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Reagan Entrapped: Promoting Democracy in the Philippines

"If Reagan stood for anything, it was standing up for old, anti-Communist friends."
– S. Burton, correspondent for *Time Magazine*[1]

Although loyalty is a virtue, the tenacity with which Reagan defended his old friends, such as Filipino dictator Ferdinand Marcos, brought the president's actions directly into conflict with his unmitigated pledge to promote democracy across the globe. In the mid-1980s, the stark contrast between Reagan's rhetoric and Reagan's behavior seemed to vindicate the conventional wisdom that the purpose of those idealistic pronouncements that emanate from the White House is to mask the unsavory character of so much that is done in the name of national security. Yet in 1986, the United States instructed Marcos to step down from office, which he did. If not for the massive protests led by the democratic opposition in the Philippines, these instructions from Washington would have had only a minimal effect or perhaps none at all. Yet for the purposes of this paper, the more interesting question is why the Reagan administration, after supporting Marcos and other right-wing dictators so consistently and for so long, suddenly decided to place its weight on the opposite side of the political scales. This paper will argue that although Reagan never abandoned his sentimental attachment to either Marcos or his other anti-Communist friends, Reagan became entangled in his idealistic, pro-democracy rhetoric to the point where he felt compelled to act on its revolutionary premises.

In addition to Marcos, the Reagan administration distanced itself from or played a role in the downfall of a number of other right-wing dictators, including Haiti's Jean-Claude Duvalier, South Korea's Chun Doo Hwan and Chile's Augusto Pinochet.

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[1] Burton 1989:254.

Although the administration made almost no effort to reform stable dictatorships, such as those in the Middle East, it sided again and again with the democratic opposition in those instances when an authoritarian government began to disintegrate. This paper will focus on Filipino-American relations because the Reagan administration's decision to abandon Marcos reflected a turning point in its relationship with pro-American dictators around the world. Although Duvalier fell from power first, the Reagan administration never became deeply involved in Haitian politics. In contrast, the Philippines was a former American colony and longtime American ally. More importantly, it played host to the American naval base at Subic Bay and the American air base at Clark Field, both of which the United States considered vital to preventing the expansion of Soviet influence in Asia and the Pacific. In addition, Marcos found himself threatened by a rapidly growing Communist guerrilla force. Thus, when the Filipino dictatorship began to crumble, the United States had to confront a fundamental dilemma of Cold War politics: Should it support a pro-American dictator or should it accept the risk of Communist forces occupying a strategic position in the Third World?

There is a strong consensus among realist scholars of international relations that great powers, including the United States, will not hesitate to compromise their principles in order protect their strategic interests.[2] There is also a consensus among historians of American foreign relations that the United States consistently compromised its

[2] Walt 1987:38-9; Peceny 1999:*passim*. On Walt's influence, see Cox *et al.* 2000:4-5. Certain constructivist scholars argue that norms influence state behavior. However, those constructivists with an interest in American foreign policy have argued even more forcefully than their realist counterparts that the United States behaved in a misguided and unprincipled manner throughout the Cold War. (See Campbell 1992, Weldes, *et al.*, eds., 1999) The one scholar who stands firmly apart from this consensus is Tony Smith, who argues that democracy promotion was "the central ambition of American foreign policy during the twentieth century." (Smith 1994:3-4)

democratic principles in order to advance its strategic interests during the Cold War.[3] In certain instances, however, America's Cold Warriors sought to bring down dictatorships and promote democracy abroad on the grounds that democracy was the best antidote to Communism.[4] Yet according to both scholars and journalists, Reagan demonstrated little to no concern about his allies' democratic credentials.[5] Such arguments are correct insofar as Reagan took office in 1981 determined to repair the United States' alliances with those right-wing dictatorships denigrated by the Carter administration. Yet Reagan's attitude toward pro-American dictatorships evolved dramatically over time. This paper will argue that Reagan's decision to break with Marcos represented the turning point at which Reagan began to fulfill his rhetorical commitment to oppose not just the dictatorships of the left, but also of the right.

The Reagan Doctrine and its Corollary

In the closing moments of the first State of the Union address of his second term, Ronald Reagan declared that

> Freedom is not the sole prerogative of a chosen few; it is the universal right of all God's children…our mission is to nourish and defend freedom and democracy, and to communicate these ideals everywhere we can…
>
> We must stand by all our democratic allies. And we must not break faith with those who are risking their lives – on every continent, from Afghanistan to

[3] Schmitz (1999) and Karabell (1999) provide the most detailed discussions of this subject, although
[4] A similar logic informed the American effort to democratize Japan and Germany as an antidote to fascism. Among Cold War presidents, John F. Kennedy stands out as the one most committed to promoting democracy in order to fight Communism. (See Rabe 1999)
[5] Bonner 1987:355, 444; Gutman 1988:71-72, 88-89; Scott 1996:225; Booth & Walker 1999:145-6; Schmitz 1999:294, 302-3. There are a number of exceptions to this consensus, all of which have been heavily criticized or largely ignored by other scholars. See Carothers 1991; Muravchik 1991; T. Smith 1994.

> Nicaragua – to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth.[6]

Five months later, the conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer identified this brief passage from the State of the Union address as the "Reagan Doctrine, which relies on indigenous revolutionaries to challenge (for reasons that parallel, but need not coincide with ours) the Soviet empire at its periphery."[7] Strictly speaking, the purpose of the Reagan Doctrine was to justify the overthrow of leftist governments in the developing world. Yet because the Reagan Doctrine called for the overthrow of leftist governments on the grounds that they were undemocratic, there soon emerged a corollary to the Reagan Doctrine which stated that in order to demonstrate the sincerity of its desire to promote democratic revolutions in the Communist world, the United States must sever it ties to right-wing dictatorships in the anti-Communist world.

Liberal criticism of the Reagan Doctrine sought to portray it as an *ad hoc* and extremely hypocritical justification of the *contra* war. *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker observed that "[the Sandinistas'] domestic program is not as democratic as Mr. Reagan and most Americans would like, though it compares favorably with that of South Africa and reasonably well with those of the Philippines, South Korea and Chile." Ronald Steel, the prize-winning historian of American foreign relations, wrote that

> President Reagan seems to have made the overthrow of the Sandinistas the great moral crusade of his second Administration. He justifies this on the grounds that they are "totalitarian, brutal and cruel." So they may well be. But that is not the point. The world is full of such regimes, some of them supported by us.[8]

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[6] *Public Papers of the President: Ronald Reagan*, 6 Feb 1985, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress". The Public Papers, hereafter cited as PP-RR, are available online at <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/resource/speeches/rrpubpap.htm>.

[7] "The Reagan Doctrine", *Washington Post* (hereafter WP), 19 July 1985:A25. Thanks to Krauthammer, the phrase "Reagan Doctrine" gained immediate admission to the American political lexicon. The phrase has endured for more than two decades and been used in the title of both of the major academic treatises on American aid for anti-Communist insurgents. (Lagon 1994, Scott 1996)

[8] Wicker in *New York Times* (hereafter NYT), 14 Jun 1985:A31, Steel in NYT, 26 Feb 1985:A27.

The purpose of such criticism was not to demand forceful action against the right-wing governments of the Philippines, South Korea, Chile and South Africa, but rather to prevent forceful action against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Nonetheless, this sort of criticism implied that if the Reagan administration did take a stand against its authoritarian allies, it could thereby validate its antagonism toward the Sandinistas.

Even greater pressure to behave in a consistent manner came from the Republican side of the aisle. In Congress, the overwhelming majority of Republicans joined with their liberal counterparts to demand that the United States support the democratic opposition in Manila. In addition, high-ranking Republican officials within the departments of State and Defense sought to win the president over to the democratic side. Ironically, those Republicans who called upon Reagan to repudiate Marcos often drew their inspiration from Reagan's own rhetorical commitment to lead a global democratic revolution.

