State. More accurately, he desired to make the nation's resources benefit him and his regimes instead of the Filipino citizenry as a whole. This resembled the general purpose for a colony, to be productive and profitable for the mother country. In fact, Marcos failed to realize the parallel between the society his regime's policies has created and his own view of Philippine colonial society:

It [The Philippines] had no politically strong middle class to mediate between them. This bred a political culture very much different from that of the ideal society of free and self-reliant persons supposed to flower in the liberal and democratic republic. Mass poverty, above all, determined this political culture. The poor depended too much on the benefits – jobs, handouts, help in dealing with an often lazy and corrupt bureaucracy – that they could get from the rich and the powerful in exchange for their loyalty and courteous respect.<sup>1</sup>

As Arce, Abad, and Aquino's previous arguments mentioned, the Philippines citizenry under Marcos mainly were divided into two distinct groups: the privileged and the poverty-stricken. The Spanish colonial elite always held a tight grip on the Philippines wealth whether it was

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<sup>1</sup> Marcos, Ferdinand E. Revolution from the Center: How the Philippines is using martial law to build a New Society. Raya Books: Hong Kong 1978. P 19

through tribute, taxes or an assimilation of Philippine rulers with the Spanish elites of the colony.<sup>1</sup> It is the same steadfast control that Marcos and his political allies held over the Philippine economy. Even after World-War II and the U.S. granting the Philippines sovereignty, the Philippines continued to lack a significant middle class. In agreement, Wilfredo Arce and Ricard Abad proclaim:

Those who have family connections, or who can amass the necessary resources, may opt to migrate ...Emigration provides short-term benefits for households and individuals, but it is doubtful that it contributes to the country's economy and political self-sufficiency. The notion of disadvantaged individuals or family-centered groups turning to the agencies of the advantaged sector for assistance is accepted and even welcome, but only if they pose no threat to established coping mechanisms...The result is that gains continue to be made by those who are already gainers and losses continue to be incurred by those who are already losers...It is evident, therefore, that the solution lies in breaking down the barriers that support this dualism, and enhancing interaction between the two sectors.<sup>2</sup>

These two authors point out the necessity to break down the distinction between the wealthy and the disadvantaged Filipino citizens in order to create a middle class. No substantial middle class existed in the Philippines because it was not profitable for those who can earn a decent living but are not part of the socioeconomic elite to remain in the country. Those who could afford to, utilized their funds and migrated to the United States, Middle East, or more prosperous

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<sup>1</sup> Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism*, p 161.

<sup>2</sup> Arce and Abad, "The Social Situation", p 65.

neighboring Asian nations to put their labor and capital to use in a more socially and economically stable nation.<sup>1</sup> Regrettably, this exodus of competent laborers, intellectuals, and wage earners during Marcos's era remain one of the unfortunate factors that keeps the Philippines in the distinctly divided and economic top heavy state that still exists today. Marcos' hoarding of the funds for his regime and his own personal game did not help improve the situation in any way. Rather, his fraudulent political policies seem to contribute to setting back the achievements of the Philippine state and its people to their subordinate positions during colonial rule.

### **Attempts at Establishing a Heroic Image in Philippine History**

In the midst of this discussion on the effects of Marcos and martial law on Philippine society it is vital to take into consideration the effects Marcos's proceedings had on the Filipinos residing in the southern region of Mindanao. In general, historical literature focusing on Marcos is relative mostly to his policies and political actions concerning the Christian majority government and Philippine citizenry. However, a closer investigation reveals that "during the Marcos regime Mindanao was not spared. In fact, Mindanao became the battleground".<sup>2</sup> Marcos had the political framework laid out to unify the two culturally diverse Philippine regions of Luzon and Mindanao. Yet, Marcos's complete control of the government prohibits his political breakthroughs with Muslim rebels from ever being properly implemented.

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<sup>1</sup> Arce and Abad, "The Social Situation",. p 65.

<sup>2</sup> Ramirez, Edgardo B. "A Historical Account of the Mindanao Peace Process in Southern Philippines". Eleventh Regional Seminar-Workshop on Oral and Local History. August 13-14, 1998. Notre Dame University: Cotabato City, Maguindanao Philippines. p 39.

First, one of Marcos' primary reasons for declaring martial law was to be able to better combat the foreign influenced secessionist organization within the Philippines. Particularly, the two major guerilla forces tying up Marcos' hands during this time period were the Communist Part of the Philippines (CPP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). In regards to the MNFL, the Muslim minority's quandary with the Philippine government was the result of inequities and misunderstandings going back more than 400 years. Also, historians argue the hostilities stemmed from competition with the Christians for traditions lands and the Muslim desire to preserve their cultural identity.<sup>1</sup> During President Marcos's time, tensions between his administration and the rebel factions arose when:

The [Philippine] military had recruited Filipino-Muslims and trained them on the island of Corregidor. When they found out their mission, code-named "Jabidah", was for sabotage and insurgency in Sabah<sup>2</sup>, they reveled and 68 were massacred. Only one survived.<sup>1</sup>

Stemming from this atrocity, actual armed conflict took place between the military and Muslim forces on June 19, 1969, the birthday of one the Philippine's national heroes Joze Rizal. It was sparked by the military massacre of sixty-seven Muslims inside a mosque in Manili, Cotabato [city, region in Philippines] and when martial law was declared and more government troops were sent down to quash them (70-80% of the armed forces) in what many described as full-scale war.<sup>3</sup> However, President Marcos understood that martial law or not, this potential outbreak of total civil war in the Philippines would not only destroy his already tarnished

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<sup>1</sup> McDougald, The Marcos File, p 163.

<sup>2</sup> A contested island between Malaysia and the Philippines, ruled for centuries through a sultanate government system that was common in the southern Philippines during Kudarat's time.

<sup>3</sup> McDougald, The Marcos File, p 163-165.



national image but his international image as well. In an attempt at peace, the Marcos and Congress established the following legislation:

PD 742 and LOI 290 of July 07,1975: establishing the Office of the Regional Commissioner for Region IX and Region XII (splitting Mindanao into distinguishable regions for managerial purposes) with the hopes that the social and economic causes of conflict could be better addressed through government's coordinated and fast responses by removing piecemeal measures and red tape.<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of the Office of Regional Commissioner for these two Muslim dominated regions helped Marcos extend his influence in this hostile region. More importantly, the intentions to create more smooth and efficient communications between the MNLF, Moro Filipinos, and government officials at Malacanang was truly an effective attempt towards establishing harmony between the Philippine government and the MNLF. Then, a global turn of events in 1976 lead to another major government order. This time in 1976 Congress granted autonomy to the 13 Moro dominated provinces in the Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan regions. This surprising piece of legislation can be attributed to the the Iraq and OIC (Organization of the Islamic Conference) oil embargo of 1976 that caught the Philippines [strong allies with the United States] in a bind. The problem rose out of the fact that the Philippine's economy ran on 99% energy through oil 97% of which was bought from Saudi Arabia. The oil embargo would have completely crippled the Philippines. It was through negotiations with Philippine Muslim representatives that caused the Saudi King to agree to sell oil to the Philippines if their

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<sup>1</sup> Ramirez, Edgardo B. "A Historical Account of the Mindanao Peace Process in Southern Philippines". Eleventh Regional Seminar-Workshop on Oral and Local History. August 13-14, 1998. Notre Dame University: Cotabato City, Maguindanao Philippines. p 38

government would sit at a negotiating table with the MNLF and allow the OIC to be a third party.<sup>1</sup> Thus, resulted the establishment of the Tripoli Agreement which granted “autonomy” to the southern regions of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan.<sup>2</sup> On paper, Marcos it seemed as if Marcos was able to unite the Muslim south and the Christian majority under a government. These depicted policies seem to ideally address issues regarding the needs of the regions and everything would unfold proudly under one united and seemingly peaceful Philippine Nation.

Unfortunately, history is not explained solely through political policies and their proposals. If it were, then Marcos could truly be deemed a heroic and harmonious figure between Muslim and Christian Filipinos. This is not the case. As Edgardo Ramirez illustrates:

Under Marcos, appointments and elections were always the rule of the powerful and he started the “Kamag-anak Incorporated” (My kin, my accomplice) with his cronies and supporters. This is why even with the number of laws and proclamations, the situation in Mindanao did not improve, in fact it worsened!<sup>3</sup>

In other words, the autonomy granted to these regions under Marcos was essentially useless because he would appoint governors that would institute the policies he desired and not the corresponding Moro population. Hence, the Tripoli Agreement was far from the end of the struggle for the MNLF and Moro Filipinos. Likewise, Peter Gowing in his piece, “How Muslim Are the Muslim Filipinos”, writes:

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<sup>1</sup> Ramirez, Edgardo B. “A Historical Account of the Mindanao Peace Process in Southern Philippines”. Eleventh Regional Semonar-Workshop on Oral and Local History. August 13-14, 1998. Notre Dame University: Cotabato City, Maguindanao Philippines. p 39

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.usip.org/library/pa/philippines/tripoli\\_12231976.html](http://www.usip.org/library/pa/philippines/tripoli_12231976.html)

<sup>3</sup> Ramirez, Edgardo B. “A Historical Account of the Mindanao Peace Process in Southern Philippines”. Eleventh Regional Semonar-Workshop on Oral and Local History. August 13-14, 1998. Notre Dame University: Cotabato City, Maguindanao Philippines. p 40.

What is needed is a recognition of the fact that the Muslim minority is one of the “givens” of Philippine national life. They are not going to become Christians and they are not going to disappear...Any concept of integration must take into account the fact that, contrary to what Christian Filipinos may wish, the Muslims constitute a minority that will struggle actively to preserve its differences and identity.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the failed promises of the Tripoli Agreement, the MNFL and the Moro Filipinos have not give up their struggle for adequate representation in the Philippine Congress. In the end, it is unfortunate that his absolute power and control ruined a golden opportunity to establish a true sense of nationhood for all Filipinos during such a tumultuous time period.

