The 1986 Filipino Crisis: Triumph of Democracy through U.S. Intervention

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by

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ABSTRACT

In 1986, the United States faced a serious foreign policy dilemma in the Philippines. The U.S.'s main concern was the two military bases, Clark Air Force Base and Subic Naval Base, strategically located in the Philippines. The leases on these bases were obviously in jeopardy if the Filipino government turned Communist. Likewise, President Ferdinand Marcos' regime was in danger of falling due to the Communist insurgency. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) continued to add strength to their numbers as Marcos failed to enact meaningful reforms. The poorer class of the Philippines increasingly saw the Communists as a viable alternative to their economic hardships. Therefore, it was in the United States' best interest to either force Marcos to enact reforms necessary or support the creation of a democratic reform movement.

This paper attempts to deal with the U.S.'s role in the complex situation of the 1986 Filipino election. The U.S. had an unique role in that it was invited by both parties, the Marcos regime and the opposition led by Corazon Aquino, to intervene. However, this intervention, while resulting in a democratic government for the Philippines, created considerable implications for other U.S. allies in the region and around the world. It also raised questions for U.S. foreign policy makers as to the criteria of support for Third World nations opposing Communism.
February 7, 1996 marked the tenth anniversary of Corazon Aquino's "People's Revolution". The 1986 Filipino election demonstrated democracy's ability to triumph in the face of corruption, greed, and ignorance. The Filipino people took their first step toward a self-democratic government after years of authoritarian rule. They did this in spite of a leader intent on maintaining power and a communist insurgency within the country. Many Filipinos faced tremendous personal danger in their struggle to vote. Ultimately, this struggle established a democratic government which replaced the old authoritarian regime.

Additionally, the United States had a unique role in the 1986 vote. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings brought needed clarity to the situation. President Reagan's observation team, headed by Senator Richard Lugar, brought needed clarity for both the President and the people of the Philippines. But more importantly, the U.S. intervened in numerous instances to ensure that the Marcos regime would not remain in power. While "people power" created the revolution, the U.S. guided the Philippines towards that end. As a result, the Philippines today continue to face the problems caused by years of abuse under a dictator. However, with the support of democratic ideals, the Filipinos face the future with hope instead of fear.

The Philippines, before Ferdinand Marcos took over in 1965, had an average annual economic growth rate and a political stability surpassing all of Southeast Asia. Japan was the only other country which could claim a better standard of living (Friend 571). In spite of the promising aspects, persistent problems remained in the Philippines. The economic gap between the rich land owners and the poor farmers had widened. Individuals buying power steadily decreased as basic food stuffs almost became too expensive. The police force became more and more unable to protect individual citizens from unlawful activity. A number of small armies
arose as people felt increasingly powerless.

These problems and others led President Marcos to declare martial law in 1972. Marcos later defended this action in an article in which he attempted to defend his tenure as president. Marcos cited several examples of a government imposition of martial law to deal with a perceived crisis. He said, "The governments of Pakistan, India, Taiwan, South Korea, Burma, Thailand, and Indonesia,...have made regular recourse to martial constraints in situations of perceived crisis...Friend (the author of a rebuttal article) seems to argue that martial law was imposed in the Philippines to serve personal ends" (Marcos 91).

Marcos' claim of martial law being for the good of the country can be supported by some facts (Friend 572). Marcos introduced a measure of land reform attracting foreign investment through the World Bank. Public security increased as many of the leftist guerrillas were dispersed. Most Filipinos felt as if order had been restored by the police. The infrastructure of the nation was improved. Roads, buildings, and irrigation projects bettered conditions throughout the region. The average Filipino finally experienced hope in needed reforms.

This return to law and order came at a tremendous cost, however. The cost was the erosion of the personal liberties and freedoms of the Filipino people. Ferdinand Marcos' claim that martial law was declared only as a last option to control the dynamics in the Philippines may well have been true. Marcos may have had the best interests of the nation in mind. However, the result of the declaration of martial law was the establishment of a new oligarchy of Marcos' cronies.

This establishment of concentration of power in a few of Marcos' friends brought the Philippines to a new low which would eventually set the stage for the 1986 revolution. Theodore
Friend argues that Marcos ruined the Philippines in six ways (Friend 575-577).

One: Crony socialism redistributed the wealth of the nation to a select few. The resulting corruption smothered competition and wrecked the economy.

Two: The semi-militarization of the government decreased the overall professionalism of the military and increased the New People's Army's (NPA's) influence. (The NPA was the military wing of the Communist Party in the Philippines)

Three: Mismanagement of the economy led to 40 percent unemployment and major malnutrition.

Four: Marcos, while not completely a tyrant, did allow the government to erode into a corruption which he controlled.

Five: Marcos continued to issue propaganda to support his image both at home and abroad.

Six: Marcos, through martial law, undermined the basic institutions of the nation. The Supreme Court became nothing more than a mere symbol and the Congress lost any power it once had.

All of these factors contributed to the decline of the nation's economic, political, and military climate. If Marcos' goal by declaring martial law was to improve the conditions of the average Filipino person, he had failed miserably. Despite some attempts to introduce measures of improvement, the Marcos regime proved incapable of enacting meaningful reforms. The level of "crony capitalism" remained too obtrusive to making life better for the average Filipino. The facts indicate that Marcos' goal was to solidify his hold upon a nation which was vital to the United States. Marcos had succeeded in this aim. By 1983, the climate within the Philippines was on the verge of becoming chaotic.