A third source of pressure on Reagan was the American media, which provided non-stop coverage of events in Manila during the final days of the Marcos dictatorship. The media also focused considerable attention on the president's Republican critics, since a president's own partisans so rarely question his judgment in the realm of national security. All together, these diverse and interdependent sources of criticism made it very hard for Reagan to resist the logic of his own rhetoric.

Marcos' Rise to Power

After its expulsion of the Spanish in 1898, the United States waged a bloody war against Emilio Aguinaldo's nationalist guerrilla force in order establish itself as the

colonial master of the Philippines. Yet even before it had crushed Aguinaldo's guerrillas, the American government began to prepare its first overseas dominion for democracy and independence. The process of transition was a slow one. Independence did not arrive until July 4, 1946.[9] By that time, national elections had become an established institution. The Philippine republic was no liberal democracy, however. Corruption pervaded every aspect of political life and the rule of law was tenuous at best. Nonetheless, the Filipino army acknowledged the supremacy of the civilian government and civilian office-holders respected the authority of the republic's Supreme Court. The Filipino press was wildly sensational but otherwise free.[10]

In 1965, Filipino voters chose an eloquent young lawyer named Ferdinand Marcos to become their next president. Marcos prevailed in the 1969 presidential election as well, although his lavish spending and his reliance on intimidation were excessive even by Filipino standards. Marcos' enraged opponents fought back in the 1971 legislative elections, which were the most violent in the history of the Philippines but which resulted in a major victory for the opposition. Marcos became desperate as opposition to his increasingly authoritarian government intensified. In 1972 alone, the Filipino president survived eight separate assassination attempts.[11] Rather than accept that his own excess was responsible for the growing chaos in the Philippines, Marcos declared martial law on Friday, September 22, 1972. The American ambassador in Manila sought to prevent Marcos from taking this critical step toward the consolidation of his personal dictatorship, but the Nixon administration displayed minimal concern for

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[9] Standard English-language accounts of the colonial period include Karnow 1989 and Brands 1992.
[10] Thompson 1995:15-32.
[11] Thompson 1995:33-48. On Marcos' personal background and rise to power see Bonner 1987:9-27, Karnow 1989:365-75.

the welfare of Filipino democracy.[12] On Capitol Hill, neither Democrats nor Republicans expressed any serious reservations about what Marcos had done. Only the *New York Times* emphasized that the imposition of marital law reflected the personal interests of the president represented a serious threat to the democratic order.[13]

The Kirkpatrick Doctrine in Asia

In November 1979, Georgetown political scientist Jeane Kirkpatrick published "Dictatorships and Double Standards", an essay that provided conservatives with a detailed justification for welcoming right-wing dictatorships into the American fold. Kirkpatrick's in-depth analysis of the final days of the pro-American dictatorships in Nicaragua and Iran identified the Carter administration's failure to support its nominal allies as a primary cause of the radical revolutions responsible for the downfall of both Somoza and the Shah.[14] During Marcos' time as elected president of the Philippines, a handful of leftists committed to the ideas of Mao Zedong relaunched the guerilla war that the Filipino government had brought to an end in the early 1950s. Although the New People's Army (NPA) made little headway before the declaration of martial law, the heightened repression and unprecedented corruption of the martial law regime made the NPA ever more attractive hundreds of thousands of Filipinos, especially the rural poor. Thus, ironically enough, by subverting its democratic constitution and subjecting the

[12] Bonner 1987:92-111, Brands 1992:298-302. Bonner asserts that Marcos sought and received explicit permission from Nixon to declare martial law. Karnow draws on archival evidence from the Nixon Library to dismiss this contention. (Karnow 1989:469-72)
[13] NYT, 27 Sep 1972:46, 4 Oct 1972:46. Bonner relies on selective quotations from the *Times* to suggest that it approved of Marcos' takeover. (Bonner 1987:110)
[14] Reagan requested a personal meeting with Kirkpatrick after reading her essay, even though he had never met her or even heard of her before that time. Kirkpatrick's arguments impressed Reagan so greatly that he appointed her as ambassador to the United Nations with cabinet rank shortly after his inauguration. (Interview, Kirkpatrick, 18 Jan 2005)

nation to his harsh and tragic misrule, Marcos made it imperative for the Reagan administration to support him, lest it fail to learn the supposed lessons of Iran and Nicaragua.[15]

Even before his inauguration, Reagan began to strengthen American ties to the Filipino government. In December 1980, Imelda Marcos, the first lady of the Philippines, visited Reagan's suite at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York, where both of them were staying. Imelda was one of only two foreign dignitaries with whom Reagan met before his inauguration, the other being the chancellor of West Germany. Reagan had first met Imelda in 1969, when President Nixon sent the Governor of California to represent the United States at a ceremony in Manila. Reagan insisted that the meeting in New York be a strictly private affair, although word of it reached the *New York Times* less than a month later. According to one participant, the positive encounter left both Imelda and her husband "almost euphoric".[16] As a gesture of good will, Marcos brought an end to more than eight years of martial law just three days before Reagan's inauguration. As the *New York Times* pointed out, the gesture was little more than cosmetic since Marcos gave up none of his emergency powers. Nonetheless, the *Times* editorial board declined to criticize Reagan for his close relationship to Marcos on the grounds that even the openly idealistic Carter administration had given "Manila $500 million in military aid in return for 'unhampered use' of two American bases. In dealing with Mr. Marcos the Carter liberals wrestled with their principles, and pragmatism

[15] All the standard works on Filipino-American relations point to Kirkpatrick's influence on the Reagan administration. See Bonner 1987:293-8, Karnow 1989:400, Brands 1992:316. Explicit analogies between the Philippines, Iran and Nicaragua did not begin to emerge, however, until the visible disintegration of the Marcos dictatorship began in the mid-1980s. Muslim separatist insurgents in the southern Philippines also challenged the Marcos regime, but their limited and local objectives prevented them from becoming a serious threat to the government.

[16] Bonner 1987:73, 298-300; Karnow 1989:377, 401. For a photograph of Reagan dancing with Imelda in 1969, see the black-and-white plates in Bonner 1987.

usually won."[17] This sort of observation demonstrates the degree to which, in the early 1980s, Americans across the political spectrum believed in the existence of a fundamental conflict between the nation's interests and the nation's ideals.

The Reagan administration reinforced its initial efforts to court Marcos by dispatching senior members of the cabinet to Manila. The official purpose of Secretary of State Alexander Haig's visit in June of 1981 was to attend a conference of ASEAN's foreign ministers. Yet as a memo for Haig from one of his assistant secretaries pointed out, Haig's trip was also "a bilateral visit to a friendly country." The memo then observed that "as the first senior Administration visitor to the Philippines," Haig ought to "reassure [his] Philippine hosts of the importance we attach to our association[,] including the important military facilities we maintain there." Not surprisingly, the memo made absolutely no mention of human rights or democracy.[18] Less than ten days after Haig's departure, Vice President Bush arrived in Manila to represent the United States at Marcos' third inauguration as President of the Philippine Republic. After amending the constitution in order to allow himself to run for office yet again, Marcos held a supposed election in which he won 86% of the votes. Even though a cable from the American embassy described the various ways in which Marcos fixed the results, a

[17] NYT, 23 Jan 1981:A22, 25 Jan 1981:IV-6. H.W. Brands describes the Carter administration's policy as a classic illustration of how the United States has compromised it ideals in the name of security. (Brands 1992:309-11) For the most detailed account of the Carter administration's relationship with Marcos, see Bonner 1987:163-292.

[18] This memo and other declassified documents can be found in the National Security Archive collection entitled *The Philippines: U.S. Policy During the Marcos Years, 1965-1986* (hereafter cited as NSA/ Philippines). The memo for Haig, prepared by Assistant Secretary John Holdridge on 22 May 1981, is Document 1938.

