A Social history of the Philippines Martial Law Years 1981-1987: An intersection of Kinship Politics, Religion, and Revolution

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This thesis is an analysis of the intersection of kinship politics and religion in the 20th century Philippines. It discusses their cultural influence and effects on the protests and revolution against the Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship. A social history conducted through interviews of witnesses, activists, and Filipino immigrants is used to contextualize major events of the 1980s. The years 1981-1987 were chosen due to the historical importance of events such as the visit of Pope John Paul II, the assassination of opposition leader Ninoy Aquino, and the EDSA revolution which toppled the dictator.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos from 1972-1986 was a pivotal moment in the history of Southeast Asia. Initially it was justified as a "revolution from the center" mantra that struck out at the communist insurgency in the country and the conservative oligarchy that dominated the country's political and economic structures. It ended with a bloodless revolution led by numerous members of civil society to force the Marcos family into exile. The final years of the dictatorship, from 1981-1986, and its apparatus of martial law, which was formally repealed in 1981, has been well documented by scholars. What has not been well documented are two other intersecting pillars of society, specifically the role of kinship politics and activist religion, that contributed to the downfall of Marcos and precipitated the revolution. Nor has there been extensive documentation of the social history of the martial law years, due to extensive censorship and the suppression of dissent. This paper aims to address both knowledge gaps, both through an interdisciplinary recounting of the latter half of the twentieth century Philippines, through the lens of kinship politics and Theology of Struggle (ToS) Catholicism. Along with a series of interviews that provides a social history of "on the ground" perspectives which cover several class and ideological lines in metro Manila during the 1980s. Together, these interviews and interdisciplinary approach provide a well-rounded social history of the country by explaining kinship politics and activist religion from those who grew up with and understand the concepts best, other Filipinos.

The fundamental argument of this paper is that a social history of the martial law years is not possible without an "interdisciplinary" approach. This social history discusses aspects of Filipino culture, such as kinship politics, that explains how it radiates towards other fundamental aspects of Filipino life. Meaning the Filipino version of Catholicism and ToS, their interpretation of liberal democracy, a precedence of regional identity over national identity, and neocolonialism which dictate the day-to-day life in the country. All of these norms are affected by kinship politics. In that vein, this paper takes a conscious holistic approach to several fields, such as anthropology, social history, colonialism, and politics to discuss how kinship politics and religion were shaped by these forces.

The study of kinship is an integral part of the field of anthropology. Contemporary studies of kinship have undergone an evolution over several decades since

the publication of David Schneider's *American Kinship: A Cultural Account (1968).*[1] He argued that mid-twentieth century approaches to studying nonwestern societies projected Euro-American perceptions of kinship and culture onto their subjects. According to him, this defeated the point of understanding different peoples, as all data was funneled into working within western conceptions of gender roles, sex, and values.[2] Western scholars minimized the role kinship played in daily life and assumed that as societies moved away from "primitive forms" they became progressively more individualistic.[3]

Afterwards the definition of kinship broadened as the field began to retool its approach. These changes are quite recent, they have only taken place over the last thirty years since the 1990s.[4] Previously, anthropology rigidly separated state and non-state societies. Essentially, western scholars assumed that kinship had little relation to governance, since western societies regulated the ideas of kinship through legal means and ideas of individualism.[5] This is best exemplified by *Naturalizing Power,* an essay collection edited by Carol Delaney and Sylvia Yanagisako, published in 1995. The collection records how a wide variety of social inequalities – including those based on class, ethnicity, race, and gender – are naturalized in the discourses and practices of kinship, in law, in the rhetoric of nationalism, and in religion.[6] They argue that kinship is not a "natural order" construction of biology, but a human-made production based on their local environment.

In 2014 there was a conference in Berlin organized by Tatjana Thelen and Erdmute Alber called "Doing Politics – Making Kinship: Back Towards a Future Anthropology of Social Organization and Belonging," hosted by Humboldt University.[7] The conference was dedicated to bringing the two subfields of politics and kinship closer together by adopting a holistic view on both. The conference was focused on four main themes, the impact of kinship on politics, the impact of politics on kinship, the interaction of kinship and politics, and feedback loops between kinship and politics in

[1] Sandra C. Bamford, "Introduction: Conceiving Kinship in the Twenty First Century," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 12.
[2] Bamford, *Introduction: Conceiving Kinship in the Twenty First Century*, 13.
[3] Bamford, *Introduction: Conceiving Kinship in the Twenty First Century*, 13-14.
[4] Ibid, 15-17.
[5] Ibid, 13-15.
[6] Ibid, 15.
[7] Sandra C. Bamford and Signe Howell, "The Interface between Kinship and Politics in Three Different Social Settings," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 671.

which both are preconditions as well as results of the other.[8] Conferences like the one held in Berlin show that the evolving thought in the field is that kinship around the world is not determined by blood but by a process of building bonds, through repeated, conscious, and reciprocated effort by all people involved.[9] This renewed and more nuanced understanding on the development of and construction of kinship around the world is pivotal to understanding the new subfield of kinship politics.

Kinship politics, which operates as an interdisciplinary sub-field, is an intrinsic cultural component of many societies around the world. Societies in Southeast Asia are no exception. Although arguably all societies are kinship driven, the construction of kinship varies by country, ethnic group, etc.[10] Kinship politics featured several common themes across the field involving political systems, economic systems, cultural norms, colonialism, gender, marriage, and lines of descent.[11] To continue the debate on the intersection of kinship and politics, I argue that another element is culturally relevant to the Philippines and similar regions. Religion is also intertwined with kinship just like politics and kinship, we need both to understand the martial law years, they should not be treated like three separate topics.

Liberation Theology

Religion is a part of the daily lives of Filipinos, whether they are practicing Catholic Christians or not, as it fundamentally affects how Filipinos perceive themselves as a nation and as a people.[12] Ironically, there is surprisingly little information on the study of liberation theology in the Philippines, during the height of martial law, and in general. For the purposes of this paper, there are two main texts that must be referenced to contextualize the Catholic Church's interactions with the Marcos government: Robert Youngblood's, *Marcos Against the Church: Economic Development and Political Repression in the Philippines* and Gretchen Casper's, *Fragile Democracies: The Legacies of Authoritarian Regimes.*[13] These are the only two scholarly works that discuss the Church hierarchy of priests, sisters, and archbishops and their political interests and interactions in the wider

[8] Andre Thiemann. "Doing Politics, Making Kinship." Doing Politics – Making Kinship: Back towards a Future Anthropology of Social Organisation and Belonging" *Conference*, (Introduction of Conference), 2014.
[9] Bamford, *Introduction: Conceiving Kinship in the Twenty First Century*, 12-13.
[10] Signe Howell, *The Interface between Kinship and Politics in Three Different Social Settings,* 670.
[11] Candace Lukasik, "Kinship," Political Theology Network, July 30, 2022.
[12] Jack Miller, "Religion in the Philippines," Asia Society.
[13] Robert Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church: Economic Development and Political Repression in the Philippines,* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019); Gretchen Casper, *Fragile Democracies: The Legacies of Authoritarian Regimes,* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995).

scope of martial law. They highlight the ideological differences between the thousands of clergy in the country, such as the progressive, moderate, and conservative wings of the church and how Theology of Struggle (ToS), gained traction in the institution.[15] Furthermore, they explain how ToS is based on Latin American Liberation Theology, which gained popularity during the 1960's after the Vatican II conference and why this conference is so important to progressive Church ideology.[16] Also, they discuss and explain the operation of grassroots organizations known as Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) that became instrumental in ground level resistance against the government and military.[17] Most importantly, Youngblood and Casper chronologically detail the growing radicalization of the church against Marcos. Starting with the progressive clergy, who were already against him, but then cascading into the conservative upper ranks of the archbishops openly rebelling with the assassination of presidential candidate Ninoy Aquino.[18] It is impossible to discuss the role of ToS during martial law without these texts and because no other texts discuss religious rebellion against the government with this level of depth or clarity.

Liberation theology is a key topic for discussing the martial law period because it was based around clergy engaging in social justice and helping their followers in material matters, such as wealth inequality, affordable housing, and government corruption.[20] This ideology is in stark contrast to the typical conservative approach of the Catholic Church in the west, which has historical examples of collaboration with authoritarian governments due to self-interest. For example, the extensive collaboration of the Catholic Church with the Franco dictatorship in Spain, which helped legitimize his coup against the Republic and preserved their special privileges.[21] There is also the secret alliance of Pope Pius XI with the fascist Mussolini regime in Italy, based around fighting communism and limiting personal freedoms.[22] In comparison, many Filipino clergy participated in rebellion against the Marcos central government, through active or passive resistance. This was performed through printing dissent, by harboring

[15] Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church*, 3-7.
[16] Casper, *Fragile Democracies*, 18-26.
[17] Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church*, 76-100.
[18] Casper, *Fragile Democracies*, 55-86; Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church*, 172-200.
[20] Kathleen M. Nadeau, *Liberation Theology in the Philippines: Faith in a Revolution* (Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University Press, 2004), xiii-xviii.
[21] Freddie Scott, "The Spanish Catholic Church and Franco's Regime - EARS." European Academy on Religion and Society, January 21, 2022.
[22] Dave Davies, "'Pope And Mussolini' Tells The 'Secret History' Of Fascism And The Church." NPR. NPR, April 24, 2015.

communist guerillas and anti-government rebels, organizing against government monopolies, and by directly protesting in front of Malacañang Presidential Palace despite death threats by the military.[23]

Scholarly works on Liberation Theology began widespread publication during the 1990s. Unsurprisingly, this is after the 1986 revolution when censorship of the press, academics, and average citizens were lifted, and open debate was restarted. Youngblood's work was published in 1990 and Casper's work was published in 1995 but there are several other anthropological works related to liberation theology that this paper wishes to highlight. Some works such as *A Path to Liberation* written by an evangelical Christian, James R. Welchel in 1991, is essentially a polemic against communist ideology and the downfall of Marxism in a post-Soviet world.[24] There are a few dozen pages with a cursory overview of what Liberation Theology is and its start in Latin America to address issues of poverty.[25]

Liberation Theology in the Philippines: Faith in a Revolution by Kathleen M. Nadeau discusses ToS through an anthropological lens. Her case study is located in the Cebu and Negros regions of the central Philippines. Her anthropological lens limits the scope of her discussion from the historical events related to ToS and is more focused with small, on the ground, interactions with NGOs and BCCs that usually practice ToS philosophies.[26] For this paper, this discussion, while interesting, is unhelpful to better understanding the religious phenomenon of ToS and its wider nuances within the Philippines Catholic Church. She never explains why Christianity has had such staying power and genuine respect over the centuries among the populace. The rest of her study is a debate on the effectiveness of NGOs in local rural regions, specifically how NGOs come into conflict with local governments.[27] The scope of this work is limited, especially with how it does not discuss the wider implications with how hands-on, or not, the central government is. Nor does it focus on how kinship plays into governing at the local level.

[23] Nadeau, *Liberation Theology in the Philippines*, xiii.
[24] James R. Whelchel, *The Path to Liberation: Theology of Struggle in the Philippines*. Quezon City: New Day Publishers of the Christian Literature Society of the Philippines, 1995.
[25] Whelchel, *The Path to Liberation*, 3-10.
[26] Ibid, 29.
[27] Ibid, 52-71.

Lastly there is, *A Theology of Southeast Asia: Liberation Postcolonial Ethics in the Philippines* by Agnes M. Brazal, which is focused on discussing the intersection of post-colonial theories with theology. This work is purely theoretical and for academic discussion, the book's chapters are a reworked series of lectures Brazal gave in 2017 at Boston College as part of the Duffy lectures in Global Christianity.[28] She provides various summaries by post-colonial scholars such as R.S. Sugirtharajah's theories of the multiple streams of post-colonialism.[29] Along with Homi Bhabha's post-colonial thoughts on hybridity, which discusses the realistic outcomes of enforced assimilation by colonial authorities.[30] At best these theoretical underpinnings are useful for background research but not actual citation or discussion in this work or wider works on Liberation theology.

Throughout the research on this topic, this has been a recurring issue of hyper focused works on interesting anthropological mechanisms, which are not applied to a wider context. Ranging from polemics by ideologues, who are attempting to join the chorus of anti-communist rhetoric after the fall of the USSR. Otherwise, theoretical works that never move beyond theory and are inaccessible for those outside academia. Meaning the theories are not workable in any interview discussions except with religious academics, at best. It is extremely telling that one recent collection of essays from the Philippines, *The Marcos Era, a reader,* still references Youngblood when discussing matters of the schism between Marcos and the Catholic church.[31] Jayeel S. Cornelio references this debate during his chapter on explanations of church radicalization and open protest.[32] Youngblood's explanations of political discord between the central government and church, due to differing ideas on regional development to increase social mobility, are still applicable to this day and has been deeply enlightening for this thesis.

Kinship Politics Debate

In the Philippines the main debate over kinship politics is specifically about how families maintain power, and who they do it for. The most notable scholars in this debate

[28] Agnes M. Brazal, *A Theology of Southeast Asia: Liberation-Postcolonial Ethics in the Philippines* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019),
[29] Brazal, *A Theology of Southeast Asia*, 10.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Leia Castaneda Anastacio and Patricio N. Abinales. *The Marcos Era: A Reader*, (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2022).
[32] Jayeel S. Cornelio, "Marcos, Christianity, and the Seduction of Authoritarian Nostalgia," In *The Marcos Era: A Reader*, by Leia Castaneda Anastacio and Patricio N. Abinales. Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2022, 341.

are Dr. Alfred McCoy and Dr. Mina Roces. McCoy's lens of study in his book "Anarchy of Families" is through an analysis of crony capitalism which feeds into corrupted democratic institutions. He argues that Filipino kinship politics are driven, singularly, by strongman *caudillo* politics, violence, the threat of violence, and having a monopoly of violence being key to maintain control.[33] Furthermore, that specific families and clans maintain this control through maintaining a monopoly on violence in their specific province (sphere of influence) that outweighs the control of the central government in Manila.[34]

Usually, it is one powerful patriarch that establishes the family and its influence and then passes on the legacy to his children or closest descendants. They maintain this control through a large kinship network of friends, family, collaborators, co-workers, cronies, and in-laws.[35] This regional control works its way up to the highest echelons of government to the presidency and central government and back down again. The eventual president is backed by an alliance of these regional oligarchs that provide him the votes, money, and thugs necessary to get him the votes to win national elections and maintain legitimacy.[36] This is known infamously as the "guns, goons, and gold" strategy to election politics that was coined by American media.[37] Regional leaders mobilize their kinship networks for connections to investors, key points of economic trade, and votes. The president's family is usually a kinship network from one of these powerful oligarchic families as well.[38]

While McCoy's approach has numerous flaws, which are outlined by the Roces summary in the next paragraph, his greatest strength is operating as a nominal outsider to Filipino politics, in the country and in academia. He argues that Filipino historians, in the wake of the post war and post dictatorship period, are more focused on building a national identity among their countrymen, than taking stock on the stratification of society among classes and the elite.[39] He criticizes nationalist writers from all ends of the political spectrum, such as Renato Constantino, Teodoro Agoncillo, and Jose Maria

[33] Alfred W. McCoy, *An Anarchy of Families State and Family in the Philippines* (Quezon City, PH: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1993). 7-10.
[34] McCoy, *An Anarchy of Families State and Family in the Philippines,* 10-18.
[35] Ibid, 10-14.
[36] Ibid, 14.
[37] Bob Drogin, "'Guns, Goons, Gold' Time in Philippines: Elections: Authorities Brace for Traditional Violence and Cheating as Campaigns Get under Way," Los Angeles Times, February 10, 1992.
[38] McCoy, *An Anarchy of Families State and Family in the Philippines,* 16-18.
[39] Ibid, 2.

Sison for focusing too much on the crimes of their former colonial masters in Spain and America and the collaboration of the elite Filipinos.[40] Ironically, they dismiss the wealthy for being class and race traitors and brush over the tangible effects this class has on Filipino society and the lack of social mobility *created* by their oligarchic kinship politics.[41] McCoy's collection is an attempt to address this scholarly oversight to better understand how deep oligarchic kinship politics keep the Philippines in a state of cyclical corruption.

Roces vehemently opposes this argumentation on violence being the key to understanding the Filipino case as she finds it reductive, overly narrow, and ignorant of numerous Filipino cultural norms.[42] She agrees with the argument that kinship is a feedback loop between crony capitalism and democracy and that the oligarchs in the various regions of the Philippines dictate the presidency. Her main point of contention is over the methods of control and influence. She uses the powerful Lopez family as a case study to discuss how oligarchs in the Philippines maintain power through nonviolent means.[43] It is usually coercion, through money, influence, and connections through all levels of the public and private sector that allows domination of politics. In short, the Lopez family controlled the radios and newspapers in the post war Philippines, and then eventually the main television networks including the biggest station in the country ABS-CBN and the biggest sugar producer BISCOM.[44] The Lopez's never used violence to maintain their political control of the country. Instead they used their media influence to manipulate public opinion, destroy rivals, and support the re-election campaigns of patriarch, Senator Fernando Lopez.[45]

Roces strength is in acknowledging the numerous cultural reasons for the continuation of the kinship system in politics. For example, the term *Palakasan*, is a competition for favors.[46] This race to gain favor with the president would lead to endless nepotism and crony capitalism that determined government contracts going to friends. Then family members would be installed in positions of economic control or influence

[40] Ibid, 2-4.
[41] Ibid, 4.
[42] Mina Roces, *Kinship Politics in Postwar Philippines: The Lopez Family, 1946-2000* (Malate, Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University Press, 2001), 6-8.
[43] Roces, *Kinship Politics in Postwar Philippines 1946-2000,* 9-11.
[44] Mina Roces, "Kinship Politics in Post-War Philippines: The Lopez Family, 1945–1989," *Modern Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (January 2000), 181–221: 86-110.
[45] Ibid, 91-92.
[46] Ibid, 86-87.

in return. The cycle of patrons returning these favor through embezzlement, falsifying documents, or silencing rivals would continue ad nauseum.[47] McCoy never discussed these cultural terms beyond *utang na loob*, which is a debt of gratitude. The implication was family members felt obligated to return kindness or benefits from other kinship members.[48] This is only a small part of the greater whole of what drives kinship relationships, expectations, and motivations. In fact, several of the interviews conducted for this thesis touch on the topic but go to lengths to explain how *utang na loob* contributes to cronyism in the political system.[49] Meaning, there are also inter-family rivalries and different boundaries about acceptable nepotism, that illuminate the severity of the problem and how contextualized it is.