1983 to 1985: Setting the Stage for a Revolution

Despite the restriction of personal freedoms, many Filipinos felt relatively little anger towards the Marcos regime. The majority of the people supported any measure which would
bring stability and peace to their country. However, the assassination of Benigno Aquino accelerated the dynamic of discontent which had, so far, been dormant. The Catholic Church could look the other way at many of Marcos' shady dealings, but the assassination of Benigno proved too large of an atrocity for Cardinal Jaime Sin and his followers. Also, many within the military could not ignore the effect the assassination had upon their professionalism as General Fabian Ver and other military personnel were implicated.

Benigno Aquino had been an active politician in opposition to Marcos for several years before 1983. During the martial law years, he had been incarcerated and later allowed, in 1980, to travel to the United States to receive treatment for his heart condition (Resource Book 12) Aquino was allowed to return to the Philippines in August of 1983. He came to offer a nonviolent solution to the Marcos presidency. Many felt that his return had marked a great triumph for democracy. Benigno embodied many of the populace's dreams for prosperity in a ravished economy.

Those hopes were dashed when an armed assailant killed Benigno Aquino on the tarmac of the Manila International Airport on August 21, 1983. Strangely, the very purpose of Benigno's return to the Philippines, to unify an opposition against Marcos, was brought about by his death. Senator Lugar wrote in his book, *Letters to the Next President*, "Ironically, that moment of murder and martyrdom set in motion thirty months of events which revealed the extent to which democracy had been endangered and then an extraordinary climactic march toward restoration of Philippine democracy." Herbert S. Malin in an article of *Asian Survey* said, "The killing (of Benigno Aquino) provoked a national and international reaction of outrage and dissatisfaction over conditions in the country of dimensions unsurpassed in the peace time..."
Although not realized then, the resulting trial proved to be the beginning of the end of Marcos' attempt to retain power. The initial hearings raised concerns over the extent to which the five-member panel would prosecute. The panel conducted hearings in Manila, Japan, and California. The most important finding of the panel was the involvement of the military in the assassination. Four of the members implicated General Luther Custodio. But the most important military figure, General Fabian Ver, was accused by one of the members. This presented a dangerous situation for President Marcos. Should he support his life long friend or blame the whole assassination on him to save his presidency? Marcos knew that if the trial was anything less than fair and impartial, it might cause an eruption in civil outrage. Likewise, if he did not support Ver, Marcos would have faced considerable opposition in a portion of the military. This dilemma would be a thorn in Marcos' side until his eventual departure.

The assassination of Benigno Aquino highlighted in the minds of the Filipinos, and especially with international observers, the inadequacies of the Marcos government. Aquino's death served as a symbol of the injustices of a martial law government unable to protect its citizens, provide a stable economy, or maintain democratic freedoms. This provided added fuel for a communist insurgency which was already growing in support and strength.

By the beginning of 1984, the Filipino economy faced a crisis unlike any other in its history. The severe world recession of the early 1980's, an increasing public sector deficit, over borrowing from abroad, and mismanagement of the economy had led to outstanding debt of more than $26 billion (Malin 203). Benigno Aquino's death furthered the economic crisis as it caused doubts among foreign investors as to the credibility of Marcos. Aquino's death caused many
The debate on whether the present crisis is primarily an economic or a political one has been resolved for most Filipinos in favor of the political. This is because of the fact that the structure of decision-making affecting all aspects of society, including the economy, concentrates power in a few hands and enables public accountability to be subordinated to private interest, if not completely ignored (76).

The facts support Hernedez's claim. Not only was the economy stagnant in the early 1980's, the nation registered a negative GNP growth rate of around 4% to 5% (Malin 204). Marcos claimed unemployment throughout the nation was around 13% and 74% of Filipinos believed that they could be considered poor (Hernadez 77). The inflation rate was estimated to be between 50% and 65% in 1984. The incredible state of the Philippine economy could not be attributed to anything else except the mismanagement of the Marcos government. No natural market force could have produced such disastrous results.

The faltering economy of the early 1980's only furthered the growth of the communist insurgency within the Philippines. The "new" Communist Party of the Philippines began as a pro-Chinese party in contrast to the "old" party which was a pro-Soviet Union form of Communism. The previous communist party, PKP, attempted to overthrow the government after World War II in the Huk rebellion. In the same way, the new CPP was waging a guerrilla war against the Marcos government in the early 1980's.

The CPP had increasingly become dangerous as it spread throughout the nation rather than remaining in the traditionally liberal central Luzon. Most figures have the CPP's numbers anywhere from 10,000 to 20,000. Richard Armitage testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in December of 1985 that the number of communist insurgents had reached
more than 16,500 (Senate 1985). Herbert Malin reported that 10,000 strong supporters and
10,000 armed men (Malin 202). Other reports had their numbers at 5,000 to 6,000 in 1983,
10,000 in 1984, and 20,000 in 1985 (Hernadez 65). Regardless of the numbers, it was quite
evident that the number of communist insurgents was on the rise. Sec. Armitage reported the
CPP to be in about 60 of the Philippines 73 provinces. Later, he stated that the rate of insurgency
of actual communist controlled area was around 20% (Senate 1985).

Much of this increase in numbers can be attributed to the state of the economy,
specifically the lack of real land reform, allowing peasants to share in the profits of farming.
Ivan Malloy raises this observation in his article, Revolution in the Philippines. He says, "To
many, the NPA provided a vehicle by which opposition of the most effective kind could be
expressed against the oppressive rule of the Marcos regime." (828). The NPA's "liberalized"
zones of influence did give hope to those 74% of Filipinos who considered themselves poor.
Their lack of wealth was directly attributed to the lack of ownership of land. Many Filipinos
began to see the communists as liberators of a corrupt government which had brought the
economy into such shambles.