Additionally, Marcos attempted to demonstrate to the Filipino people that he was an opponent to U.S. influence in the country’s political and economic affairs. From the U.S. acquisition of the Philippines from Spain, to Philippine sovereignty in 1946, it is impossible to deny the great amount of influence the United States has had in Philippine government, economy, society, and even religion. This has led to, “a tendency for Americans to see Filipinos as being rather like themselves, and to fail to appreciate the great differences that continue to exist within the outer forms of Filipino life”.<sup>2</sup> Here the problem of creating a national identity extends beyond the national level of the Philippines to the world stage. The Philippines is now a sovereign nation and the dream of freedom for nationalistic heroes like Jose Rizal, Sultan Kudarat, and Emile Aguinaldo have become reality. Even under Marcos, Filipinos wanted to be recognized beyond the image of a mere extension of the United States. Furthermore, the general

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<sup>1</sup> Mastura, Datu Michael O., 1984, "Muslim Filipino Experience: A Collection of Essays." Philippine Islam Series , no. 3. Manila: Ministry of Muslim Affairs. p 148.

<sup>2</sup>Bresnan, John. “Preface”. Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986. p 12.

Philippine population viewed American influence as an extension of the corruption and unbalanced distribution of wealth that existed in the affluent families and colonial elites during American rule. Marcos understood this and attempted to put the blame of the failing Philippine economy on intrusion of foreign influence:

Crises at home made us realize that our so-called special relations with the United States, which had governed our postcolonial period, had become a hindrance to the pursuit of our national interest... We are reexamining our various economic and security arrangements with the United States in keeping with the developing situation in Asia and in the world. Specifically, we insist that national treatment can no longer be given to American citizens in the Philippines. We strongly feel that extraterritorial rights of American soldiers in the US bases in the Philippines must go. We made our positions clear. Sovereignty and extraterritoriality are not negotiable.<sup>1</sup>

Marcos was attempting to appeal to his citizen's sentiments of hostility towards American interest in the Philippines. Those opposed to American military bases and business investment in the Philippines felt it was detrimental to the Philippines. They argued that these foreign military and commercial investments were self-interested and were not focused on the benefitting Filipinos in even the most basic manner.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Marcos attempted to relate his political ideology of independence from foreign control to the nationalistic sentiments of Philippine heroes, such as Sultan Kudarat. Take for example, during a ceremony dedicating a Philippine postal stamp to sultan Kudarat in 1975 Marcos proclaimed to the Filipino people:

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<sup>1</sup> Marcos, Ferdinand E. Revolution from the Center: How the Philippines is using martial law to build a New Society. Raya Books: Hong Kong 1978. p 81.

<sup>2</sup> Newsom, David D. "Foreword". Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986. p 9.

Upon my degree, [Sultan Kudarat] is recognized as a hero befitting the highest decorations and orders of the Republic of the Philippines and this is the Order of Sultan Kudarat.<sup>1</sup>

In this ceremony, Marcos utilized Sultan Kudarat and his unifying message in an effort to motivate Filipinos to resist oppressive foreign influence in the affairs of Filipinos. This speech and award is one example of Marcos's endeavors to parallel his rule and presidency alongside a historical figure such as Kudarat. Overall, Marcos advertises to the Filipino people that their nation can develop much more efficiently without the aid of the United States and even implies he is attempting to cut the need for American financial and military support. His cries for nationhood at times emulate the same nationalistic messages of Rizal and Kudarat during their time.

Nevertheless, an examination of the Philippine allocation of troops during the Vietnam War provides a different tale regarding his loyalty to the cause for nationhood. For example:

Indeed it was reported (and later confirmed) that Marcos' proposal to send troops to Vietnam, finally approved by the Philippine Congress in August 1966 followed a secret agreement that Washington would provide funds for engineering battalions to be used for road building and other community development projects in the Philippines and would subsidize the Philippine contingent in Vietnam.<sup>2</sup>

President Marcos' decision to send Filipino citizens to fight and die in Vietnam was not without direct U.S. influence. The decision was made not just because of the funds but also because

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<sup>1</sup> Mastura, Michael O. "Sultan Kudarat's Role in Maguidiano". Muslim Filipino Experience: A Collection of Essays. Ministry of Muslim Affairs: Manila, 1984. p 23.

<sup>2</sup> Noble, Lela Garner. "Politics in the Marcos Era". Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986. p 76.

Marcos was concerned he would not receive approval from the United States to implement his plans for martial law. He requested ambassador Henry Byroade to obtain reassurance from President Nixon. Then, on February 1, 1971 Marcos wrote:

I had before this asked him to tell me frankly if the American government would support me if there was need to declare martial law to save the country from communists.

Nixon's answer was "Absolutelty!".<sup>1</sup>

Marcos did not send those troops to Vietnam just with the good intentions of assisting a fellow "democratic" Southeast Asian nation. Rather, he wanted to display to the United States his support for them, his anti-communist sentiments, and in the end desired to gain favor from the U.S. for his anti-democratic implementation of martial law. He would ride the threat of communism to request more aid from the U.S. Then, when U.S. State Department official Marshal Green accused Marcos' of overestimating the threat of a foreign funded communist threat, the Philippine dictator became irate. Undoubtedly, this is because:

He [Marcos] wanted its [America's] aid money but with no strings on how it was used; he wanted its defense support, but he regarded the military bases as 'a limitation of our sovereignty'; he wanted its official blessing for martial law...but he never quite trusted the assurances he got.<sup>2</sup>

Marcos betrays his ideological view for the Philippine military and financial freedom from the United States. He did not want to depend on their military but he needed their added protection from his growing number of enemies. Also, Marcos relayed to the Filipino people that with, "the

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<sup>1</sup> Rempel, William C. Delusions of a Dictator: The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in His Secret Diaries. Little Brown and Company: Toronto, 1993. P 105

<sup>2</sup> Rempel, William C. Delusions of a Dictator: The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in His Secret Diaries. Little Brown and Company: Toronto, 1993. P 173.

ending in 1974 of preferential trade with the United States gave us the chance to begin securing effective national control of the economy. Our first step was to ban non-Filipinos from owning real estate”<sup>1</sup>. Yet, the reality was that Marcos sought political allies among American business interests and the end of preferential trade gave Marcos the leverage he needed to persuade American big business to lobby for his funds “to battle communism” in the American Congress<sup>2</sup>. He was willing to utilize his influence in the political and financial sectors of the Philippines to create exceptions to the ban from non-Filipinos to own real estate in exchange for American investors to push for his U.S. allocation of funds. Furthermore, President Marcos could not have seen the U.S. and its economy as an enemy of the Philippines because he himself was a secret investor in America. Here Belinda Aquino reveals how a leading newspaper in California published an article in June 1985 revealing how Marcos and his regime had been draining funds from the Philippine economy for years and sending them overseas, mainly the United States. The Pulitzer Prize-winning team of reporters worked for about 6 months documenting reports that Marcos and his closest associates had used their positions of leadership or connections with the government to acquire hundreds of millions of dollars to buy condominiums, mansions, shopping centers, banks, offices, buildings, business enterprises, and other forms of real estate, mostly in the plush San Francisco Bay area. A Filipino business executive who was interviewed said in dismay, “Let’s face it, this country [Philippines] has been ruined by the greed of a few people, and what makes it sad is, we can’t say enough is enough. We can’t seem to bring ourselves to

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<sup>1</sup> Marcos, Ferdinand E. Revolution from the Center: How the Philippines is using martial law to build a New Society. Raya Books: Hong Kong 1978. p 72.

<sup>2</sup> Rempel, William C. Delusions of a Dictator: The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in His Secret Diaries. Little Brown and Company: Toronto, 1993. P 173-174.

stop them. We're broke; where's the money? There's no accountability. It's sickening.”.<sup>1</sup>

Overall, Marcos's fraudulence of Philippine funds and its economy delineated him from his desire for independence from foreign influence and aid.

**Marcos's Pursuit of Power Lead to His Downfall**

Moreover, it is Marcos's enormous power and hoarding of Philippine finances that eventually lead to his downfall and removal from office. These numerous examples of the population's general discontent and abhorrence of Marcos' and his practices seem to make the concept of nationhood a lost cause. The people cannot unite under their country's leadership and policies because Marcos has damaged their perception of the Philippine nation. However, it is Marcos's social injustice and the self-interested control of the political and economic which create his strongest opponents and eventually lead to his removal from office. Marcos' atrocities gave Filipinos of different political, religious, and social convictions. Leading up to the declaration of martial law, people's strong disdain for Marcos regime led to several organized protests calling for the end of Marcos' era of corruption:

	<b>Regime Alternative</b>	<b>Nonregime Alternative</b>
<b>Nonviolent Struggle:</b>	Traditional Opposition (rival political parties?)	Catholic Church / Business elite (those not employed by Marcos)

<sup>1</sup> Aquino, Belinda A. Politics of Plunder: The Philippines Under Marcos. University of the Philippines College of Public Administration: Quezon City, 1987. p 31.



<b>Violent Struggle:</b>	Communist / military rebels	Muslim Secessionists / social democrats
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Mark Thompson’s chart outlines and classified the major groups opposing Marcos.<sup>1</sup> All the groups had the common motive to defeat Marcos and have him removed from power. Yet, there were those who desired to establish a successor government and others who were willing to utilize extreme force to achieve their overarching goal. In some cases there even were intellectuals who were not afraid to defiantly and loudly advertise their opposition to the Marcos’ oppressive regime. For instance, on January 30 (**check for year in book couldn’t find**) a delegation of prominent faculty and students of the University of the Philippines were admitted into the Malacanang palace to meet with Marcos. The president hoped a calm discussion would take place where the president could defend himself from the rumors he was seeking a third term and possibly to establish martial law. Instead, the scene went as follows:

Jopson [Student Body Leader] thrust a sheet of paper onto the desk in front of the president...”You sign that,” he heard Jopson demand. More impudence!<sup>2</sup>

These students showed neither reverence for the presidency nor fear for Marcos. Their impudence reflected their total disdain towards Marcos and his policies. This angered Marcos who verbally attacked Jopson [whose father was a grocer and old acquaintance of Marcos]:

“Why are you so arrogant? Is this what the groceries produce?”. Yet, this heated confrontation only further empowered the students and Jopson who readily replied:

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, Mark R. The Anti Marcos Struggle-Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines. New Haven: Yale University, 1995. p 9.