Once again, the holistic approach is necessary to understanding kinship politics. Roces and McCoy seem to argue the nuances of the debate as if there is a clear distinction in methods used by families, especially McCoy. Both methods of violent and non-violent approaches to power will be discussed in this paper as military and diplomatic means were used by the Marcos family and their cronies to maintain their hold on political and economic power. The same applies to some of the previous oligarchic kinship dynasties that were supplanted by the Marcos regime, it was not just the Lopez family, but they mastered the art of non-violent coercion. For all intents and purposes, the debate between Roces and McCoy is irrelevant to this paper because both methodologies are equally applicable based on the context of which oligarchic dynasty is being discussed. To be clear, it is not to downplay the merits of the debate, only that one does not necessarily exclude the other in this specific discussion.

Although western liberal democratic values were imposed on the Philippines during the period of American colonialism, it is in name only. The American colonial government wanted to impose their values onto their colony in the hopes it would emulate their example as a thriving democratic state, but in Asia.[50] On the surface, the implication is that the Philippines democracy is meritocratic but when kinship politics is added into the mix it becomes significantly more complicated. The cultural terms *malakas (strong)* and *mahina* (weak) are highlighted by Roces and explain the behavior of

[47] Ibid, 34-44.
[48] Ibid, 5-10.
[49] *Thesis Interview*, Leo and Ofelia Alcantara, Apr 6, 2023.
[50] Adam D Burns, *William Howard Taft and the Philippines: A Blueprint for Empire*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2020), 16-18.

politicians like Marcos.[51] It is similar to the idea of saving face, Marcos wants to appear strong and in control, and appearing weak instantly loses him legitimacy. The legitimacy needs to be constantly maintained, or another *malakas* rival can take your place. This leads to the "guns, goons, and gold" mentality that McCoy argues for, meaning bribery to key officials, many men to stuff ballot boxes, and violence when all else fails.[52] The reason Marcos fights so hard for re-election wins is because it is another currency of legitimacy. The cultural aspects, drive the political aspects, which reinforces the culture- it is an ouroboros.

Structure of the Paper

This paper is structured to first provide historical context, then cultural and religious overviews of the late twentieth century, and lastly firsthand accounts from Filipinos who grew up in these times. Chapter 2 is a historiographical overview of the postwar years which explains the rise of Ferdinand Marcos. The conditions of the Philippines immediately following the war and independence in the middle of country wide devastation has a significant impact on the economic, political, and social issues for decades to come. This chapter will also discuss the neocolonial traits of the Philippines relationship with the United States. This context provided by the secondary literature of the years 1946-1965 help lay the foundations for the cultural and religious issues which will be discussed in chapter 3.

Chapter 3 will discuss the beginning and justification of martial law in 1972 before moving on to the development of Theology of Struggle in the Philippines. The discussion will go into detail about the structure and nature of the Catholic Church during these decades. There was a clear fracture among the church hierarchy that contributed to infighting in the church and more independent development among the clergy. The creation of grassroots organizations and Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) and the government response to these developments is critical to understanding several important avenues of resistance against the central government. Then the discussion will move to the nature of kinship politics and where the secular opposing factions against Marcos came from. Many opposing factions came from the oligarchic families that were the prime influencers in Filipino elections before martial law. Their loss of status, arrests, seizure of assets, attacks against their families, and other injustices

[51] Roces, *Kinship Politics in Postwar Philippines 1946-2000*, 42-43.
[52] McCoy, *An Anarchy of Families,* 12-16.

done towards them led to a united front between the church, the poor, the middle class, and the wealthy.

Chapter 4 is a social history that incorporates interviews from the generation of Filipinos who grew up in this chaotic time period. After much of the context has been explained, the interviews will provide an on the ground perspective of three pivotal events occurring between 1981-1986. These interviews are meant to provide a counter-narrative to western and academic sources from witnesses or those who lived through it, because the situation was not as clear cut as reports imply. Also, each interviewee comes from a different economic background or ideological position that provides widely different viewpoints and credit to those involved. The lifting of martial law and the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1981, the assassination of rival presidential candidate Ninoy Aquino in 1983, and the EDSA revolution that overthrew the Marcos family in 1986 will be discussed and re-contextualized with these interviews. Without this structure and without this interconnected explanation of events, it would be impossible to understand the depth of the period 1981-1986 in Metro Manila.

Chapter 2: Independence with Strings Attached

Historiography of the 20th century Philippines is uneven, meaning some decades have scarce information while others have a library's worth. For example, this chapter is forced to rely on information from Teodoro Agoncillo and Renato Constantino, because the time period of the 1940s-1970s is limited in primary sources and scholars. Due to both censorship by the Marcos regime and the fact they are the most accomplished academics in the topic, even other works referenced for this thesis, such as Blitz and Francia, use Agoncillo and Renato as a source base. Also, the Philippines is a young country, its national history is still being revised and reexamined. However, if an academic, or even the average reader, wants to understand the development of the modern-day Philippines, the years 1946-1980 are a historical imperative, not a footnote.

This chapter is focused specifically on the history of the aftermath of independence in the post war and cold war period. These events have shaped the course of kinship politics and religion. This is because the historical colonial and neo-colonial relationship with the United States and their cold war foreign policy is intrinsic to understanding not just the Marcos presidency but the history of the office post-independence. In the forthcoming sections, it will be shown that the United States military, intelligence agencies, and government have played a pivotal role in who has taken the office of the president. The office of the president is one of the most sought-after prizes of the oligarchic kinship networks in the country, as it is the highest position of power and authority. Meaning the United States has interfered with this electoral process by siding with opposing kinship factions or particular leaders for their own benefit.

What is Neocolonialism in the Philippines?

Before continuing, neo-colonialism needs to be defined within the context of this paper, as it will be instrumental to understanding the post-war timeline. Neo-colonialism is best defined as an intentionally unequal relationship between two nation-states. One nation-state has an overwhelming advantage over the other in terms of economic, political, military, and/or cultural power.[53] Through this they can influence

[53] Kwame Nkrumah, Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism (New York, New York: International Publishers, 1966), ix-x.

the weaker country at all societal levels. Economic exploitation and unequal trade agreements that favor the "neo-colonizer," along with political interference to maintain this advantaged position, is an important aspect of this relationship.[54] The most important feature of neo-colonialism is in its unofficial nature, the neo-colonizer does not officially control the neo-colonized.[55] There is no colonial government, they do not create or enforce the laws, they do not have a colonial military. Nominally the weaker nation is independent and recognized as such by the international community. It is the control through clandestine actions, back-room deals, political manipulation, corruption, and dependence that creates colonialism in all but name.[56]

Whatever the official narrative on the end of colonialism is, what is true is that in the wake of WWII western Europe and the respective colonial powers were devastated. Many of their colonies turned to rebellion as part of growing nationalist movements and seeing the opportunity for liberation.[57] The metropole's capacity to maintain control over their colonies with an exhausted military and destroyed economic base was near impossible.[58] That did not stop them from trying but most, if not, all the colonial wars failed. France lost Indochina and Algeria, the Netherlands lost Indonesia, Britain gave up India and partitioned it without a fight, the rest of Africa rapidly decolonized throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and the United States was the first to decolonize with the Philippines.[59] However, relinquishing official control should never be misconstrued with altruistic desire for independent states or giving up on colonial wealth. Many former colonial powers did not willingly do so, and the means of control just shifted to different methods that were realistic or more socially acceptable.[60]

[54] G. N. Uzoigwe, *Neocolonialism Is Dead: Long Live Neocolonialism: Postcolonialism and World Peace*. (Mauritius: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2020), 61-64.
[55] Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism*, ix.
[56] Uzoigwe, *Neocolonialism Is Dead*, 61.
[57] Fabian Klose, and Dona Geyer, Human Rights in the Shadow of Colonial Violence, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 2013.), 49-52.
[58] Frank W. Thackeray, and John E. Findling. *Events That Formed the Modern World: From the European Renaissance through the War on Terror*. 5. Vol. 5. 5 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clio, 2012), 174-175.
[59] Jan C. Jansen and Jürgen Osterhammel, Decolonization a Short History, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.), 71-118.
[60] Uzoigwe, *Neocolonialism Is Dead*, 81-82.

Does the United States meet this definition with the Philippines? An apt quote by Tom Mboya, a Kenyan founding father and anticolonial activist, can sum up American policy broadly, "The object of neocolonialism is to ensure that power is handed to men who are moderate and easily controlled, political stooges. Everything is done that the accredited heirs of colonial interests capture power.[61]" In terms of economic dependence and military protection the evidence presented in this paper argues a resounding yes. As will be discussed later in this chapter control of American military bases in Asia would be pivotal to American anti-communist strategies. American influence on the Philippines economy while it is in a weakened state during reconstruction allowed easy and cheap access to the Philippines wealth of natural resources. Regardless, the actions of the United States over the post war decades, from the minute independence was achieved, to the day Ferdinand Marcos left, was mired in the covert or overt actions of either the American government or their agents.

A 20th Century Colonial History

The Philippines never had a chance to organically grow its own political systems and culture, it was always imposed on them by the Spanish or American colonial government.[62] The Filipino fight for independence and national identity, or lack thereof, is directly affected by its successive colonial history. Unlike other colonies around the world, the Philippines experienced three successive colonial masters for 381 consecutive years, from 1565-1946. For the modern Philippines the most influential relationship has been with the United States, as they possess a uniquely close relationship despite the short colonial era of 1901-1941. Furthermore, the close alliance is surprising considering the country was sold to America as part of the peace treaty ending the Spanish-American war, and the three-year war from 1899-1902 (although fighting lasted well into 1913) between the Philippines and America to regain their independence.[63]

However, there are three key factors that rapidly reshaped the colonial relationship from adversarial to kinship. First, there is the Jones Act of 1916 that

[61] Ibid, 64.
[62] McCoy, *An Anarchy of Families*, 11.
[63] Brian McAllister Linn, The Philippine War, 1899-1902, (Lawrence, KN: University Press of Kansas, 2000).

guaranteed a road to independence for the Philippines within twenty years.[64] This transition to a Commonwealth was supposed to slowly move Filipinos into positions of authority throughout the former colonial government, with Americans ceding more and more control until the handover was complete.[65] Filipinos did not need to fight for independence from their colonial master, they were already being given it peacefully, legally, and on a reasonable timeline.

Secondly, the presence of General Douglas MacArthur and his liberation of the Philippines had endeared Filipinos of that generation to the American military and his legacy.[66] He retired from his position as Chief of Staff of the American Army to become Field Marshall of the Philippine Army in 1936, at the request of his best friend Manuel Quezon, President of the Commonwealth.[67] Being appointed commander of the colonial army by the colonizer is one thing, *willingly* becoming commander of the Commonwealth army, independently, at the request of their head of state is another. MacArthur famously lost the country to the Japanese in 1941 and then reclaimed it in 1944, fulfilling his "I shall return" speech.[68]

Third, MacArthur played kingmaker for the Philippines, which would be a recurring theme. In 1945, MacArthur presided over independence of the Philippines on behalf of the United States.[69] Behind the scenes the Filipino government was deciding who would run for President of the now independent country. MacArthur provided American backing towards opposition candidate, but also Japanese wartime collaborator, Manual Roxas who was a staunchly pro-American leader.[70] The choice was not based on merit but personal preference and interpersonal politics. MacArthur and the late President Quezon preferred Roxas, Roxas had a link to elite collaborators and pro-American guerillas, and President Osmena had ties to officials in Washington that

[64] "The Jones Law of 1916, Preamble" Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, Accessed February 28, 2023.
[65] Amy Blitz, *The Contested State: American Foreign Policy and Regime Change in the Philippines,* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 57.
[66] "The Philippines: Sentimental Journey." *Time,* Time Inc., July 14, 1961.
[67] Scott, *Rampage,* 27.
[68] Chicago Daily Tribune, "General Vows to do His Best; Throng Cheers," March 21, 1942.
[69] Blitz, *The Contested State*, 75.
[70] Renato Constantino and Letizia Constantino, *The Philippines the Continuing Past* (Quezon City, Philippines: The Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1978), 186.

clashed with MacArthur.[71] President Roxas won the election in 1945 and the leadership of the pre-war elite was reestablished. The pro-American resistance leaders were accommodated within the ruling elite, while the non-traditional groups, like the Hukbulahap were denied access to any government position.[72]

The Growing Pains of Independence: 1946 to 1965

Roxas's political alliance with the Americans would come back to bite him, as the outbreak of the Huk Rebellion of 1948-1953 would show. Central Luzon would be affected by years of guerrilla warfare, rural and working-class unrest, with civilians trapped in the middle. Organized rebellions and anti-government groups like the Huks, would be recurring actors for the rest of the century. After the war the Philippine economy was paralyzed, with all sectors of life, agriculture, education, shipping, and the government itself being unable to function.[73] Manila was annihilated by the Americans and Japanese, with all districts suffering 85%-98% damage.[74] The countryside fared no better as many towns and fields were burned or turned into craters by artillery. Farmers essential equipment was operating at 40-60% efficiency, nor did they have the roads available to transport them.[75]

Liberation and independence were leading immediately into societal collapse. The United States acknowledged the damage and suffering of the Filipinos and the US congress agreed to pay $120,000,000 for infrastructure rebuilding along with another $260,000,000 for other assorted financial burdens.[76] Along with $620,000,000 in reparations to any Filipino who suffered during the war.[77] The catch was that the money hinged on an agreement between both governments on a free trade agreement and other stipulations.[78] In short, the Philippines needed to amend their constitution to allow American citizens and businesses parity rights with Filipinos "to dispose, exploit,

[71] Constantino and Constantino, *The Philippines the Continuing Past*, 170-175.
[72] Ibid, 187-188.
[73] Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 8th ed, (Quezon City, PH: R.P. Garcia Publishing Co., 1990), 427-428.
[74] Scott, *Rampage,* 507.
[75] Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 427-428.
[76] Ibid, 431.
[77] Ibid, 432.
[78] Ibid, 433.

develop, and utilize all agricultural, timber, and minerals lands along with minerals, oil, petroleum, and waters.[79]" This would be the first of many foundation stones of the neo colonial relationship.

Roxas and his allies in the Nacionalista Party quickly called a special session of Congress to pass the new amendment, the Bell Trade Act.[80] However, Luis Taruc, leader of the Huk guerillas and a newly elected senator, with 6 other allied senators and congressmen blocked the amendment.[81] Roxas then falsely accused Taruc and his allies of election fraud and terrorism and forced them to vacate their seats.[82] The amendment then passed, as Taruc returned to the provinces, then he immediately took up arms against the government. Logic dictates that if you cannot change your country through legal means, then the only recourse left is illegal and rebellious means.

The Huk Rebellion was not simply about the surrender of economic sovereignty to the Americans. Overall, it was an agrarian movement against centuries of wealth inequality and abusive practices against the peasantry and poor.[83] Rallying under the banner of communism, the Huks wanted an end to the encomienda system instituted by the Spanish and continued by the Americans.[84] The system was essentially feudal as the people had their land repossessed, legally and illegally by the Spanish clergy and landlords.[85] The landlords then allowed the peasants to farm the land, while he received 50% of the harvest. The Americans did not attempt to meaningfully address these abuses, as they allied themselves to the *cacique* landlord class during colonization.[86]

Furthermore, the Huks already had an antagonistic relationship with the Americans and their allies during WWII. The Huks were the largest and most successful

[79] "Commonwealth Act No. 733- Bell Trade Act 1946." Philippine Laws, Statutes and Codes - Chan Robles Virtual Law Library, April 30, 1946.
[80] Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 437.
[81] Ibid, 437.
[82] Ibid, 438.
[83] Ibid, 441.
[84] Ibid, 441-443.
[85] Ibid, 441-442.
[86] Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*. Quezon City, (PH: Renato Constantino, 1975), 313-315.

guerrilla movement during the Japanese occupation, with 70,000 active members.[87] They carved out sections of Luzon from Japanese control and won many supporters in the provinces for their effectiveness and for returning land stolen by the landlords.[88] When the Americans returned, the landlords and anti-communist bent of the elite lead to the persecution of the Huks. Many Huk squadrons were arrested, mass executed, or removed from their seats of power by American G.I.s and American allied guerrilla units.[89] As previously mentioned, Roxas had strong ties with these American backed guerrillas. The removal of Taruc and the passing of the Bell Trade Act was merely the final straw in a long line of grievances.