However, it was clear from the beginning the NPA's goals were by no means peaceful.
Michael Armacost said, "... We should not delude ourselves. The NPA leaders are not agrarian
reformers. They are ruthless; they are opportunistic; they have systematically used violence to
intimidate local officials and to expand their influence in the rural areas." (74)

Thus, the violence of the New People's Army (NPA), the military wing of the CPP,
increased in the few years before the 1986 election. In April of 1985, John Whitehall reported on
the level of violence the Philippines were experiencing in the countryside (3). Small
assassination squads, called "sparrow units" would attack a group of two or three soldiers in a crowded marketplace.

One reason for this increase in violence was to obtain much needed arms and ammunition. Another reason was to show the Filipino people the inadequacies of the army to protect them. Often, the NPA would prey upon soldiers who rode in open jeeps, unprotected from snipers in the surrounding hills, and trucks deep within the mountainous terrain. Or they would wait for a group of soldiers to become isolated from a moving convoy, attack, and then disappear into the countryside.

To combat these guerrilla tactics, the government created the Civil Home Defense Forces (CHF) (Whitehall 4). Each village would have a captain with around ten men under his command. These men would ideally be armed with M-1 rifles to protect the village. Unfortunately, these groups were not well armed enough to combat the tactics of the NPA. When the government did give them enough arms, they just became more likely to get attacked by the NPA always in search of more weapons.

The government also created OPLAN KATATAGAN (Operation Plan for Stability) in order to combat the secessionist and insurgency problems (Hernandez 69). Basically, this plan prescribed reforming the military to better relate to the Filipino people. Also, the plan proposed actively opposing the CPP and NPA by local means and an increased military presence.

In spite of the government's attempts, the communist threat within the Philippines continued to grow in the years prior to the 1986 election. A lack of reform on the part of the military and in the economic conditions of the country proved too daunting a task for the Marcos government. Only real reform could thwart the communists' message of equal opportunity for
all Filipinos. The CPP lived on the distress of the Filipinos and their lack of faith in a Marcos led government. Only a government which could create some hope in the hearts and minds of the Filipino people had a chance of defeating the communists' goals.

1985 to 1986: An Election Marked by Fraud

By 1985, it was clear that Ferdinand Marcos' government was in jeopardy. Added to the economic, military, and communist problems he was encountering, Marcos had to deal with his failing health. Fred Brown, a staff member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, visited with Ferdinand Marcos in August of 1985 (Brown). Brown explained how Marcos was in terrible shape physically and looked as if he were about to die. Marcos' skin had a pale appearance and his eyes were glazed over. Mrs. Imelda Marcos ushered him out of the room after a few minutes of the meeting in order to try and hide the president's true condition. Senator Lugar spoke in regard to the state of Marcos' health before the 1986 election (Lugar int.). The senator expressed just how debilitated Marcos had actually become. It was clear that Marcos' physical ability to run the nation had come into question.

In Letters to the Next President, Senator Lugar told how Juan Ponce Enrile, Marcos' defense minister, spoke of Mrs. Marcos pushing Ferdinand to order the election (108). Mrs. Marcos knew the precarious state of the President's health and reckoned that by 1987, the regularly scheduled presidential election, Ferdinand would be in too poor of health to run. Also, she would likely be Ferdinand's vice-presidential candidate in the next election. Therefore, it was in Marcos' best interests to hold the election earlier in order to ward off any real, organized opposition.

In addition, a visit by Senator Paul Laxalt, R-Nevada had contributed to President Marcos
calling for the election. Senator Laxalt was one of President Reagan's closest friends and brought to the Marcos government a word of caution. It became obvious to Marcos that concern over the Philippines went all the way to the Oval Office. Senator Lugar said, "I believe the decision by Marcos to have an election... found its origins in the Laxalt visit... Marcos wanted to show he had broad support." (Madison 2707)

It was the culmination of all of these events that led President Marcos on November 3, 1985 to call for a snap election. This Week with David Brinkley, a news commentary show, interviewed President Marcos discussing such topics as Benigno Aquino's death, the human rights abuses within the Philippines, and the threat of a Communist takeover. Partially goaded by George Will's questioning, President Marcos announced that in order to prove the he had the will of the Filipino people, he would call for an early election. The immediate question was whether or not this declaration was legal.

The legality of the declaration of the election came into question as soon as President Marcos called for the election. Many of the opposition leaders questioned this declaration as they wanted more time to prepare for the upcoming regularly scheduled election in May of 1987. Indeed, most of Marcos' cabinet officers tried to dissuade him from calling the election (Lugar 98). They believed, and correctly so, that Marcos had made a mistake by calling the election so early. They wanted to wait until the regular election in May. However, Marcos believed that he could not back out of the decision as he had already proclaimed on American television his intent. To do so now, would further jeopardize the already precarious state of affairs in the Philippines.

With Marcos steadfast in his decision, the issue of the election's legality went before the
Supreme Court. The Philippine Constitution calls for a President to be elected every six years. However, Marcos had ruled under martial law since 1972 and thus had the power of decree.

Allen Weinstein, and others, in a report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee explained the specifics of the Presidential decree power (Amendment 6).

> Whenever in the judgment of the President there exists a grave emergency or a threat or imminence thereof, or adequately on any matter for any reason that in his judgment requires immediate action, he may, in order to meet the exigency, issue the necessary decrees, orders; or letters of instructions, which shall form part of the law of the land. (Senate 1985: 79)

Thus, the President had the constitutional authority to decree anything as long as it addressed a problem which he deemed an emergency or grave situation. President Marcos' calling for a snap election was constitutionally sound as long as it addressed an emergency within the country. President Marcos could certainly argue that the election was addressing a situation in the Philippines in which a grave emergency existed. Theoretically, not even a Supreme Court decision could have overturned the election. As it turned out, the Supreme Court did uphold the snap election as constitutional. Six justices voted in favor of throwing out the petitioners claims.

