

The Politicization of the Philippine Military under Marcos and Aquino

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I. Introduction

Nation-states maintained armies throughout history to protect their political institutions and way of life from outside threats.

In practice, the *raison d'être* for keeping armies had not been entirely without risk. Governments had been overthrown by the military without consent of the people.

How then, does the state protect itself from its own military? This question continues to plague many countries in Asian, Africa Latin America and in some east European states.

A. The Role of the Army in Totalitarian States

In some African countries ruled by "presidents-for-life" emulating tribal systems, the military controlled all facets of life in order to shape society in such a way that it would guarantee perpetual rule. Politico-military power becomes the exclusive instrument for running the country without popular mandate.

In other totalitarian states, as exemplified by single-party communist governments, the party had absolute power over all institutions, whereby the military and the secret police were the key instruments for keeping everything and everyone under rigid control. Thus the interests and activities of the party and the military are closely intertwined with the main institutions of society as a whole.

The party keeps the military under control by appointing polit-commissars as co-equal officers in each unit of command: from the general staff down to the platoon level.

It is an attractive recipe followed by leftist and fascist dictators in Third World countries to ensure perpetual rule.

B. The Role of the Army in Democratic Societies

In the case of modern democratic states, governments are able to protect their constitution through the basic tenet that the military must be subservient to civilian rule, guaranteed by built-in checks-and-balances of power between the executive, judiciary and legislative branches of the government.

Historically, this tradition is nurtured in democratic societies by creating a civilian militia through the introduction of universal military conscription of all able-bodied men (as in the case of Switzerland) and women (as in the case of the state of Israel) to instill the principles of participatory democracy.

After the Vietnam war, America abandoned its two-century democratic tradition of a conscript army in favour of an all-volunteer army of professional soldiers.

Likewise, countries in Europe which have reached democratic maturity could rely on a professional military without the fear of being taken-over by the military or by its surrogates.

Today, many countries in eastern Europe which have little or no democratic traditions are looking for western models due to their historical fear of the military taking over their duly elected civilian governments.

II. A Brief Historical Review of the Philippine Military Tradition

During the Pre-Spanish Colonial Period, the chieftains and kings (datus, sultans and rajahs) exercised political, judicial and military authority in consultation with their advisers and scholars.

It was replaced by Spain's military tradition during the colonial period, characterized by close collaboration and sharing of power amongst the administrative, judicial and clerical authorities - whereby the military was not under civilian rule but somewhat co-equal with other colonial representatives of the Spanish crown.

During the Spanish-Filipino war, the insurrectionist army adopted this legacy of Spanish military tradition which still exists today in modified form in most Latin America countries. Most of the Filipino military commanders came from the landed-gentry or from the intellectual elite, the so-called "ilustrados" who were mostly educated in Europe and who had little experience in warfare and democracy.

When Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States under the Treaty of Paris in 1898, most of the Filipino military commanders who led the five-year guerilla war against the new American occupation army also came from the same social class. Experienced military commanders like Gen. Antonio Luna and Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo carried on the military and authoritarian traditions of Spain.

During the next fifty years, the United States replaced the Spanish-implemented military ethos in the Philippines with an entirely new military tradition and codex based on the American experience.

The educational, administrative, judicial and legislative institutions in the new commonwealth were also replaced with the American model.

The American system prevailed even after the United States granted independence to the Philippines, but juxtaposed in most cases over the former Spanish practices, Filipino culture and social customs.

This tradition of having a civilian government paramount over the military was interrupted during the Marcos regime when Martial Law was declared in 1972.

III. The Philippines: A Case Study in Democratic Tutelage

After a series of unsuccessful coup d'etat attempts during the first four years of Mrs. Corazon Aquino's presidency, some observers within and outside the Philippines doubted whether nearly 50 years of American tutelage was insufficient for the country to acquire a mature tradition of civilian control over the military.

Once a model of democracy, political maturity and stability in Southeast Asia, one could also surmise on the other hand that the majority of the army supported Mrs. Aquino, indicating that the military honoured the tradition of being subservient to a duly elected government.

Can this tradition of parliamentary control over the military in democratic societies be transplanted to other countries with little democratic traditions?

After World War II, America modified its earlier success in the social-engineering of a conquered nation by replicating it in Japan and Germany which also had relatively short democratic histories.