State Department memo for the vice president referred to the outcome as "a solid victory for Marcos", who "ha[d] in fact obtained the mandate he sought."[19]

At a celebratory luncheon hosted by Marcos at the presidential palace in Manila, Vice President Bush delivered a toast that would become a lasting source of embarrassment both to him personally as well as to the entire Reagan administration. In his toast, Bush stated that "our country has a deep commitment in the Pacific; a great respect not only for the Philippines but for the other ASEAN countries. We love your adherence to democratic principle and to the democratic processes."[20] Significantly, Bush's toast represented a departure from the talking points provided for him by the US embassy in Manila, which pointedly omitted any reference to the Philippines as democratic. Nonetheless, Bush's improvised remarks were fully consistent with the instructions he was given by the State Department. According to the same memorandum that referred to "a solid victory for Marcos", Bush's visit was supposed to reassure the Filipino dictator that congressional criticism of human rights violations in the Philippines "do[es] not reflect Administration policy and that the Administration looks forward to working with the Marcos government."[21]

During his sojourn in Manila, the vice president invited Marcos to pay an official visit to the United States in September 1982. Whereas the Carter administration refused to honor Marcos with a state visit, the Reagan administration made a point of inviting all

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[19] The cable from Manila to Washington, dated 17 Jun 1981, is Doc. 1957 in the NSA/Philippines collection. The memo for Bush, dated 18 Jun 1981, is Doc. 1959. American journalists' coverage of the election was light to non-existent, although what minimal coverage there was suggested that the results were thoroughly illegitimate. (NYT, 17 Jun 1981:A12; WP, 17 Jun 1981:A19)

[20] The full text, as delivered, can be found in: Cable – Manila to regional embassies, 30 Jun 1981, NSA/Philippines – Doc. 1970.

[21] The embassy's suggested talking points can be found in: Cable – Manila to Washington, 28 Jun 1981, NSA/Philippines – Doc. 1967. The memo for Bush (Doc. 1959) was prepared by Deputy Secretary of State Walter Stoessel, Haig's second-in-command. Thus, it reflected the thinking of the State Department's top officials.

of its most important authoritarian allies to Washington shortly after Reagan's inauguration. The presence of such divisive figures in the nation's capital ensured at a least a measure of negative press coverage for the administration. Within the space of seven days, Marcos' photograph graced the front page of the *Washington Post* three separate times. Before that time, the *Post* had run only two front page stories about the Philippines during Reagan's year and a half in office.[22] Although both the *Post* and the *Times* published editorials that were sharply critical of Marcos and Reagan, the editorial boards of both papers resigned themselves to the necessity of balancing Soviet power in the Pacific by paying Marcos hundreds of millions of dollars to host American air and naval bases in the Philippines.[23] Congressional criticism of the Marcos visit was tepid as well. Only nine congressmen signed a letter to the White House opposing Marcos' visit. Five senators, including Ted Kennedy, signed a letter to the White House that did not even protest the decision to invite Marcos, but simply expressed their concern that Marcos' state visit might be "misinterpreted" as an endorsement of Marcos' authoritarian rule.[24] The passivity of the administration's critics reflected the prevalence of the belief that the United States had no choice but to compromise its principles in the interest of national security.

There was one liberal Democrat, however, who saw things differently. During all eight years of the Reagan administration, Rep. Stephen Solarz of New York served as chairman of the House Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs. As early as 1981,

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[22] WP, 13 Sep 1981:A1, 16 Sep 1981:A1, 17 Sep 1981:A1.
[23] WP, 15 Sep 1981:A24; NYT, 15 Sep 1981:A26. News items about Marcos' visit also pointed to his authoritarian rule and disregard for human rights. For example, the headline of one article in the *Post* read, "Report Charges Torture, Killing in Philippines". The article then described the contents of a report released by Amnesty International in anticipation of the Marcos visit. (WP, 15 Sept 1981:A20)
[24] Both letters were reprinted in the Congressional Record. (CR, 14 Sept 1982:23806, 12 Sept 1982:23436)

Solarz began to argue on the floor of the House that promoting democracy in the Philippines was the most effective way to secure access to military bases there. According to Solarz, Clark Air Base and the Subic Bay naval facility were "absolutely indispensable" to the projection of American power into the Western Pacific. Yet Solarz warned his colleagues that American disregard for the freedom in the Philippines would result in a backlash against the United States after in the post-Marcos era.[25]

In November of 1981, Solarz held a public hearing before his subcommittee in order to search for better methods to handle US-Filipino relations. The star witness of the hearings was Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, the exiled leader of the democratic opposition in the Philippines. Aquino was the first politician arrested after the declaration of martial law in 1972. Just shy of his fortieth birthday, Ninoy had already served as the youngest governor and youngest senator in the history of the Philippines. In 1973, he may well have become its youngest president. During his eight years in prison, Ninoy resisted Marcos by refusing to stand trial before a kangaroo court and going on extended hunger strikes. In early 1978, Patricia Derian visited Aquino in prison. Derian was the Carter administration's Assistant Secretary of State for democracy and human rights. Derian later recalled that Aquino had impressed her as "a democrat, a small *d* democrat, with an honest-to-God full understanding of the history of the idea of democracy, of the necessity of it." On May 5, 1980, Ninoy suffered a heart attack. Afraid of being held responsible for his death, Marcos sent Aquino the United States for bypass surgery, where he remained thereafter.[26]

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[25] CR, 4 Apr 1981:10239-40.

[26] Bonner 1987:101-106, 227-8, 288-90; Karnow 1989:389-400. Derian's assessment, provided during an interview with Bonner, was made with the benefit of hindsight after Ninoy's assassination and the fall of Marcos. Derian also described Aquino as "someone of monumental stature…Like Churchill. A giant."

When Aquino testified before Solarz's subcommittee, Solarz asked him "What do you think the United States should do to bring about the democratization [of] the Philippines? In other words, in terms of its implications for American foreign policy, what would you like to see our government do?" In spite of Solarz's welcoming tone, Ninoy provided him with a timid and unambitious answer; he suggested that the United States advise Marcos to hold free and fair elections. Well aware that Marcos would never admit that Filipino elections were not already free and fair, Solarz asked Ninoy, "Is there anything else you would like us to do?" Ninoy responded, "You don't have to lavish [Marcos] with praises. I realize you have to maintain relationships with Mr. Marcos." Only after Solarz asked for a third time how the United States could promote democracy in the Philippines did Aquino respond that a symbolic cut in military aid might be appropriate. Aquino's comments illustrate the degree to which even those most committed to the democratization of the Philippines presumed that the United States' interests compelled it to work with, rather than against, right-wing dictatorships.[27]

Blood on the Tarmac

On the morning of August 21, 1983, Ninoy boarded a Boeing 767 for the brief flight from Taipei to Manila. The plane touched down just after 1 PM. Shortly before landing, Ninoy went to the restroom, where he put on a bulletproof vest under his jacket. When Ninoy returned to his seat, he held a rosary and prayed. After the flight landed,

[27] "US Policy Towards the Philippines", Congressional Information Service Number (hereafter CIS-NO) 82-H381-19, 18 Nov 1981:58-59. While recognizing that the United States government had to cooperate with Marcos, Ninoy remained firm in his belief that democracy was the antidote to the Communist insurgency in the Philippines. Thus, when Rep. Henry Hyde (R-IL) asked Ninoy how one could expect a government besieged by Maoist guerrillas to live up to the democratic ideal, Ninoy responded that "We defeated in the Philippines a greater insurgency during the 1950's not by increasing repression but by increasing human freedom." ("US Policy", CIS-NO 82-H381-19, 18 Nov 1981:64-66).

three uniformed soldiers boarded the plane, located Ninoy and escorted him to the exit. There were numerous journalists on the plane, both from the United States and other countries. They tried to follow Ninoy on his way out of the plane but were held back by plainclothes security officers. As Ninoy descended the stairs from the plane, five shots rang out, followed by a burst of machine gun fire. A single shot to the back of the head, at point-blank range, ended Aquino's life and sent his body tumbling down onto the runway. Police commandos then picked up Aquino's body, placed it in a van and drove away.[28]