<sup>2</sup> Rempel, William C. Delusions of a Dictator: The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in His Secret Diaries. Little Brown and Company: Toronto, 1993. p 37-38.

Yes, he was the son of a grocer, Jopson snapped back. ‘But at least my father is an honest grocer’. Could Marcos claim to be an honest president? Insult upon insult [came from the delegation of students and teachers]. They had come not to listen, but to lecture. Again, they demanded a sign declaration.<sup>1</sup>

These students and intellectuals saw through Marcos. They understood the sacrifice of democracy made with the declaration of martial law and abhorred his corruption made evident through the public revelation of his political plunder. They did not see him as a prominent individual as the president of the Philippines but rather as an enemy that needed to be stopped.

However, unity of the Filipino people and the establishment of a national identity had been one of Marcos’ political initiatives. He decreed to the Philippine citizens:

We made major institutional changes that secured and conserved national control of such key sectors such as finance, trade, and industry...Nationalism is one face of our national development plan. The other is the growth of the poorer classes of society. We are stressing income redistribution both as a means of democratization and as a spur to increase production. The major social reforms we have begun – land reform, the organization of cooperatives, employment generation, community development – all of these will pay off by giving millions of our patient people a new hope, and by encouraging them to produce more.<sup>1</sup>

First, as previously shown, the institutional changes Marcos made to the Philippine economic sectors of finance, trade, and industry is that he forcibly took them over and handed them to his

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<sup>1</sup> Marcos, Ferdinand E. Revolution from the Center: How the Philippines is using martial law to build a New Society. Raya Books: Hong Kong 1978.p 72-73.

personal allies and friends. Next, the growth of poorer class has been essentially impossible under Marcos due to the administrations consolidation of funds. Likewise, Boyce asserts:

Deteriorating terms of trade and the predations of the Marcos regime crippled the export agriculture. The nation's once-plentiful forest resources were nearing depletion. And the country had entered the state of negative net transfers to its international creditors, forcing the Filipino people to live 'below their means' for the indefinite future.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, it was comical Marcos would even attempt to proclaim to be an advocate for the poor when his own wife has fallen under worldwide scrutiny for stealing Philippine funds to fund her obsession of shoes, since her entire collections filled a mansion.<sup>2</sup> Marcos' promise of hope for the common Filipino citizen to improve his or her lifestyle is ironic because hope for the destitute Philippine nation did not come from Marcos but rather the People's Power Movement that rose out of the significant controversy that contributed greatly to Marcos' downfall. Finally, it came to the point where Marcos' ideological speeches and political abuse and thievery became a catalyst for more and more Filipinos to take action towards change.

### End of the Marcos Era

Here, Benigno Aquino's assassination in 1983 that marked the beginning of the end of Marcos' reign of terror. In short, Benigno Aquino was a Philippine Senator who began his political career about the same time as Ferdinand Marcos and was one of his most outspoken and

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<sup>1</sup> Boyce, The Philippines, p 347.

<sup>2</sup> "10 Questions for Imelda Marcos". Time South Pacific. Australia/New Zealand Edition. 7/3/2006. Issue 26. Business Source Premier. <<http://wf2dnvr3.webfeat.org/s4gp116/url=http://web.ebscohotst.com.>>

effective adversaries during his reign over the Philippines. Even after being thrown in jail by Marcos, Aquino continued to lead and support insurrection groups against Marcos such as the Light-a-Fire Movement (LAFM) and the April 6<sup>th</sup> Liberation Movement (A6LM).<sup>1</sup> After a trip to the States for health and safety reasons, Aquino planned a return to the Philippines for Marcos to utilize his political and monetary resources to win a contested 1984 legislative elections. Even though Aquino knew Marcos was going to sabotage the elections, he wanted to make Marcos strain his economic resources because he knew it would add on to Marcos's problems along with his failing health and economic policies. On August 21, 1983 Aquino made his return to the Philippines only to be "murdered in a blatant fashion: he was shot by a Philippine military escort as he descended from a plane full of international journalists".<sup>2</sup> **[Lost the exact data on the name of the report but its here somewhere will find it!]** National and international pressure forced an investigation into the matter and it was found that military personnel part of Marcos' barkada [group of friends] was the assailant. This sparked outrage among Marcos' opponents and Filipinos as a whole. There were always rumors about Marcos's crooked dealings but now the public execution of Aquino became a catalyst event for people to unite under against the Philippine dictator. In fact, the opposition to Marcos grew in power with the acquisition of the Philippine's powerful business sector because they understood the Philippine's financial crisis was a result of his squandering of the national funds and now even the Catholic Church public joined the opposition.<sup>3</sup> Altogether, Marcos's despotic rule led to the unification of ideologically

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, Mark R. The Anti Marcos Struggle-Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines. New Haven: Yale University, 1995. p 85-89.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson, Mark R. The Anti Marcos Struggle-Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines. New Haven: Yale University, 1995. p 115.

<sup>3</sup> Lande, Carl H. "The Political Crisis". Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986. p 117-118.

diverse Filipinos, all with the common goal of toppling Marcos. Then the February 1986 presidential election came and as the world watched Corazon Aquino (Bengino Aquino's widow) become elected the new president of the Philippines. In a last bit of political and prideful desperation:

Marcos took the oath of office one last time. As he stumbled through an inaugural address, at times his voice barely audible and his swollen eyes making it difficult to read his own speech, family and friends gathered in grim silence around him. A child in the crowd, one of his granddaughters, noticed without understanding that everyone seemed so sad. Then, a last appearance at the palace balcony. Ferdinand and Imelda waved to a chanting group of loyalists in the garden below and sang one last duet for the crowd "because of you".<sup>1</sup>

Marcos insisted he had won the election but his destroyed consolidation of military power and pressure from the United States forced Marcos to take refuge in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> The image left of Marcos for the rest of the world to see was the shattered pieces of a President and Dictator of the Philippines who utilized his power to benefit himself, family and friends over the well-being of the Philippine nation. Although Marcos desired to build a flourishing, self-sufficient, and united nation, it was the influence money and power on his political policies that created an opposition more powerful than his tyrannical regime. His abuse of presidential powers, declaration of martial law, support of the invasion of foreign corporate investment in the Philippine economy, utilization of violence to promote his policies and unjust political favoritism towards family and

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<sup>1</sup> Rempel, William C. Delusions of a Dictator: The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in His Secret Diaries. Little Brown and Company: Toronto, 1993. 196

<sup>2</sup> Rempel, William C. Delusions of a Dictator: The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in His Secret Diaries. Little Brown and Company: Toronto, 1993. p 195-196

friends lead Filipinos to become very wary of government authority. In agreement, Patricia Horavitch writes:

At the end of the Marcos era, very many Filipinos had substantial grievances against state power. These grievances were articulated into political discourse which was then used in the organization of actual events and processes in which people participate and feel as though they were making their own history.<sup>1</sup>

Although different from his self-portrayed heroic image, Marcos does indeed unite Filipinos in their mistrust and distaste for Marcos' regime. His self motivated policies, economic plunder of the country, and manipulation hauntingly mirror the very Spanish colonial policies towards the Philippines that Kudarat and Rizal worked to demolish. His selfish demeanor and greed driven policies lead to the unification of Filipinos and even foreign powers such as the United States to force Marcos to step down from his tyrannical reign. Without a doubt, Jose Rizal and Sultan Kudarat aimed to unite the Filipino people against being an indolent and oppressed nation. At the end of Marcos's twenty year dictatorship, he united the Filipino people against the same colonial atrocities that faced Rizal and Kudarat. In Marco's case, his policies, reorganization of Philippine society, and its economy recreated in similar fashion these same colonial injustices. Therefore, it was the united Filipino people who came together to put an end to the Marcos Era.

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<sup>1</sup> Horavitch, Patricia. "The Martyr and the Mayor: On the Politics of Identity in the Southern Philippines". Cultural Citizenship in Island Southeast Asia: Nation Belonging in the Hinterlands. Ed. Renato Rosaldo. University Of California Press: London, 2003. p 62.

### **Chapter 3:**

#### **President Corazon C. Aquino & The People's Power Movement: Nationalistic Icons**

##### **Introduction**

At the end of the last chapter, Marcos's twenty year solid grip on Philippine power decayed and fell apart. As a result of his corrupt government, oppositional political parties, Filipino citizens, and International entities such as the United States became united and called for the removal of Marcos from power. What gave the Filipino people the "courage and power" to oppose Marcos, such a powerful dictator?

For example, Pablo A. Teoco, a university student, and other students were passing out anti-Marcos campaign articles from the ALMA (Association of Lawyers for Mrs. Aquino) at the Shoemart Center in Quezon City (a major shopping center). People were excited and interested with the letters. However, there were still sentiments of caution and secrecy because of fear of the guards. Teoco recounts how:

One of [the guards] approached us and confiscated the materials. We had to explain that we had every right to distribute them. People were watching but could hardly do anything. They just had to wait and see. The security guard, irked by the shopper's cold stares and murmurs was forced to return our leaflets on the condition that we vacate the premises. Instead of heeding his advice, we continued to distribute the remaining copies and then went to see a movie.<sup>1</sup>

This is one example where people had strength and courage to support Corazon Aquino even though President Marcos was throwing her supporters into jail during the 1986 elections. The guard's, an employee and supporter of Marcos, power and authority collapses under the stares of the people. The unity here between the students and the shoppers at the mall is a motif of nationhood that has spread throughout the Philippines during Aquino's campaign. Historians such as Lucy Komisar depict how Aquino campaigned and attempted to cater to the needs of the business elite, rural farmers, Moro Filipinos in the south, and "other victims of the injustices of the Marcos regime".<sup>2</sup> Just as various sections of the Philippines came together to support Aquino, the Filipinos in the above scenario support one another and unite together against the

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 54

<sup>2</sup> Komisar, Corazon Aquino: The Story of a Revolution, p 86-87.



guard. This represents the Filipino citizens coming together against Marcos' unjust hold over their country. Altogether, this chapter will demonstrate how Corazon Aquino helped remove Marcos's instilled fear upon Filipinos because she presented a realistic and efficient alternative to his dictatorship.