A. The American Military Tradition

When General George Washington became the first president of the United States, he saw the need for the newly independent country to rely on an entirely civilian militia backed by a permanent officers corps.

The concept of the "Minutemen" was born. Farmers and other civilians could be called into military service on a very short notice (a practice which continues in Israel and in Switzerland) and the right to bear arms by its citizen-army was enshrined in the American Constitution.

A few years after America's declaration of independence, the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, was formally established in 1802.

Subsequent presidents like John Adams, Aaron Burr and Thomas Jefferson shared the same view with Gen. Washington that the American Army must be led by a corps of officers who are trained in the art of warfare as well as in democratic principles such as acceptance of civilian authority over the military.

It was therefore not coincidental that this task fell on Gen. Sylvanus Thayer (1785-1802), who made a lasting impact on America's oldest military institution. An eminent soldier and educator, he believed in molding the future cadre of gentlemen-officers whose first allegiance would be to the American Constitution.

B. The Philippine Military Academy: An American Transplant

Immediately after taking possession of their new colony, the Americans saw the need to establish a state university and a military academy where the future Filipino officers could be trained in the American military tradition.

Modeled after the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) was founded in 1905 in order to imbue its cadet officers a similar military code of conduct, esprit de corps and loyalty to the Constitution.

The PMA was first staffed by American instructors and later by Filipino faculty members who were trained either at the United States Military Academy at West Point or at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. Today, the country's premier military institution also trains cadets from other Southeast Asian countries.

For almost fifty years, Philippine military commanders respected the authority of the civilian government. Officers rose through the ranks without political interference and patronage.

Appointments from the rank of lieutenant colonel to general have to be approved by the President and the bicameral Congress after the Commission on Appointments had rigorously reviewed and endorsed the nominations.

IV. Models and Strategy Used by Marcos for Consolidating Power

The late President Ferdinand Marcos, who was democratically elected during his first four-year term of office, was a master of realpolitik adopted within the context of Filipino mentality and sociology.¹

Marcos emulated models in European totalitarian fascist and communist states which achieved and guaranteed absolute power through politicization of the army backed by the secret police.

To achieve his political goals, Marcos also saw the importance of corrupting the educational system in order to indoctrinate the next generation.

Reminiscent of the Nomenklatura in communist states, Marcos nurtured his future elite in youth organisations such as the YADO which was modelled after the Hitler Jugend and the Communist Young Pioneers.

Like its fascist and communist models, YADO introduced elements of paramilitary training and political indoctrination and offered the same attractions such as free camping or field trips, colourful festivals and smart uniforms to win the youth.

Marcos introduced in the national school curriculum as compulsory reading in civic education his New Society Party manifesto, "The Filipino Ideology".

To keep a non-contiguous country of more than 7,000 islands under control, Marcos imposed martial law and increased the size of the army to contain the communist-led insurgency but principally also to keep the provincial governments under surrogate military administration.

The command structure of the military was decentralized and the military command areas/zones redefined to prevent the possibility of a coup d'état by the army.

Since the PMA was not producing sufficient number of officers to lead an enlarged army, additional officers had to be recruited from the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), the paramilitary programme of various private and state universities.

Although the ROTC officers were not adequately trained compared to the PMA graduates, Marcos assumed that the former were already politically indoctrinated through introduction of his party manifesto in the school curricula.

This politicization of the military and the emergence as a formidable political force later backfired when Gen. Fidel Ramos and defense secretary Juan Ponce Enrile openly defied the Marcos regime in February 1986 which catapulted Mrs. Aquino to power.

V. The Politicization of the Military under Marcos

There are several factors which led to the politicization of the military in the Philippines, but the declaration of martial law in 1972 started or hastened this transformation.

A. Historical Background

The social and political transformation undergone by the military during the 20-year Marcos regime produced a new political climate which continued into the Aquino presidency.

By mid-term of the Marcos martial-law regime, the military began to show signs of breaking from its hallowed traditions.

The rift within the army was exacerbated when Lt.Gen. Romeo Espino retired as Chief of Staff and the president bypassed other senior officers and appointed as successor his distant cousin and boyhood friend, General Fabian Ver, who often infuriated the professional officers corps whenever he circumvented the traditional military chain of command or ignored seniority rule by appointing or promoting officers to key posts proven for their loyalty to Marcos and his wife, Imelda.²

This practice of political patronage caused bitterness and restiveness among the professional officers corps who were accustomed to the army tradition of seniority cum merit system.