**The Role of United States and the Observation Group**

The United States had mainly two national interests in the 1986 election. The first was maintaining its two military bases at Clark Air Force Base and the Subic Bay Naval Center. The second was ensuring the Communist threat was significantly opposed regardless of who won or lost the election.

The two military bases at Subic Bay and Clark field were vital to the United States'
overall strategic plan in the Pacific. Besides protecting our allies in the Asian theater, these bases would have served as a refueling staging area in case of a Persian Gulf War. In a Middle East war, the United States could have used the bases to supply Israel with needed arms and materials. Additionally, the cost of replacing such strategically located bases would have been more than $1 billion. The United States would have had to transfer thousands of men and cargo. Also, the Philippines provided cheap, trained labor which it would have been hard pressed to find anywhere else (Madison 2709).

Senator Phil Gramm, R-Texas, spoke of the importance of these bases in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "...I think the people need to understand the military importance of the Philippines to the United States in those two bases and recognize that there are no good alternative to those bases." (Senate 1986: 9) Obviously, the United States had to keep the Clark and Subic Bay military bases free from any communist threat. Senator Gramm, under questioning by Senator Pressler, later spoke about what a communist controlled Philippines would mean to our military strategy, "...should the Government go Communist, we certainly would not be able to stay..." (10)

The United States in 1986 was faced with a situation in the Philippines in which its primary concern was the continuation of the leases on its military bases. Obviously the U.S. had to do all it could to deter any communist threat which would end the rights to those bases. Iran had taught the U.S. the consequences of allowing an unfriendly government to take control. The dilemma which faced President Reagan and Congress was the best way to counter the communist agenda. Should it back a Marcos led government, encouraging him to concede to reforms or should it do everything possible to ensure the a democratic opposition wins?
It had become obvious to many members of Congress by January of 1986 that the Marcos government could no longer adequately secure the rights to the military bases. The support for Marcos, both at home and in the United States, continued to erode. But, there were still some in Congress who argued that the United States had a history of giving up on friends opposed to Communism. Their logic supported backing Marcos no matter what the case.

These members of Congress failed to realize the true nature of Philippine politics in 1986. The lack of reforms in the military, the continued abuse of human rights, and the monopolization of the economy had given the communist insurgency a foothold in the Philippines. The potential for a Communist takeover was real. President Marcos could no longer fight the Communist insurgency, ensuring the rights to the military bases, because he no longer had the overwhelming support of the Filipino people. As a result, the United States had an interest in assuring that the February 1986 election was free and fair. President Reagan decided to send an observation delegation, headed by Senator Lugar, for this purpose.

The feasibility of a free and fair election was discussed in a report submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in January of 1986 by the National Democratic and Republican Institute for International Affairs. Six criteria were considered in determining the election's fairness (Atwood 90-92).

The first was the Commission on Election's (COMELEC) accreditation for the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL). COMELEC was originally created by the government to oversee the election process and ensure procedural safeguards. However, their credibility had diminished by the 1986 elections. NAMFREL, however, was a citizen's volunteer watch group. They proposed a quick count which would bring the results of the election to a
close within 24 hours. This quick count could help reduce much of the voting fraud such as stealing of ballot boxes.

The NAMFREL organization played in a critical role in the election process. Without NAMFREL, there would not have been any attempt at a fair and free election including the United States sending an observation delegation. Only NAMFREL had the resources to field an effective monitoring system (Goldman and Pascual 223). Brian Atwood testified in January of 1986 that "... It would raise serious questions in our mind as to whether we would go ahead with this mission if NAMFREL were not able to do its quick count." (18) NAMFREL's quick count made fraud in the counting process extremely difficult. NAMFREL's count made an Aquino claim to power possible after the election disputing COMELEC's count which had Marcos winning.

Additionally, COMELEC had two positions which needed to be filled before the 1986 election. These positions were important because COMELEC served as the governing body over the elections. The appointment of two non-KBL members would go a long way in ensuring the credibility of the election as most of the members already belonged to Marcos' party.

The third criterion for the election was the accreditation of UNIDO as the dominant opposition party (DOP). Under Philippine law, the DOP is allowed to serve on the canvassing committees, receive special COMELEC media attention, and other privileges to combat the power of the incumbent. This was done in December of 1985.

According to Philippine law the DOP, UNIDO in this case, must have equal access to all forms of the media. UNIDO had filed several grievances against the KBL alleging that they were not receiving the equal air time as provided by law. While drawing only a few thousand
people, President Marcos' political rallies were covered extensively on Filipino television. They were often replayed throughout each day (Russ 127). In contrast, Mrs. Aquino's rallies often drew crowds numbering in several thousand people. Yet, these large crowds were hardly covered by the Filipino press. Despite all of the grievances over the abuse of the media, the UNIDO part pressed on reaching the masses of Filipinos through other means.

Additionally, the Weinstein report called for COMELEC to ensure the non-participation of military and paramilitary organizations. According to Philippine election law, military personnel must remain 50 meters from the polling place except to vote (Senate 1986: 23). This was important as the 1984 congressional elections, as well as virtually all other elections in Philippine history, had seen massive amounts of intimidation by both pro-Marcos forces and the NPA. Ensuring no military presence in the polling areas would allow the Filipinos to conduct a fair election.

The final recommendation by the Weinstein commission was the establishment of an observation delegation from the United States. Throughout the Senate Foreign Relations hearings held two weeks before the election, it became clear that both Marcos and the DOP wanted an observation group. UNIDO wanted the delegation for obvious reasons, to ensure a safe election and to guard against fraud. President Marcos however did not necessarily want the observation group but had to accept it as he had already promised to allow it to come. The United States wanted this delegation to provide an eyewitness account of the events, good or bad, which would transpire during the election.