Also, this chapter will focus on the unification of Filipino political parties, rebels, and citizens to end the twenty year "presidency" of Ferdinand Marcos. Particularly, the politics and personality of Corazon Aquino illustrates this extraordinary tale. She transforms from the mere widow of Benigno Aquino, an influential figure of Marcos' opposition, to national heroine President Corazon Aquino the one political figure and individual in the Philippines that could unite the country's opposing political parties and diverse citizenry and end Marcos' twenty year reign over the nation. This investigation will go through the campaigning and aftermath of the 1986 presidential elections in the Philippines. A thorough analysis of speeches, letters, lectures, and interviews with Filipino politicians, writers, and citizens during this key moment in Philippine history will reveal the sense of unity and pride that Aquino brought to the Filipino people. Taken as a whole, her words, actions, and influence on the Filipino people closely mirror the messages of nationhood that Jose Rizal and Sultan Kudarat have exemplified as national heroes.

Furthermore, this analysis will examine EDSA and the People Power Revolution of 1986 in the Philippines and its vital role in the shaping the current Philippine national identity. In summary, the elections were labeled "snap elections" because they were supposed to be a year later in 1987. However, due to pressure from political opposition and the United States, Marcos

held the elections in February 1986. Some examples of the U.S. pressure on Marcos were for him to clean up his corrupt and inefficiently run economy, government. The United States government also demanded he put an end to the communist threat that put American bases in the islands at risk.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Marcos decided on November 3, 1985 to have them in February 7, 1986, but he tried to make the best of the new election date as well.<sup>2</sup> Since he gave into the U.S. demands for snap elections, he felt he had satisfied his critics overseas enough to have them overlook some of the major deficiencies in his regime. In addition, he chose a Vice President that wouldn't have much influence in political matters, all of his comrades still kept their tight hold on the Philippine's major economic sectors, and Marcos reinstated General Ver, the man convicted for ordering the assassination of Benigno Aquino. In the end, Marcos gave up his desired date for the elections but he still had the country running under his cronies and exact will. Overall, Marcos still knew how to play the game and he was not about to give up his seat of power.

The letters, first-hand accounts, and other primary sources of this section will reveal that in the end, it was clear to the citizens of the Philippines and the rest of the world that Cory was the true choice of the Filipino people to be their new president. However, Marcos and his political machine [Batasan] declared himself the reelected president of the Philippines in February of 1986 and he was determined to utilize all of his political and personal resources to remain the head of the state. Thus, the People Power Revolution of 1986 came about due to these

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<sup>1</sup> Komisar, Corazon Aquino: The Story of a Revolution ,pg 60.

<sup>2</sup> This source used for most of the ideas in this paragraph.

Thompson, Mark R. The Anti Marcos Struggle-Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines. New Haven: Yale University, 1995. p 9.

drastic events during the election period. Essentially, the People's Power Movement began when Philippine Defense Minister Juan Prince Enrile and Armed Forces Vice Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Fidel Ramos publicly announced their withdrawal their allegiance to the defeated president. These two major military figures barricaded themselves at their respective military headquarters, Enrile at Camp Aguinaldo and Ramos at Camp Crame. Immediately, Marcos accused these two individuals for planning a coup d'etat and ordered for their immediate arrest and/or removal by the Philippine military because he knew their dissent was challenging his presidency. These threats of violence from Marcos caused an outcry from religious leaders, such as Cardinal Sin, who asked the Filipino to provide support and prayers for these two men. Even further, there were religious and oppositional leaders who asked people to essentially form a human blockade around the Enrile and Ramos's "rebel headquarters". No one, no matter their political convictions, wanted to see a violent clash between the Marcos' military and Enrile and Ramos's forces. A swarm of men, women, children, and religious folk came out to Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) across from Camp Crame bringing rations, prayers, and their bodies to utilize to ward off Marcos' advancing troops. The following first-hand accounts, letters, and speeches will delve into the thoughts of the leaders of the opposition and the Filipinos who were present during this historic event to reveal the power of unity among Filipinos whether they supported Marcos or his opposition. The people who came out to EDSA came from all walks of Philippine society, young or old and rich or poor, and willingly risked their lives in front of armed soldiers and tanks in an attempt to protect Enrile and Ramos. Here were two individuals showing willing to risk their careers and lives to oppose Marcos's false claim to victory over Corazon Aquino in the 1986 elections. During this historic event from February 22-25, 1986,

Filipinos spiritually and physically came together at EDSA, faced force with prayer and hospitality, and were rewarded by witnessing the formal inauguration of President Aquino on Tuesday morning February 25<sup>1</sup>. This date does more than indicate the beginning of President Aquino's administration. It also marks the removal of Marcos from power, but emulates a time when an individual can once again take pride in being labeled a Filipino. Through the People's Uprising of 1986, Filipinos showed themselves and the world they could peacefully remove a dictator and fairly elect a new president, Corazon Aquino, to begin rebuilding the Philippine state that has been on a decline since first took control. Overall, none of this historical change and progress would have been possible without the emergence of Philippine nationalism depicted through the unification of Filipinos from different political, social, and religious backgrounds. Altogether, Filipinos demanded a time for change for their nation.

### **Corazon Aquino's Presidential Campaign**

President Marcos Ferdinand politically and financially had all the necessary tools to win the "snap" 1986 Philippine presidential elections. As discussed in the previous chapter, Marcos controlled the military, parliament, the courts, the bureaucracy, the electoral process, most of the press, and most of the economic monopolies. Marcos's New Society Movement, K.B.L, was the

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<sup>1</sup> Hernandez, Carolina. "Reconstituting the Political Order". Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond. Ed. John Bresnan. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986. p 196-197.

most efficient and impressive political machine formed in the Philippines Post-World War II.<sup>1</sup> It controlled two-thirds of the seats in the legislature and more than 90 percent of local offices. The Marcos political party influence was strongly felt in all thirteen regions, seventy two provinces, more than forty-two thousand barangays, and finally eighty-six thousand KBL chapters at the precinct level. He had a multitude of people working for him from government workers, corporate employees, and even famous actors that were all utilized by the KBL and Marcos to get him votes. For example, writer Lucy Komisar, explains how at Marcos's rallies for the 1986 campaign, "the audiences, many transported to the sites in trucks or buses, spent most of their time watching singing groups and movie stars. Often, after people were paid [for their attendance at the rally] they drifted away even before Marcos spoke".<sup>2</sup> Bribery was also a common tool the KBL used to buy votes from citizens. Marcos also offered money to public school teachers and other overseers of voting tabulation sheets to allow the KBL to manipulate the counts in the party's favor:

According to estimates, he allocated at least \$500 million for vote buying...The KBL also reportedly offered P 1,000 (\$50) per voting tabulation sheet turned over to it for possible manipulation, and P 10,000 (\$500) to any public school teachers working as election inspectors who would allow the ruling party to cheat in their precinct.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, Marcos and General Ver, his head of military operations, were not shy about utilizing terrorism to intimidate the opposition and its supporters. For example:

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<sup>1</sup> This source represents most of the facts regarding the K.B.L in this paragraph. Thompson, Mark R. The Anti Marcos Struggle-Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines. New Haven: Yale University, 1995. Pg 141-142.

<sup>2</sup> Komisar, Corazon Aquino: The Story of a Revolution , p 84-85.

<sup>3</sup> Thompson, The Anti Marcos Struggle.. Pg 142.

Marcos was intent on crushing Aquino in her home province of Tarlac, where Eduardo Cojuangco used local militia to murder and terrorize opposition supporters. In one of the most gruesome incidents Evelio Javier, a former governor and Aquino supporter, was assassinated in broad daylight in the capital of Antique province by hired guns of warlord Arturo Pacificador [armed by Marcos].<sup>1</sup>

The Marcos regime had no qualms about using violence even in public to achieve its desired ends. Thus, these factors along with the assumption of U.S. support, Marcos felt he could overcome any crisis. Yet, outside of Marcos' idealistic view of the Philippines, the truth was, "the economy was a shambles, political institutions lay in disarray, the communist-led insurgency threatened most of the countryside – what was once democracy's pride in Asia had become a basket case".<sup>2</sup> The destitute state of the country fueled the fervor for Marcos' opposition but also caused more people to seek a change from his twenty year rule. People began to look beyond his idealistic promises of a new and promising era for the Philippines under his rule. Therefore, Corazon Aquino drew her popularity from these people. Likewise, Francisco Tatad observed:

Aquino had nothing...none of Marcos' unlimited resources, no experience. But her husband's brutal murder and the scandalous acquittal of all the accused after a year of

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, The Anti Marcos Struggle, pg 142.

<sup>2</sup> Tatad, Francisco S. "Scenario: The Election Campaign, 1986". People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. p 43.

farcical trial had made her a symbol to the entire nation...The nation was in love, a love affair had swept the nation, and it would transform the self-image of the Filipinos.<sup>1</sup>

Filipinos saw her as an ultimate victim of Marcos' abuse of his powers. The murder of her husband, a key opponent to Marcos, at the hands of military officials made people feel that if there was any one individual who should understand the atrocities Marcos has committed to the Philippines and its citizens, it would be Aquino. Also, from a political standpoint Aquino never stood a chance running against Marcos. He had been president of the Philippines for 20 years, had more capital, and more "political man power" than any of his opponents, especially Aquino. However, despite the odds, political tools, and financial numbers being against her, the people soundly supported Aquino. One reason may be because as Jose Rizal wrote in respect to an individual's nation or "motherland", "whatever our condition might be then, let us love her always and let us wish nothing but her welfare. Thus we shall labor in conformity with the purpose of humanity dictated by God, which is the harmony and universal peace of his creatures".<sup>2</sup> Thus, people united around Aquino not as an alternative but a solution to Marcos and the various problems facing the Philippines during that time. Marcos believed he could lead the Philippines to a new and prosperous era. Faced with civil and economic strife and a still-vague communist threat, Marcos wrote in his diary:

I must comfort, the future, love, family and even life and honor itself for a people and country the strength of which [is] being eroded slowly but systematically by their ill-

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<sup>1</sup> Tatad, Francisco S. "Scenario: The Election Campaign, 1986". People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. p 43.