The legacy of the Huk Rebellion would cast a long shadow, as it was influential to the election of the next pro-American president Ramon Magsaysay. Magsaysay was famous for being the Secretary of National Defence in 1950-1951 and helmed the effort to resolve the Huk Rebellion through a policy of attraction and negotiation.[90] He also reformed the corrupt military and Philippine Constabulary by replacing them with well-organized commanders.[91] He solidified his popularity by overseeing the 1951 midterm elections to prevent voter suppression and voter fraud. He was a staunch Filipino populist, who appealed to the *tao*, the average Filipino, who were looked down on by the political elite.[92] *The Magsaysay Myth*, as termed by Teodoro Agoncillo and James R. Prescott, of a charismatic man who could do no wrong and was a champion of the people until his death still persists to this day.[93] [94] His grassroots campaign was the first of its kind in the 20th century Philippines, however his rise to fame was helped greatly by the United States and the CIA, in another instance of American foreign meddling.

The CIA, specifically agent Edward Lansdale, the father of American black ops, took a special interest in Magsaysay[95]. Many US officials believed Magsaysay to be an

[87] Blitz, *The Contested State*, 70.
[88] Blitz, *The Contested State*, 70.
[89] Ibid, 70-72.
[90] James R. Prescott, "Ramón Magsaysay—the Myth and the Man." *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 23, no. 1 (2016): 7–32: 15.
[91] Prescott, *Ramón Magsaysay—the Myth and the Man*, 14-16.
[92] Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 461-462.
[93] Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 462-465.
[94] Prescott, *Ramón Magsaysay—the Myth and the Man*, 7-13.
[95] Ibid, 14.

excellent example of an anti-communist, pro-American, and pro-democracy advocate to serve as a model for the rest of decolonized Asia[96]. Lansdale made contact in 1950 when Magsaysay was lobbying in the US congress in Washington. Lansdale was instrumental in getting Magsaysay appointed Secretary of National Defense by lobbying officers in the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG)[97]. He was also a special advisor to Magsaysay's policy of attraction counterinsurgency plan[98]. It was not just Lansdale; Col. Jaime N. Ferrer founded the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) to guard against election fraud in 1951. Ferrer was an asset directed to assist CIA officer Joseph B. Smith[99]. Truman administration officials are quoted saying, "we do want to strengthen his [Magsaysay's] hand as far as possible (over his presidential opponent Quirino).[100]" As a final show of force, Lansdale organized a press tour around the United States for Magsaysay, where he was introduced to the international press.[101] Outlets like the *New York Times,* the *New York Herald Tribune, Life, Time,* and *Look* magazines listened to his strategies on defeating the Huk. Magsaysay even ended up on the cover of Time magazines November 26, 1951, issue.[102] Unsurprisingly Magsaysay won the 1954 presidential election.

This cannot be emphasized enough; Magsaysay was an outlier in Filipino politics. He did not have any kinship ties to major political families or economic oligarchs. Unlike previous and future presidents Magsaysay genuinely was a working-class individual, he had dropped out of college and managed a bus company.[103] His backing by the CIA aside, he did not build alliances with the establishment, he did not have old money backing him, and he did not have any political training.[104] This is in direct contrast to previous and later presidents, as the next chapter will discuss, who gained power directly through kinship connections and marriage alliances with key regional families. Magsaysay would lose control of his congressional alliance and voting majority specifically because he did

[96] Ibid, 23.
[97] Ibid, 14.
[98] Ibid, 15.
[99] Constantino and Constantino, *The Continuing Past,* 308.
[100] Prescott, *Ramón Magsaysay—the Myth and the Man,* 17.
[101] Ibid.
[102] "Time Magazine Cover: Ramon Magsaysay - Nov. 26, 1951." *Time*, Time Inc., November 26, 1951.
[103] Prescott, *Ramón Magsaysay—the Myth and the Man,* 13.
[104] Ibid, 11-17.

not play nice with the old guard, who actively obstructed his reforms.[105] His legacy left much to be desired as his numerous land reforms, education reforms, infrastructure plans, and wealth redistribution amounted to mostly talk and no impactful outcomes.[106]

Magsaysay would have a short-lived presidency, as he died in a plane crash in 1957. His successors Carlos Garcia (1957-1961), followed by Diosdado Macapagal (1961-1965), were mostly mired in graft and corruption accusations or other controversies. Garcia, attempted to step out of the controversy of Magsaysay's "American puppet" accusations by promoting a turn towards nationalism, reasserting sovereignty, and economic austerity[107]. He instituted a Filipino First policy with protectionist rules for local industries and prevented the remittance of foreign money by international corporations.[108] Hundreds of Filipino businesses began to grow and moderate industrialization was taking place.[109] He proved to be very unpopular as his policies only benefitted a handful of Filipino businessmen and he alienated many American and Chinese business interests.[110] Renato Constantino asserts that the CIA tried launching a coup against Garcia, with the intention of replacing him with Defense Secretary Vargas, who was pro-American, "to get the Philippines back on the track.[111]" Outside of the politics, the population living below the poverty line grew exponentially and wages stagnated, as a result crime rates grew and faith in the government plummeted.[112]

Macapagal exacerbated all previously mentioned societal problems to the extreme, laying the final groundwork for entrenched neocolonialism that persists to the present day. Macapagal performed an about face from the Filipino First policy and implemented free trade for all. Termed the decontrol policy, he removed protectionism from homegrown Filipino businesses and devalues the peso from 2-1USD, to 3.9-1USD in a bid to woo back the Americans and foreign interests.[113] He would hire technocrats

[105] Ibid, 12.
[106] Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 468.
[107] Luis Francia, *A History of the Philippines: From Indios Bravos to Filipinos*, (New York, NY: Overlook Press, 2014), 215.
[108] Constantino and Constantino, *The Continuing Past*, 312.
[109] Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 215-216.
[110] Ibid, 310.
[111] Ibid, 305-307.
[112] Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 470-472.
[113] Constantino and Constantino, *The Continuing Past*, 313-315.

to run government economic policy, whose reforms became infamous under Ferdinand Marcos during the martial law years of 1972-1981. These technocrats implemented IMF and World Bank policies of neoliberal capitalism and meritocracy-based rules, which in practice only hamstringed national development and liberally applied double standards.[114]

The decontrol policy had a disastrous effect on the average Filipino and Filipino run businesses. American investment doubled during the 1960s from $375 million to $741 million, these businesses then sent their profits back stateside instead back into the Philippines economy like homegrown businesses.[115] Then the multinationals would take out loans from Philippine banks to fund their local operations, denying funding to Philippines businesses, who were hampered by limited credit loaning systems enforced by the IMF.[116] The devaluation of the peso meant vital equipment from overseas for operation doubled in price. Adding insult to injury the technocrats demanded all the new startups compete "fairly" on the free market with much larger and better funded American corporations.[117] Thousands of Filipino businesses in every sector, from fishing and manufacturing to oil and mining, went bankrupt and were bought up or consolidated by the Americans.[118] The standard of living fell, wages dropped or stagnated, all goods became twice as expensive, and poverty line marched forward.

Macapagal would finish his term with several scandals and policy failures, the most infamous of them was the Stonehill scandal. It involved a bribery case among dozens of Filipino senators, congressmen, journalists, and cabinet members.[119] Macapagal went above the heads of an appointed congressional committee and deported Stonehill back to the US, making it impossible to investigate the evidence further.[120] The Americans resented the clumsy handling and public relations nightmare involving Stonehill. Filipino politicians were enraged by being unable to prosecute a blatant graft and corruption case that would have restored public trust.

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[114] Ibid, 316-318.
[115] Ibid, 316.
[116] Ibid, 314.
[117] Ibid, 314-315.
[118] Ibid, 316-317.
[119] Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 475.
[120] Ibid, 476.

Lastly, he pushed another attempt at a land reform into a law to abolish tenancy farming and break up large estates, establish an equitable renting-leasee system to ease the plight of the commonfolk.[121] Wealthy landlords had a strong presence in congress and blocked or amended the bill to render it worthless, then blocked the funding needed to enforce the law.[122] Coupled with rising inflation, rising unemployment, and low crop yields Macapagal became the pariah for just about everyone in the country, his own political party, the Liberals, abandoned him for a new rising star.[123]

The Path to Martial Law: 1965-1972

The situation was ripe for a newcomer to take the reins of power, if only out of desperation to turn things around. In 1961 the new Senate President of the Philippine Congress would be freshman Ferdinand Marcos. He made a name for himself for opposing the corruption and incompetence of the Macapagal presidency, including sending Filipino engineers to aid the Americans in the escalating Vietnam War.[124] Ironically Marcos ran on the same platform as Macapagal, to solve graft, corruption, and wealth inequality. He won decisively in the 1965 election by 600,000 votes, being seen as the face of change to finally lead the country to its real potential.[125]

The great irony of history is that seemingly small, short terms actions, have everlasting long-term consequences that one never expects. As Garcia's nationalist turn created the fertile ground for Macapagal to oust him as president, Macapagal's failed attempts to reform the country allowed Marcos to build a powerful coalition for himself. Macapagal made an enemy out of the Lopez family, the biggest oligarch clan in the post war Philippines.[126] They owned major media outlets, from newspapers, to radio, and television, including the Manila Chronicle newspaper and the largest TV broadcaster ABS-CBN, among several other high profile utilities companies.[127] The Lopez's were known as the kingmakers of Filipino politics, having the money necessary to fund any

[121] Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 477-478.
[122] Constantino and Constantino, *The Continuing Past*, 319.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 483.
[125] Blitz, *The Contested State*, 103.
[126] Roces, *Kinship Politics in Post-War Philippines: The Lopez Family, 1945–1989*, 189-192.
[127] Roces, *Kinship Politics in Postwar Philippines, 1946-2000*, 91-98.

presidential campaign, and patriarch Senator Fernando Lopez who could build a political clique around the candidate.[128] Macapagal wanted to address business monopolies and political kinship networks and the takedown of the Lopez family would be an essential win.[129] This drove the Lopez family into allying with his rival Marcos, in a bid to protect themselves and take revenge for "uncalled for attacks" upon their family.

With Lopez money and political clout opening the way for him, Marcos had free reign to change the Philippines in any way he wanted. Marcos went to work to solidify his hold on Filipino politics, by consolidating control of the Philippines military and American good will. In 1965 the United States was trying to salvage the public relations image of their war in Vietnam, they wanted their allies to contribute more troops to the war to showcase a united front.[130] In a turnaround from his previous opposition Marcos sent a 2,300-man engineer battalion to serve in Vietnam, the opportunity to score political points with President Johnson was obvious.[131] Marcos then strengthened his position with the United States with a press tour to Washington with a promise of millions of dollars of economic aid and IMF loans.[132] Afterwards President Johnson sent Marcos a secret communique about nuclear weapons stored in the Philippines, to strengthen ties and trust.[133] Marcos saw this as blackmail material to ensure US backing of his decisions throughout the rest of his presidency.

In the end Marcos embezzled over $125 million of American funds and distributed them to his friends, cronies, or Swiss bank account. Whatever was left was invested into a centralized military, police, and intelligence command under his rule.[134] This would be the foundation of the police state under martial law, although this was not apparent at the time. Marcos enhanced his American support by stoking their ever-present fear of communism. Since the colonial days the Americans had Clark Air Force Base and Subic Bay Naval Base in the Philippines, they were essential to many operations in the ever-

[128] Roces, *Kinship Politics in Postwar Philippines: The Lopez Family, 1946-2000*, 111-122.
[129] Roces, *Kinship Politics in Post-War Philippines: The Lopez Family, 1945–1989,* 197-202.
[130] Blitz, *The Contested State*, 103
[131] Sterling Seagrave, The Marcos Dynasty, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1988.), 182-183.
[132] Seagrave, *The Marcos Dynasty*, 181.
[133] Blitz, *The Contested State*, 104.
[134] Seagrave, *The Marcos Dynasty*, 188.

escalating Vietnam war.[135] The lease to the bases now expired in 1991 and could close sooner if enough public sentiment called for it.[136] The US was concerned about growing anti-American movements in the Philippines, due to the bases and Filipino soldiers active in Vietnam.[137] They were also concerned about a new communist group taking up the mantle of the Huk rebellion. These fears would manifest themselves in the 1969 Philippines presidential election as another wave of unrest and rebellion overtook the Philippines in "the First Quarter Storm."

"There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen."
-Vladimir Lenin, 1917

The events of 1969-1970 would be a watershed moment for the Philippines, as Marcos would fight for his second term in office. Fight is a misnomer, as Marcos would engage in blatant voter fraud, and not for the last time. The final ballot of the November elections scored a 2 million vote deficit over his opponent Sergio Osmena Jr.[138] Even the politically apathetic could see this margin of victory this was impossible. The widespread violence across the country at the ballot box, with images across media of armed men, brawls, and even flamethrowers delegitimized the contest further.[139] In almost the same year, December 26, 1968, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) would be founded by University of the Philippines professor Jose Maria Sison. They would ally with the New People's Army (NPA), which would become their armed wing. The NPA was made up of the last remnants of the Huk Rebellion.[140] Their stated goal was the overthrow of U.S. imperialism, feudalism, bureaucratic capitalism, and the seizure of political power.[141]

[135] Blitz, *The Contested State*, 102-104.
[136] Ibid, 102.
[137] Ibid, 106.
[138] Ibid, 106.
[139] Tillman Durdin, "Charges of Fraud and Violence Follow Elections in Philippines," The New York Times, November 15, 1969.
[140] Ibid, 106.
[141] Mapping Militant Organizations. "Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army." Stanford University. Last modified August 2018.

It was not just armed militancy gaining traction. Anti-government sentiment was spreading throughout the lower, intelligentsia, and middle classes. The perceived neocolonial relationship with the US, their military bases being used for Vietnam war operations, and Filipinos deployed to Vietnam inflamed protesters.[142] The overthrow of the Sukarno government in Indonesia in 1965 with a military dictatorship only radicalized students further.[143] Also, in the south another insurgency and rebellion was growing in Muslim Mindanao after the Jabidah Massacre of 1968, with the Moro National Liberation Front demanding autonomy from the central government in response.[144]

The national crises came to a head in January 1970 with two massive riots on January 26th and January 30th widely broadcast on live television. January 26th was called the *Battle of Burgos Drive* as 50,000 student, worker, and peasant demonstrators convened outside the congressional building during the opening of Congress.[145] It ended when protestors threw burning effigies at Marcos and Imelda and the riot police quickly intervened. Thousands fled the streets but those who stayed were viciously beaten by the police, notable three students from *Kabataang Makabayan*, or Nationalist Youth (KM).[146]

The violence escalated on January 30th, dubbed the *First Quarter Storm*, as two separate protests at the Congressional Building and Malacañang Presidential Palace morphed into one.[147] It ended with protestors throwing molotovs and homemade bombs onto the palace grounds. The Presidential guard chased them out and both sides ended up digging in at Mendiola Bridge where the guards opened fire on unarmed protestors, once again on national television.[148] Many neutral bystanders and politically unengaged spectators were noted to have sheltered or helped protestors flee the scene as an act of defiance against the government.[149] In the court of public opinion, Marcos and the

[142] Talitha Espiritu, *Passionate Revolutions: The Media and the Rise and Fall of the Marcos Regime*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2017, 27.
[143] Espiritu, *Passionate Revolutions*, 27.
[144] Mapping Militant Organizations. "Moro National Liberation Front." Stanford University. Last modified May 2019.
[145] Espiritu, *Passionate Revolutions*, 23.
[146] Ibid, 24-26.
[147] Ibid, 29.
[148] Ibid, 30.
[149] Ibid, 31.

military had been condemned. However, in the media battle afterwards Marcos would twist the facts through political revisionism and claimed that the protestors were an organized communist insurgency, being run covertly by the CPP and NPA.[150] The alleged demonstration was in fact a failed coup attempt, the evidence of their eyes and ears were to be ignored.

The fear of a strengthening communist insurgency was the public justification Marcos would use to institute martial law on September 21, 1972.[151] In the summer of 1971 Marcos called for a constitutional convention to rewrite the 1935 constitution on the grounds of it being an American dictated document, not a true Filipino one.[152] It was a ploy to change the term limits from two maximum to three, as the 1973 elections were coming up and he was to vacate the presidency.[153] On August 21, 1971, at a political rally for the opposition Liberal Party two grenades exploded that wounded dozens.[154] Violence in Mindanao spread with massacres of Christians by the Muslim liberation groups and both events were blamed on the communists. Then in early 1972 Sergio Osmena Jr., his opponent in the 1969 election, was discovered to be plotting an assassination attempt against him using American mercenaries, Osmena quickly fled the country.[155] Afterwards, bombings would rock Manila almost once a month, once again being connected to the communists.[156] The final straw of Marcos' patience would be the deadlocked constitutional convention, which opened the door for banning American military bases from the country as a riposte to Marcos's attempts to circumvent a peaceful transition of power.[157] Conveniently, on September 22, 1972, Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile would survive an "assassination attempt" from gunmen who attacked his car.[158]

[150] Ibid, 32-33.
[151] John Bresnan, *Crisis in the Philippines*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 80-84.
[152] Blitz, *The Contested State*, 106.
[153] Bresnan, *Crisis in the Philippines*, 23.
[154] Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 225.
[155] Blitz, *The Contested State*, 107.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 225.

As a response to the assassination and to stem the tide of violence President Marcos invoked Proclamation No. 1081, instituting martial law to restore order to the country.[159] Congress was abolished, the supreme court was severely weakened, and the military was now the main instrument enforcing order and compliance with the wishes of the executive branch.[160] To ensure martial law would hold, Marcos sent an aide to the United States to gauge their approval. It was a resounding, yes across the board. World bank Director Robert McNamara promised double the loans to Marcos to continue martial law.[161] American business interests were promised to be left untouched; the Foreign Relations committee voiced no objections, and the American media even voiced their approval towards Marcos for his "strength in a nation of uncertainty[162]." With the last potential roadblock gone, the era of "one man democracy" began.