Moreover, Marcos and Ver set up a separate intelligence service (NISA) whose loyalty he could rely upon, thus diminishing the importance of the regular intelligence agency (ISAPF).

NISA informers and agents were strategically placed in government ministries and institutions to ferret out Marcos enemies and potential trouble-makers.

To shield Marcos from officers of doubtful loyalty, Gen. Ver appointed his own son, Col. Erwin Ver, as commander of the Presidential Security Guards, the military unit which was assigned to guard the presidential palace.

As praetorian guards and guarantors of Marcos firm grip to power, most of these soldiers came from the president's political power base in the Ilocos provinces.

B. Other Factors Attributed to the Politicization of the Army

Despite the Philippine army's more than 50-year traditional role of being subservient to the civilian government in a democratic society, a large segment of the PMA cadet-officers graduating class of 1971 who received their commissions in that year when martial law was declared, began to challenge and breakaway from the tradition as protector-servants of the state.³

Unlike their predecessors who had no experience of imposing military dictatorship, this new cadre of officers became the "implementors" of martial law.

Apart from the social and economic backgrounds of the new generation of officers whose families traditionally wielded political power by virtue of their wealth and social status, a number of senior and middle-ranked officers also enjoyed special status during the martial law regime when they were given adjunct civilian posts in top corporations or were assigned to key bureaucratic posts in the defense ministry and in other branches of the government.

While the original intention was to infuse the idealism and military discipline of these young officers into the government bureaucracies to render them more efficient and responsive to national needs, it also had the adverse effect of providing a kind of military codex which was quite alien to their predecessors who had sworn as professional soldiers "to serve and defend the Constitution of the Philippines".

This additional tutelage under a political environment provided the groundwork for the politicization of the army when several of these officers in the armed forces after Marcos was deposed in 1986 returned to active duty under the new government of President Aquino.

Deprived of the experience in a democratic system which preclude congressional oversight and free press to investigate repression and human rights abuses, this new military caste within the loyalist army developed a frame of mind which could neither accept the restoration of civilian authority nor parliamentary control over the army.

Thus the seeds of political instability which would later threaten Mrs. Aquino's presidency (and perhaps also subsequent Philippine governments) were sown earlier during the Marcos regime.

VI. The Emergence of an Opposition Group (RAM) within the Military

These changes instituted by Marcos and Ver demoralized and politicized Philippine military such that internal pressure began to build-up to reform the army, led mostly by middle-ranked officers who graduated from the Philippine Military Academy (PMA).

The split within the military became formal when some officers founded the "Reformed the Armed Forces of the Philippines Movement" (RAM).

The RAM membership represented at least a dozen overlapping diverse groupings rather than a monolithic structure: the old military elite who looked up to Gen. Ramos for leadership; the "young turks" and disgruntled colonels bypassed by Gen. Ver; a large group of ambitious officers who looked up to the defense minister for the post-Marcos era power-grab; a group of idealistic officers truly interested in reforming the army and restoring democracy in the Philippines,...to mention a few.

RAM officers who either served under Enrile at the defense ministry or came from his personal Internal Security Unit became the best organized splinter group of Marcos army.

A. The Political Philosophy of the RAM Leadership

RAM's long-term main objectives and surrogate goals are four-fold: to restore professionalism and discipline in the military, to neutralize the leftists and communist groups, to fight graft and corruption, and to impose of military authority over the country.

In spite of their lack of a coherent political and economic platform, RAM's political philosophy share many similarities to the european fascist movements of the 1920's and 1930's.

Italian, German and Spanish fascist movements believed that in order to rise from the aftermath of World War I's economic ruin and political chaos, society must foreswear the give-and-take, rough-and-tumble nature of compromise-politics and the indecisiveness of democratic systems in favour of a resolute, disciplined, orderly, structured and decisive approach to solving the numerous problems and to redeem society impoverished by war and run-away inflation.⁴

The core RAM membership are imbued with the same messianic complex and heroic vision, totally convinced that in a country beset by the enormous political, social, economic and over-population problems, only a new military caste could lead and lift their country above the present political and economic quagmire; that the present political system, despite all its democratic pretensions,

is basically inefficient and feudalistic, incapable of catching up with the rest of the Asian countries; and that the Philippines should follow the examples of the military-backed authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia which had overtaken the Philippines in their economic performance, social development and geo-political importance.