<sup>2</sup> Rizal, Jose. "Love of Country".

wishers. But I must be just as cool, deliberate but bold and daring as we were during those dark days of the war. There [is] no other course. God [has] made it so.<sup>1</sup>

He strongly felt his regime would lay the foundation for a revolutionary transformation of international and domestic policies, but in the end he manipulated the Philippine government and its economy for no one's benefit but himself.<sup>2</sup> She had no experience nor did she officially accomplish anything yet but already people were praising Aquino. At the final day of her campaign:

In Manila, people from points all over the city began marching and arriving in cars and jeepneys early in the morning. Finally, over a million people, waving flags, shouting joyously, grinning, flashing the Laban sign, jammed Rizal Park for a meeting that lasted almost ten hours to hear oppositional politicians, entertainers, and finally Cory [Corazon Aquino].

This multitude of Filipinos came together to support their new acclaimed "hero".

Additionally, Corazon Aquino's message to the Philippine people seeking independence from Marcos' tyrannical rule resembled an intellectual and peaceful calling for Filipinos to rise up against oppression. For example, from a paper she read out loud on October 1, 1985, Corazon Aquino lectured:

Mr. Marcos is finished. No amount of media manipulation or officious bravado can change the reality of our economic and moral desolation...Is it possible then to displace him without resorting to the use of violence and thereby triggering the cycles of

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<sup>1</sup> Rempel, William C. Delusions of a Dictator: The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in His Secret Diaries. Little Brown and Company: Toronto, 1993. P 75.

<sup>2</sup> Noble, Lela Garner. "Politics in the Marcos Era". Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond. Ed. John Bresnan. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986. p 77-78.



instability and suppression that his removal seeks to avoid? Those of us who believe in the peaceful processes know that this is a difficult middle ground to take. But we have to hope.<sup>1</sup>

She understood first-hand the power and violence Marcos is willing to utilize in order to ensure the stability of his reign. Yet, Aquino also realized that ousting Marcos through violence such as an assassination or forceful take over would have catastrophic results in the long run. While it would achieve the primary goal of removing Marcos from power, there would be a long and tumultuous struggle for power in the Philippines due to the lack of a smooth transition. Corazon Aquino understood that impartial elections were needed in order for the Philippines to successfully changeover from Marcos' dictatorship to a flourishing and competitive democratic state. In a similar manner, Rizal understood that seizing control of the Philippines from Spain through violence would not result in an efficient and proper transition for the Philippines to become an independent state. In the previous chapter, Rizal illustrated his disdain for people accrediting his name to Katipunan, a revolutionary group seeking to remove Spanish influence in the Philippines through military arms and violence. In regards to the Katipunan's call for arms, Rizal wrote to his countrymen:

From the very beginning, when I first had notice of what was being planned, I opposed it, fought it, and demonstrated its absolute impossibility...I was convinced that the scheme was utterly absurd, and, what was worse, it would bring great suffering...I have written

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. pg 44.

likewise (and I repeat my words) that reforms to be beneficial, must come from above, that those which come from below are irregularly gained and uncertain.<sup>1</sup>

Here, Rizal alluded to the same problems that Aquino and the rest of Marcos' opposition faced in the Philippines. Rizal made it clear in this letter that the Katiputan's call to arms was foolish and would not have stable and beneficial results. He referred to beneficial reforms as those that "come from above" or revolutionary changes that occur not through violence but through the proper discussions and politics. In the same manner, Aquino wanted to prevent blood-shed in the removal of Marcos because she knew in the end it would save more lives than if a violent take over had taken place. Equally importantly, she wanted to avoid the use of military force to ensure an efficient, effective, and long-standing new government for the Philippines. Both Aquino and Rizal felt Filipinos needed to understand it is their nation and that Filipinos have the right to utilize democracy to elect who leads their country. Aquino's actions appeared to be concerned with the well-being and prosperity of the Philippine state and its people over her own political and personal gains. For example, in one of Professor Cesar N. Sarino's lecture at the University of the Philippines the progress of Aquino's Administration was analyzed. In essence, Sarino contended:

There are two activities which gave given substance and meaning to President Aquino's genuine legacy of restoring, sustaining, and strengthening democracy in the Philippines, First is the ongoing decentralization of government functions...The second were the

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<sup>1</sup> Rizal, Jose. "Letter to His Countrymen". pg. 330.

national and local elections in May 1992 – a vibrant symbol that democracy has indeed been restored after 20 years of autocratic rule.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Aquino revealed sincere concern for the Philippine nation and its people because she utilized her political position to return political power back to the people and away from the Philippine presidency. In retrospect, Aquino's actions allowed her to closely resemble Rizal's unselfish dedication to development of the Philippines.

Furthermore, Aquino presented strong, honest, and sincere characteristics that helped Filipinos trust a political figure after two decades of mistrusting a deceitful government. She united sections of Philippine society, from the elite businessmen to the rural worker. Vincente T. Paterno, a business man recalls:

Cory [Aquino] had several things that swing people towards her. First, her honesty. Second, her dignity. And third, her strength. Here was a person who said something they people could believe. She did not even begin to consider running until the million signatures came forward [from citizens pledging their vote to her as president]. Here was a person who consistently did not want to be president. And as Ninoy's [Benigno Aquino] widow, she had paid her dues. Unquestionably, here was a person with moral authority. For me, that was something important...Here was someone who had suffered under Marcos. And she was credible speaking against Marcos.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sarino, Cesar N. "Local Government, Peace and Order". The Aquino Administration: Record and Legacy (1986-1992). U.P. Public Lectures on the Aquino Administration and the Post-EDSA Government (1986-1992). Vol. 1. University of the Philippines Press: Quezon City, 1992. p 69.

<sup>2</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. pg 45.

These characteristics of honesty, dignity, and strength appear to mirror those of a hero and that is exactly how Filipinos saw her. As Vicente Paterno alluded to above, she gave people a feeling of trust because they felt she would not take advantage of them or create political illusions for them the way Marcos did since he controlled everything. Under Aquino the people could begin to trust their government and have pride in their nation once again. Also, her own husband paid the ultimate price for living under and opposing Marcos' regime. Hence, people knew that when she spoke of reforming the Philippines into a better nation, she truly meant it. Eventually, Cory began to witness for herself the resounding support she had throughout the entire nation. During her campaign through the Philippine archipelago, she recalled how, "after Mindanao, I came back and told my children: 'We have won'. I had never seen such crowds before. People were waiting for me. They were not just waiting and listening but also contributing whatever little money they had".<sup>1</sup> It is no wonder Aquino prematurely proclaimed to her children, "we have won". Even the Moro Filipinos came out in full force to support Aquino. She understood the significance of obtaining political and monetary support from a region of the country that's had a history of desiring to be autonomous from the Philippine government at Malacanang. In the end, it meant she could receive the support of the nation as a whole. Take for instance her interactions with Muslim secessionist leader Nur Misuari. Aquino and her campaign managers asked Misuari if he could minimize cheating in the Muslim regions, but:

Misuari did more than that. He instructed his commanders to campaign for Cory. Cory said there was no deal, but that if she won, she would hold talks with the separatists, who had been fighting a guerilla war for thirteen years and she would respect Muslim

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 52.

aspirations for autonomy to the extent that it was compatible with the territorial integrity of the nation.<sup>1</sup>

The support from the Moro Filipinos was undoubtedly sincere and showed Cory that the Philippines as a whole desired a change for the better. Overall, Corazon Aquino's "heroic" traits and sincerity as a politician gave people faith in her ability to become a president for the progression of the Philippines and its people from the darkness Marcos tyranny has cast.

In addition, Aquino's campaign against Marcos gave people realistic hope for a brighter future for their country and themselves. For twenty years Marcos ruled the Philippines, and for those two decades Filipinos endured his corruption and destruction of democracy. Essentially, Marcos' reign made people believe their votes, opinions, and efforts did not matter under a government that controlled everything through greed, favoritism, and violence. As author Charles C McDougald puts it bluntly:

The 70's could be labeled the "dark ages" for the Philippine media. No friend or relative of Marcos or Imelda could be criticized. Other forbidden topics included Marcos' health and Imelda's extravagance. Only government accounts of political and economic news could be reported, and these accounts were usually so self-serving or so out of sync with international press report, that they were unbelievable.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Komisar, Corazon Aquino: The Story of a Revolution., pg 87.

<sup>2</sup> McDougald, Charles C. The Marcos File: Was he a Philippine Hero or a Corrupt Tyrant. San Francisco Publishers: San Francisco, 1987. p 179.

Filipinos during Marcos's reign saw democracy as dead and with it any notion of self-pride and achievement in their nation. Cory's campaign began to change these destitute views of the Philippine government and nation. For instance, Antonio Mapa described his campaign work in the rural provinces of the Philippines for the 1986 snap elections:

We told them they were free to vote for whomever they wished, but we asked them to listen to our campaign. In one large field, I anxiously waited as more than 160 laborers emerged from the tall cane stalks and gathered to hear my plea. I was deeply moved when, at the end of my short speech, an elderly worker stood up to say how greatly pleased they were to learn that the owners had come to ask them – instead of ordering them – to vote for the same candidate they had set their hearts on. In the past, these people simply nodded obediently or passively to similar exhortations. This time, they responded with outright cheers, jubilation...<sup>1</sup>

He discussed how in the past elections people were always instructed to vote for whomever the large landowners supported. People assumed that would be the case again this time around. Fortunately, Mapa witnessed for himself that times were changing. Rural workers were no longer being forced or pressured into voting for the candidates the elite and powerful landowners supported. They understood the magnitude of these elections and how it could change the lives of the Filipino people and state. Aquino and her campaign's message to the Filipino people began to remove the shades of fear and doubt that Marcos had installed into everyone. Eventually, people began to support Aquino with their votes and even risked their lives to ensure

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 53-54

the ballots were protected from Marcos' long and corrupt reach. In a letter from February 10, 1986, a Lola (grandmother) recalled:

In Guadalupe Viejo in Makati, as in many other places, armed goons broke into voting precincts to scare away the voters and snatch the ballot boxes. In some places, they succeeded. Elsewhere, they found determined civilians sitting on the ballot boxes. Your Tita Pechay was hit with a chair; and she had to be hospitalized. Flying voters illegally moved from precinct to precinct voting for certain KBL [Marcos sponsored] candidates – of course, they were paid each time they voted.<sup>1</sup>

She provided a first hand example of people she knew and saw put their time, effort, and what little funds they had towards Corazon Aquino's presidential campaign. Also, she witnessed the dark side of Philippine politics under Marcos and the heroics of many Filipinos who attempted to stop the vote stealing and lying that everyone knew Marcos would attempt to utilize to win the election. These very atrocities and unjust practices of Marcos's regime are what motivated Filipinos to defend the integrity of this election with their very lives. People knew the dirty and corrupt methods Marcos would utilize to attempt to win this election. Yet, given confidence by Aquino, Filipinos no longer stood by idle.