The next chapter will discuss kinship politics and activist religion during the martial law years. Censorship under the Marcos dictatorship makes an open discussion on its history murky, not least of all because of the external pressure applied to historians to not criticize the regime. Most notably, historian Teodoro Agoncillo wrote a textbook for use in schools nationwide, titled *A History of the Filipino People*, which has been cited in this paper. Once the work reaches the 1970s Agoncillo was pressured by the government to remove any harsh criticism of Marcos and his policies. These edits have persisted in later editions and have colored the perceptions of martial law for at least two generations of Filipino students.[163] Furthermore, kinship politics and religion would become the backbone of resistance against the Marcos regime, and it is equally important to understand how these resistance movements gained traction and where they were coming from. A historical foundation of grievances is the fuel to an ideological base of discontent that plots the downfall of any government.

[159] Ferdinand Marcos, "Proclamation No. 1081, s. 1972." Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines. Malacañang Palace, September 21, 1972.
[160] Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 572-573.
[161] Blitz, *The Contested State*, 109.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Jan Carlo B. Punongbayan, "The Marcosian 'Golden Age' Myths: What They Are, Why They Persist, and How to Dispel Them," In *The Marcos Era: A Reader*, by Leia Castaneda Anastacio and Patricio N. Abinales. (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University, 2022), 301.

Chapter 3: Twin Pillars of Leadership

"You need to understand the nature of the Filipino psyche. Two things were instilled in us by the Spanish, a love of God and a love of family."

-Leo Alcantara, Interview, Mar 30, 2023

The years 1972-1986 have a limited historiographical base from Filipino scholars in the country, because of the mass censorship taking place under the Marcos government, as explained in chapter 2. Almost all histories about the time period written outside of the country were written after or around the EDSA revolution and the ousting of Marcos. Much popular and scholarly literature were written between 1987-1993, and always revolves around Marcos, not the country or its people. For example, *Waltzing with a Dictator* (1987), *The Marcos Dynasty* (1988), *Corazon Aquino: the Story of a Revolution (1987), The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos (1986)*.[164] Instead the discussion of this period will shift to the development and radicalization of the religious and oligarchic opposition against Marcos. Ferdinand Marcos was overthrown in the EDSA Revolution— a bloodless coup that was led by Filipino clergy, backed by the poor and middle class, that included support from armed communist guerillas, that democratically reinstated the old kinship-based oligarchy. This outcome is complicated and paradoxical. Seen through the lens of Filipino kinship politics and religion based on the ideology of Theology of Struggle (ToS), this description makes significantly more sense.

The arguments for who is responsible for the EDSA revolution and who contributed to the exile of Marcos varies. The general consensus is that the middle-class student activists dominated the main opposition groups.[165] However, this is deeply contested by modern scholarship, as some say the military was responsible because of the RAM (Reform the Armed Forces Movement).[166] Others say that the urban poor

[164] Raymond Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator: The Marcoses and Making American Policy*, (New York, New York: Vintage, 1987.); Sterling Seagrave, *The Marcos Dynasty*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988.); Lucy Komisar, *Corazon Aquino: The Story of a Revolution*, (New York: George Braziller, 1987.); Primitivo Mijares, *The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda* Marcos, (San Francisco, CA: Union Square Publications, 1986.)

[165] Mary Racelis, "Organize! The Urban Poor Claim Their Right to the City." In *Martial Law in the Philippines: Lessons and Legacies 1972-2022*, by Edilberto C. DeJesus and Ivyrose S. Baysic, (Manila, PH: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2023.), 101-102.

[166] Salvador Guerrero, "The Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM): A Creation of Historical Experience." *Kasarinlan*, no. Vol 3, No. 3 (November 3, 1988), 57.

contributed equally, then others credit the Catholic Church due to Archbishop Jaime Sin's radio address to rally at Malacañang Palace.[167][168] This paper is adding to the revisionist argument that the revolution was more complicated than the mainstream consensus says. This paper argues that when both the exiled oligarchy and the religious establishment joined forces, the revolution began to gain traction and hit critical mass, there is no one group responsible, it was a collective effort by the Filipino people, spearheaded by these two groups.

Kinship politics was instrumental to martial law because the old society oligarchs brought Marcos to power, and it was those same oligarchs that helped overthrow him. Marcos knew how to manipulate the political environment to his advantage by using kinship ties to gain power and then maintain that power. He ran the Philippines like a privately owned family enterprise, however this behavior was the norm, as many dynasties carved out spheres of influence in their home province. The difference was Marcos would violate many of the unspoken rules for social and political conduct. His behavior and that of his allies alienated their supporters and incensed the opposition into more radical action. The Philippines does not operate on meritocratic norms for political legitimacy but through cultural and social norms of reciprocation, respect, and honor.

Theology of Struggle is the Filipino name for Liberation Theology, that was popularized by Latin American clergy during the 1950s-1960s. The movement was inspired by the Vatican II council held in 1965, which wanted to update the practices of the Church to be more relevant for the modern-day congregation and their problems.[169] This led to a call for a shift towards the clergy being more active in the lives of their followers besides preaching the gospel. In short, this meant the clergy would be more active in directly addressing poverty, inequality, racism, oppression, and any other factors that affected the quality of life of people in their community.[170] As the Marcos government was the direct source of many negative quality-of-life outcomes, this meant many clergy decided to be more politically active against his policies specifically.

[167] Racelis, *Organize! The Urban Poor Claim Their Right to the City*, 101-103.
[168] Rappler, "Listen: Cardinal Sin's 1986 Appeal for Filipinos to Go to EDSA, Support Ramos and Enrile," February 23, 2022.
[169] Pope Paul VI, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today," Vatican, Servizio Internet Vaticano, December 7, 1965.
[170] Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church*, 6.

Liberation Theology and Theology of Struggle, although an important minority ideology in the church, was a massive shift away from collaboration to outright dissent, protest, and leftist activism. This activism carried extra legitimacy in the eyes of the populace due to the significant number of practicing Catholics in the country.

Theology of Struggle towards the Revolution

Theology of Struggle led to a fragmentation within the Philippines Catholic Church. This divide can best be described as a significant minority of bishops, priests, and nuns devoting themselves to the social problems affecting the most vulnerable in the Philippines.[171] Opposing them were conservative bishops that did not believe their place was involving themselves in politics, the church was supposed to be an apolitical organization that preached the word of God, nothing more. Practically many of these bishops did not want to become enemies of Ferdinand Marcos, who had the full backing of the military, or they agreed with his policies.[172] In the middle were the moderates, as defined by Youngblood, as those who did not want to question the legitimacy of the government. However, they reserved the right to criticize specific policies and that the church needs to be more responsive to the inequalities in society and modernize.[173] However, this fragmentation was not immediate.

In the first years after the declaration of martial law many in the Catholic establishment were apolitical, refused to support change, and preferred supporting Marcos over the communist insurgency.[174] Years of political violence and entrenched poverty created a deeply unstable and exhausted society. A common response is what scholar Jayeel S. Cornelio calls "critical collaboration," those who were willing to work with the government but verbally denounce its excesses.[175] Only the leftist wing of the church, which was a significant minority in 1972, was against martial law from the outset.[176] Over the next ten years the police state would crackdown on the Catholic activists and then moderate and conservative church members. Some of these abuses will be discussed in this section. It was the government overreach and intimidation that would radicalize the church, *as a whole,* against Marcos. The Christian left was the most

[171] Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church,* 70-71.
[172] Ibid, 72-73.
[173] Ibid, 73.
[174] Gretchen Casper, *Fragile Democracies*, 60-62.
[175] Cornelio, *Marcos, Christianity, and the Seduction of Authoritarian Nostalgia*, 337.
[176] Cornelio, *Marcos, Christianity, and the Seduction of Authoritarian Nostalgia*, 338.

active in anti-government organization but the institution itself, after 1983, abandoned Marcos and encouraged mass protest.

The political disposition of the clergy was quite diverse, spread out across 100 Bishops, 4500 priests, 7000 religious sisters, and 450 brothers[177]. The lowest rung of the church hierarchy were the priests, nuns, brothers, and missionaries operating throughout the country. It is here where the most progressive elements of the church expressed themselves. It was at the ground level, mostly involving sisters and missionaries, where ToS was openly practiced and executed. They started their operations on the island Mindanao in 1972, which was a hotbed of anti-government activity, religious strife, and poverty.[178] Mindanao is where the majority of Muslim Moros lived, along with several ethnic minority groups. The progressive wing of the Church, and priests in the churches of Mindanao openly defied the orders from bishops around the country and refused to leave the region.

Furthermore, they declared that it was sinful to allow the innocent and poor to suffer under unjust socioeconomic conditions and active political repression. Social justice is political and an intrinsic part of the church's role of evangelization (according to Vatican II). To act as innocent bystanders, who were disconnected from the poor in their congregation, was irresponsible and an abdication of duty.[179] In fact, one of the many reasons Mindanao was chosen as a staging ground for community organizing and activism was because of its Moro affiliation. ToS and progressive priests' interpretation of the Church's mission was universal justice, brotherhood, and leading all away from sin, the differences of religion were irrelevant because their mission was for all Filipinos.[180] This ideology is why the activist church was so effective in their resistance, unlike the oligarchic elite, this group could not be bought, sold, or corrupted. Attempts to do so would only strengthen their resolve to resist. The government's continual assault on human rights meant the activist church would always be there to oppose them until the government either stopped or *was replaced* with a democratic leader.

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[177] Gretchen Casper, *Fragile Democracies,* 60.
[178] Thomas M. McKenna, "Marcos and the Moros: Philippine Muslims, Martial Law, and the Bangsamoro Rebellion," In *The Marcos Era: A Reader,* by Leia Castaneda Anastacio and Patricio N. Abinales, (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University, 2022.), 135-141.
[179] Casper, *Fragile Democracies,* 64-66.
[180] Ibid, 64.

The community organizing took many forms, but its most impactful one was (BCCs), which have been documented by anthropologists in the Philippines.[181] BCCs are an important facet of the religious anti-government resistance and the revolution, because they offered *an alternative* to local, pro-Marcos government leaders.[182] BCCs were a program that emphasized human development through "consciousness raising," which is taken from Latin American ideas of Liberation Theology.[183] This was combined by the idea of a small Christian community based around American community organization to encourage members to participate in decisions that directly affect them, in the church and community.[184] In short, BCCs were created to be community driven organizations that were locally focused, which could be as small as a specific town or province, and politically aware and active. The BCCs were meant to empower people to liberate themselves from the cycles of poverty, oligarchy, and intimidation by the military, government, or gangs.[185] Instead of being dependent on the government or elites to better their lives, the community would create their own methods of autonomy to better their lives.[186] This would be done in tandem with the church, and the organizing principles were a fusion of church doctrine based on Vatican II and collective action.

Theology of Struggle doctrines, combined with successful community organizing through BCCs would become a major threat to the Marcos regime. At least they would be *perceived* to be a threat by the central government. The government's logic was that BCCs actively publicized and organized against crony capitalism, repression of labor, and human rights abuses by elites.[187] Based on the province, either a multinational corporation, a military or paramilitary outfit, or a Marcos affiliated oligarch could be operating in the area. Simply, put BCCs and activists' priests were bad for business and

[181] Ben Kerkvliet and James C. Scott, *Everyday Forms of Resistance in South-East Asia,* (London, UK: Frank Cass, 1986.); Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *Everyday Politics in the Philippines: Class and Status Relations in a Central Luzon Village,* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990).; Anne Harris, "Dare To Struggle, Be Not Afraid." A Study of the 'Theology of Struggle' in the Philippines" (Perth, AUS, Murdoch University, 2000.); Anne Harris, "The Theology of Struggle: Recognizing Its Place in Recent Philippine History," *Kasarinlan,* Philippine Journal of Third World Studies, 21, no. 2 (2006): 83–107.; Lisa Asedillo, "The Theology of Struggle: Critiques of Church and Society in the Philippines (1970s-1990s)". *Indonesian Journal of Theology* 9 (1) 2021, 62-92.

[182] Casper, *Fragile Democracies*, 78.

[183] Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church,* 84.

[184] Ibid, 84.

[185] Ibid, 91-92.

[186] Ibid, 91-92.

[187] Teresa S. Encarnacion Tadem, "Technocrats and Their Impact of Their Economic Policies on the Marcos Era: Contradiction, Corruption, and Crisis." In *The Marcos Era: A Reader,* by Leia Castaneda Anastacio and Patricio N. Abinales, 2022, 213-215.

maintaining control of the populace becomes extremely difficult when grassroots organizations disprove the propaganda and offer different but effective solutions.[188] The ToS ideology make it harder to corrupt these groups since their organizing principle is founded around modern Catholic ideas of social justice, equality, and sacrifice.

Official government reports on security from 1975 and 1978 explicitly name BCCs as a threat to them and methods to undercut their influence.[189] Among several concerns, the government believed BCCs could be used as a tool of political power on a national scale, meaning the organizing would move beyond townships and into the national consciousness.[190] These fears would be quite prescient; however, one could argue the government had created their own self-fulfilling prophecy. The fact some proposed solutions were co-opting BCCs through mainstream conservative clergy and turning the divided church groups against each other in the media speaks volumes about the government's fear of these groups.[191] The disorganized masses had no power, and the church was the focal point of this activism, many grassroots organizations *would not exist* without them. More importantly the church acted as a literal safe haven for activists because raiding church property was a public relations nightmare in a devout Catholic country. The fact the police state did so, rallied support for the church's cause from moral outrage.

The shift toward the progressive wing would only begin around 1975 and kept escalating every year until 1983, where the significant portions of the church united against Marcos. In 1976 the Marcos government began using the state-controlled media to denounce church political "interference" along with rumors of an organized radical Christian left political party.[192] Then the government began banning foreign missionaries and closed two religious publications and some radio stations.[193] Through the rest of the 1970s several pastoral letters by the CBCP (Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines) were published, one, stating that violence was a legitimate means to follow one's conscious in certain circumstances. Afterwards, two pastoral letters

[188] Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church*, 83-93.
[189] Ibid, 93-94.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Casper, *Fragile Democracies*, 68.
[193] Ibid.

denounced martial law and encouraged average people to re-examine the cultural, economic, and political structures of the country and the pitfalls of authoritarianism.[194]

The progressive wing began to grow in the face of the growing human rights abuses related to indefinite imprisonment, "disappearances" of activists, and violent paramilitaries. This led to an outright split of the leftist wing in 1979 between the National Democrats (Net-Dems) and Socialist Democrats (Soc-Dems).[195] Both groups were anti-Marcos, but the Nat-Dems in particular would often be associated with assisting communists in the NPA/CPP.[196] Many accusations by the government of communist associations came from the actions of this group being broadly applied to the whole church. Ironically, these attacks only pushed more church moderates and conservatives to the left, including Manila Archbishop Jaime Sin. Their public rebuttals denouncing radicals fell on deaf ears and became justifications for more crackdowns.[197] This development shows that the more apolitical wings of the church were now being blamed for the actions of their more activist members. Punishing the whole, for the actions of a few is the type of behavior that defined martial law for all of Filipino society. This is an example of how an entire *institution* becomes radicalized, this is why the church was so prominent at the *end* of martial law. The church was turned into another enemy for Marcos to fight.

The divide would grow even wider in 1980 with the arrival of Pope John Paul II in a visit by the papacy to the largest Catholic nation in Asia. Marcos tried using the Papal visit of 1981 to legitimize his government, the implication was that the Pope would not come if he was morally against Marcos's actions.[198] Before the visit Marcos nominally lifted martial law and "allowed" freedom of expression, the press, and dissent. This backfired as the Pope denounced Marcos's human rights record and declared that a nation's security interests cannot take precedence over human rights and dignity.[199] As will be discussed further in chapter 4 with a social history of the era, the lifting of martial law was anything but legitimate.

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[194] Ibid, 70.
[195] Ibid, 75.
[196] Harris, *The Theology of Struggle: Recognizing Its Place in Recent Philippine History*, 90-91.
[197] Casper, *Fragile Democracies*, 76-78.
[198] Ibid, 77.
[199] Ab Tam, "Pope in Manila Declares Rights Must Be Upheld, "The Washington Post, February 18, 1981.

The moderate and conservative wings of the church began shifting their positions to the left, meaning the overall position of the church became less apathetic towards the abuses of the government. The government kept increasing pressure on the church hierarchy after the Pope's visit to remain apolitical. The Pope told a gathering of clergy, "You are not social or political leaders or officials of a temporal power. Let us not be under the illusion that we are serving the gospel if we dilute our charisma through an exaggerated interest in the wide field of temporal problems.[200]" Marcos also tried "enforcing" this neutrality, one prominent example involved raids on church establishments throughout 1982. In just August and September alone four military raids were conducted against leftist associated clergy to "root out" the NPA. Throughout the martial law years there were 18 recorded raids against accused church leftists, each time the raids would target either a BCC or a church social justice group.[201] Essentially BCCs or helping the poor became synonymous with NPA support. The end result was a further radicalized left, a morally enraged center and right, and open support of BCCs and grassroots organizations to defy the government. By 1983 with the assassination of Ninoy Aquino, all levels of the church were in open rebellion, it had all backfired.

The activist Church spearheaded grassroots organizing and the Christian left helped shelter and support the growing communist movements. However, what the church lacked was funding for nationwide collective action, as crackdowns on activists led to withholding of church funds.[202] They had no direct political connections to the mechanisms of power; the Catholic church, by its nature, cannot run for political office and can only protest for legal change, not enact the policies.[203] Even the powerful archbishops, like Jaime Sin, could call on the people to collective action for political reasons, but the church would always be relegated to the bottom level of anti-Marcos resistance. What gave the ground level resistance power beyond just numbers and

[200] Tam, *Pope in Manila Declares Rights Must Be Upheld*, Washington Post.
[201] Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church*, 115.
[202] Harris, *The Theology of Struggle: Recognizing Its Place in Recent Philippine History*, 91, 103.
[203] Vatican, "Code of Canon Law - Book II - The People of God - Part I. (Cann. 208-329)," Secretariat for Communication. Accessed June 8, 2023, Code 285.

morality was the funding, media access, political connections, and logistical network of the oligarchs and kinship dynasties of the pre-Marcos era.