B. The Political Agenda and Surrogate Goals of RAM

The main political grievance of RAM is rooted from the belief that despite all those democratic trappings and rituals, the Aquino administration represents the same system of nepotism, corruption and greed of the "Marcos dictatorship-kleptocracy".

This was partly stated in their manifesto issued by the RAM ringleader, Lt.Col. Gregorio ("Gringo") Honasan who led the sixth putsch attempt.

To succeed in their political ambitions, RAM's militant wing tolerates the tacit political support from unlikely allies and former enemies: chiefly from the UNIDO Party of Vice President Salvador Laurel, from the New Nationalista Party of Juan Ponce Enrile and from the Bagong Lipunan Party of Marcos.

RAM's immediate aims and surrogate goals are: to eliminate the economic grip of the oligarchs (referring to some rich families who control the so-called "money-politics" in the Philippines); to subjugate and discipline the population; to suspend parliament and rule using extraordinary powers by declaring a state of national emergency.

C. The Social and Economic Backgrounds of the RAM Officers⁵

The political restiveness of some officers and their ambivalence towards civilian authority could be traced to the social and economic backgrounds of some of military officers who graduated from the PMA beginning the 1970's.

Prior to the 1970's, the majority of the officers traditionally came from the middle and lower-middle class families, rather than from the economic and social elite.

After martial law was declared in 1972, an increasing number of officers came from middle, upper-middle and upper-class families who were children accustomed to the Philippine tradition of close linkage between economic power and political power.

No longer was the military career disdained by these children from the upper-class families who normally preferred careers in the academic professions, business, industry and in the Jesuit priesthood (which also attracts sons from the Philippine upperclass society).

More than half of the middle and upper ranked-officers received postgraduate degrees and/or had attended management and/or political science training in Europe and in North America.

A number of officers have written books or published articles in academic journals. Several senior officers have attended command and staff colleges in the United States and in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Today, the officers corps and the rank-and-file soldiers are more representative of all social classes of Philippines society than the members of congress - thus transforming the military into a formidable political power.

D. The Role Played by RAM in Deposing the Marcos Regime⁶

During mid-1984, the RAM officers began to hatch a plot to overthrow the Marcos regime and replace it with a military-civilian junta.

As the Marcos opposition became bolder and more open in 1985, the RAM officers were convinced that time was ripe for a coup d'état but delayed the putsch try when Marcos gambled on a special "snap elections" for February 1986.

When Marcos supporters realized that they would lose the election, they resorted to intimidations, violence, fraud and vote-buying to prevent Mrs. Aquino and the opposition candidates from taking power.

Despite national indignation and international pressure, President Marcos refused to relinquish power to Mrs. Aquino which intensified even more RAM's resolve to topple the Marcos regime.

RAM planned a surprised attack against the Presidential Security Guards at the presidential palace while other RAM units would capture four major strategic targets: the main army headquarters at Camp Aguinaldo and Fort Bonifacio for its armory and logistic source, Basa and Nichol's airbases for moving-in reinforcements from the provinces, and a radio-TV station in Manila for appealing for support from the people.

When RAM tried to recruit as their "trojan horse" Maj. Eduardo Doromal, then security perimeter officer of the presidential palace, he betrayed the plot to Gen. Ver, who immediately informed Marcos and reinforced the palace guards with the elite Philippine Marines.

Warned by their informers at the palace about Gen. Ver's arrest orders for defense chief Juan Ponce Enrile and Gen. Fidel Ramos, RAM officers led by Lt. Col. Gregorio Honasan, then head of Enrile's Internal Security Unit, immediately informed Ramos and Enrile about their impending arrests.

Together with RAM officers and rebel troops, Enrile and Ramos withdrew to the army headquarters at Camp Aguinaldo for the showdown and declared open defiance to Marcos.

The RAM rebels knew that they could not sustain a combined air strike from helicopter gunships and the ground tank-assault spearheaded by the Marines.

Realizing their predicament, Enrile and Ramos appealed to Cardinal Jaime Sin who rallied the masses through by radio. Thousands of people from all walks of life blocked the streets to prevent Marcos tanks from reaching the perimeter of Camp Aguinaldo.