The murder of Beningo Aquino exposed the depth of the population's resentment toward Marcos. Massive protests erupted across the nation and the government dared not respond with violence. The protests were led by the middle-class, democratic opposition, but there were leftist guerrillas waiting to inherit the mantle of revolution should the moderates fail to reform the government. What American policymakers had thought of just a few days before as a stable dictatorship was now a falling domino. The night before his death, Ninoy told a correspondent from *Time* that:

> I really feel the country is heading toward a crisis, being pulled by two tendenceies: toward the right and a military junta, toward the left and a Communist takeover…My point is that if the moderates want to be relevant to the situation, we must move now. Otherwise there will be a Nicaragua or an El Salvador situation.[29]

American politicians across the political spectrum began to emphasize the striking resemblance of the Philippines to both Nicaragua and Iran, circa 1978. This double analogy had divisive partisan implications, since the examples of Nicaragua and Iran were what had led Jeane Kirkpatrick to declare that the United States must never abandon

[28] Sandra Burton (1989:23-35) provides the most detailed account of Aquino's final hours and final moments.
[29] Burton 1989:17.

its authoritarian allies. In contrast, liberals asserted that if the United States had distanced itself more aggressively from the Shah and Somoza, radical anti-American forces would never have been able to take power. Thus, the struggle to define American policy toward the Philippines in the aftermath of Aquino's murder became just as much a struggle about the past as it was about the future.[30]

The Reagan administration's initial response to Aquino's murder entailed an array of hesitant concessions to widespread public outrage. Two days after the murder, a high-ranking official at the State Department told journalists that the United States government would distance itself from Marcos if he or his subordinates were found to be responsible for the murder.[31] Six weeks later, the White House cancelled the president's trip to Manila, scheduled for November. However, Reagan dispatched Michael Deaver, his assistant chief of staff, on a personal mission to Manila in order to hand-deliver a hand-written message from the president. Reagan wrote, "Dear Ferdinand and Imelda…I've always had confidence in your ability to handle things…our friendship for you remains as warm and firm as does our feeling for the people of the Philippines."[32] Shortly after Deaver's visit to Manila, Vice President Bush told reporters in Chicago that the United

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[30] For a thorough discussion of how historical analogies influence the policymaking process, see May (1973) and Khong (1992). Note, however, that in the situations analyzed by May and Khong there was a relatively strong consensus on how to understand the lessons of the past and their implications for the present. In contrast, this chapter will addresses a situation in which the lessons of the past were themselves the subject of contention.

[31] NYT, 25 Aug 1983:A1. The high-ranking official spoke to journalists "on background", meaning that his comments were for the public record but that his identity should not be disclosed. This practice was common at the time and is still common today. Transcripts of background sessions are often made available to the public.

[32] For the text of Reagan's letter, see: Cable – Manila to Washington, 4 Oct 1983, NSA/Philippines – Doc. 2643. For a partial account of Deaver's meeting with Marcos, see: Cable – Washington to Bangkok, 3 Oct 1983, NSA/Philippines – Doc. 2640. The White House released the letter to the public and informed journalists that it had been written in Reagan's own hand. (NYT, 5 Oct 1983:A3)
Reagan insisted that unexpected events in Congress had forced him to cancel the trip. Journalists described this justification as a diplomatic gesture intended to placate Marcos. (See, for example, WP, 4 Oct 1983:A1)

States "could not cut away from a person [*i.e.* Marcos] who, imperfect though he may be on human rights, has worked with us…The United States does not want to have another Khomeini."[33]

At the embassy in Manila, the American response to Aquino's murder was much more decisive and dramatic than it was in Washington. Ambassador Michael Armacost sat in the front row at Aquino's funeral mass even though the Filipino government had warned that it would consider the attendance of foreign diplomats to be an affront to its dignity. At the funeral, Jaime Cardinal Sin, the archbishop of Manila, denounced the "atmosphere of oppression and corruption, the climate of anguish and fear" that prevailed in the Philippines. Cardinal Sin then described Ninoy as the personification of "the Filipino's courage in the face of oppression." After the mass, hundreds of thousands of Filipinos joined the procession to the graveyard.[34] Prior to Aquino's murder, the Filipino opposition had considered Armacost so loyal to Marcos that it referred to him as as a *tuta*, or lapdog, and "Ambassador Ourmarcos". After his arrival in Manila in March 1982, Armacost subordinated all other concerns to the renewal of America's basing rights at Clark Air Field and Subic Bay. The achievement of this objective entailed lending his prestige to the Marcos dictatorship. Later, Armacost would recall that "I began to sense that it suited [the Marcoses] purpose to demonstrate great intimacy with the American ambassador." After Aquino's murder, however, Armacost constantly antagonized the

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[33] *Chicago Tribune*, 7 Oct 1983:PAGE.

[34] Bonner 1987:352-4, Burton 1989:133-46. For a contemporary account, see WP, 1 Sept 1983:A28. The burial of the *Post*'s account of the procession deep inside the paper provides an important measure of just how rapidly American journalists lost interest in the Philippines after the initial coverage of Aquino's murder. For example, just six days earlier, the presence of tens – not hundreds – of thousands of marchers at Aquino's cortege merited front page coverage in the Post. News from the Philippines did not return to the front page until late September. (WP, 26 Aug 1983:A1; 21 Sep 1983:A1)

dictatorship by conferring in public and on a regular basis with prominent members of the opposition, such as Cardinal Sin.[35]

Armacost's conversion to a critic of the regime heralded the coming together of an influential coalition of senior officials in the United States government committed to a policy of reform in the Philippines. Even before Aquino's murder, Paul Wolfowitz, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacfic affairs, had begun to confront Marcos about human rights and democratic reform. After extensive meetings with Marcos and his senior ministers in April 1983, Wolfowitz sent a detailed report directly to the Secretary of State in which Wolfowitz emphasized that "we need to continue urging Marcos to hold legislative elections as scheduled in 1984 and to begin an evolution toward more democratic institutions…Over the longer term, the related problems of slowed economic development, human rights and the internal security situation are serious potential issues which we must address." Whereas the Reagan administration rarely criticized right-wing governments for their brutal methods of fighting off communist insurgents, Wolfowitz identified military abuse, along with economic deprivation as the primary causes of the NPA's growth.[36]

The anti-Marcos coalition also had two critical allies at the Department of Defense. The first was Richard Armitage, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA). Often described as the "Pentagon's State Department", ISA is responsible for representing the Pentagon in the diplomatic decision-making process. Towards the end of 1983, the Reagan administration established a special interagency task force to monitor the situation in the Philippines. Wolfowitz

[35] Bonner 1987:330-32; Burton 1989:150-154.
[36] NPA/Philippines, Doc. 2387.

served as chairman while Armitage represented the Department of Defense. Other relevant organizations, such as the National Security Council, also sent representatives of similar stature. According to Armitage, "There was an unusual unanimity of views at the assistant secretary level."[37] In mid-1984, Armacost, Wolfowitz and Armitage gained the support of Adm. William Crowe, the commander-in-chief of the United States armed forces in the Pacific (CINCPAC) and later chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Gravely concerned about the NPA insurgency, Crowe made five separate visits to the Philippines during his tenure as CINCPAC. Disturbed by the corruption and incompetence of the Filipino military, Crowe provided Marcos with "guidelines" for transforming his armed forces into an institution prepared to confront the insurgents. Although Marcos always welcomed Crowe's advice, he never acted upon it. Crowe concluded that "Things had to change. Marcos was not making the decisions that had to be made, primarily because of personal vanity." In June 1984, Crowe sent a blistering report to the White House that suggested "we start right now to develop a policy to persuade Marcos to leave office." Yet Crowe himself had serious reservations about giving such advice. "It's not comfortable to recommend to your own government that a head of state be deposed or encouraged to step down. That is a momentous step."[38]

Reagan read Crowe's report and invited him to the White House for a personal briefing. In spite of the president's well-known respect for the admiral, Reagan did not think that Marcos should step down. According to Crowe, "Obviously he felt that Marcos was a friend, and he was reluctant to do something precipitous unless we were on solid ground." According to Crowe, "There were strong views on both sides. People

[37] Blitz 2000:161.
[38] Burton 1989:246-52; Karnow 1989:406-408.

were asking, 'Suppose you engineer a change, who will you get? It could be worse…I was not so naïve as to think everything could be wonderful. When the time came – and it was going to come – the longer we allowed [Marcos] to stay there, the more traumatic it would be." In addition to Reagan, hawkish realists such as Caspar Weinberger, the Secretary of Defense, and William Casey, the director of the CIA, resisted Crowe's advice. Their position reflected the lessons of Iran and Nicaragua.[39]

Watching the Polls

In 1984, two developments in the Philippines had a critical impact on the perceptions of American policymakers. The first was the apparent revival of democratic institutions in the Philippines, of which the legislative elections in May were emblematic. The second was the dramatic growth of the NPA, which made the threat of a communist revolution seem very real to observers in Washington. Together, these developments brought American policymakers closer to the realization that the Kirkpatrick Doctrine served as a lackluster guide to the defense of American interests, at least in the Philippines.