Kinship Politics towards Democracy

Politics in the Philippines is nominally a liberal westernized democracy based on merit, but in practice is driven more by the connections one has and the family they're born into. For centuries the political sphere was and continues to be driven by clientelism, bossism, political dynasties, corruption, and congressional pork barrel bribery.[204] The differences with the oligarchs in the pre-Marcos years vs the Marcos years

Nuns protesting outside Malacañang Palace during EDSA | Photo by Kim Komenich for the San Francisco Examiner

is essentially non-existent. Marcos replaced the kingmakers of the old system, the Lopez family, with himself. What drove the old oligarchs into resistance against him, even though he was one of them, was the many ways Marcos would violate the unspoken rules for social and political conduct. The blatant cronyism was not new, but the level of collateral damage was. The widespread *incompetence* and the *amount* of thievery crossed the line. The worst of it was the deeply personal attacks against the oligarchs and their families, which involved imprisonment, forced exile, and physical and emotional torture.

The best history of the Lopez family is recounted by Mina Roces, in Roces, *Kinship Politics in Postwar Philippines: The Lopez Family*, where she also goes to great lengths to

[204] McCoy, *An Anarchy of Families State and Family in the Philippines*, xii-xix.

explains the nuances and inner workings of kinship political through a cultural lens.[205] Before explaining the impact of kinship feuds in the Marcos era, defining Filipino kinship politics and its cultural context is necessary. Kinship politics in the Philippines are centered around elite families, who can usually trace their origins to the colonial aristocracy, big business magnates, or well-educated politicians, build monopolies that are inherited from generation to generation.[206] These powerful families could be oligarchs, warlords, senators, CEOs, newspaper owners, etc. The common thread linking how they all operated was that their goal was to expand their domains and maintain them until it could be passed on to their children or competent relatives.[207] They maintained control through the "guns, goons, and gold" method that has been oft represented in research on the Philippines due to its dramatic nature. They also maintain control through control of the media, bribery, and non-violent intimidation tactics.[208] This method was used often by the Lopez family.

This system is culturally reinforced by several concepts related to honor, integrity, and respect. *Utang na Loob* is one common example that has been brought up by different interviewees for this thesis.[209] This concept dates back to the pre-Hispanic era, which translates to debt of gratitude or reciprocity.[210] The reason a lot of nepotism and quid pro quo happens in the Philippines is because of *Utang Na Loob*, once a family member or close friend provides a favor for you, and the word is used broadly, it is necessary to return it. Refusing to do so leads to accusations of being *Walang hiya*- completely shameless.[211] For those who take their reputation seriously, this is one of the worst things you can call someone. In terms of kinship politics *Pakikisama*- yielding to consensus-, means sacrificing ones desires because the group demands it.[212]

This involves yielding one's complaints or concerns to the will of the leader or perceived majority for the sake of a unanimous decision. This type of behavior is encouraged for the sake of smooth interpersonal relations.[213] This is quite common in

[205] Roces, *Kinship Politics in the Philippines: the Lopez Family 1946-2000*, 6-10.
[206] McCoy, *An Anarchy of Families State and Family in the Philippines*, 1-4.
[207] Ibid, 19-27.
[208] Roces, *Kinship Politics in the Philippines: the Lopez Family 1946-2000*, 9.
[209] Interview, Rene De La Torre, Oct 13, 2022.; Interview, Leo and Ofel Alcantara, Apr 6, 2023.; Interview, Antonio San Jose, June 8, 2023.
[210] Roces, *Kinship Politics in the Philippines: the Lopez Family 1946-2000*, 27-34.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid.

societies that favor collective harmony over overt individuality. Lastly is the concept of *Palakasan*- a system where those in power compete over special privileges and exemptions from regulations and bend the rules of law for their kinship group. This ties in with *Utang Na Loob,* but for government and business practices.[214] This would define the Marcos government as governance revolved around ministers competing to gain favors for power and not actual governance. Marcos's cronies would try to outmaneuver each other to gain ownership or leadership of prized companies repossessed from the oligarchy.[215] An apt comparison would be a feudal lord conquering new territory and then gifting it to a noble retainer for services rendered.

Filipino society is fragmented along class lines where there is limited class participation or collective action to change the systemic corruption. The elites exist in the class which benefit from it and have concentrated so much power at the top where it cannot be removed through legal means, since they control the legal means.[216] In fact, the Philippines democracy does not truly have political parties, but political families that resolves feuds through their political parties instead of political issues.[217] The government is how these political families legitimize their behavior, when in reality democracy is a just a battleground for personal interests. For, example the Nacionalista and Liberal party members trade allegiances repeatedly through history. They do not leave due to a change in beliefs or policy but due to a change of patrons or a disillusionment with their former oligarch allies.[218] This is why the Lopez family possessed so much power, their co-patriarchs CEO Eugenio and Senator Fernando handled disputes in the business world and the political world simultaneously. Rival families and leaders, like Macapagal, could be removed from power through governmental means, their reputations slandered by the media, and then their funding destroyed by the Lopez monopoly buyouts.[219]

The Lopez family is the most prominent example of a kinship dynasty, as they were the richest and most powerful of the Filipino oligarchs. They owned the major broadcasting station of ABS-CBN, they owned several newspapers and radio stations,

[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Eric U. Gutierrez, Ildefonso C. Torrente, and Noli G. Narca, *All in the Family: A Study of Elites and Power Relations in the Philippines*, (Quezon City, PH: Institute for Popular Democracy, 1992), 3-18.
[217] Gutierrez et al., *All in the Family*, 3-18.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Roces, *Kinship Politics in Post-War Philippines: The Lopez Family, 1945–1989*, 197-203.

and with this power they could set the political narrative for their supporters and opponents.[220] The also owned MERALCO, the largest power provider in the country, along with several sugar plantations and real estate firms. Fernando Lopez was the co-patriarch of the family with his brother Eugenio, who was running the business side of the family. Fernando was a long time Filipino senator, who would become kingmaker for several presidents.[221] Their family feud with Macapagal led to him allying with Marcos, and became Marcos' VP, in return the Lopezes helped fund both electoral campaign victories. Marcos would never have achieved as much as he did without the Lopez family, their money, their media network, or their political connections. This is why his betrayal of the Lopez family was so notable, not just to the oligarchs but it was noticed by the average person as well.[222] The bitter feud played out over years in the news media, to Marcos' detriment. In many ways the future revolution against Marcos should be called a revolt of the elite.

Before his declaration of martial law Marcos targeted his former benefactor as they were the next favored presidential candidates after Marcos' second term ended. He accused the family of building monopolies and controlling large segments of the Filipino economy, which is not wrong. His claimed intent was breaking up these monopolies to allow competition and growth of meritocratic businesses and not family empires.[223] This was just a ploy to repossess all their assets, especially the news media (The Manila Chronicle, ABS-CBN) and MERALCO, and redistribute them under government-controlled subsidies or cronies. He "convinced" the Lopezes to legally sell their assets to him by taking Eugenio "Geny" Lopez Jr. as a political hostage on fake assassination charges.[224] Eugenio Sr. sold the family assets based on the promise of the release of his son, which never happened.[225] This hostage situation prevented the Lopezes from retaliating, but it also showed Marcos to be *walang hiya*, because of how open he was about it.

Marcos would double down on his behavior with another public display of cruelty. Geny Lopez was still imprisoned for several years after the sale of Lopez assets and

[220] Ibid, 203-204.
[221] Ibid, 189-197.
[222] Interview, Antonio San Jose, June 8, 2023.
[223] Joseph Lelyveld, "Rich Family Loses Power in Bitter Feud With Marcos," *New York Times,* April 22, 1975.
[224] Roces, *Kinship Politics in Post-War Philippines: The Lopez Family, 1945–1989,* 206-207.
[225] Lelyveld, *Rich Family Loses Power in Bitter Feud With Marcos*.

during his imprisonment Eugenio Sr. was essentially in exile in the US for medical treatment.[226] Eugenio Sr. was diagnosed with terminal cancer and begged Marcos to see his son before he died. Marcos forced him to fly back to Manila to personally speak with him only to deny him visitation rights anyway and he died never having seen his son.[227] Revenge is nothing new in family feuds, neither is escalation. However, to put it bluntly, spiting a dying man from seeing his loved one with news reporters transcribing your behavior is an excellent way to make enemies and inspire hatred from people like the Lopezes.

The Lopezes were not the only oligarchs Marcos did this to, the Lopezes were just the beginning. Over the 1970s the Lopezes (Media, MERALCO Electric), Roces' (The Manila Times), Prieto's (Philippine Daily Inquirer), Elizalde's (Manila Broadcasting Corporation), Soriano's (Philippine Airlines, San Miguel Corporation), and Jacinto's (Steel, Mining, broadcasting) all had their businesses repossessed, bought out, or sold and redistributed to Marcos associates.[228] In light of this, it is easy to understand why the old oligarchs wanted Marcos removed from power. Marcos had destroyed decades or centuries of wealth in a decade and stole it for himself and his allied oligarchs. The personal example he made of the Lopezes meant that nothing was off limits, children, siblings, and parents were acceptable targets. Many oligarchs and their families fled to protest or hide in exile, usually in the United States.[229] By the 1980s, either because of revenge, a restoration of status, or for moral reasons, these exiled families would want any chance to strike back at Marcos and overthrow him, but only if an *opportunity presented itself.*[230]

The United Front 1983

That opportunity would present itself for all anti-Marcos groups, where a perfect storm of events would lead to a united front of the old oligarchy and the Philippines

[226] Lelyveld, *Rich Family Loses Power in Bitter Feud With Marcos*.
[227] Roces, *Kinship Politics in Post-War Philippines: The Lopez Family 1946-2000,* 208.
[228] Lopez family refer to previously cited Mina Roces literature; Roces family refer to, The Manila Times, "About Us | The Manila Times," Accessed June 10, 2023.; Prieto family refer to, Sofia Tomacruz, "What You Should Know about the Inquirer Group." Rappler, July 18, 2017.; Elizalde family refer to Media Ownership Monitorship Philippines. "The Elizalde Family," 2016.; Soriano family refer to "History of San Miguel Corporation." *International Directory of Company Histories*, no. Vol. 57. (2004).; Jacinto family refer to "Manila Takes Over Assets of a Family, Including Steel Mill." New York Times, January 6, 1973.
[229] Jose V. Fuentecilla, *Fighting from a Distance: How Filipino Exiles Helped Topple a Dictator*, The Asian American Experience (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 1-21.
[230] Fuentecilla, *Fighting from a Distance*, 75-91.

Catholic Church. They would take a leadership position and rally the masses in a moment of national outrage with the assassination of Ninoy Aquino in August 1983. Aquino was killed on live broadcast and he instantly became a martyr, his funeral drew 150,000 mourners.[231] The conservative and moderate factions in the church and the oligarchs felt they could no longer stand on the sidelines. For those who had always been against Marcos, it was a symbolic act of cruelty that was the final straw against any restraint. For the more conservative and moderate elements, it was a crossing of the line that was unforgiveable. Ninoy was seen as a patriot and member of the old guard but more importantly, he was the face of the opposition, the only legitimate threat to Marcos.[232] Killing the only legitimate threat to his power, perceivable out of fear, and doing it so publicly, without shame, was unacceptable. Even the military had begun to turn against Marcos, with a divide between the professional military class and the crony military that benefitted from government nepotism.

"Is the Filipino worth suffering, or even dying, for? Is he not a coward who would readily yield to any colonizer, be he foreign or home-grown? Is a Filipino more comfortable under an authoritarian leader because he does not want to be burdened with the freedom of choice? Is he unprepared or, worse, ill-suited for presidential or parliamentary democracy? I have come to the conclusion that he is worth dying for because he is the nation's greatest untapped resource.[233]" – Ninoy Aquino

Over the next three years dissent from every corner of the country rallied to the banner for a restoration of democracy under Ninoy's widow Corazon. Cory Aquino can be described as the ideal representative of all the disparate anti-Marcos groups, figuratively speaking. She was a member of the powerful Cojuangco and Sumulong families, which were sugar and rice barons. Both families were part of the landed aristocracy towards the end of the Spanish colonial era and were prominent senators and congressmen from their respective provinces of Tarlac and Rizal.[234] She married into the Aquino family, which today spans four generations of prominent politicians from Tarlac province.[235] She was deeply religious and many of her speeches were based around her

[231] Komisar, *Corazon Aquino,* 4-9.
[232] Interview, Rene De La Torre, Oct 13, 2022.
[233] Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, "The Filipino is Worth Dying For," Speech delivered at Asia Society in New York City, August 4, 1980.
[234] Komisar, *Corazon Aquino,* 11-12.
[235] Komisar, *Corazon Aquino,* 29-32.

faith and commitment to nonviolent revolution. She was also stanchly anti-communist and her old society oligarch ties, and reform mindset labelled her as the centrist candidate American foreign policy could support.[236] Most of all she was not a politician and had no desire for political office, in many ways she was inoffensive to the powerful and a better symbol than a leader.

What allowed a crusading widow to take the office of the presidency was the People Power Revolution backed by the twin pillars of the old kinship oligarchy and the grassroots organizing of the church. For an example of this cooperation, starting in 1984 NAMFREL, the CIA front organization, was revived under legitimate means to fight voter fraud. The group was another arm of grassroots organizing that brought out 500,000 volunteers to document and publicize electoral fraud and violence at the ballot box.[237] Most importantly, they would serve as an independent vote counter for the 1985 snap elections for the presidency called by Marcos to reassert his legitimacy. NAMFREL'S declaration of Aquino as the winner and the Marcos backed COMELEC (commission of elections) decision as fraudulent.[238]

NAMFREL was backed by Filipino corporate executives who lent planes, business headquarters, and administrative experience for the cause. Almost all the corporate executives were from the old oligarchy, such as the Ayalas (San Miguel Beer), the Aboitiz's (electricity and banking), and Jose Concepcion (Chairman for ASEAN Business Advisory Council).[239] The church was equally supportive using BCCs to help coordinate poll watchers. The Catholic Education Association opened high school and colleges around the country to local election watchers. The Jesuits even organized the "NAMFREL Marines" a group dedicated to clean elections and social justice.[240]

[236] Casper, *Fragile Democracies*, 109.
[237] Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, *In the Name of Civil Society: From Free Election Movements to People Power in the Philippines*, Southeast Asia--Politics, Meaning, and Memory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 91.
[238] Hedman, *In the Name of Civil Society*, 91.
[239] Hedman, *In the Name of Civil Society*, 92.
[240] Ibid.

After the fraudulent elections the spontaneous revolution on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) took place in February 22-25, 1986. This was the culmination of the United Front as it started with the CBCP calling the elections fraudulent and condemning them after the reports by NAMFREL on Feb 13.[241] Archbishop Ricardo Vidal went so far as to call for nonviolent rebellion, "Now is the time to speak up. Now is the time to repair the wrong. The wrong was systematically organized. So must its correction be. But as in the election itself, that depends fully on the people; on what they are willing and ready to do.[242]" This was followed by the parliament opposition walking

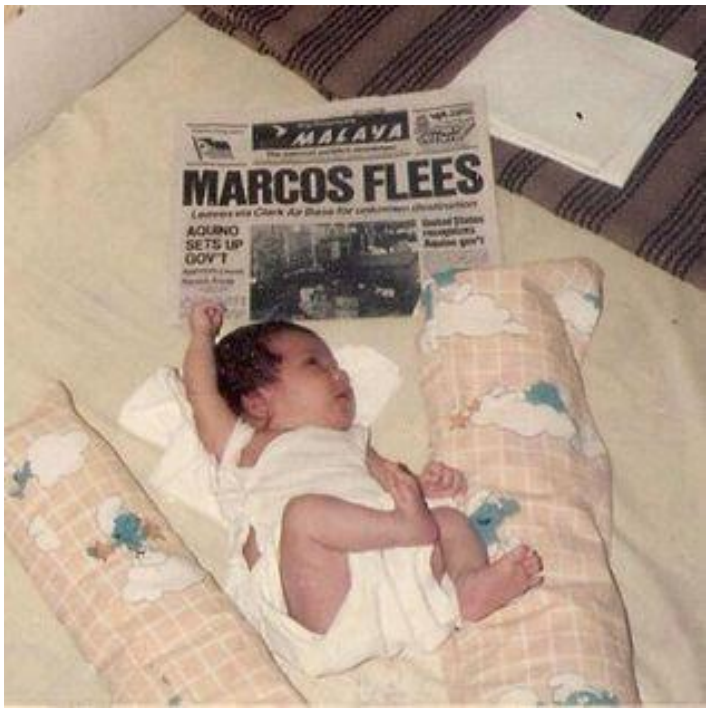
(2-23-86) - MANILA, PHILIPPINES: DEFENSE MINISTER JUAN ENRILE (CENTER W/UZI SUBMACHINE GUN) IS SURROUNDED BY SOLDIER-SUPPORTERS SUNDAY AS HE WALKS TO MEETING WITH ACTING ARMED FORCES CHIEF LT. GEN. RAMOS. THE TWO MEN BROKE OFF FROM PRES. MARCOS YESTERDAY AND HOLED THEMSELVES INSIDE CAMP AGUINALDO. INQUIRER PHOTO / TOM GRALISH

out in protest, then a day later Cory Aquino held a rally that drew two million people calling for civil disobedience and boycotts of all Marcos affiliated companies.[243]

EDSA would come about by a failed military coup by RAM (Reform the Armed Forces movement) composed of the professional officers, led by the Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Vice Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos, who felt ostracized by the

[241] Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, "Statement: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines on Post-Election," Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, February 13, 1986.
[242] Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, *Statement: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines on Post-Election*.
[243] Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, "A History of the Philippine Political Protest | Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines," Accessed June 11, 2023.

nepotist Marcos faction.[244] Usually, military coups are not something to be celebrated, but in this context many Filipinos would say otherwise. Archbishop Jaime Sin went on the radio calling any and all willing Filipinos to head to the camp of the rebels and give emotional support, food and other supplies.[245] By the time the radio transmission was cut hundreds of thousands had answered the call and filled the streets in front of the presidential palace with tens of thousands joining them by the hour. Many of the clergy, brothers, nuns, missionaries, and bishops were seen standing in front of tanks and soldiers as human shields.[246] By the 24th a Philippines Marine brigade was called in to attack the army rebels but had refused the "kill order" four times due to wavering loyalty and because of blatant civilian casualties.[247] Several interviews, which will be discussed in chapter 4, mention this act by the church as a key point of leverage against the military. If a single member of the clergy were killed, on live television like Ninoy Aquino, it was noted there would have been widespread unrest in response.[248]



Daughter posing with Newspaper of Marcos exile| Provided by Juan Antonio "Jeepy" Perez | Private Collection| Feb 1986

[244] Casper, *Fragile Democracies*, 110-114.
[245] Rappler, "Listen: Cardinal Sin's 1986 Appeal for Filipinos to Go to EDSA, Support Ramos and Enrile," February 23, 2022.
[246] Interview, Rene De La Torre, Mar 30, 2023.
[247] Cecilio T. Arillo, *Breakaway: The inside Story of the Four-Day Revolution in the Philippines, February 22-25, 1986*. Manila, PH: CTA & Associates, 1986, 76-83.
[248] Interview, Rene De La Torre, Mar 30, 2023.