### **EDSA & The People's Revolution of 1986: Rekindling of Philippine Nationalism**

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<sup>1</sup> Not sure how to cite author. Nine Letters: The Story of the 1986 Filipino Revolution. Gerardo P. Baron: Quezon City, 1986. 45-46.

At EDSA, Filipinos came together to support not Aquino but all those who would no longer stand for his manipulation of the Philippines and its people. Two major “leaders” responsible for these heroic events were Enrile and Ramos and their direct defiance of Marcos after his false declaration of victory of the 1986 elections. For example, on a radio broadcast on February 22, 1986, opposition leader Agapito Aquino declared to the listeners:

We will give them moral support. We will surround the camps and protect them with our bodies...[The people] have declared [Marcos’s] regime no longer has the support of the people and yet it insists on holding onto power. Anyone who respects the will of the people deserves our help.<sup>1</sup>

Agapito Aquino gave his blessing to Enrile and Ramos, two men that he saw as enemies until the day they both defected from Marcos. Yet, Agapito and others knew that these unfolding events in early 1986 were changing the political and social landscape of the Philippines. The people’s resounding support of Corazon Aquino during the 1986 elections and Marcos’s loss of two major military leaders showed that his regime was losing its perceived aura of immortality. Twenty years passed with no one significantly challenging Marcos because there was no political party or oppositional leaders who could lead the Filipinos to freedom from his longstanding regime. Aquino, Enrile, Ramos and the events at EDSA provided Filipinos with credible leaders and worthy purpose. Eulogio Gonzales, a policeman at the time, recalls:

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 54



We were just waiting for somebody to lead us. We were just waiting to see who would be brave enough to stand up. But even before that we had already wanted to move – we could no longer stomach the circus they had made of the elections and the Batasan Proclamation. So when we heard on TV that Enrile and Ramos had decided to turn their back on Marcos, we knew that this was what we were waiting for. I immediately reported to Crame because the General had asked for our help. I knew, even then, that we didn't even have enough ammunition to last a whole day. Our greatest weapon was the people around us.<sup>1</sup>

People knew the damage Marcos and his regime were causing to themselves and their country for sometime but without hope to significantly challenge, him nothing was done. For example Carl Lande comments on the political climate in the Philippines during Marcos's reign:

Martial law inhibited the campaign activity of its opposition candidates and their followers, when the media and the Commission on Elections were wholly controlled and used in its own behalf by the Marcos administration...[during the 1981 elections] all major opposition groups agreed among themselves to field no candidate against the president. As a result, Marcos was reelected virtually unopposed.<sup>2</sup>

Thanks to the support from Enrile and Ramos, Aquino provided people with hope for a new, credible, and efficient leader of the Philippines. In addition, EDSA revealed the “power of the people” in determining the leader and future for their country. William C. Rempel recalled how

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 108.

<sup>2</sup> Lande, Carl H. “The Political Crisis”. Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986. p 139.

Marcos may not have been ready to step down from his presidency because as, “Marcos left Malacanang with his family that night [in February 1986] aboard an American military helicopter, still insisting he was the lawfully elected president of the Philippines”.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, the events of EDSA communicated to him and the rest of the world that the Filipino people no longer would accept him as their leader. On February 27, 1986 the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* announced, “[Filipinos] have deposed a dictator without the help of anyone but themselves, and they have unshackled their country from a decade of bondage with minimal bloodshed.”<sup>2</sup>

Undoubtedly, the historic events in those final days of February 1986 leading to Corazon Aquino’s official inauguration and Marcos’s departure from the country were made possible due to the unification of Filipino citizens from various backgrounds and convictions, an amazing depiction of Philippine nationalism.

Additionally, a closer look EDSA reveals the extraordinary lengths people went to prevent a violent outbreak between “rebels” and Marcos’s forces. It was the strength in unity of the Filipino people that eventually led them to victory. No one cared whether someone used to support Marcos, at EDSA the goal was to provide assistance, aid, prayers, and moral support to those willing to publicly oppose Marcos. Maria Fe. P. Paller was present right outside of the military base Camp Crame and she noticed how:

One soldier was really perspiring. His lips were parched and his jaws were taught.

Suddenly, a withered old man broke from the crowd to offer the soldier a cold drink.

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<sup>1</sup> Rempel, William C. Delusions of a Dictator: The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in His Secret Diaries. Little Brown and Company: Toronto, 1993. P 196.

<sup>2</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 246.

Several bystanders took the cue from the old man and offered the soldier cigarettes. The soldier shook his head and smiled weakly. In a moment, he bowed his head. He did not want them to see that he had begun to cry.<sup>1</sup>

People understood that the soldier used to be part of the regime's oppressive army before Enrile and Ramos changed sides. Seeing him suffer and people giving their support to an oppositional force, truly showed the unity emerging from the events of the EDSA revolution. Also, the crowd's generosity reflected kinship ties citizens should feel as part of one nation. Family is an essential aspect of Filipino culture. Thus an expert on values in Philippine society and referring to the "1986 Philippine Revolution", Raul J Nonoan wrote:

[The People's Power Movement] distinctive contribution was that they expanded the moral consciousness of the Filipino beyond the borders of the nuclear and extended family and the wider limits of linguistic groups to become aware of the new emergent national community, *patria adorada* (Rizal)...[and others]...and [the movement] viewed moral education as essential to social and political transformation.<sup>2</sup>

Likewise, nationalistic figures such as Rizal related obligations to one's family to one's country as well. In the poem, "Last Poem of Rizal", he wrote, "on the fields of battle, in the fury of fight, others give you their lives without pain or hesitancy, the place does not matter, cypress, laurel, lily white, scaffold, open field, conflict or martyrdom's site, it is the same if asked by home and

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 120.

<sup>2</sup> Bonoan, Raul J. S.J., "Values Education and Philippine Society". Values in Philippine Culture and Education. Ed. Manuel B. Vol 7. 1994. p 6.

Country”<sup>1</sup>. He calls for Filipinos to recognize that people give up their lives to protect their country in the same way they would to ensure the safety and well-being of their own personal home and family. Those living in the same nation, belong to the same home, and are part of the same Filipino family and everyone should be willing to sacrifice their life for the betterment of their fellow Filipino “family members’. Thus, these same sentiments of nationhood and family can be seen between those present at EDSA on that historic occasion. Lulu T Castneda, a wife and mother, recalls:

We were told to link arms. I looked at the faces of the people around me and especially at the man to my right who was holding on tightly to my arm. My big concern was: I am going to die with this man and I don’t know his name. I wanted to ask his name, but then did not want him to think I was fresh. I did not ask his name. As utter strangers, we faced what seemed like imminent death together.<sup>2</sup>

This is account of a wife and mother willing to lock arms with strangers and give up her life to protect Enrile and Ramos who have opposed Marcos. Also, many came out to support Enrile and Ramos came not with guns and arms but with prayers and food. This must have been frustrating and challenging for the soldiers still under Marcos’s command who were ordered to crush this rebellion, a steadfast rebellion of people armed with prayers, words of kindness, and acts of generosity to their enemies. In regards to the response of Marcos’s forces to the overwhelming turnout of people at EDSA, Amado L Lacuesta recounted the images of the soldiers under

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<sup>1</sup> Rizal, Jose. “Last Poem of Rizal”. **Find source**. pg 393.

<sup>2</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 124

General Tadiar of the marines. He mentioned how they were unwavering and appeared unemotional the Filipinos offering them food, water, and pleading with them to turn away and prevent bloodshed. Then, the general warned the people he is ordered to move their APC's and tanks into the fortress but the people resoundingly chant NO. As a result, the general and the soldiers geared up, turned on the engines of the military vehicles, and prepared to move forward:

The metal mountain jerks forward. Defiant, nervous shouts all around. The praying voices rise another key. I wonder what it is like to be crushed under tons of metal. The metal mountain jerks forward again. But no one stirs except the excited journalists jockeying for better angles. Then the engine stops. There is an astounding split second of silence. The crowd erupts into wild cheers and applause. General Tadiar looks at us, turns and shakes his head. He disappears somewhere to the rear. His soldiers look around uneasily, unwilling still to concede eye contact.<sup>1</sup>

Truly, these people were out in full support to illustrate to Marcos and his forces they were willing to give their lives to show his regime and the rest of the world they did not accept him as the true winner of the 1986 presidential elections. Their power came together and even impressed the steadfast discipline of the soldiers and general who were still obeying Marcos's orders. However, this abundance of public support did not move Marcos one bit. George Winternitz describes the increased activity of Marcos's forces against the people at EDSA:

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 126

Before dawn, the cry was more desperate: tanks and tear gas...marines marching against our group. The organizers fixed barricades, grouped our people in organized fashion, repositioned our vehicles, instructed us on how to cope with tear gas, provided buckets of water with calamansi (lemons) and rags for our faces.<sup>1</sup>

Marcos felt no kinship to these people nor showed them any mercy. Despite the cry from people for there to be no violence and a peaceful solution to the political instability in the nation, Marcos still orders his men to gas or run over innocent civilians. In other words, he is desperate to regain the power he once had over the Philippines that has been tested by Aquino, Enrile, Ramones and the Filipino people who have come out for the People's Power Movement. Altogether, these accounts reveal the ways Filipinos came together during the "People's Revolution" to show Marcos he no longer had legitimate control over them and the nation. The way people came together firmly united to defend newly elected Aquino and her allies such as Enrile and Ramos demonstrate the sense of nationhood emerging during this time.