Marcos scheduled legislative elections for May 14, 1984 with two purposes in mind. On the one hand, the elections were supposed to serve as a safety valve for the pressure that had been building up on Marcos as a result of both Aquino's murder and the descent of the Filipino economy into a deep recession. On the other hand, they were supposed to install of a solid majority of Marcos supporters in the National Assembly so Marcos could maintain the fiction that the Philippines was a nation of laws without

[39] Ibid.

compromising his ability to rule by decree.[40] In order to satisfy the first purpose of the 1984 elections, Marcos had to allow the opposition to participate in both the campaign and the vote counting process to a far greater degree than he had in the days of martial law. In order to satisfy the second purpose of the elections, Marcos had to falsify the results to the same extent that he had in the days of martial law. The inherent contradiction of these demands facilitated the efforts of the democratic opposition to transform the elections into a major embarrassment for Marcos.

After initial consideration of a boycott, the Filipino opposition decided that participation would be wiser. In March, Ninoy's widow, Corazon "Cory" Aquino reversed her position on the boycott, declaring that "the path of reconciliation and national unity through free, clean, and meaningful elections is the only means to avert violence." Moreover, Ninoy had returned home the year before precisely because of his believef that the 1984 elections, however flawed, represented the all important first step toward the restoration of a democratic order. Advocates of the boycott criticized Cory sharply, but her moral stature as the widow of the martyr endowed her decision with far greater weight than that of any other political figure, even though she herself was not running for office.[41] Cory and others understood that Marcos had the ability to cut off the opposition's access to the media, both print and broadcast, as well as to spend unknown sums in order to bribe both local officials and individual voters. However, they had tremendous confidence in the ability of volunteer election observers to prevent decisive

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[40] On the origins of that pressure, both political and economic, see Thompson 1995:114-21.

[41] Burton 1989:197-203. There was no single opposition in the Philippines but rather an array of parties, factions, and prominent individuals that occupied very differently places on the ideological spectrum but were all committed to democratic reform. Thus, it is somewhat misleading to speak of "the opposition" as a coherent whole. Although the internal configuration of the opposition had significant implications for Filipino politics, the detailed analysis of such matters is beyond the scope of a dissertation about the making of American foreign policy.

fraud at the polls. The most important of the volunteer poll-watching organizations was the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), which had the ability to deploy approximately 150,000 volunteers, primarily in urban areas and the less remote provinces.[42]

The circle of American officials committed to promoting democracy in the Philippines did their best to complement the opposition's efforts to ensure a positive outcome. The arrival of Amb. Stephen Bosworth in Manila in April 1984 represented an extremely important addition to the pro-democracy faction. Imelda Marcos bragged that her friends in Washington were responsible for the replacement of Armacost prior to the legislative elections in May. In fact, George Shultz had promoted Armacost to Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, the third-highest ranking position in the State Department. Meanwhile, Bosworth committed himself even more aggressively to the democratic cause. In the run up to the elections, political and military officials at the American embassy held off-the-record briefings for journalists at which the questioned the ability of Marcos to govern the Philippines.[43]

The outcome of the 1984 election in the Philippines thrilled both the Filipino opposition as well as its supporters in the United States. Expected to prevail in 30 to 40 of the republic's 183 districts, the opposition instead prevailed in 63. Moreover, this total provided only a partial indication of the opposition's strength, since it was unable to win any seats at all in the numerous provinces controlled entirely by Marcos' subordinates.

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[42] A similar organization, also named NAMFREL, had played a critical role in the monitoring the legislative elections of 1951. The original NAMFREL received funding from the CIA, which Truman directed to support democracy in the Philippines. Although the original NAMFREL dissolved, its founder joined with other members of the democratic opposition to establish a new poll-watching organization after Aquino's murder in 1983. They decided to preserve the original name. (Burton 1989:216-20, Thompson 1995:125-130)

[43] Burton 1989:237, 243.

Yet wherever NAMFREL was active, the opposition won most of the seats it deserved. Most importantly, it won 15 of 21 seats in Metro Manila province, thus embarrassing Imelda Marcos, the provincial governor and manager of the governing party's provincial campaign.[44] In a cable to Washington, Amb. Bosworth pronounced that "NAMFREL has performed magnificently." Although under no illusions that the elections had brought an end to the Marcos dictatorship, Bosworth wrote in a subsequent cable that "The real loss is to [Marcos'] mystique and aura of invincibility."[45]

The Guerrilla Surge

The opposition's success in the 1984 elections did nothing, in the short term, to reduce the momentum of a rapidly growing guerrilla movement. While visiting Manila in July, Stephen Solarz warned that the Philippines may fall prey, by the end of the 1980s, to a "Communist takeover". In an opinion column published in August, Solarz warned the American public that widespread interest in the May elections and ongoing economic crisis in the Philippines "has obscured a development that may have far more significant long-term consequences for that country and for America's position in Asia: the rapidly expanding strength of the Communist-dominated New People's Army."[46] Whereas the NPA provoked little concern in the United States during the first years of the Reagan administration, it then emerged as a major threat with the same suddenness that

[44] Thompson 1995:124-30. Thompson breaks down the results by city, province and region in order to demonstrate how few districts were amenable to an opposition victory, often made possible by NAMFREL oversight. NAMFREL announced on the day after elections that opposition candidates were winning in 91 districts, but later returns favored pro-Marcos candidates to a suspicious extent. (NYT 16 May 1983:A1)
[45] Cable – Manila to Washington, 15 May 1984, NSA/Philippines – Doc. 2808; Cable – Manila to Washington, 16 May 1984, Doc. 2811. Numerous declassified cables provided a very detailed account of the election campaign and results. Interestingly, in a memo for Shultz, Paul Wolfowitz reiterated Bosworth's assertion that Marcos' "aura of invincibility" had been lost. (Doc. 2812)
[46] NYT, 18 Jul 1984:A4, 8 Aug 1984:A23.

the Sandinistas had in Nicragua. However, the lessons of Nicaragua made even liberal Democrats hesitant to abandon pro-American dictatorships. In his final appearance before Solarz's subcommittee, Ninoy argued less than two months before his death that when the United States "told Somoza 'you must go,' everyone got the message…That happened again in Iran, when the administration started leaning on the Shah. So it can happen in the Philippines." Solarz responded by informing Ninoy that "it is hard for me to believe that the cause of democracy has been significantly served by subsequent developments in either [Iran or Nicaragua]."[47] Although Solarz remained fully committed to promoting democracy in the Philippines, he and his allies within the administration, such as Bosworth and Wolfowitz, had to fight an uphill battle to persuade senior policymakers that even when confronted by the clear and present danger of a Communist victory in the Pacific, America's national interest still demanded unflagging support for the democratic cause.