This public act of defiance led to a collapse of Armed Forces morale and military defections to the rebels. There were even some minor attacks by the air force on airfields and Malacañang Palace.[249] The final nail in the coffin was captured on live television where Marcos argued with his Chief of Staff Gen. Ver canceling an order to launch an airstrike on the rebel army to prevent any civilian deaths.[250] On the 25th two different inaugurations took place for Marcos and Aquino, in an act of symbolism by both parties.[251] On the 26th the United States offered safe transport out of the country and Marcos left with his family with the blessing of Enrile.[252] The revolution was bloodless, and every party had played its part in its resolution. The narrative ends here, as the post-Marcos years of 1987-present covers an entirely different era beyond the scope of this paper.

Towards a Social History

The downfall of Marcos should be viewed as a collective action by the fractured sectors of society uniting in this specific purpose. There has been endless debate on what caused this outcome and how we got here. This paper argues that Marcos had united society against him, by antagonizing and enraging the most powerful groups in Filipino society, the Catholic Church, and the old oligarchs. The EDSA revolution was not planned, it was spontaneous, but the abuses under the regime that inspired the two million participants to protest, had been building over the decade. Grassroots organizations were created because the government failed to meet their needs in terms of welfare and safety. The activist wing of the Catholic Church helped organize hundreds of these groups, both because ToS demanded a greater leadership role from the clergy in society and because clergy wanted to offer alternative options besides the government. The Marcos government tried repressing, raiding, and publicly denouncing these church activities, only to backfire and inspire more moral outrage from the progressive wing and force the more apolitical wings to act in the face of growing criticism and unrest.

Marcos and his technocrats applied the same behavior to the old oligarchy that had helped him rise to power in the first place. He violated every social taboo in a bid to

[249] Arillo, *Breakaway*, 78-83.
[250] William Branigin, "Rebels, Marcos Contest Control of Philippines - The Washington Post." Washington Post. The Washington Post, February 24, 1986.
[251] William Branigin, "Aquino and Marcos Hold Rival Inaugurations - The Washington Post." Washington Post. The Washington Post, February 25, 1986.
[252] Seth Mydans, "Marcos Flees and is Taken to Guam; U.S. Recognizes Aquino as President," New York Times, February 26, 1986.

consolidate power and spite his enemies. Within a cultural context, Marcos showed that he possessed no shame, would imprison and torture family members and loved ones, and publicly embarrass his enemies in ways that would only inspire more hatred. Many members of the old oligarchy were forced into exile, where many of them spent time lobbying support in the United States for collective action. The most notable of them all was opposition leader Ninoy Aquino. The united opposition did not come together until Aquino was assassinated in 1983, the collective outrage of the general populace inspired the oligarchs and apolitical wings of the Catholic Church to take a leadership position and organize collective action. The tensions would finally explode with EDSA and the rest is history.

However, there are several major events during that defined the 1980s Philippines that have been well documented in historiography that have come to define the overall narrative of the revolution. The next chapter seeks to provide counter narratives from the accepted western media or official Philippine government history. By conducting several interviews across class lines- including the middle class, religious clergy, the urban poor, student intelligentsia, and student activists, and the apolitical- this paper seeks to offer other points of view from the ground level on what was occurring in metro Manila during these turbulent times. As will be shown from direct quotes and from the transcripts available in the appendices, large events such as the Pope's visit in 1981 and the lifting of martial law were not as impactful as it initially appeared. The assassination of Aquino had numerous aftershocks besides national mourning, that would inspire collective action. Lastly, the EDSA revolution has been hailed as a middle-class revolution but all the interviewees had varying perspectives on which group was most responsible for the success of EDSA and large contributors to the revolution in general. Like most events in history, things are not always what they seem.

Chapter 4: A Social History of Metro Manila

The subject of memory has always been a tricky subject, as our memories are highly malleable and constantly shifting. We even forget subjects in short term memory that we thought about mere seconds ago.[253] The point of discussing some of the lived memories with my interviewees are to discuss their *experiences* under martial law in their formative years. Secondly, to see how the passing decades has affected their perception of this era. Their biases are assumed to exist, but how they present those biases is the aim of this chapter. To quote oral historian Donald A. Ritchie's, *Doing Oral* History, "No sources of this kind are ever purely objective. But the way people tell their stories—what they emphasize, what they leave out—can tell the historian as much about their times as the concrete details they provide.[254] These lived experiences lie outside the official Marcos narrative and more importantly outside the accepted western narrative by the media and cold war government officials. These experiences are also passed down to the next generation, the concept of post memory applies to the Philippines context, considering the important role of family. In short, post memory as described by Marianne Hirsch, is a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a consequence of traumatic recall but at a generational remove.[255] Martial law was a traumatic event for millions of Filipinos and sometimes that general trauma is passed on to the children, and then those children inherit the feelings of indignation, sorrow, and loss.[256]

For example, those living in Manila during the Pope's visit in 1981 and the lifting of martial law, had an entirely different experience of this momentous occasion. My goal is to provide counterpoints and a nuance to the end of the chaotic martial law years, which can be seen as a linear narrative by outsiders but extremely complex and uncertain to those in the thick of it. For instance, the western media portrayed EDSA as the return of democracy, as previously discussed, it was the return of the old oligarchy. More importantly, this is not a statement made in hindsight, but even contemporaneously this was a pervasive feeling among the protestors. Indeed, the revolution should be termed a restoration; this phrasing is used in my interviews, most notably by student activist, Juan

[253] Marte Otten, Anil Seth, and Yair Pinto, "Seeing Ↄ, Remembering C: Illusions in Short-Term Memory," PLOS, The University of Queensland, April 5, 2023.
[254] Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 3rd ed, (New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2015), 111.
[255] Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 103–128: 106.
[256] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 105-106.

Antonio "Jeepy" Perez, the former undersecretary for the Commission on Population and Development.[257] Every major event discussed in this chapter has varying perspectives, with limited consensus, as opposed to the official histories such as the Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines.[258]

I also want to preserve some of the living memories the generation of Filipinos who lived up to and through the People Power Revolution whether in Manila or as part of the diaspora overseas. Due to a lack of primary sources, censored works, destruction through war, or just general disinterest, sometimes the stories of the lived experiences are not able to be passed on. The recounting of the post war Philippines and Marcos era through secondary literature only covers part of the story. However, I want to make clear that the interviews presented in this paper are only from Filipinos who lived in Luzon, where many lived in or were from the capital of Manila and were anti-Marcos. It does not cover knowledge gaps related to those from pro-Marcos Luzon, the central Visayas region, or the Muslim southern region. This paper does not seek to fill in those gaps, but to add to the growing corpus of literature that seeks to tell a personal social history of the events of the generation of the 1960-1980's. Speaking from my own positionality, my interviewees are from the northern Luzon region, with many being born or have grown up in the metro Manila region. Many interviewees are members of my own family or part of the kinship network. Indeed, as chapter 3 has discussed the nature of kinship networks, the same cultural cues can be applied to these interviews as my subjects have been chosen, in part because of the kinship network available to me and not the other way around.

1981- The Pope and A Potemkin Construction of Freedom

To begin, let's start chronologically with some of the major events of the 1980s. Pope John Paul II's visit to Manila was hailed by the western media as a major turning point in the martial law era. It was commemorated as the official end of martial law, as throughout the month of January Marcos promised lifting bans on free speech and protest, and a more open press. After slowly increasing more freedoms, he would lift martial law in its entirety. The decision was portrayed as an attempt to appease the Pope and show that the Marcos government respected human rights and the religious values of the Catholic Church.[259] The Pope's visit was supposed to represent the

[257] *Thesis Interview,* Juan Antonio "Jeepy" Perez, May 10, 2023.
[258] Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, "A History of the Philippine Political Protest | Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines," Accessed June 11, 2023.
[259] Albert F. Celoza, *Ferdinand Marcos and the Philippines,* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1997), 74.

acknowledgment of the most Catholic non-western society in the world, and the lifting of martial law represented the respect held for the Vatican and the Pontiff.[260]

However, those living in Manila during this allegedly momentous occasion had an entirely different understanding of the visit. Many did not perceive the lifting of martial law as the actual end of martial law. My Ninong (godfather), Rene de la Torre, called the act a "formal display.[261]" Meaning it was for show but not actually designed to be a proper transition back to a democratic state, in fact, "the control after the Pope left was still there. The armed forces were still the ones in the streets and making sure that everybody was in their form of peace and order.[262]" This perspective is not just a cynical statement but is backed up by publicly available information at the time, reported by major news outlets such as the Far Eastern Broadcasting company (FEBC) and the Hong Kong Associated Free Press (AFP).[263]

Marcos still had the power to ban media, shows, exhibitions, and admission to schools after martial law was lifted.[264] He could define his presidential powers as within his judgment of a grave or critical threat, which was a broad definition of executive authority that was included in his revision of the 1972 constitution.[265] He also famously allowed a provision that issued immunity to himself, his cabinet, and public officers for acts in office that could later be deemed as illegal or crimes against the populace.[266] This would retroactively apply to any "reasonable" actions taken by the Marcos government and its supporters since the beginning of martial law. His pardons also applied to any military officers that acted within the means to carry out orders to "defend the state" from subversive (allegedly communist) actions.[267]

All the means for maintaining the apparatus of martial law remained intact. Marcos had not conceded any real power to the civilian populace other than the allowance of more open protests and printed and broadcast dissent.[268] However, any act of open rebelling could be put down, if deemed necessary, and all the perpetrators

[260] Reynaldo Santos Jr., "Looking Back: The Papal Visit and Lifting of Martial Law in PH." *Rappler*, January 17, 2015.
[261] *Thesis Interview*, Rene De La Torre, Oct 13, 2022.
[262] *Thesis Interview*, Rene De La Torre, Oct 13, 2022.
[263] *Manila FEBC* "Marcos' Announcement," January 5, 1981.
Hong Kong AFP, "Marcos Announces Martial Law to End 17 Jan," January 16, 1981.
[264] *Hong Kong AFP*, "Security Matters," January 11, 1981.
[265] "General Order No. 1, s. 1972," *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines*, Accessed May 6, 2023.
[266] *Hong Kong AFP*, "Marcos Issues Immunity Decree for Self, Others," January 13, 1981.
[267] *Hong Kong AFP*, "Marcos on Post-Martial Law Military Deployment," January 15, 1981.
[268] *Tokyo Kyodo*, "Marcos Foresees Post Martial Law Political Changes," January 10, 1981.

responsible for future repression were legally absolved before the act was even committed. *None* of the laws that allowed Marcos to declare martial law and give himself extraordinary executive powers had changed. The military could still operate freely and any previous crime was retroactively pardoned. It would make sense for my Godfather to have no faith in the restoration of his freedom because how is one free when agents of the state can still kill and torture you under the guise of national security. The Pope's visit was a public relations side show and the Pope himself declared that the Filipino clergy should stay of out matters of state.[269]

Perception is critical to understanding the various conclusions towards an anti-Marcos stance. To my Ninong, Marcos was clever, and his actions were performative to appease the Pope and other moral actors. Marcos oppresses while maintaining a veneer of legitimacy to all who do not see past his façade. Rene hates Marcos as an individual, whose actions spit in the face of the morality of his Catholic faith. Rene, in a previous life, was studying in a seminary to be a priest.[270] This is why the Pope's visit was so hollow in his eyes, because it is so obvious how fake it all is and yet they are lied to their faces that things have changed.[271] As a contrast my Tito (Maternal Uncle, mother's cousin) Leo Alcantara, expands on the perception and distrust of Marcos. To him the lifting of martial law was also fraudulent and insincere, it should not be taken as a good faith gesture.[272] However, Leo is not religious, in fact he was studying to be a doctor at the well-respected University of the Philippines.

Having the money and the ability to study in the medical profession implies an already privileged backgrounds along with the drive and ambition to succeed in a high stress environment. This completely shifts the focus of contempt for Marcos for a person coming from this background. Leo has contempt for the religious establishment, "To me, the hypocrisy of the church is very apparent during martial law. In the first few years, the church was silent. There's no noise… But the hierarchy of the church does not want to rock the boat.[273]" This was the response to a question about his opinion of the political activism of priests during martial law. This juxtaposed his wife, Ofelia, who credited the political participation of priests at all levels of the church hierarchy to protest the

[269] *Manila FEBC*, "Pope Cautions Priests Against Meddling in Politics," February 17, 1981.
[270] *Thesis Interview*, Rene De La Torre, Mar 30, 2023.
[271] *Thesis Interview*, Rene De La Torre, Oct 13, 2022, 30:38.
[272] *Thesis Interview*, Leo and Ofelia Mar 6, 2023.
[273] *Thesis Interview*, Leo and Ofelia Mar 6, 2023.

dictatorship.[274] Unsurprisingly, Leo has very opposing opinions on the religious establishment than my godfather, a former trainee of that establishment.

To expand further, Leo's contempt is based around political and secular concerns, not religious ones. In relation to the Pope's visit, Leo has an extremely thorough response to questions about the impact of the Pope's visit with numerous arguments for why it was exaggerated in its symbolic meaning. Leo's recollections implied a much more diplomatic approach, "The content of the Pope's speech is all about family, not politics, not even martial law. Although he would mention a thing or two about freedom, and oppression, especially about the poor and poverty, which alludes to martial law. But that's not directly saying this is what's happening during martial law.[275]" Again, and again the narrative was that Marcos was lifting martial law in preparation for the Pope's arrival and yet the reaction to the visit in practice amounted to looking presentable during an inspection. "The entire metro Manila was clean for that week that the Pope was here, and then everything returned to normal after the Pope.[276]"

Newspapers around Asia and in the United States published dozens of articles on January 17, 1981, about the official lifting of martial law.[277] In contrast to this narrative, "There was a time Marcos issued the proclamation, but it does not explicitly say he was lifting martial law. The document is different, but Malacañang is portraying it as saying that martial law was lifted. It was not, but America was happy and that's good enough for Marcos and that's good enough for America. And there's still martial law.[278]" It's clear Leo is more focused on the geo-political aspects of the visit, and he explicitly mentions the shadow of the United States. Leo and Rene both talk about Marco's cunning, but Rene ascribes the lies to Marcos and his government while Leo places the blame on the tacit approval of America. While both reach the same conclusion on martial law, how they both arrived at the conclusion provides one example of how, a religious Filipino and an educated secular professional Filipino, might perceive the effects of the visit. The political situation remained tense for several years but static, that was until 1983.

1983- The Impact of Ninoy

[274] *Thesis Interview*, Leo and Ofelia Mar 6, 2023.
[275] *Thesis Interview*, Leo and Ofelia Mar 6, 2023.
[276] *Thesis Interview*, Leo and Ofelia Mar 6, 2023.
[277] *Hong Kong AFP*, "Marcos Announces Martial Law to End 17 Jan." January 16, 1981.; Henry Kamm, "Marcos Frees 341; Lifts Martial Law," *New York Times*, January 18, 1981.
[278] Interview, Leo and Ofelia Mar 6, 2023.