It was a political debt which would later cost RAM's primacy for leadership under the new government and subsequently alter the political balance of power in the Philippines and lay the foundation for political instability.

The price paid by RAM for the cardinal's support was the endorsement of Mrs. Aquino as the "undeclared winner of the election" who was immediately sworn in as president.

This "marriage of convenience" later proved to be the root of the problem between the Aquino government and a significant segment of the military led by RAM officers loyal to Enrile who resented the presence of some leftist advisers and anti-military cabinet members in the government.

E. The Emergence of a New More Radical Wing within RAM

After many failed putsch attempts, the inability of the RAM's militant wing to indoctrinate some of the uncommitted newly commissioned officers to accept its leadership gave rise to a more idealistic but radical element within RAM, called the Young Officers Union (YOU).

Formed out of frustration and impatience, YOU co-exists within RAM rather than an independent offshoot of RAM's militant wing, albeit somewhat with less political acumen than the core RAM leadership.

The political philosophy of YOU is akin to the mainstream RAM leadership which could be summed up in their criticism of weakness and incompetence of the Aquino government: that the military is being used by the business oligarchs (which is an integral part of the Aquino power base) as guarantors for the survival of the ruling economic and social upper class; that they are being used to fight the communists to protect the interests of the ruling class while their own families barely survive to feed and pay for the education of their own children; that the government and the media are quick to accuse them of human rights abuses in their counter-insurgency drives but remain silent about the communist reprisals and terrorist tactics; and that the economic largesse generated by the system hardly trickle down to the masses.

Their principal questions addressed to the Aquino government are: "What are we dying for? Are we fighting the guerillas to keep these oligarchs in power and to defend their interests and to perpetuate this corrupt system?"

Despite their differences in ideology and political orientation with the guerilla rebels, YOU share the same populist appeal in their claim as champion of the masses.

F. Political Grievances of RAM against the Aquino Government

After RAM handed power to the civilian opposition who were more politically astute and experienced in political in-fighting, they soon realized that they had been outmaneuvered and denied power which they felt rightfully belonged to them.

The Enrile-faction of RAM particularly felt the need to redress the injustice of getting only a peripheral role in the new government and for being given little credit for ending the 20-year Marcos authoritarian regime.

This unhappy segment of the RAM membership could not tolerate to see Mrs. Aquino emerged as the undisputed winner and wants a bigger role for their sacrifice in risking their lives and their military careers in the successful struggle to topple Marcos.

VII. The Politicization of the Military under Aquino

When Marcos was deposed from power in a bloodless revolution in February 1986, Mrs. Aquino inherited not just a bankrupted treasury but also the legacy of a politicized military establishment.

Little did the new president know that the progenitor and guardian of her power would someday be the main threat to her government.

Six unsuccessful coup attempts were staged during President Aquino's first four years in office. The initial coup trys were more comic operetta performances, but subsequent attempts improved with deadly ferocity as the leaders gained more planning and combat experience each time.

The putsch-leaders loyal to Enrile who, by then was elected as senator during Mrs.Aquino's presidency, were encouraged by the deteriorating socio-economic conditions and by the internecine political power struggle among her supporters from the ruling political party, interest groups, human rights activists, businessmen expropriated by Marcos, and grass-roots religious and secular power blocks which previously constituted the main civilian political opposition to Marcos.

Mrs.Aquino's coalition government was an alliance of convenience which was predestined to antagonize a segment of the military as indicated by the unsuccessful coup attempts.

A. Key Moves in Neutralizing the Internal Military Threat

Faced with a politicized army and a putsch-inclined militant wing of RAM, President Aquino had to mollify the army through various fiscal and political means: increases in the military budget (including salary increments for the soldiers) and consultation with her military advisers prior to some major cabinet decisions.

Despite a high-profile civilian cabinet, in reality President Corazon Aquino could only rule at the behest of the loyalist military acting behind the political scenes.

President Aquino and her loyalist general-advisors share the view that the pre-Marcos military tradition and professionalism must first be restored using both political and non-political means in order to pacify and restore morale in the army.

The appointment of two highly professional soldiers, Lt.Gen.Fidel Ramos as defense minister and Lt.Gen. Renato de Villa as AFP Chief of Staff, was crucial to the attainment of those goals.