In the early days of the Reagan administration, the State Department considered the NPA to be a potential threat rather than an actual one. According to the briefing book prepared for the vice president's trip to Manila in June 1981,

> The most serious element militarily [of the opposition] is the Muslim insurgency…Although it still ties up 2/3 of the Philippine armed forces, and receives aid from other Muslim countries, it is confined largely to the south and is not growing. The Communists' New People's Army is small – 5-6,000 armed personnel – but it is national and its mass support base, especially in rural areas, has been growing steadily.[48]

Less than four months later, Secretary of State Alexander Haig received a memo which informed that "The NPA problem has overtaken the Muslim insurgency…as the leading

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[47] "US Philippines Relations and the New Base and Aid Agreement", CIS-NO 83-H381-94, 22 Jun 1983:152-53.

[48] Briefing book, 19 Jun 1981, NSA/Philippines – Doc. 1960 (No pagination in original. See archival page numbered 23 of 25.) It was during this visit that Bush made his infamous toast.

internal security threat." The memo then argued "The current level of NPA activity is not a direct threat to the GOP [*i.e.* Government of the Philippines]. However, the GOP must address more vigorously the problem of military abuses and the economic situation if it is to check the upward trend."[49]

The consensus that the NPA was not a major threat began to fall apart rapidly in the months after Ninoy was murdered. In the spring and summer of 1984, four separate, detailed studies of the political situation in the Philippines confirmed that the NPA had become a major threat. James Nach, a political officer at the US embassy, was the author of the first. Nach had spent four years in Vietnam during the war and developed a passionate interest in Communist insurgents. While stationed in the Philippines, he spent night and weekends working on his report, which the embassy sent back to Washington in the form of cable that was no fewer than seventy-five pages long. Nach concluded that Marcos was simply not capable of adapting to the threat presented by the NPA. He wrote that "Without new directions from the top, the prospects are for continued deterioration with the eventual outcome – ultimate defeat and a communist takeover of the Philippines – a very possible scenario."[50] Drawing on Nach's work as well as other information to which it had access, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research prepared its own assessment of the NPA. It observed that "The NPA, without any foreign assistance, has grown from a few roaming bands in Luzon at the beginning of the Marcos

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[49] Memo, Holdridge to Haig, 14 Oct 1981, NSA/Philippines – Doc. 2012.

[50] Cable – Manila to Washington, 9 Jun 1984, NSA/Philippines – Doc. 2863. For Nach's biography, see Bonner 1987:355-57. Nach's report included a detailed history of the insurgency and its ideological development. He emphasized that the insurgents were, in fact, committed Communists. Neither Democrats nor Republicans dissented from this conclusion, although scholars who testified before Congress such as David Rosenberg of Middlebury College described the insurgents as socially progressive pragmatists. ("The Situation and Outlook in the Philippines", CIS-NO 85-H381-34, 20 Sep 1984:122-23. See also Rosenberg's article on the history of the NPA from *Problems of Communism*, reprinted in CIS-NO 85-H381-34, 20 Sept 1984:92-111.)

period, to an estimated force of 13-15,000 armed regulars and several thousand part-time guerrillas operating in 62 of 73 provinces." The report went on to compare the situation in the Philippines to the situation in Nicaragua during the final years of the Somoza dictatorship.[51] Across town from the State Department, the analytical staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was working on its own evaluation of the NPA. After spending three weeks in the Philippines, analysts Frederick Brown, a Republican, and Carl Ford, a Democrat, declared that "The insurgency's greatest strengths are the abuses, inefficiencies, corruption and complacency of a regime long in power." Brown and Ford concluded their report with a pair of questions: "Is there recognition of [the] need for a democratic revolution? Is there time to carry it out?" Their bipartisanship ensured that Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IA), the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee would take their analysis and recommendations very seriously.[52] The fourth and final report on the NPA was the one prepared by Adm. William Crowe and mentioned above. Of the four, only Crowe's report commanded the attention of the president. It persuaded him of the seriousness of the threat, but not that Marcos had to go. Thus, the advocates of democracy promotion continued to face an uphill battle to transform their analysis into the Reagan administration's official policy.[53]

Hearts and Minds in the White House

On October 21, 1984, during Reagan's final debate with Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale, one of the moderators reminded Reagan that

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[51] See also Brands 1992:326-27.
[52] "Situation in the Philippines", CIS 84-S382-24, Oct 1984. The report by Ford and Brown was not classified. Thus it has been assigned a CIS identification number like all other congressional hearings and reports. For a draft version of the report, see NSA/Philippines, Doc. 2916.
[53] See above, pages 19-21.

> You severely criticized President Carter for helping to undermine two friendly dictators who got into trouble with their own people – the Shah of Iran and President Somoza of Nicaragua. Now there are other such leaders heading for trouble, including President Pinochet of Chile and President Marcos of the Philippines. What should you do, and what can you do to prevent the Philippines from becoming another Nicaragua?[54]

Before an audience of almost eighty million, Reagan answered that question in a manner fully consistent with the Kirkpatrick Doctrine. He stated that "I know there are things there in the Philippines that do not look good to us from the standpoint right now of democratic rights, but what is the alternative? It is a large Communist movement to take over the Philippines."[55] Reagan's remark provoked outrage in both the Philippines and the United States. More importantly, it demonstrated just how much resistance Solarz, Bosworth and Wolfowitz would have to overcome in order to marshal American support for a democratic transition in the Philippines.

Recognizing the president's remarks as a threat to all they had worked for, the pro-democracy faction within the administration began to argue vociferously that Reagan hadn't meant what he said. The day after the debate, a State Department spokesman told reporters that Reagan had not meant to suggest that Communism was the only alternative to Marcos. "I don't think the President was narrowing the situation that far," the spokesman said. "I think there is certainly recognition on everybody's part that there are other forces working for democratic change in the Philippines."[56] Journalists understood exactly what the State Department meant to say. Two days after the debate, a correspondent for the *New York Times* observed matter-of-factly that "Although Mr. Reagan expressed support for President Marcos in his debate with Walter F. Mondale two

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[54] PP-RR, 21 Oct 1984, "Debate".
[55] Ibid. The *Washington Post* provided estimates of the television audience. (WP, 23 Oct 1984:C8, 24 Oct 1984:D14)
[56] NYT, 23 Oct 1984:A3.

days ago, the overall American policy now is to press the Marcos Government to allow a sharing of power through the revitalization of democratic institutions."[57] In Manila, Amb. Bosworth gave a speech two days later in which he told the audience that "functioning democratic systems have proven to be a strong defense against communist penetration and subversion…In effect democracy has proven to be the most effective doctrine of national security." Bosworth concluded his address with Reagan's own words, taken from the president's landmark defense of democratic values at Westminster: "We must be staunch in our conviction that freedom is not the sole prerogative of a lucky few but the inalienable and universal right of all human beings."[58] Finally, Paul Wolfowitz told an interviewer that "The President knows that there is a strong, moderate, democratic element in the Philippines" and that "we" support "the restoration of democratic institutions in the Philippines."[59] Taken together, these improbable interpretations of Reagan's remarks illustrate two important aspects of presidential speech. First, administration officials find it almost impossible to disagree with the president in public. Second, when the president comes down on both sides of an issue, enterprising officials may use the president's own words to advance an agenda that reflects their wishes and not those of the president.

While the public statements of Wolfowitz and Bosworth sent an important message to both the Filipino opposition and American journalists, both men understood that the most important battles they would have to fight would be against Marcos' allies within the administration. In August 1984, the White House had approved of National

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[57] NYT, 24 Oct 1984:A1. The State Department's message was clearly understood by numerous journalists. See for example: WP, 24 Oct 1984:A23; 25 Oct 1984:A24; 26 Oct 1984:A23. Each of these articles made the same point but was written by a different author.
[58] *American Foreign Policy – Current Documents* (hereafter AFPCD) 1984, Doc. 378:761-62.
[59] AFPCD 1984, Doc. 378:763.