But not all members of Congress, including Senator Lugar, were convinced as of January of 1986 that an observation group was advisable. Their concern was that an observation group,
by its very presence, could legitimate an election marked by wholesale fraud. When I spoke with Fred Brown, I asked him when Senator Lugar changed his mind and decided to accept the President's offer to lead the observation group. Mr. Brown expressed that the hearings from January 23, 1986 highlighted the investment the United States had in the Philippines, an investment in democracy (Brown). Also, Andy Semmel, foreign relations legislative assistant for Senator Lugar, explained how the real decision came down to the Filipinos' courage. If these people were willing to risk their lives and fortunes for the democracy, then the United States had an obligation to help them in any way possible (Semmel). In the senator's own words, "It would be a serious mistake for the United States not to demonstrate its support for democracy in the Philippines." (Russ 30)

Thus, Senator Lugar led the observation team made up of various members of Congressmen, businessmen, and religious leaders to the Philippines. Their mission was to observe as much of the election as possible. Knowing that total coverage of the election sites in the Philippines, a nation with numerous small islands, was impossible, the team broke up into different groups with each visiting a few polling sites in their area. At most sites, the groups talked to Aquino supporters and election officials who were overall enthusiastic about the election but still fearful of Marcos' tactics. These Filipinos knew the danger in using their right to vote but believed in a sense of duty. It soon became clear to the observation group that the election was marked with massive fraud. After assembling the groups together before their departure home, Senator Lugar gave a brief report on the election they had seen marked with fraud.

Results of the 1986 Election
As Senator Lugar's plane touched down in Washington, D.C., the tallying of the election returns continued. However, the observation group, while leaving a small contingent behind, had already seen enough fraud and violations to make an informed report to President Reagan. Most of the violations were so blatant and obvious, President Marcos had a tough time denying them. A contingent of the American press corps did not help as well as all three major networks even had their anchors broadcast live from the Philippines. It did not take long to realize that Marcos had tried in every way possible to rig the election.

One tactic he used was to steal the ballot boxes before they had a chance to arrive at the canvassing center. *Newsweek* reported an incident in Tarlac, Corazon Aquino's home province. Three jeeps with 30 armed men, one of the jeeps had a Marcos sticker, drove up to the polling site and informed the citizens that the voting was over. Fortunately, one hundred people rushed into the polls to protect the ballot boxes. Additionally, groups of American journalists were not far behind (Cullun 16). This pressure frightened the assailants, Marcos supporters, who finally left. However, most of the polling places were not as lucky as this one.

At another polling site, Marcos thugs held knives to NAMFREL volunteers' throats and threatened to shoot others if they did not give up the ballot boxes. Marcos supporters stood outside of the polling site, beyond the legal limit, handing out money to anyone who promised to vote for Marcos. *The Far Western Economic Review* reported an incident at the Mandaluyong municipality. A volunteer worker there watched helplessly as a man strode in and stuffed the ballot box with a wad of extra votes (Sacerdoti 14). Many of the people who showed up to vote could not do so. Marcos supporters made sure that the process was as difficult as possible. Most of the voters simply went home after spending hours waiting for their chance to vote.
It was then up to an enthusiastic Senator Lugar to convince the White House of the fraud that had taken place. The senator met with President Reagan, Admiral John Poindexter, Donald Regan, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, and Secretary of State George Shultz on February 11 still charged emotionally from the election (Lugar 152). Senator Lugar informed the President of the tremendous amount of fraud which had been committed by Marcos. President Reagan then countered with reports he had received of fraud on the part of Corazon Aquino.

Obviously, the President still had this report on his mind when he gave a press conference the following day. He spoke of the election having possible fraud by both sides (Russ 30). This announcement also revealed that the President, and certain members of his cabinet, still did not want to commit the United States either to Marcos or Aquino. This infuriated most Aquino supporters who began to wonder if the observation group had accurately reported the fraudulent abuses. Senator Lugar gave a press conference in South Bend to correct the President's mistake. The question was: "Do you agree with the President that fraud occurred on both sides?" Senator Lugar responded unemotionally, "The President was misinformed. The Philippine government was in control of the election. The preponderance of fraud was by the government." (Lugar 153)

The President had made a serious mistake and later admitted it. In a later press conference he said, "Although our observer group has not yet finished its work, it has already become evident, sadly, that the elections were marred by widespread fraud and violence perpetrated largely by the ruling party. It was so extreme that the election's credibility has been called into question both within the Philippines and the United States." (Lugar 154) These words gave hope to Aquino who was glad that the White House had finally gotten the facts straight.

President Reagan's acquiescence to the ousting of Marcos was one of the pivotal points in
Corazon Aquino's People's Revolution. With President Marcos having no support from the United States, he had to face the reality of his demise. Marcos had to face the facts when Senator Paul Laxalt called him concerning the election. President Marcos, trusting Laxalt as a friend, asked him advice on what he should do. Laxalt's advice was, "to cut and cut clean." (Lugar 165) Marcos eventually took this advice and was air lifted out of the Philippines by the United States to the Hawaiian Islands. With President Marcos out of the country, Corazon Aquino took over the reigns of the government solidifying a democratic government in the Philippines.

**U.S. Intervention: Implications and Questions**

Mainly spurred on by the press, many viewed Corazon Aquino's rise to power as a victory by the people of the Philippines. The truth was that Aquino came into power as a result of Marcos relinquishing control, not by her defeating him in an election or in civil war (the U.S. would not allow that to happen). Corazon Aquino never actually won an official election and never would (Fidel Ramos ran and won in 1992). President Marcos was the actual winner in the 1986 election and had a legitimate claim to power. In all probability, President Marcos would have still been in control were it not for the intervention of the United States. At the very least, Marcos would have created a bloody civil war in which the victor would have claimed control.