Defense minister Ramos, a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, is highly respected in all branches of the armed forces and by the civilian population for his role in deposing Marcos and in restoring democracy in the Philippines.

Archetype of the soldier-diplomat in the West Point tradition, Ramos firm grasp of domestic and foreign policy issues (which analysts detect even from his military briefings) reminds many of his father who was formerly foreign minister under two presidents.

Lt.Gen.Renato de Villa, who was formerly supervisor of cadets at the Philippine Military Academy, is a highly skilled administrator, political scientist and tactician. A graduate of the PMA and of the prestigious Asian Institute of Management (AIM) established by the Harvard Business School, the army chief of staff instituted internal reforms in the military structure and was privy to the president.

Together with the defense secretary and other loyalist generals, he persuaded Mrs.Aquino to abolish the military police (Philippine Constabulary) and integrate it into the main army (AFP).

When Gen.de Villa reached mandatory retirement age, Mrs.Aquino appointed as his successor General Rodolfo Biazon, a professional soldier who rose from very humble origins to become chief of staff of the army. Gen.Biazon led the counteract during the critical hours of the sixth coup d'etat attempt which prevented the rebel army from capturing the main army headquarters.

President Aquino also took the advice from former U.S. President Ronald Reagan that if she were "nice to the Marines, the Marines would be nice to (sic protective of) their president". The elite Philippine Marine Corps is now considered the vanguard of Aquino's loyalist army.

Some observers believe that by appointing Gen.Ramos as her defense minister and promising him the party choice for the official presidential nomination, the restive loyalist army held ranks as well as prevented RAM's militant wing from succeeding to power.

In return, the loyalist military leadership quickly dispatched troops to quell all putsch attempts, including the recent regional uprisings in the Cagayan and Mindanao provinces during Mrs.Aquino fifth and last year in office.

Hence, unlike during the Marcos regime, politicization of the military under Aquino occurred in a more subtle form and manner.

B. The RAM and the Loyalist Generals

After their sixth putsch attempt, RAM-militants became aware that the balance of power had shifted from Mrs.Aquino's PDP-Laban Party which hold the majority in Congress to the military establishment.

The loyalist generals who stood in RAM's way from taking over the country are the defense secretary, Lt.Gen.Fidel Ramos, and the three successive former chief-of-staff generals (De Villa, Biazon, and Lysandro Abadia) appointed by Aquino who will likely survive the rest of her office term.

Although the loyalist army either negotiated the surrender or have arrested some of the RAM rebel leaders, it has failed to arrest the charismatic RAM ringleader Lt.Col.Gregorio Honasan and to interdict the financial and moral support for the rebel army.

Observers believe that the loyalist army see more strategic value in keeping the core RAM leadership in hiding than in putting them in jail or completely out of the political scene, principally as a counterbalance against the better-funded and better organized political parties, civilian and business coalition forces vying for primacy in the 1992 presidential elections.

Despite frequent changes in hideouts of the key RAM leaders, observers assume that local and foreign intelligence operatives know their locations since they are able to hone-in their transmitters whenever the local and foreign press were granted interviews by some of the media-conscious RAM rebel leaders.

VIII. Future Problems for the Post-Aquino Government

The greatest achievement of the Aquino government is the restoration of democracy and human rights after a 20-year of Marcos authoritarian rule and kleptocracy.

But Mrs.Aquino's respect for democratic principles are often mistaken by her critics for a weak presidency and blame her for failing to unify her coalition

forces in solving the enormous socio-economic problems facing the country.

The current free-for-all is either blamed on her inexperience and indecision especially during meetings with top military advisors, including her reluctance to censure and discipline her rich landowner-relatives to stem the criticism of nepotism and lip-service to land-reform, or simply a wrong perception of her critics on the nature of the democratic process.

While past administrations were plagued with the same chronic problems of endemic graft and corruption, population explosion, widespread poverty and social unrest, communist-led insurgency and muslim secessionist rebellion, present and future civilian governments must deal with the threat from a segment of the military which had already staged seven unsuccessful putsch attempts during the last five years.⁷

A. An Analysis of the Internal Military Threat to Democracy

A retrospective analysis of the seven putsch attempts by the rebel group of the Philippine military reveals the following major problems which threaten the political viability of any future democratically-elected government in the Philippines:

1. The split in the military tends to be horizontal rather than vertical, which makes it extremely difficult for the future civilian governments to win over the military in the long term and to insulate the loyal military units from indoctrination by the RAM leaders in the short-term.
2. Given the fact that the key RAM officers remain at-large and their key political and financial backers have been neither neutralized nor apprehended, a coup d'etat attempt after the May 1992 presidential election is possible in case there will be rampant cheating and intimidation.
3. Retired Gen. Fidel Ramos, who is a candidate for president, is presumed to maintain contacts and to receive support from both the majority of the loyalist army as well as from the core RAM-YOU membership.