Security Study Directive 4-84 (NSSD 4-84) which instructed the various branches of the federal government responsible for national security to study "our capabilities and limitations of helping the Philippines deal with…a worsening insurgency situation, in ways consistent with our interest in strengthening democratic institutions and political stability in the Philippines."[60] The National Security Council presented the results of this wide-ranging study in National Security Decision Directive 163 (NSDD 163), which provided Wolfowitz, Armitage, Bosworth and their allies with the necessary cover to intensify their campaign against Marcos. The directive asserted that "the Philippines must be a stable, democratically-oriented ally." Therefore, the United States would commit itself to the "revitalization of democratic institutions in order to assure both a smooth transition when President Marcos does pass from the scene and longer-term stability."[61] The significance of NSDD 163 according to Wolfowitz was that "Basically we were delegitimizing Marcos, but not in a way that could destabilize the country."[62]

According to Sandra Burton, a correspondent for *Time* who covered the Philippines throughout the 1980s, NSDD 163 "served as a useful cover under which subtle but quite far-reaching intervention in the Philippine affairs was able to go forward."[63] During the first week of February 1985, Amb. Bosworth returned from Manila in order to strengthen Wolfowitz and Armitage's insistence that the United States

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[60] NSSD 4-84, 10 Aug 1984, reprinted in *Presidential Directives on National Security, Part II: From Harry Truman to George W. Bush* (hereafter NSA/PD-II), Doc. 1688.
[61] NSDD 163, 20 Feb 1985, reprinted in NSA/PD-I, Doc. 1842. The declassified version of NSDD 163 has been heavily redacted.
[62] Bonner 1987:362-63, Burton 1989:252-55. The passage in NSDD 163 that describes Marcos as "necessarily part of the solution" does not appear in the declassified version of the text. However, administration officials provided this verbatim quotation to multiple journalists after Marcos' downfall.
[63] Burton 1989:253. The full quotation from Burton reads: "…far-reaching intervention in Philippine affairs was able to go forward, cloaked in benign intentions to help a dictator foster a restoration of democracy. Designed to be all things to all people inside a divided foreign policy bureaucracy, [NSDD 163] was sensitive to the many delicate nuances that were at play in a crisis which struck at the very heart of the sacrosanct Fil-Am 'special relationship.'"

must get tough with Marcos. In the months before his trip to Washington, Bosworth reached out to the opposition in an unprecedented manner by organizing a private dinner with Corazon Aquino and her closest advisers. Bosworth fully understood that word of his private meeting with Aquino would spread quickly throughout Manila and become an important symbol of American intimacy with the opposition.[64] Bosworth met with Secretary Shultz on February 7th. On the day before, Wolfowitz sent a preparatory memo to Shultz defending the push for reform in the Philippines. Striking a defensive note, Wolfowitz told Shultz that "we are not promoting the dismantling of institutions that support stability – as occurred in Nicaragua during the collapse of the Somoza regime. Our goal is [an] orderly succession that leads to a stable transition." Wolfowitz also made an explicit request that Shultz allow his photograph to be taken with Bosworth for the explicit purpose of demonstrating to Marcos that American demands for reform had the support of cabinet-level officials.[65] Instead, Wolfowitz and Bosworth got something even better; after a private meeting with President Reagan, Bosworth had his photograph taken with the commander-in-chief. After Bosworth returned to Manila, Marcos asked him it if were common for an ambassador to meet with the president. Bosworth simply replied, "No".[66]

Bosworth's meeting with the president reflected the rising influence of the pro-democracy faction led by Wolfowitz and Armitage. Although the activism of this faction was responsible in part for its growing success, a more thorough account of US-Filipino

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[64] Burton 1989:244-48.

[65] Memo – Wolfowitz to Shultz, 6 Feb 1985, NSA/Philippines – Doc. 2978. The declassified version of the memo is heavily redacted. Also, Wolfowitz's characterization of the Carter administration's policy toward Nicaragua was less than fair. Nonetheless, given that Nicaragua was the paradigmatic domino that had fallen to Communism because of American naiveté, the advocates of democracy promotion in the Philippines had no choice but to grapple with the Nicaraguan precedent.

[66] Bonner 1987:362-65. Bonner also notes that Bosworth held numerous meetings with journalists and congressmen during his brief stay in Washington.

relations must place such activism within the rhetorical context of the moment. On the same day that Wolfowitz sent his memo to Shultz, Ronald Reagan made his famous declaration that "We must stand by all our democratic allies. And we must not break faith with those who are risking their lives – on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua – to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth."[67] Five days later, in an exclusive interview with the *New York Times*, the paper's correspondents told Reagan that "there are people in Congress who are talking about the situation in the Philippines with the opposition parties in turmoil there, with the Communist insurrection. They're saying that the Philippines is our next Iran. Do you see the Philippines that way? Do you agree?" Reagan's response represented a comprehensive revision of the position he had taken during his debate with Mondale. Reagan told the *Times* that "we realize there is an opposition party that, we believe, is also pledged to democracy. We also are aware that there is another element in the Philippines that has Communist support and backing. What we're hopeful of is that the democratic processes will take place and, even if there is a change of party there, it would be that opposition faction which is still democratic in its principles…as I say, we're going to do, continue to do, everything we can as a longtime friend to see that the Philippines remain a democracy."[68]

[67] PP-RR, 6 Feb 1985, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress".
[68] PP-RR, 11 Feb 1985, "Interview". Reagan's suggestion that the Philippines ought to "remain" a democracy was somewhat fanciful, but the overall thrust of his remarks demonstrated that his understanding of Filipino politics was now consistent with NSDD 163's insistence on democratic reforms.

Snap!

On November 3, 1985, Ferdinand Marcos appeared as a guest on "This Week with David Brinkley", a weekly news program broadcast on ABC. Fluent in English and known for his prowess as a debater, Marcos had been a regular guest on network news programs throughout the 1980s. But on November 3, 1985, Marcos made the extraordinary announcement that the Philippines would hold presidential elections in early 1986 rather than in mid-1987 as scheduled. Marcos billed the elections as his chance to show the world that he more popular than ever, in spite of the widespread belief that he had lost his mandate. Moreover, Marcos added, international observers would be welcome to monitor the election and Ninoy's widow Corazon was welcome to run against him.[69] With the benefit of hindsight, most authors describe Marcos' decision to hold an early election as the critical mistake that led to his downfall. Yet in November 1985, well-informed observers in both Washington and Manila considered the announcement to be a masterful *coup de main* that would prevent the opposition from organizing itself to oppose Marcos' re-election.

In spite of the bitter conflict over Nicaragua that divided Congress throughout 1985 and 1986, both Democrats and Republicans displayed a remarkable ability to cooperate with one another for the purpose of promoting democracy in the Philippines. On May 15, 1985, the Senate passed a resolution calling for "the revitalization of

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[69] The next morning, Marcos' announcement was the top story in both the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. (WP, 4 Nov 1985:A1; NYT, 4 Nov 1985:A1) For maximum effect, Marcos wanted his announcement to seem spontaneous. Thus, Sen. Paul Laxalt (R-NV), a close friend of President Reagan, suggested to ABC interviewer George Will that he ask Marcos about the possibility of an early election. Both Laxalt and William Casey, the director of the CIA, later took credit for persuading Marcos to hold an early election. Yet according to Bosworth and other American diplomats, neither Laxalt nor Casey did so. (Burton 1989:290-91, Karnow 1989:408-10) Even so, the desire of conservative realists such as Laxalt and Casey to take credit for promoting democracy in the Philippines demonstrates just how much attitudes within the Reagan administration had changed since the early 1980s.