After the establishment of the Aquino government and even during the crisis, troubling questions and implications arose for the rest of the Third World and the Reagan Administration's policy. What did this "revolution" mean for the rest of America's allies? Did other non-democratic allies have to enact meaningful reforms? U.S. intervention in the Philippines, while having a positive result, may have caused more damage strategically for the Administration than before realized.
First, a close scrutiny of the Reagan administration's Third World foreign policy is needed in order to fully understand the United States' role in the 1986 ousting of President Marcos. While in theory the United States was the protector of democracy throughout the Cold War, often times President Reagan, as well as many previous presidents, supported authoritarian regimes and strong men who brought stability to otherwise chaotic countries. Unfortunately, the price of this stability usually came at the expense of genuine democratic ideals and institutions within the country.

This support for right-wing, authoritarian dictators was proposed by Jeane Kirkpatrick in 1979 in an article she wrote for *Commentary* (Bell 103). She spoke of the overwhelming influence a dictator has upon the institutions and organization of a nation. She said,

> The fabric of authority unravels quickly when the power and status of the man at the top are undermined or eliminated. The longer the autocrat has held power, and the more pervasive his personal influence, the more dependent a nation's institutions will be on him. Without him, the organized life of the society will collapse, like an arch from which the keystone has been removed. (Morley 227)

According to Kirkpatrick, the United States interests around the world were served best when a nation was stable and those interests were secure. Authoritarian dictators often brought that stability to a chaotic situation, especially in the Third World. Typically, these strong men only took control of the authority of the nation by abusing a portion of the economy (comparatively), turning the military into a personal army (while claiming to fight Communist insurgencies), and ensuring the political situation would confirm their legitimacy to govern.

While these tactics may have, at the very least, been questionable in regard to democratic ideals,
they were certainly not in doubt in regard to their opposition to Communist regimes. Many of the United States strongest allies in the fight against Communism were military or authoritarian regimes whose human rights records were questionable. Thus, it was in the best interest for both the authoritarian regime and the United States to fight the Communist threat.

In contrast, left-wing, totalitarian governments attempted to control every aspect of the society. Instead of allowing the economy and religious cultures to remain in their respective market forces and traditions (as many authoritarian governments did), these governments typically took complete control of the economy and were more easily susceptible to Communist insurgencies. In fact during the Reagan administration, left-wing, totalitarian governments became synonymous with Communist regimes. The roll-back of Communism throughout the Third World meant open or covert opposition to totalitarian governments.

With Kirkpatrick's appointment as ambassador to the United Nations, this policy of opposition towards left-wing governments while tacitly or openly approving of right-wing dictators came to be associated with the Reagan administration. As a result, journalists and others within Washington termed Kirkpatrick's theory the "Reagan Doctrine." This doctrine, whether meant as flattery or criticism towards Reagan, theorized that pluralistic democracies had a greater chance in developing through a right-wing, authoritarian government rather than a totalitarian. By their nature, totalitarian governments attempted to monopolize control over every aspect within the state rather than just giving power to a few "cronies". Authoritarian governments could be more easily led into a pluralistic democracy because many of the democratic social institutions, while discouraged and discredited by personal autocracies, continued to exist. These right-wing, often nationalistic regimes gave ordinary citizens more
opportunities for self-expression than an all-encompassing left-wing government.

But more importantly, right-wing, authoritarian dictatorships were easier to control. The interests of both parties, the U.S. and the dictator, were often in agreement. Also, the pragmatists in the administration found it easier to control the affairs of a Third World government through one man rather than numerous levels of bureaucracy. In effect, these dictators became quasi-puppet officials supported by the U.S. for purely self-interests. Consequently, they became the main Third-World government of choice for a United States intent on control.

Yet, despite the "Reagan Doctrine's" supposed sanctioning, many authoritarian governments found themselves beleaguered by the Washington establishment, not the administration as a whole, by the end of the Reagan Presidency. This came about in spite the fears of many liberals within the Washington establishment that every right-wing regime would be protected, despite human rights abuses. Coral Bell wrote in *The Reagan Paradox* about some of the confusions of the Reagan Administration's foreign policy and the regimes that fell because of it. "...the casualty rate among such regimes, right or left, from various causes during the Reagan years was remarkably high. Even the long-established tough-minded autocracies of Paraguay and Chile were shaken. The Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan all had by 1988 seen a discrediting of 'strong man' governments, and some Washington influences ... had helped amplify the 'winds of change' involved." (Bell 101) By the end of 1986, the Philippines would become just one of a growing list of personal autocracies which lost power due, in part, to the involvement of the United States' government.

In studying the situation during the 1986 crisis, inevitably a question arises whether President Marcos was thrown out of power by a revolution from the Filipino people or through
intervention by the U.S. The answer is both. Definitely, the people of the Philippines, led by Corazon Aquino, made tremendous sacrifices in order to topple the Marcos regime. Cory's "People Power" was the driving force behind the attempt at a free and fair election. When the portion of the military which sided with Marcos came to roll over General Fidel Ramos and the other members of the military who sided with Aquino, the Filipino people were the ones who descended into the streets in mass placing their lives in jeopardy, not the United States military. Marcos faced a determined opposition which had the will and the backing of the church and a portion of the military. This opposition was not going to stand for any power sharing agreements nor were they unwilling to openly fight the pro-Marcos military. The rebellion against Marcos was unequivocally a revolution from the center of Filipino society against a nationalistic, personal autocracy.