Both RAM and a large segment of the loyalist army could unite and revolt against the catholic hierarchy's political interference and use of the pulpit throughout the country to prevent Ramos from being the first Protestant President in a predominantly Catholic country.⁸

4. RAM's likelihood of succeeding in future coup attempts is now greater: a review of all the putsch attempts shows that RAM strategists convinced more army units to join their ranks and corrected their mistakes after each combat experience. RAM also improved its capacity to wage psycho-warfare by aiming its political indoctrination to both the army and the civilian population.
5. Although neither side could claim that the Filipino people was clearly on their side during the critical first two days of the sixth rebel army putsch attempt, an indifferent or ambivalent public was all that RAM ever hoped for in order for their tactical plans to succeed, according to psychological warfare specialist navy captain, Rex Robles.

The underground RAM leader, Lt.Col. Gregorio Honasan, expressed the same opinion in an interview with foreign journalists that it is in the nature of the Filipino character and Philippine politics that only ten to twenty percent

will stand up or speak out openly - for or against, especially on issues which involve the risk of life, liberty, jobs and political power.

This observation was also confirmed by the intelligence chief, Gen. Rodolfo Canieso, a few days before he was replaced by a new NICA director, when he revealed in his intelligence report after the sixth coup try that about 70 percent of the army will be "fence-sitters" in future take-over attempts.

6. If the horizontal rather than vertical split within the army persists, then the current military leadership is really isolated from the rank-and-file soldiers and young officers.

To pacify and heal the split within the army, Mrs. Aquino ignored the Machiavellian dictum of either "granting absolute reward or absolute pain" by neither winning and rewarding converts nor exacting the most severe punishment for the mutineers.⁹

7. With the expulsion of the U.S. bases in the Philippines, it is likely that the American President will be reluctant next time to help put down another putsch attempt.

B. The 1992 Presidential Race and the Candidates

When Aquino's Laban party reneged on its pledge and endorsed instead as its official presidential candidate in the 1992 elections House Speaker Ramon Mitra, Gen. Ramos decided to run independently with the backing from his military power base and from the middle class society.

After a period of internal political posturing and outside encouragement, President Aquino distanced herself from the Laban Party's official candidate and the catholic hierarchy when she publicly endorsed Fidel Ramos in January 1992 as her presidential successor.

The unofficial diplomatic grapevine in Manila reveals that the United States, including many foreign diplomats and several regional leaders from ASEAN countries, favour a future successor to Mrs. Aquino who both command military authority and possess statesmanship qualities to tackle the enormous socio-economic problems facing the country which has been visited by a series of devastating natural catastrophies during the last four years.

The prospect of electing the first Filipino Protestant President is strongly opposed by the conservative Philippine Roman Catholic Church and its Opus Dei membership who endorsed former Supreme Court Chief Justice Marcelo Fernan as their candidate for the presidency, but later decided on a combined ticket with the Laban Party to rally behind Ramon Mitra as candidate for president and Justice Fernan as vice president.

Led by Cardinal Jaime Sin, the formidable political machine of the Catholic Church, mainly the conservative clerics and laity groups (Opus Dei, Knights of Columbus, Basic Christian Communities and the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting) is determined to stop Ramos and emerge as winner in May 1992.

Senator Joseph Estrada, a former local movie star and populist presidential candidate, commands a wide following among the masses and the nationalist intellectuals.

The candidacy of Marcos-widow, Imelda Romuladez Marcos, could be seen partly as a ploy to unite and revive the political fortunes of her husband's Bagong

Lipunan Party, but mainly to demonstrate to those intent of prosecuting her for tax evasion and other felony charges that she is a political kingmaker to contend with; that she is capable of amassing votes from her traditional political bailiwick in the Ilocos and the eastern Visayas provinces.