On August 21, 1983, Ninoy Aquino was shot in the back of the head fifteen minutes after arriving at the airport. I have covered his assassination in detail in the previous chapter, so the focus of the interviews was around the local reaction to his death. I have argued through the secondary literature that the assassination is where the disparate factions of the Philippines come together to overthrow Marcos. The religious establishment and the oligarchic old society now felt emboldened to openly oppose Marcos or defect from his regime. These interviews provide more firsthand nuance to the feelings of the population, not just the opposition groups. First there was a general feeling of depression in the capital region, for the rest of 1983 the populace had felt a gut punch. The face of the opposition was gunned down in front of the entire homeland. The difference is that Ninoys' death had become the final straw, not just for organized groups but for individuals, "Everybody was depressed at first, but there was also a lot of fear of what is next. But there was also a lot of strength that they said, this cannot go on anymore. They should really ignite. I think that's a good word. They should really ignite the people to show that what's going on shouldn't continue to be happening.[279]"

The Marcos media machine already had tried shifting and manipulating the narrative around the assassination. Marcos claimed a lone gunman, connected to the boogeyman of communists for the umpteenth time, had been responsible for killing Ninoy.[280] The convenient scapegoat had been killed by the military immediately after Ninoy died. The power of media narratives over the martial law period was that they were

[279] *Thesis Interview*, Rene De La Torre, Mar 30, 2023.
[280] Raymond Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator: The Marcoses and Making American Policy*, (New York, New York: Vintage, 1987), 345.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WHERE ARE THEY?

Satirical Newspaper| Provided by Juan Antonio "Jeepy" Perez| Private Collection

effective in population control. Control occurs because of genuine belief or fear in repercussions. In Manila at least, did people believe this story of the lone gunman? In a word, no.[281] "The picture of dictatorship was so blatant already… And then all of a sudden you could see, and no one believed that there was a Galman [accused assassin] … He was like the fall guy. And everybody believed that his [Aquino] coming home was just his funeral arrangement. So that's why everybody just made sure that this cannot go without us going upfront with this. So that everybody, even those that were initially part of the Marcos team were all of a sudden against him now.[282]" So Marcos has *lost the compliance of the people*. "And he thinks he still can control the people. He still thinks he can make the people fear the military. But unfortunately, a majority of the military is already against Marcos. The Marcoses lost the military. America sensed that they know that that was why they, cleaned their hands, they wash them with alcohol from the Pacific Ocean

[281] Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator*, 346-249.
[282] *Thesis Interview*, Rene De La Torre, Oct 13, 2022.

and said, it's time for you to leave.[283]" With this has he lost the compliance of members of the military.

The Marcos stranglehold on media began to crack as counter newspapers and magazines began running issues to provide counter narratives, dissenting opinions, and mockery of the regime. "Well, when Ninoy died, we saw the blossoming of the mosquito press, we called it the anti-Marcos press. Some serious journalists really wanted the truth to come out. But they would get called out by Malacañang. So, they would resort to satire, they would come up with comedy issues of the newspaper where Marcos was lampooned.[284]" Whatever loopholes there were to get the truth out were used and with every passing year more and more dissent would be printed. It started with a trickle, with the slight opening of speech and press privileges in 1981. Then a torrent in 1983, after Ninoy died, as the journalists also joined the outpouring of wrath against the government.[285]

It's important to understand that when the bulk of the population, which usually is compliant in the face of the monopoly of violence held by the government, feels no fear, the regime loses that monopoly.[286] More accurately it is when the average person feels more anger overriding their fear of the military. Situations have a tendency to snowball out of control, not initially but gradually, through a buildup of momentum that gains speed through every succeeding error. With authoritarian regimes this comes about through a combination of overreaction, loss of stability, and a loss of faith from key backers. All three occurred from 1984-1986. The overreaction would come about with the snap elections of 1985.[287] Marcos called for a presidential election to publicly display that he still had the support of the populace, meaning the support of his cronies. Every one of his inner circle and the US state department advised against this course of action and to wait for the 1987 elections.[288]

The loss of stability is embodied by the resurgence of all previously discussed opposition forces, especially the NPA/CPP which had reached 24,000 soldiers with a

[283] *Thesis Interview*, Leo and Ofelia Mar 6, 2023.
[284] *Thesis Interview*, Juan Antonio "Jeepy" Perez, May 10, 2023.
[285] *Thesis Interview*, Juan Antonio "Jeepy" Perez, May 10, 2023.
[286] Munro, A, "State Monopoly on Violence." Encyclopedia Britannica, March 6, 2013.
[287] Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator*, 376-377.
[288] Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator*, 390-391.

Cory Aquino during a rally | Jan 27, 1986| Credit to Val Rodriguez| AP

presence in 68 of the 73 provinces.[289] Also, the defiance of the general populace gained traction and Marcos himself had contracted Lupus and was gravely ill, meaning infighting set in over who would replace him.[290] For the Marcos regime the biggest loss of external support came from the Reagan administration and United States. It is around 1984 that the US policy towards the Philippines begins shifting away from unanimous support. A senior state department official speaking to author of *Waltzing with a Dictator,* Raymond Bonner summed up the situation succinctly, "The question is not whether he is corrupt or not…The question was whether he had political control of the country… They [America] eased him out because he lost control of the country.[291]"

1986- People Power and Placing Responsibility

Lastly, there is the People Power Revolution; this event has been covered extensively in the previous chapters and by journalists, pundits, and historians. The focus now is to discuss how the interviewees reacted to the event, participated in it, or who they credit its success to. For example, Rene, the former training priest turned doctor, credits the Catholic Church for kickstarting the revolution. Specifically, the lower levels, the priests, nuns, and brothers for *organizing* the student population against the regime. "They [the church] were very much involved in all these social issues in making students understand that you have to involve yourselves. You have to be part of the change that must take place in the Philippines post-Marcos era… But the people underneath them [Catholic Bishops], were more freely, whether they were secular priests

[289] Diane Orentlicher and Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, *Vigilantes in the Philippines*. (New York, New York, Human Rights First, 1988), 3.
[290] Jodesz Gavilan, "When Ferdinand Marcos Hid His Illness from Filipinos." Rappler, September 23, 2020.
[291] Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator,* 359.

or people that joined the orders just with order Dominican orders. I think they were probably, in my opinion, they were more really involved in letting the student population know what was going on and what was their role to be able to make changes in society.[292]"

As a contrast we have Leo's secular perspective, which is not just secular but outright downplays the role of the Catholic Church in the People Power Revolution. He agrees with Rene that the upper ranks of the Church did not participate in dissent, however he goes further. He says, "the hypocrisy of the church is very apparent during martial law. In the first few years, the church was silent.[293]" Leo denounces the upper ranks, but he also denounces many of the lowers ranks as well, the only religious group he gives credit too are the nuns. "It was only in the eighties when the middle class and the students and the cities are becoming vocal, but the priests are becoming vocal. Actually, it was the nuns who are more vocal than the priests during that time. Sisters from St. Teresa's, and sisters from Saint Scholastica, they were being picked up, not the priest. **So our nuns are more radical than the priest** [emphasis mine], because the priests at that time are still obeying hierarchy, what the Cardinals, the archbishops, the bishops are saying…[294]" His perspective on religious class is disproved by the secondary literature discussed in the previous chapter, priests, brothers, and nuns all participated in grassroots organizing since the 1970s. Yet he only assigns credit to the nuns and only during the 1980s.

I argue this comes from his middle class, educated background. Leo is studying to be a doctor in the capital at University of the Philippines, one of the elite schools in the country. He has no interactions with the provinces, his life revolves around the capital region and his peers are also middle-class intellectuals. He would not be up to date with the actions of grassroots organizations in Mindanao or Visayas. The flow of information is controlled by the Marcos government censorship, whatever gets past the censors still has limited mileage to carry beyond vast distances between the north and south. His biases are shaped by these circumstances. Furthermore, Leo credits the revolution to the activism of the middle class, not the religious establishment, not the old society oligarchs, and not the poor masses. "It was actually the middle class who ran the show. Not the poor people. The poor people were there to sell their goods. If you look at EDSA, they're all middle-class people. And even the rich who are no longer in favor of Malacañang. People, sons of Ateneo [University], sons of De La Salle [University], the St.

[292] *Thesis Interview,* Rene De La Torre, Mar 30, 2023.
[293] *Thesis Interview,* Leo and Ofelia Mar 6, 2023.
[294] *Thesis Interview,* Leo and Ofelia Mar 6, 2023.

Teresa's, these are elite schools. So, it was actually a show of the rich or the middle class, the uprising. It's not coming from the masses. They don't care as long as they have food on the table, they won't care.[295]"

The prevailing narrative in popular historiography and retellings of EDSA credit the Catholic church and the middle class for being the proponents of the revolution. The middle class and old society oligarchs are hailed as the foundation of EDSA. The church was given credit for organizing by calling the people into the streets and calling for the clergy to defend the rebelling military units camped outside the presidential palace. Leo's perspective is a popular one, but does it hold weight to continue dismissing the masses? No, new historiography as recent as this year 2023 from Filipino academics argue that the poor and the masses were instrumental to the revolution, equal or more so, to the religious, wealthy, and middle classes.

In the collection *Martial Law in the Philippines: Lessons and Legacies 1972-2022*, contributor Mary Racelis argues that the urban poor came in significantly large numbers during EDSA, and they were motivated to overthrow a dictatorial government.[296] They were not apathetic citizens; their concerns were legitimate but completely contrary to the needs and concerns of the other participating classes. The urban poor were concerned with violent evictions by the military and forced relocation.[297] They were constantly dehumanized as "squatters," the rural poor fared no better as their land was repossessed for the sake of multinational corporations, as previously discussed.[298] Both groups of the Filipino lower classes were suffering wealth inequality and government sanctioned violence. I argue that their role in the revolution is diminished because their class concerns about wealth inequality and collective organizing threaten the inherent and restored power structures of the Catholic Church and the kinship oligarchy, who benefit from monopolies, tax exemptions, hoarding of prime property and, agricultural land. The middle classes do not fight for basic necessities and better working conditions but freedom of speech and expression, their priorities do not exist on the same plane as the organized poor. This is a possible explanation for Leo's dismissal of the masses, and this also explains why Rene only discusses the actions of the church, but never any

[295] *Thesis Interview*, Leo and Ofelia Mar 6, 2023.
[296] Mary Racelis, "Organize! The Urban Poor Claim Their Right to the City," In *Martial Law in the Philippines: Lessons and Legacies 1972-2022*, by Edilberto C. DeJesus and Ivyrose S. Baysic. Manila, PH: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2023, 101-141.
[297] Racelis, *Organize! The Urban Poor Claim Their Right to the City*, 101.
[298] Racelis, *Organize! The Urban Poor Claim Their Right to the City*, 101-102.

specific examples beyond the uprising of "the people." Which people, from which class and social space, is never mentioned or implied, it does not seem to cross his mind.

To expand on this point further, *Moral Politics in the Philippines: Inequality, Democracy and the Urban Poor* by Wataru Kusaka, delves in to the topic of the "dual public spheres.[299]" In the Philippines, he argues that the "coexistence of multiple public spheres exerts a significant on the development of hegemonic struggles in civil society and the democratic political process.[300]" The interviews conducted for this thesis showcase this dual public sphere on the micro level. The dual public spheres are the divide created by the centuries of inequality driven by the Philippines colonial past that manifests through the fractured national language, education, news media, and living spaces.[301] These forces have been discussed throughout this entire thesis, and the divide is between those with wealth, intergenerational and nouveau rich. Those with privilege were able to receive an education in English, Spanish, and Tagalog. Meaning they reached the highest levels of education, could network with others of the same class, and usually inherited or created the oligarchic corporations or political dynasties that drive the social stratas of society.

My interviews, discussed here and recorded in the transcripts showcase this as well, Antonio, my father, grew up in the long running slum of Malate in Manila. He is relatively apolitical only stating that he is anti-communist. He casually discusses the participation political bribery among his own family, with his father collecting money for the Liberal Party.[302] He lived in poverty but was acutely aware of the corruption and cruelty of the regime despite not being in dissent groups. Political participation is not indicative of ignorance, sometimes it is a choice to endure or a lack of organized willpower. Rene and Leo went to Ateneo University and University of the Philippines, these are Ivy League schools by Philippine standards, but one was studying to be a priest and then became a doctor, the other a doctor but wholly secular. Both men were deeply informed due to their privileged positions but were informed by wildly different forms of media and social circles. Leo's wife Ofelia was also a doctor and directly participated in EDSA, she administered first aid to the protestors. Ofelia was from the rural province

[299] Wataru, Kusaka, *Moral Politics in the Philippines: Inequality, Democracy and the Urban Poor*, (Singapore, NUS Press, 2017), 50-81.
[300] Kusaka, *Moral Politics in the Philippines,* 50.
[301] Kusaka, *Moral Politics in the Philippines,* 51-69.
[302] *Thesis Interview*, Antonio San Jose, June 8, 2023.

of Leyte and described martial law as peaceful.[303] The widespread censorship and lack of access to news meant they followed curfews but were isolated from the political protests and communist upheavals in many ways.[304] My mother Alma was a nurse and extremely apolitical but religious, focused on emigrating to America. Yet by 1986 in the Asian immigrant bastion of Flushing, Queens she cheered with her roommates as EDSA was televised around the world.[305]

Despite these wide variance in upbringing and politics, they all reached the same conclusion, the killing of Ninoy was the final straw in one way or another, Marcos needed to go. Either passively or actively they would contribute to the government's loss of legitimacy. When people like Ofel protest at EDSA, or like Juan would organize anti-government rallies, or students like Leo would debate the illegitimacy of the regime in the classroom, and people like Antonio would bad mouth Marcos in their neighborhood- these are the little moments that combine for a larger impact. What is special about the revolution is that both public spheres came together, put aside their differences, and worked together to overthrow the dictator. It was an alliance of all the classes, that had worked against each other for centuries.

The Value of Social History

What is important about social histories and memory is that it is not about debating "facts," is it about debating and understanding the perspectives of the people who lived through pivotal events. It is not about who is most correct or justified but about the competing memories at play. Why are these memories so different from one another despite the assumption of commonality due to location? How do they compete and why do certain narratives win out over others in the public consciousness? What does this tells us about the Filipino people who participated in this event? "Everybody has a different recollection, sometimes of the same facts… They embellish. They omit. They have agendas, hidden or not.[306]"

"Properly done, an oral history helps interpret and define written records and makes sense of the most obscure decisions and events. An interview with a thoughtful participant and

[303] *Thesis Interview*, Leo and Ofelia Mar 6, 2023.
[304] *Thesis Interview*, Leo and Ofelia Mar 6, 2023.
[305] *Thesis Interview*, Alma San Jose Nov 21, 2021.
[306] Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 111.

perceptive eyewitness can generate new ideas and avenues of inquiry that a researcher might have never thought of pursuing.[307]"

This is the point of conducting social histories. The "main events" have already been discussed ad nauseum but the experiences of those who were there and continue to be affected by them is still new territory. The social history in this chapter is limited to Manilenos essentially, who are an overrepresented group in the Philippines in terms of political and cultural power but that does not mean their words carry less weight. Manilenos were at the center of the beginning and end of martial law, their formative years in this time should not be dismissed for the false equivalence of less popular voices automatically being more meaningful or legitimate. To refer back to the above quote, the original subject of this thesis was the earl 20th century Philippines during American colonization. However, the appeal of speaking to those who experienced martial law and inquiring about their unique experiences and life trajectory is a rare opportunity that has borne fruit many times over as this chapter and the appendices will show.

I am not trying to favor one region over another, social histories should be conducted for all major and minor groups in the Philippines, but my contributions were driven by my kinship connections. Both sides of my family are from Luzon and Metro Manila. I can only discuss Manilenos because I am a product of them, their lives, their culture, and their upbringing in the capital. As chapter 3 discussed, kinship drives many social and professional relationships in the Philippines. It is not even a matter of nepotism or favoritism but simply a matter of ease of accessibility. The selection of interviewees was driven by the kinship connections I possess and not because I was looking for these specific individuals. Even if I were fluent in Tagalog and could speak to Filipinos outside of my kinship network, I could not conduct research for Visayas, or Mindanao, or even half of the provinces in Luzon. I do not speak their languages and they may not speak mine. Nor do I have connections to their regional culture or have familial connections to tie me to those places. My ability to conduct research as thoroughly as the one presented here would be limited and extra time would be spent building foundational knowledge on these regions before I could even begin.

As this chapter has shown, the lifting of martial law in 1981 was illegitimate and the western narrative around its implications has been misunderstood. Although this was the point, as several interviewees mentioned, Marcos provided illusions of freedom

[307] Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 112.

that outsiders would take at face value. The real lifting of martial law only happened around 1985/86 because of the combination of political unrest, Marcos being ill, the revolt of the press, and the defection of the military. Furthermore, when looking at the interviews holistically, it is clear that the combination of the middle class, religious establishment, and the oligarchy was key to the overthrow of Marcos. The arguments over who should bear the most responsibility for the revolution is important, but this paper has argued that it was the combination of the activist clergy and the old oligarchy that provided the "ignition" for change. Several of the interviewees who were politically active have supported this argument, which runs counter to the official history from the Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, which declared the middle class as the most instrumental in EDSA.[308]

My hope is that the interviews discussed here allow scholars in the west and the Philippines to continue to focus on social level histories that have fallen through the cracks in favor of larger, sweeping narratives. There are already some works that address this gap in knowledge such as *Subversive Lives A Family Memoir of the Marcos Years* by Susan F. Quimpo and Nathan Gilbert Quimpo.[309] This work of social history tracks the participation of the entire Quimpo family in the communist insurgency of the NPA and political participation in the CPP during the martial law years.[310] It delves deeply into communists in the Philippines have not been given equal credit to the nationalists and republicans in the overthrow of Marcos.[311] This is due to the influence of nationalist narratives and the conservatism of a post-colonial society which is still deeply influenced by the United States.[312] This work must continue, as their greatest strengths lie in dismantling of decades long narratives that have become accepted as "common sense." As many of us in the field of history know, common sense is a construct based on assumptions so old they no longer stand under scrutiny, and a lack of scrutiny is just bad methodology.