#### Significance of the People's Power Movement and its Aftermath

After all the prayers, fear of violence, and death, the People's Power Movement at EDSA began the remolding and rebuilding process of the Philippine government. As Marcos's forces got closer to their "rebel" targets, the sound of gun shots were not heard. Instead, there were handshakes, hugs, cries of joy and relief as many soldiers refused to harm any innocent people.

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 195-196.

Some of Marcos's forces even changed over to the so called "rebel" side. Cesar D Umali recalled:

The most amusing observation about the whole siege is that all those ordered to attack Camps Crame and Aguinaldo defected to the side of the rebels just before they reached their target. They did not fire their guns at the mass of unarmed civilians. To me, this inability to shoot civilians was the single most crucial enigma during those days, resulting from just the right blend of faith and patriotism.<sup>1</sup>

Umali's commentary is interesting because he also labels those in support of the People Power Movement as rebels. Then, the very same people are referred to as civilians who the soldiers decide to ally themselves with as well. Marcos and his cronies no longer represented the will of the Filipino people nor the Philippines anymore. He and his remaining allies became the real "rebels" of the Philippine Nation during this time. Similarly, Corazon Aquino, the people proclaimed true leader of the Philippines, understood the significance of EDSA for herself as president, the Filipino people, and the Philippine nation. She discussed how:

The people of EDSA amazed me. They faced death. It was a different thing altogether from rallies or political meetings. Life was on the line in EDSA. That was why I was so angry when my security did not want me to go to EDSA. I told them: "NO way can I not be in EDSA." I had announced it on radio. My security was probably getting ulcers because I would not listen to them. I said: "Look, this is all my doing." They argued: "It

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 230

is our duty to protect you.” Finally I said: “if you do not take me there, I am going by myself.” I went to EDSA on Monday afternoon.<sup>1</sup>

Besides her campaigning, this is one of the reasons why Aquino emerged as a heroic and unifying hero. Agreeably, Michael Pinches, in an analysis of the working class’s political sentiments during “The People’s Power Movement”, argues that “certainly the desire by many people to remove Marcos was strong; conversely many saw much appeal in the apparent sincerity and honesty of Aquino”.<sup>2</sup> In other words, she understood she owed all of her success during the elections and at EDSA to the people. These were her constituents and the very people who she will need to efficiently improve the Philippine nation and rebuild its nationalistic image. Hence, she made it a point to go to EDSA and give her own individual support to the People’s Power Movement and demonstrated to her allies the sincerity in her politics for the people.

### **A Heroine of Nationalism Brings the Philippines to a New Era**

*It is fitting and proper that, as the rights and liberties of our people were taken away at midnight twenty years ago, the people should firmly recover those lost rights and liberties in the full light*

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 209

<sup>2</sup> Pinches, Michael. “The Working Class Experience of Shame, Inequality, and People



*of day...We become exiled in our land – we, Filipinos, who are at home only in freedom – when Marcos destroyed the Republic fourteen years ago. Through courage and unity, through the power of the people, we are home again.*

*President Corazon C Aquino, inaugural address, February 24, 1986.<sup>1</sup>*

No longer is it a rumor that Marcos's twenty year reign has ended. It is pure reality that Marcos is gone and the newly elected President Corazon Aquino has officially become president of the Philippines with her proposed message to all Filipinos that their freedom and home will be restored to them. This occasion reached out and touched many Filipinos across the nation making it significant more than a simplistic historical and political date in time. For example, a letter from a grandmother during this momentous occasion reminisced:

Our merry-making actually began when Cory was safely installed as our new president. People had mini motorcades all over Manila with friends, blowing their horns and shouting Cory's name. On channel 4, the tape of her inaugural was shown several times over...By 10p.m. [it] was officially announced that the Marcoses were out of Malacanang. These three veteran TV announcers shed tears unashamedly...Once again, being Filipino is glorious!<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 235

<sup>2</sup> Not sure how to cite author. Nine Letters: The Story of the 1986 Filipino Revolution. Gerardo P. Baron: Quezon City, 1986. Pg 42.

Filipinos gained their freedom from Marcos's tyranny but they have also regained a sense of pride in their citizenship. Additionally, Aquino wrote a note that stated:

It is true: the Filipino is brave, the Filipino is honorable, the Filipino is great. I have never felt prouder to be a Filipino. I am sure I share this feeling with millions of other Filipinos. I am told that in other cities, when they learn that you are a Filipino, they shake your hand and praise the nobility of your race. In the streets of New York, I am told that Filipinos are being stopped and congratulated for moral courage as a people. The Filipino stands proud before the whole world.<sup>1</sup>

Defining nationalism among people is a difficult task. Yet, both a grandmother and the president of the Philippines felt the same deep emotions of pride in their nation and ethnicity due to the victory of the EDSA movement. This defining moment in history is as close as one can get to define the pinnacle of nationhood.

Unfortunately, not every Filipino shared these same prideful sentiments. It appears some who were not present at EDSA or in the Philippines at the same time may have different outlooks on the significant achievements of the People's Power Movement. Particularly, a letter from a middle-aged Filipino woman in the Philippines regarding her sister living in New York reveals the lack of credit some Filipinos give to the EDSA movement:

A sad thing happened to me today. I called your aunt living in New York to tell her about how Filipinos today are bursting with pride because we ourselves...toppled the Marcos

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 245

dictatorship. She would not believe me. She said I should give credit where credit is due: that America (with the possible exception of president Reagan) was partly responsible for the end of the Marcos dictatorship...But America must not and cannot take any credit for the four-day People's Revolt that finally toppled the dictatorship....It had to be the Filipinos themselves who delivered the uncompromising message to Marcos himself.<sup>1</sup>

This letter reveals the lack of national identity and pride some Filipinos overseas have of their nation. This can be attributed to many reasons. One explanation can be the distance and also because they were not present during those intense days of the People's Power Movement in February. Furthermore, the letter demonstrates the pride the narrator takes in the power of the Filipino people and their ability to overcome Marcos's tyranny. She personally gave her support and body at EDSA as the writer of the mentioned note pleads with the letter's recipient, "how I wish you were old enough to realize that your uncle and I and scores of other Filipinos risked our very lives so that this country of ours would be free". She gives due credit to the United States for its positive influence on the Philippines, but at the same she shows disappointment in the way many Filipinos in America may not understand the importance of EDSA and President Aquino. However, a majority of the letters analyzed reveal that EDSA evoked strong feelings of nationhood. Agreeably, a letter from March 30, 1986 asserts:

We [Filipinos] are actually very ordinary. Our story, however, evolved into a saga of heroism with ourselves in the starring roles. The Marcos years were years of shame for

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<sup>1</sup> Not sure how to cite author. Nine Letters: The Story of the 1986 Filipino Revolution. Gerardo P. Baron: Quezon City, 1986. Pg 52-53.

Filipinos – blanket character assassination on the entire Filipino people by one man – Marcos... Two outstanding facts of the EDSA Revolt stand out: it rid us of Marcos and it has restored our pride in being Filipino. To a lesser degree, it has restored the spirit of Bayanihan [ equivalent to ‘nationalism’], which in the mayhem of the Marcos years, we had forgotten. <sup>1</sup>

The shame the narrator discusses is not only of Marcos but the Filipino’s shame for allowing this to have lasted for so long. This presents itself as an illustration of nationalism because those who came out to support Enrile, Ramos, and Aquino at EDSA were present seeking to sway government power towards improving their nation as a whole rather than for themselves as individuals. In agreement, Bankoff and Weekley assert:

We must stretch this explicitly political notion of nationalism to include those who seek not to exercise state power themselves, but to influence the way in which that power is exercised in more nationalist directions.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, an impression of heroism and nationalism emerged from EDSA because it was the Filipino through solidarity and perseverance that became the catalyst for Marcos to step down and Aquino to become the people’s champion.

In essence, Marcos in his 20 years as president has dragged the Philippine economy, nation, and its people through dirty politics and corruption that he utilized for his own economic and political gains. These comments of heroism of the Filipino strongly reflect on the general

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<sup>1</sup> Not sure how to cite author. Nine Letters: The Story of the 1986 Filipino Revolution, pg 92-94.

<sup>2</sup> Bankoff, Greg & Kathleen Weekley. Post-Colonial National Identity in the Philippines: Celebrating the Centennial of Independence. Ashgate Publishing Company, Burlington. 1988. p 60.

theme and idea of this entire project. In the end, President Corazon Aquino is not represented as the only heroine in this tale of the reconstruction of Philippine nationalism. At EDSA, the solidarity of the Filipino citizens, political and religious leaders, and Filipinos from different socioeconomic backgrounds are who constructed and defined the “restored spirit of Bayanihan, or ‘nationalism’”.