Additionally, the support of Corazon Aquino mainly came from the middle class who saw the many benefits in ridding the nation of Marcos' "crony" capitalism. These were typically the small businessman, the artisan, and the shopkeeper whose livelihood depended upon the economy. Corazon Aquino's support did not come from the lower peasant classes. These peasants had a propensity to support the Communists as a result of their promises of land. Corazon herself was a member of the upper-middle class. The 1986 ousting of President Marcos was not a massive uprising of Filipino peasants begging for democracy. Rather, it was revolt of middle class Filipinos who realized that Corazon Aquino represented the type of government in which they could flourish.

The Reagan administration was not all too eager to embrace either Ferdinand Marcos or Corazon Aquino as President. Many within the administration wanted to wholeheartedly accept
Mrs. Aquino and declare her as the President-elect. George Shultz, secretary of state during the crisis, had for the most part backed Senator Lugar and the rest of the members of Congress who wanted to see President Marcos ousted. Shultz, of course, had some reservations from the beginning of the crisis and had to carefully weigh pragmatic options whereas the members of Congress could take more high-minded stances. This pragmatic view led some within the administration to recommend delay in recognizing Aquino as President even after Marcos was on his way to Hawaii. Shultz writes in his book, *Turmoil and Triumph*, about the struggle that Don Regan, President Reagan's chief of staff, and others had in understanding the true situation. Shultz was on his way to the President with a recognition statement when Regan met him outside the Oval Office. Regan said, "Wait a minute! Wait a minute! How did we get to her? How did she become president? . . . How can we say she is president of the Philippines? She hasn't won an election or been ratified by the Assembly!" But Shultz realized that Corazon Aquino needed the backing of the U.S. if she was ever to govern effectively. He said, "If we equivocate about Aquino's position at this moment, it can turn a triumph of democracy into a catastrophe. Forces on all sides, left and right, are waiting to see if we hesitate." (Shultz 638)

Up to this point, the administration had tried to invest in both camps without favoring one over the other. However, this created some resentment among the people of the Philippines who viewed the United States as the leader of the free world. Many of the opposition resented the way in which President Reagan hedged his bets: not really committing to either the opposition or President Marcos. Indeed, Corazon Aquino had trouble in dealing with the President Reagan during the crisis and after she took control. Mrs. Aquino felt that the President had acted too slowly in acknowledgment her ascendancy to the presidency. Added to this was the
embarrassing phone call Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos made to the President and the First Lady while they were in Hawaii. Basically, this phone call was staged by the Marcos's to generate sympathy in the Philippines and the U.S. Unknown to the President, the conversation was being taped and was later played throughout various news agencies. Throughout the call, Imelda can be heard giving sobbing pleas to Nancy Reagan about their plight and how they had been treated tremendously unfairly. In short, the phone proved extremely damaging to the relationship between Aquino and President Reagan.

Most of the animosity between President Reagan and Corazon Aquino came from Reagan's unshakable belief in never abandoning a friend, and Reagan considered Marcos to be a very close friend of the United States. Marcos was also a personal friend of the President's. Reagan felt as if he understood the dictator. He liked the way in which Marcos thought and he believed in helping a man which had served the United States interests since World War II (although even Marcos' exploits during the war later came into question). Mike Armacost, former ambassador to the Philippines, expressed his frustration with Reagan's loyalty to Marcos to Shultz. Shultz responded, "The president is the president. He has strong views . . . we cannot move the president under present circumstances . . . The Filipino people will have to throw Marcos out. Ronald Reagan will not push out a friend." (Shultz 629) Reagan was quoted later speaking in regard to supporting the Aquino government, "I'll support a legitimate government when she gets elected." (Shultz 641) Obviously, Corazon Aquino was not going to win over the President with any pleas of democracy. As a result, Marcos held firm until the end (when Senator Paul Laxalt gave the 'cut and cut clean' phone call) in his belief that, despite others in the cabinet and Congressmen on the Hill, Reagan's support for his personal autocracy would remain
unwaverable.

Additionally, President Reagan's support for Marcos also stemmed from the way in which the Shah of Iran was treated. Reagan felt as if the U.S. had abandoned the Shah too quickly and thus led to his demise. Reagan in no way wanted his presidency to be characterized as "giving up on an ally." The former Carter Administration's foreign policy based on human rights, not strategic value, gave President Reagan a clear picture of the world. Either a nation was for or against Communism regardless of the type of government it happened to be. President Reagan believed that Carter's emphasis on a human rights foreign policy had weakened the effectiveness of the United States to combat Communism throughout the world.

Marcos understood these personal feelings of President Reagan, that he was the dominant figure in American foreign policy; depending upon the President's belief in Marcos as a person. In the question of whether he was thrown out of power by the people of the Philippines or by the government of the United States, Marcos contended that a conglomeration of Washington insiders, not the President himself, conspired to topple his regime with little help from the Filipinos themselves. In fact, Marcos' calling for the early election was, in large part, due to the perception that within Washington certain key members of Congress and even cabinet members had lost faith in his ability to combat the Communist insurgents and enact meaningful reforms.