[308] Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, *A History of the Philippine Political Protest*.
[309] Susan F Quimpo and Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, *Subversive Lives: A Family Memoir of the Marcos Years*. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2016).
[310] Quimpo, Susan F., and Nathan Gilbert Quimpo. *Subversive Lives*, xiii.
[311] Quimpo, Susan F., and Nathan Gilbert Quimpo. *Subversive Lives*, vii-xiii.
[312] Ibid, ix-xii.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This paper asked how and in what ways, did kinship politics and religion intersect with each other during the 1980s? Furthermore, how did both of these pillars of Filipino society contribute to the downfall of the Marcos dictatorship? In order to explain this connection this thesis has been built on two separate but interconnected cultural aspects, the culture of kinship politics and the Filipino brand of Catholicism as the large shadow present in the background. Then the social history of Manileños from all stratas of the city, living their lives under that shadow, in the foreground. Chapters 2 was written as an explanation of the Philippines history post-independence starting from 1946 up to the beginning of martial law in 1972. This historiography helps contextualize the time period that allowed Marcos to take power and the deeply neo-colonial relationship with the United States that exists to this day. Chapter 3 was written to explain the history of religious activism in the 20th century and how it came into being. The renewed commitment to social justice and political issues by the church defined many of the actions of the Philippines Catholic Church. Also, that crucially, national political life in the Philippines was and is driven by the parents you are born to and the access that family gives you. Kinship politics is a driving force not just for the elite of Filipino society, but all individuals, at all levels of society.

Sometimes those connections to the seats of power were an already built foundation, other times an individual has to build it themselves. In McCoy's *Anarchy of Families* collection of essays explains this dynamic well by focusing on political dynasties like the Osmena's, a family of prominent president's and senators.[313] Then on the opposite end his collection talks about a peasant political dynasty, the de Guzmans in Luzon, and how they rose to prominence during times of social strife.[314] Kinship is not just reserved for the elites or an artifact of the days of colonialism, it is a pervasive and intrinsic part of Filipino society that cannot be ignored. From the poorest in the slums to the presidency, kinship ties can positively or adversely dictate your life, your job, your interests, and your individuality. As Roces says, kinship politics is where kinship groups operate for their own interests interacting with other kinship groups as rivals or allies.[315] She applied this definition in a purely political context, but this paper has already argued it can be extrapolated to all levels of society.

[313] McCoy, *An Anarchy of Families,* 311-347.
[314] Ibid, 33-109.
[315] Roces, *Kinship Politics in Postwar Philippines 1949-1989,* 182.

Kinship politics is used as an analytical lens because it dictates how the Filipino government functions, despite nominally being a Western liberal democracy. Also, it influences how the average person interacts with their community and society, despite the residual effects imparted on them by Western colonialism, meaning Western education, values, and language. I would argue that the Marcos presidency is essentially a case study of when kinship dynasties clash, the old money of the Lopez, Aquinos, and a dozen other families were torn down so the Marcos family could take its place with their Cojuangco allies and a dozen other surnames. The difference between the old dynasties and the new was the Marcos family took the excesses of kinship politics, of bribery, nepotism, manipulation, and political violence to its logical conclusion. The revolution, in many respects, was just switching the crowns again. "What is past is prologue."

Catholicism is not just an institution; it is entrenched into daily life in the country. In some ways, this is why Theology of Struggle blossomed in the country, like in Latin America, because there is an extra layer of activist involvement beyond just the spiritual. A key element of ToS is about everyone, starting with the clergy, offering leadership in hard times, to make their time on Earth better. Trying to live life in preparation for the afterlife, instead of being in the present moment, is an essential divide from the Euro-American Catholic church. This philosophy puts it more in line with the Liberation Theology inspired portions of the Latin American church. Rene de la Torre summed up this point succinctly, "They [people] should know exactly what it is to prepare for their older life as older Christians. So now you prepare them to become more involved in social issues in being leaders in the community so that they can be the future, you know leaders of the country. So, you're preparing them to be more involved, basically, not only in religion but in essence their existence in the community.[316]" Religion during this time period has crossed the boundary between the material and the spiritual and combined them. This is why BCCs (Basic Christian Communities) and grassroots organizations were so effective in the country because they educated and inspired people to act. This is why religion was the second main component of analysis, because the church played an active role in resistance and supporting rebellion. The church's prominent role in the EDSA revolution, in contrast to a more conservative or supportive approach to authorization regimes around the world, made it worthy of study.

[316] *Thesis Interview,* Rene De la Torre, Oct 13, 2022.

The point of this paper was to demonstrate that separating topics of analysis, like politics, kinship, religion, etc. to be studied in a vacuum is ineffective for scholarly understanding. That these topics are culturally intertwined with each other and need to be studied as a whole. Their effect on society and politics cannot be underestimated or overstated, they are the driving force for how Filipinos think, act, and react to each other in domestic and international contexts. These overarching discussions on kinship politics and religion were necessary to contextualize and define the lived experiences of those who were raised in this culture and environment of the 1980s Philippines. Kinship politics and religion were chosen as topics for the massive effect they had on the EDSA revolution and the martial law era in general, but even if another topic was chosen, they would still need to be part of the discussion.

There is a fundamental difference between Filipinos and hyphenated Filipinos such as myself. Those born in the second generation of the diaspora only have the secondhand observations, opinions, and laments of a time we never lived through. These are the post memories that have been passed down to me from the first generation.[317] Although I was raised in a Filipino household, that culture extended as far as our property line. The cultural impact of these familial post memories are diluted by its existence within American culture of the 1990s and 2000s. Nothing can replicate living in metro Manila, or living under martial law, nor learning how to build a successful life under its shadow. These lived experiences provide a perspective that journalists, academics, and outsiders cannot understand because they are an extra step removed from the situation, the emotional investment is not the same. This was why an oral history of martial law was necessary because the knowledge was not written down, no matter how many books have been published, as many experiences are only living memory now for thousands of Filipinos.

Scholars continue to debate who deserves the credit for launching the People Power Revolution. Was it the clergy who called for the people to march on the Presidential Palace? Was it the oligarchs and kinship dynasties under the banner of widow Corazon Aquino, who was backed by the powerful Cojuangco and Aquino families? Or was it the middle class and the poor who took to the streets? Interspersed between this larger narrative of national religion and politics is the social history of the

[317] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 105-106.

ordinary person that had to live under these particular circumstances. All of my interviewees were born or raised in metro Manila during the martial law period. Each person was raised in different social classes and different ideologies, in fact, all four social classes were represented in my interviews.

Antonio San Jose was born into poverty in the Malate District, one of the longest-running slums in the city, and the son of a guerrilla fighter. His father gained American citizenship for his service, which allowed Antonio to emigrate for work. Rene de la Torre studied in a seminary at Ateneo University, one of the "Ivy League" equivalents in the country. His religious background shaped most of his moral and social beliefs before he changed professions to medicine. Leo Alcantara was a secular upper middle-class medical student studying at the University of the Philippines, President Marcos' alma matter. Access to this level of privilege meant that he never needed to leave, he desired to improve his current life in the homeland instead. Leo's wife Ofelia was also a doctor and from the rural province of Leyte. She was disconnected from many of the terrors of martial law because the censorship blackout and curfews meant her life was more sheltered. Their different class backgrounds and experiences growing up significantly impacted the harm martial law had on them. It also deeply affected the level of political action they were willing to take, which was influenced by either morals, personal feelings, or pragmatism related to social mobility.

She is close friends with Juan "Jeepy" Antonio Perez, because of their Waray (Samar and Leyte) heritage and language. Kinship ties in the Philippines rarely are limited by blood because regional nationalism supplants loyalty to the nation-state. Perez was a student activist under the *Samahang Demokratiko ng Kabataan*, one of the largest student youth movements in the country. He was also the son of one of the editors of the Daily Express, one of the major Marcos crony-owned papers. Alma Alcantara San Jose was a nursing student at the University of Santo Tomas, and apolitical, only concerned with emigrating to the United States to support her family. However, her father was an heir to a large array of businesses and became a councilor in the town of Rosario in Batangas province due to his connections. Even when they are uninvolved with the seats of power, family ties mean one is never far from the people who are. Even when kinship connections are not used, they continue to exist and *can be* used and exploited for the individual's benefit at any other time for decades. This access passes on to the next generation, continuously, until these ties are severed.

None of their beliefs have much overlap, but their lives are deeply interconnected with the various themes of this paper- kinship politics, religion, and the fractured Filipino identity. Their varied opinions added greatly to understanding the nuances of daily life in the capital during the 1980s and provided a depth that Western scholars could not provide. If not for their input this paper would not have been able to comment on highly publicized, but biased (Amero-centric) events such as Pope John Paul II's visit to Manila in 1981, which coincided with the lifting of martial law. Blitz's book *The Contested State*, like many others such as Sterling's *The Marcos Dynasty*, mention the lifting of martial law but they do not explain what it was like living under those false pretenses, just political consequences.[318] Constantino's *The Continuing Past* and Agoncillo's *A History of the Filipino People* could not critically discuss the Marcos era due to government censorship as mentioned in chapter 2.

Nor would various opinions of the aftermath of the Aquino assassination have been able to be examined beyond the standard narrative of national sorrow. In the official history of the revolution by the *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines*, there is only one paragraph about protests, but they do not explain the deep-seated feelings driving the protestors.[319] Least of all, the divisive opinions of the People Power Revolution could not have been examined by this paper if not for the forthcoming opinions of the interviewees. None of them could agree on who should be given credit for kickstarting People Power. This disagreement aligns with the newest published discourse from Filipino academics in collections such as *The Marcos Era: A Reader* and *Martial Law in the Philippines: Lessons and Legacies: 1972-2022,* where several authors such as Mary Racelis and Teresita Ang See, discuss the middle-class narrative of the revolution and why that is not accurate.[320] The interviews were not about finding consensus among participants but about providing an open dialogue for the faction they supported and why. The rest of the country also operates under highly contextual and localized perspectives, like the interviewees, that have little overlap with other regions.

[318] Blitz, *The Contested State*; Seagrave, *The Marcos Dynasty*.
[319] Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, *A History of the Philippine Political Protest*.
[320] Leia Castaneda Anastacio and Patriocio N. Abinales, *The Marcos Era*, (Quezon City, PH: Ateneo de Manila University, 2022); Edilberto C. DeJesus, and Ivyrose S. Baysic, *Martial Law in the Philippines: Lessons and Legacies: 1972-2022*, (Quezon City, PH: Ateneo de Manila University, 2023).

Every province on every island has a unique and divisive viewpoint from the rest of the country spread across twelve languages, one hundred dialects, and dozens of ethnic groups. Just like with the interviewees, each province was affected differently by martial law. Marcos's home province of the Ilocos supported him fully and still supports him. Mindanao took the worst of military repression and reprisals because of the Muslim rebellions, among many other reasons as discussed in chapter 2. This paper has barely scratched the surface of available information through oral history on just the island of Luzon. Frankly, some segments of metro Manila were not covered due to the limited scope of this paper. All the interviewees have various degrees of an anti-Marcos stance, but it would be wrong to say that an anti-Marcos stance is common throughout Luzon. Marcos's hometown province of the Ilocos is located in northern Luzon and continues to be a power base for the family. To better examine points of view from the Visayas and Mindanao regions, or the urban and rural provinces of Luzon, further research will be required by scholars who have ties to those areas. Furthermore, this paper has discussed kinship politics and religion and by proxy American colonialism along with its neocolonial aftereffects; but classicism, social mobility, and other related cultural topics have not been examined. However current or new topics are approached, there is fertile ground, and always has been, for providing counter-narratives to the Western and Filipino press and academics that continue to persist from the 1980s.

For decades after the People Power Revolution scholars of the region and the Philippines tend to compartmentalize the various factors that influence the country. Kinship politics, religious activism, oligarchic dynasties, neoliberal policies, and neocolonialism are just a few of the large-scale issues in play when trying to understand the martial law years. Some of these pillars of society have been around for centuries, while some are remnants of the withdrawal of America as the colonial overlord. However, they are rarely seen as interconnected parts of the greater whole. They are put under a microscope, *individually*, for dozens of case studies across political science, anthropology, history, religious studies, sociology, etc. but, as this paper has argued, is a reductive approach. As the 1990s and early 2000s led to an anthropological change of course from studying kinship and politics as two separate entities, so too must scholars do the same for kinship politics and religion.

One of the most important arguments this paper has made is that in non-western societies similar to the Philippines, one must examine it holistically. If any argument

can be taken away from this paper, is it this. The intersection of kinship, politics, and religion may be new to academia but to these societies it is simply a way of life. What has grown out of this dynamic is a society built around kinship networks, which in turn, build economic dynasties and intermarry with each other to sustain power. These dynasties then build areas of influence because the country is so spread out and culturally and ethnically fragmented. These regional dynasties then compete on the greater national stage of the Presidency and the halls of government, for the sake of greater legitimacy. One of the many unofficial currencies of the Philippines is legitimacy, and besides the more material forms of power, the immaterial power of the approval of the Catholic Church also holds significant sway. This is why the religious activism of the Filipino clergy was so significant because it is a rarely seen situation of a usually conservative institution actively engaging in dissent against the status quo, due to moral and ideological reasons.

Although, nominally a minority, the progressive clergy that was driven by Theology of Struggle ideology became a focal point of grassroots activism that was viewed as a legitimate threat by the Marcos government. As the saying goes, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The activist clergy would not have succeeded in widespread organizing during the end of the Marcos years if not for the ousted oligarchs and the kinship dynasties financially supporting their activism. The power base of support for all three groups comes from the poor and middle classes, which need to be organized to resist. The grassroots clergy of sisters, brothers, and missionaries advocating for the rights of the least fortunate in the country provided safe haven for the powerless. Theology of Struggle is defined by political participation in earthly matters to better the lives of your followers. Being political is necessary to instigate the change for equality across ethnic, political, and economic lines. This became intertwined with a growing communist movement, with deep ties to the rural poor and middle-class intelligentsia, whose numbers were constantly reinforced by the heavy-handedness and corruption of the regime it rebelled against. It was when another oligarch, Ninoy Aquino, was assassinated, did the more conservative elements like the upper echelons of the Catholic Church and the ousted kinship dynasties begin rebelling as well. After 1983, when all the pillars of civil society came together to rebel, did actual change take place. A holistic perspective is how you make sense of, not just the larger national situation, but connections of the social history on the ground.

This thesis has set out to accomplish two things, to argue that discourse needs to be "interdisciplinary," although that is a poor word for it. I believe that separating these topics like kinship, politics, religion, family, etc. when discussing non-western societies has been more of a hindrance than helpful because it removes aspects of culture and society and forces them into a vacuum. In this vacuum, the chosen topic can be examined in ideal circumstances, under the scholar's preferred method of analysis, and not analyzing the culture and what surrounds it *as it is*. These are not disconnected parts that can be separated from the whole and still function in any meaningful way for researchers if the goal is understanding and not publishing for the sake of publishing. Frankly, it appears that the separation happens because it is easier to examine piecemeal but at the cost of comprehension with emotional and intellectual depth. This is not new discourse, as postcolonial scholars have been arguing for the same since the days of Said's *Orientalism* and Ann Stoler's writings on *Beyond the Metropole*. What this paper attempts to achieve is fulfilling this premise: of looking beyond the archives written by the colonizer or its media. To take the non-western culture that is under examination as it is, instead of trying to force it into a box that conforms to standard (western) practice. Most of all, to actually talk with the people, whose lives we write about, and record their perspectives. To ask the whys and how's, what has shaped their beliefs, and who shaped the environment that has driven the course of their lives and compare their statements with the written record. Good methodology allows tempered revisionism, thoughtful comparison, and a questioning of the status quo, specifically who wrote it and why.

Of course, this thesis is just a small contribution to the greater whole of Philippines scholars around the world to better contextualize the Ferdinand Marcos years, their impact on Philippines society, and the Filipino diaspora. The Philippines still has a dearth of scholarly literature and popular history covering its recent history. In many ways it falls in between the cracks of other countries in southeast Asia such as Vietnam, Indonesia, and India. May this research inspire other Filipino students and scholars around the world to try to investigate and examine their own familial histories and legacies, along with those still in the country. This paper, despite its academic designation, is a personal work to preserve the information and thoughts of those whose lived memories of events are now forty-three years ago. The access to these memories and events will only dwindle with every passing year.

Oral history is fundamentally about the analysis of post memories of the first generation who experienced a defining event, on the individual level, and every level ascending from it. It is not about the "truth" of the matter, finding objectivity in the face of a divisive dictator, steeped in censorship and disinformation, makes the task impossible. Even if it were possible, feelings cannot be quantified for the benefit of the researcher. Chapters 2 and 3, besides contextualizing, was a moment of practicing what one preaches. The secondary literature of historiography, political and social history, and anthropology were used in a holistic way to fill out the broader picture of the era. The narrative style of these chapters were meant to show how some of these puzzle pieces fit together beyond the surface level. More than anything the revolution is a jigsaw of overlapping and interconnected pieces that scholars are still trying to figure out. There is no one definitive truth of the revolution except for the goal of removing Marcos. Chapter 4 is meant to humanize the people whose lives were reduced to sensational headlines or footnotes in a book.

The shift to micro histories and social histories is a rebuttal, and one this paper supports, of the distance put between the scholar and his subjects. Oral history is not perfect, but the past decades have shown that it has merit in projects such as this one. In the face of the return of the Marcos family to Malacañang Palace, it is more important than ever to keep a record of these stories for future reference and as a counterpoint to any available narrative, whether Pro-Marcos or not, or pro-west or not. To showcase the various perspectives across, cultural, regional, and ideological lines of ordinary people whose only crime amounts to living in interesting times.

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