## **Conclusion**

Taken as a whole, the Philippine State and the Filipino people have had a tumultuous history. Under colonial rule for centuries, Filipinos benefitted from nationalistic heroes such as Jose Rizal and Sultan Kudarat who helped illustrate for Filipinos their obligations to their nation and fellow citizens. Outlined in this thesis, nationalistic heroes are individuals that are a focal

point of agreement among a majority of citizens regarding the unique and positive traits of an individual that should be attributed to an entire ethnicity. Additionally, Bankoff and Weekley create a compelling illustration regarding what constitutes the idea of a “Filipino nation”:

The attitude that Filipino national identity is characterized by commitment to freedom and democracy is a healthy one because it focuses on a non-affective, or procedural, notion of what constitutes a society, rather than primordial bonds of ethnicity or race. This commitment usually includes important corollary notions such as an ongoing struggle against tyranny and injustice.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, Bankoff and Weekley’s referral of a “struggle against tyranny and injustice” can reflect the struggle of Rizal and Kudarat against the Spanish colonial powers and Aquino her supporters against Marcos’s corrupt reign. Both Rizal and Kudarat are known for their intellectual dedication and pursuance of Filipino unity. Even though both individuals lived through Spain’s colonialism of the Philippines in different time periods and regions of the country, Rizal and Kudarat are two figures that are constantly referred to by Filipinos because of their messages for unity and pride among Filipinos. For instance, Chapter 1 refers to the *Year of the Filipino* where the government dedicated an entire year to the recognition of Jose Rizal and his efforts towards building a sense of nationhood for the Philippines. In the same respects, Chapter 1 also cites how in 1975 a stamp was commemorated to Sultan Kudarat to honor him “not just [as] a hero of the Muslims but a hero of the entire Filipino race, the Malay race”. In a nation as ethnically, religious, and politically diverse as the Philippines, “heroes” or individuals that all Filipinos can

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<sup>1</sup> Bankoff and Weekley. Post-Colonial National Identity in the Philippines. p 118.

proudly identify with are essential to establishing a united sense of community or a national identity. Additionally, the examination of the Marcos regime reveals how he preached to the Filipino people and world that he was seeking to mold the Philippines into a powerful, competitive, and secure nation. However, in the eyes of Filipinos in the Philippines, abroad, and the international community, Marcos did nothing more than utilize his twenty year reign to promote the wealth, security, and power of his own family and friends. Almost single handedly, Marcos created his own network of “cronies” and puppets throughout the Philippine government and economy. Therefore, Filipinos outside of his network of family and friends were forced under a form of “colonial oppression”. For the purposes of this project, “colonial oppression” refers to the widespread corruption and favoritism outlined in Chapter 2 regarding the Marcos regime and its control of the media and the Philippine economy. Agreeably, Thompson reports how:

Crony capitalism resulted in lost bailout funds [from failure to encourage foreign investment] totaling more than \$3 billion, and state capitalism resulted in a controlled economy characterized by mismanagement, inefficiency, slow growth, impeded expansion, and restricted output. In addition, the country’s agricultural exports, particular its major dollar earners, coconut and sugar, were singled out for special attention by the government. <sup>1</sup>

Clearly, Marcos and his regime’s control over the economy only had no benefit for the Philippine’s economy nor the Filipino people as a whole. The country’s loss of funds and

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, Mark R. The Anti Marcos Struggle-Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines. New Haven: Yale University, 1995. Pg 222-223.

inefficiencies were because Marcos geared the economy to benefit himself and his allies similar to a colonial power. Filipinos were living under these government controlled and corrupt conditions that were supposed to have been erased after the Philippines gained its sovereignty post-World War II. In essence, Marcos wanted to portray himself as a champion of the Philippines, “he wanted to ensure he was remembered as the country’s greatest statesman”.<sup>1</sup> Instead, his twenty year reign became one of the major factors for the demise in the Philippine’s socioeconomic development since colonial rule.

Additionally, in a nation with sovereignty issues between a Christian majority government and a densely Muslim populated southern region, Marcos’s corrupt regime ironically played a role in unifying Filipinos with such diverse language, religious, and cultural barrier. He held power for so long because even though many opposed Marcos’s regime, they were far too divided in their political and social agenda. Hence, with divisions all across the opposition, no one stood a chance of defeating Marcos’s political machine, the K.B.L. There were those who tried such as Benigno Aquino, a renowned opposition leader and husband of Corazon Aquino, who advertised Marcos’s corruption. In the end, Benigno was assassinated and this, “murder of the most prominent leader of the opposition convinced the upper and middle classes that no opponent of the present regime was safe, no matter how high his social position.”<sup>2</sup> As a result of this tragedy, opposition groups began to unite because it became clear to everyone that in order for Marcos to be brought down there had to be ideological and political compromise among the Philippine citizenry. Marcos’ influence into the economy, the Philippine Congress, and social

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, The Marcos File, p 195.

<sup>2</sup> Lande, Carl H. “The Political Crisis”. Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986. p 115-116.



sectors of Philippine society eventually become the reason oppositional interest groups united together to remove Marcos and his cronies out of office and control. While the U.S. played a role in putting pressure on Marcos's regime, it was the Filipino's solidarity that helped put an end to the Marcos Era. They were the heroes that assisted the Philippines to be alleviated from his twenty year tyranny.

Also, years of Marcos's corrupt regime and selfish politics created a mistrustful stigma of the government that was fresh in the minds of Filipinos during the 1986 elections. For example, Benedict Kerkvliet and Resil Mjares discuss how:

Apparently by the early 1980s, fewer and fewer people believed that emanated from the ruling elite, whether it was the official version of [Benigno] Aquino's death or the Marcoses' effort to cast themselves as super patrons. This is shown for instance in Pinches's account of poor men and women in Metro Manila privately ridiculing Ferdinand and Imelda.<sup>1</sup>

These two authors present the mistrust Filipinos had of their government, especially towards the end of Marcos' reign. Even with the political unity of Marcos's opposition, there needed to an individual to run against Marcos that the people could trust. Hence, Corazon Aquino came out of the tragedy of her husband's murder to become the "heroine" the Philippines could trust to lead their nation and its people. Everyone knew that Aquino knew firsthand the suffering Marcos has instilled upon the entire nation and thus everyone cling to her sincere promises for improvements

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<sup>1</sup> Kerkvliet, Benedict J. Tria & Resil B. Mjares. "Themes in the Transition from Marcos to Aquino: An Introduction". From Marcos to Aquino: Local Perspectives on Political Transition in the Philippines. Ed. Benedict J. Kerkvliet and Resil B. Mojares. University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu, 1992. p 6.

to the nation on every level. In respect to the assassination of Corazon's husband, in a letter dated March 15, 1986 the author wrote:

I had to admire her [Corazon Aquino]. If it had been me, I thought, I wouldn't have been able to control my anger at the people who butchered my husband...To this day, Cory has shown that she isn't bent on demanding blood for blood. She came back to bury [her husband]. In the following months, she lent her presence to rallies, usually surprised when crowds showed up. She consistently stayed out of politics till the day she accepted her nomination.<sup>1</sup>

People revered and respected Corazon Aquino because everyone knew she lost a husband because of his outspoken opposition to Marcos. In addition, many Filipinos considered her political endeavors to be sincere. As the letter points out, some felt Aquino ran for political office not to get vengeance for her husband's death but because she truly wanted to represent the Filipino people and their needs in the government. Corazon Aquino became a driving and healing force in the rebuilding of the Philippine Government's image at the national and international level. She gave hope to people living in a seemingly dishonest nation. Aquino was able to bring people to have faith in herself as a candidate and the Philippine government under her control because as, "[Aquino] said her faith is 'a spirit that bears things with resignation, yes, but above all blazing serene hope.'" As a result of her steadfast belief in her abilities to improve the situation with Philippine democracy, people wrote, "we are only starting with President

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<sup>1</sup> Not sure how to cite author. Nine Letters: The Story of the 1986 Filipino Revolution. Gerardo P. Baron: Quezon City, 1986. p 85.

Corazon C. Aquino. Already, we look forward to a just and fair government".<sup>1</sup> Thus, people from all regions of the nation and all levels of society risked their finances and at times their lives to assist Aquino in her campaign to defeat Marcos. It was a battle of the corrupt versus those seeking freedom, and Aquino was fighting for the freedom of the entire nation from tyranny. Additionally, the Philippines' mostly peaceful transition from Marcos's regime to a functioning democratic government owes credit to the bravery and heroics of those present and supportive of the People's Power Movement at EDSA. Complete strangers were linking arms and forming human barricades risking their lives not just for Enrile, Ramos, and Aquino but for aspiration to improve their lives and their nation. People came out to EDSA with the hope that their efforts would put an end to the lies and violence that Marcos threatened to utilize to ensure he remained in power even after his defeat in the 1986 elections. Yet, a deeper analysis into the thoughts behind people's actions during those days at the end of February reveals that the People's Power Movement restored the pride and concept of nationhood among Filipinos. After EDSA, The Philippine Daily Inquirer proudly proclaimed:

Every Filipino in the world today stands a little taller and a little prouder. No longer the butt of jokes and the object of pity or derision, Filipinos can take their place in the council of nations because they are one of the few races who have done the impossible.<sup>1</sup>

The impossible the narrator referred to was the transition of power from Marcos to Aquino through demonstrations and not full-scale military action. Filipinos took immense pride in the

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<sup>1</sup> People Power: The Philippine Revolution of 1986. Ed. Monina Allarey Mercado. Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986. Pg 120.

People's Power Movement because they felt without the people coming out to support Enrile, Ramos and Aquino during the EDSA standoff with Marcos' forces then maybe things would not have begun to change. Likewise, Marcos's removal from power, President Aquino's official inauguration as the righteous president of the Philippines and the prevention of a bloody revolution presented Filipinos were several results of the People's Power Movement that Filipinos took pride in. Corruption and inefficiencies may still exist within the Philippine government. However, people do not take the revelation of political scandals in the government lightly. Take for example, Philippine President Arroyo who has been under constant scrutiny for allegations against her husband's corrupt dealings and acts of favoritism. One of the Philippines' most renowned media websites, GMANews.tv, quotes Simon Naogosan, a critic of Arroyo and former government employee stating:

"We challenge the government officials and employees to join the Filipino people in further unmasking the systemic corruption in government. We enjoin the Cordillerans to discern the truth and demand the ouster of the Arroyo regime," he added.<sup>1</sup>

The fervent calls for action against corruption and inefficiencies in the government can be attributed to the pride and solidarity that have come out of EDSA. Without a doubt, the heroics of Rizal, Kadarat, and Aquino have developed the nationalistic sentiments of the Filipino people to become too strong to allow widespread oppression to engulf their nation like it has in the past Marcos or colonial regimes.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/85784/Ex-state-employee-twits-local-execs-ads-supporting-Arroyo>