Clora Bell wrote about Marcos' perception of the 1986 revolution. He said, "If one puts the question, Did he fall or was he pushed? the answer given by Ferdinand Marcos himself was a vehement insistence that he was indeed pushed, by assorted Washington hands... he maintained that there had been a direct American role in a conspiracy... including plans to assassinate both himself and Imelda. He also insisted that the Americans had deceived him about his destination
when he was persuaded to leave. . ." In speaking of Washington bureaucrats and the media, Bell quotes Marcos as saying, "The U.S. has become a country of trial by publicity." (Bell 107-8)

For the most part, Marcos was correct in his evaluation of the events which transpired during the 1986 revolution although he may have exaggerated somewhat. The United States, through the involvement of Congressmen and the media, did effectively change the course of events in the 1986 crisis. It was the U.S. which stepped in and monitored the elections at the request of both parties. It was the U.S. that told General Ver of the serious repercussions should he decide to fire upon the people who were blocking the tanks from attacking the portion of the military which sided with the opposition. Had Ver given this order, the rebellion quite possibly might have been put down much like the Chinese did in Tianimen Square. Also, Marcos' claim of being flown to Hawaii when he thought the destination was Ilocos Norte, his home province, may or may not be true. In The Four Days of Courage, Bryan Johnson details how Marcos desired to escape to Paoay. (268) Undoubtedly, the result of this would have been a bloody civil war in which Marcos probably would have been the victor. In any case, the U.S. wanted to avoid this result and intervened to remove the dictator. In addition to Washington officials, the U.S. media played an extremely important role in monitoring every aspect of the election; televising to the world, but especially to the Filipinos, the fraudulent activities of the Marcos regime. When Marcos spoke of being tried in a court of public opinion, he realized the tremendous impact the media had upon the American people and eventually, U.S. foreign policy.

U.S. involvement in the 1986 Filipino crisis raised serious questions in regard to her other allies throughout the world, and in particular, dictatorships like the Marcos regime. What effect would the ousting of President Marcos have on such countries as Taiwan and South Korea? Dr.
Henry Kissinger wrote in an article of the *Washington Post* in March of 1986 raising this question in regard to the extent of U.S. involvement in the affairs of a foreign nation in the name of democracy. Dr. Kissinger said the U.S. was guilty of applying a 'double standard.' "What will be the impact on world security--or human rights--if Asian countries decide that they must distance themselves from their intrusive and changeable friend?" He went on to say that the "preconditions for democracy were lacking in the Philippines as in many developing countries. "Knowing what in fact constitutes democratic reform is something the West has clearly not thought through." (Shultz 640)

Dr. Kissinger's remarks raised a serious questions. What preconditions should the United States use to determine just how "democratic" a nation needs to be in order to continue to receive support? If these conditions are not met by a nation, what steps are the United States prepared to take in order to establish a 'democratic' government.

These issues had tremendous implications for the U.S. allies throughout the Asian area. Could these countries, often authoritarian regimes and staunchly anti-Communist, expect to receive continued support from the U.S. or would they need to meet certain democratic criteria? The U.S. was in somewhat of a dilemma after the 1986 crisis in that there were many other nations throughout the Third-World with less of a record for human rights than the Marcos regime. Was the U.S. prepared to intervene in any nation which we deemed not actively pursuing democratic reforms? Even Shultz admitted that ". . . 'people power' in the Philippines disturbed leaders in many other counties, perhaps even leaders in countries of the Warsaw Pact. I knew we would need to work carefully with President Chun Doo Hwan of South Korea in our effort to bring about an orderly transition to democracy in that country." (Shultz 641)
Obviously, the perception of U.S. support of her allies came into question when Marcos was so blatantly opposed by powerful elements within the Washington establishment.

Indeed, the triumph of a democratic government in the Philippines during the 1986 crisis was reason to celebrate U.S. involvement in the region. The United States obviously played a crucial role in ensuring a relatively peaceful transition of power from the Marcos regime to the Aquino government. A bloody civil war was most probably avoided by the American flight of Marcos to the Hawaiian Islands where he remained in exile never to return. Yet, the U.S. involvement in the Philippines did not provide the Third World, indeed the entire world, with a clear understanding of the preconditions of allying oneself with the United States. As a result of the 1986 crisis, the U.S. found itself having to strengthen relationships with other friendly, Third World dictators such as in South Korea. U.S. involvement in the 1986 Filipino crisis, while perhaps correct, proved obtrusive in attempts to continue the fight against Communism while supporting genuine democratic reforms throughout the world.

**Lugar's Personal Feelings on the 1986 Crisis**

The establishment of a democratic government in the Philippines was also achieved due largely to Senator Richard Lugar and other members of the Washington establishment. A crisis may have occurred without the senator and Congressmen highlighting the Philippine crisis, both in committee hearings and in the observation group. Lugar's timely comments on the true state of affairs in the Philippines gave clarity to a confused situation. He also provided greatly needed American support for the Aquino government while its legitimacy was still in question.

The Philippines were also a turning point for Senator Lugar's views on foreign policy, and possibly the United States as well. After the Philippines, he felt the United States began to
view nations in the Third World not strictly in terms of communist or non-Communist, irrespective of the type of government. Rather, the U.S. began to see that we could encourage democracy in anti-Communist authoritarian regimes without sacrificing their strategic value. That is not to say that the Philippines can serve as a litmus test for all other struggling Third World dictatorships. The Philippines were unique in their relationship to the United States and in the conditions which existed before the 1986 election. The Philippines in 1986 did teach America that fighting Communism in the Third World can be accomplished by encouraging democratic reforms. The Philippines were special in that the United States was viewed, for once, as doing the right thing.

Senator Lugar also took great pride in "doing the right thing". Mr. Semmel explained the profound effect that the Philippines had upon the senator. At a dinner party after the 1986 election, President Aquino stood and addressed the many guests who had contributed to democracies' triumph. She spoke kindly of Senator Lugar as having a great dispassionate voice throughout the ordeal, indispensable in his efforts. The senator then rose and thanked Mrs. Aquino for her kind remarks. He said, "Mrs. Aquino, you have described me as a man having little passion. Well, I have passion for many things, my wife, Char, and our family, mainly. Mrs. Aquino, I also have a passion for the people of the Philippines." The senator's remarks described the passion that many Americans felt in February 1986. It was rewarding for Lugar, as both a senator and a believer in democratic ideals, to play a vital role in Filipino democracy.
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