Imelda Marcos will likely withdraw from the presidential race in case the legal proceedings against her are dropped and in her place former Marcos Labour minister Blas Ople will likely obtain the backing of the Bagong Lipunan Party.

Other presidential candidates, wealthy businessman and Aquino-cousin Eduardo ("Danding") Cojuangco, the incumbent vice president Salvador Laurel of the UNIDO Party and senator Juan Ponce Enrile of the Nacionalista Party are not strong contenders, but may backed Ramos if taken in as his vice presidential candidate.

The presidential race will probably not be a free-for-all among the ten candidates but a close fight between Mitra and Ramos as the minor contenders are expected to cast their support behind the main protagonists after the usual some horse-trading and backroom compromises.

IX. Problems and Perspectives

What are the long-term prospects for survival of democracy in the Philippines? Will the current military and civilian leadership succeed in restoring the Philippine military tradition of being subservient to civilian authority? If so, will it be strong enough to put down any attempt by the rebel wing of the military from imposing its authority over the civilian population?

Experience has shown so far that the 50-year tutelage in the American tradition of the military's allegiance to democratic principles and adherence to parliamentary control enabled the beleaguered Aquino government to survive until her remaining term, albeit by covertly sharing power with the loyalist military in the political process to prevent the rebel troops from succeeding in power.

The rationale behind Mrs. Aquino's politicized approach is that military, from rank-and-file soldiers to its officers, is the only institution in the Philippines which truly represents all social classes and therefore, more representative of the people than congress where the oligarchy and the traditional political clans are well-represented, including Mrs. Aquino's own clan.

Future civilian governments must be better prepared militarily such that a greater number of rebel troops and a more massive logistics would be required for the next coup attempt by the RAM militant-wing in order to mount a successful strike against the loyalist troops; it must counteract RAM's campaign to infiltrate the army and must also conduct its own political indoctrination warfare on the military and the civilian population.

As long as the country remains economically weak and internally divided, threatened and immobilized by its own army, it is doubtful if the Philippines will ever become a political and economic force again in the region during the next two decades.

*) Acknowledgements: The author wishes to thank all those persons and friends without whose support and encouragement during his research and interviews in the Philippines this article would have not been possible.

Special thanks also goes to his friends and colleagues at various research institutes in Europe, Southeast Asia and in the United States for their valuable suggestions and critical review.

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Zusammenfassung

In den 20 Jahren des Marcos-Regimes erhielt das philippinische Militär durch die Einführung des Kriegsrechts erstmals in seiner Geschichte eine politische Rolle zugewiesen. Die aus der Konkurrenz zu den anderen politischen Kräften im Lande folgende Politisierung des Militärs dauerte auch während der Amtszeit von Präsidentin Aquino fort. Das Entstehen einer größeren Gruppe im Militär, die sich weder parlamentarischer Kontrolle noch ziviler Autorität unterwarf, führte zu einer Serie von Staatsstreichern gegen die Aquino-Regierung. Die herrschenden sozio-ökonomischen Mißstände und der daraus folgende Unwille in der Zivilbevölkerung bilden die Grundlagen für die Unzufriedenheit in den Streitkräften.

Ein Überblick über die Ereignisse der letzten zwei Jahrzehnte verdeutlicht das politische Klima und die soziale Dynamik, die dazu führten, daß das Militär seine traditionelle Rolle als Diener des Staates aufgab und die Legitimation der Regierung ebenso herausforderte wie das Prinzip der zivilen Kontrolle über die Armee. Die Bedrohung des Staates durch einen unzufriedenen Teil der Armee wird auch die politische Zukunft des Landes bestimmen.

Die Herausbildung eines neuen Offizierskaders in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten, dessen sozialer und akademischer Hintergrund die Grundlage eines neuen Führungsethos bildet, hat das Militär zu einer politischen Kraft werden lassen, die die sozialen Schichten umfassender repräsentiert als der Kongreß. Die Armee stellt heute das einzige geschlossene Gesellschaftselement mit einem Gefühl für die Nation dar.

Eine kurze Übersicht über die Parteien, die in den Präsidentschaftswahlen um die politische Vormacht wetteifern, ergänzt die Darstellung und verdeutlicht die Führungskrise als Ergebnis des gegenwärtigen Ungleichgewichts der politischen Kräfte.