democracy in the Philippines." It passed by a vote of 89-8. Speaking on behalf of the resolution, Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) declared that "It is the belief of those of us who sponsor this amendment that the security interests of the United States will be enhanced in the Philippines only by a return to democracy at the earliest possible moment."[70] The Wilsonian premise of Kerry's statement, *i.e.* that democracy promotion and national security complement one another, reflected the beginning of a remarkable confluence of Republican and Democratic rhetoric in response to the declaration of the Reagan Doctrine. With regard to Nicaragua, liberal Democrats derived their arguments from the same principle of non-intervention embraced by the Carter administration. Yet when presented with the opportunity to force out a right-wing dictator like Marcos, Democrats such as Kerry saw the benefits of embracing Reagan's Wilsonian rhetoric as their own and then demanding that Reagan behave in a manner consistent with his own avowed principles. In a subtle swipe at the president's fondness for the *contras*, Sen. Kerry described the democratic opposition in the Philippines as the sort of "freedom fighters" that the United States should protect and support.[71]

In lockstep with the president, congressional Republicans adopted his Wilsonian rhetoric as their own. In November 1985, shortly after Marcos announced the snap election, both houses of Congress declared that strengthening democracy was the best way to fight Communism in the Philippines. The resolution passed the House by a vote of 407-0. In the Senate, Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-AK), the archconservative chairman of Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, declared that with regard to promoting democracy in the Philippines, "There are no factions, no divisions, no differences of

[70] CR, 15 May 1985:12029-33.
[71] CR, 1 Aug 1985:22085.

opinion in this body nor in the House of Representatives."[72] One might argue that Republican support for such resolutions was meaningless, since the passage of resolutions did nothing to restrict military or economic aid to the Marcos dictatorship. Yet during the final days of the dictatorship in February 1986, when only an unmitigated show of support from the United States could have saved Marcos, congressional Republicans still spoke out against the dictator.

In the few short months between Marcos' November surprise and the special election held on February 7, the pro-democracy faction within the administration worked closely with Marcos' most prominent critics on the Hill to ensure that Corazon Aquino had a fair shot at becoming president of the Philippines. In a November 7 memo for Secretary Shultz, Paul Wolfowitz sounded a pessimistic note about the prospects for a fair election in the Philippines. Yet Wolfowitz told Shultz that

> Whether this [*i.e.* the election] is an opportunity for us or not, we have very little choice. If Marcos goes ahead with election fraud, we will be facing a disaster in the Philippines. Therefore, we need to exert every pressure available to see to it that the election is reasonably fair.[73]

The following week, Rep. Solarz held hearings before his Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs that provided Wolfowitz and Armitage with a platform to launch their most direct attacks on Marcos to date. With the authority of the Pentagon behind him, Armitage testified that the NPA now had 16,500 men under arms and had the ability to fight the Filipino army to a draw within just 3 to 5 years. Wolfowitz stated that the only beneficiaries of a fraudulent election would be the Communist guerrillas. No one

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[72] CR, 14 November 1985:31846, 32168. On occasion, some Republicans did expressed limited discomfort with the new Wilsonian rhetoric. In July, Rep. Gerald Solomon (R-NY) told the House that he was a strong supporter of the democratic cause but felt that Marcos was being singled out for punishment in the same manner that the Shah of Iran had been singled out in the late 1970s. (CR, 9 July 1985:18098)

[73] Memo – Wolfowitz to Shultz, 7 Nov 1985, NSA/Philippines – Doc. 3053.

challenged his statement.[74] The behavior of Wolfowitz, Armitage and their audience confounds the realist expectation that nation-states are far more likely to compromise their principles when confronted by an external threat. Instead, the magnification of the Communist threat to the Philippines led the United States to promote democracy even more aggressively because of its leaders' Wilsonian faith that spreading democracy provides the best defense against foreign threats.

In practical terms, the American strategy to ensure the integrity of the Filipino elections rested almost entirely on the hope that the presence of election monitors, both Filipino and foreign, would prevent Marcos from rigging the vote. As Amb. Bosworth pointed out, the value of foreign observers was more symbolic than operational. As Bosworth wrote in a cable to Washington,

> Given the size of the country and the electorate, the complexity of the election process and the ingeniousness of electoral fraud, an American observer presence cannot by itself deter fraud. However, it will be a highly visible manifestation of US interest in the election. It can help to galvanize and inspire Filipino organizations such as NAMFREL which can so saturate the election process with poll watchers and observers as to significantly limit fraud or at least make it more difficult.[75]

In the final analysis, NAMFREL was the linchpin of the American approach. According to press accounts, NAMFREL expected to field 500,000 volunteer poll watchers, who would monitor approximately 90% of the 90,000 polling stations throughout the Philippines. In addition to ensuring the integrity of the vote, these observers would send

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[74] "Recent Events in the Philippines, Fall 1985", CIS-NO 86-H381-16, 12 Nov 1985:34, 63-4. Once again, Gerald Solomon expressed concern about the vilification Marcos and cited the precedent of Iran. Yet Solomon was adamant about the importance of elections and declared that "American foreign policy [ought] to promote true democracy throughout the world." (Ibid., 69)

[75] Cable – Manila to Washington, 18 Dec 1985, NSA/Philippines – Doc. 3142.

provisional results to NAMFREL headquarters, where a "quick count" would project the outcome of the vote before the government had time to adjust the results in its favor.[76]

Covering the Election

Candidate Marcos had all of the advantages that a European or North American politician could only dream of. The state-controlled media reported favorably and in great detail on everything he did or said, while ignoring his opponent. The state treasury served as his personal campaign fund. And when necessary, the state's security forces could harass and intimidate his opponents. But nothing could stop the Aquino surge. After starting slowly, Cory's campaign developed more and more momentum. It began to resemble a religious revival rather than a struggle for power. After two decades of abuse and corruption, Filipino voters had had enough. And their passion was obvious even to foreign observers. Ten days before the election, a front page story in the *New York Times* began by reporting that

> Tens of thousands of people took over the center of Manila's business district today in a wildly enthusiastic rally that demonstrated the wave of adulation that has built around the presidential campaign of Corazon C. Aquino.
>
> The crowd, 50,000 people or more, choked the district's main intersection, stranding buses and cars. A snowstorm of yellow confetti swirled in the updrafts between office buildings as Mrs. Aquino's supporters chanted her nickname, "Cory! Cory! Cory!"[77]

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[76] WP, 25 Jan 1986:A1. The United States funded NAMFREL to a certain extent. Raymond Bonner reports that USAID, an agency within the State Department, provided it with a minimum of $300,000. (Karnow 1989:412, Bonner 1987:407-410) In light of the size of NAMFREL's operations as well its strong support within the Manila business community, American funding deserves little to no credit for NAMFREL's success.

[77] NYT, 28 Jan 1986:A1. In a characteristic display of even-handedness, the *Times* also ran a front page story on Marcos that morning. It reported that "Obviously marshaling his limited energies for public rallies, the President, who is known to be ailing, faces the voters with a slow, leathery quality of resolution. His eyes work crowds with the hawklike air of the hunt as he blends warnings against Communism with denunciations of Mrs. Aquino's lack of experience. He tops this with the most freewheeling use of government largess to woo voters in his 20 years in power."

Although committed to winning at the polls, Aquino and her advisers never expected Marcos to acknowledge their victory. Instead, they looked forward to a "second campaign" designed to force Marcos to accept the results of the first. Moreover, Cory and her advisers accepted as a simple matter of fact, however unpleasant, that they needed the White House on their side in order to prevail against Marcos.[78] In the end, Reagan gave Cory the support that she needed, but only after his critics in Congress, in the media and within his own administration demanded that he fulfill his commitment to "not break faith with those who are risking their lives…[to] secure rights which have been ours from birth."

On election day, government-sponsored fraud and intimidation were so pervasive and so brazen that neither observers nor correspondents from the United States had to expend much effort to document their existence. Even the earliest reports in American newspapers read like a catalogue of abuse. Ballot boxes went missing. Voter registration lists disappeared. Soldiers and plainclothes officers intimidated voters to keep them away from the polls. Or instead, they distributed bribes to ensure that voters cast their ballots for Marcos. Busloads of government supporters traveled from one polling place to another in order to cast multiple ballots. Although such voters had to dip their fingers into indelible ink, it conveniently washed off.[79] The most dramatic evidence of government-sponsored fraud came to light two days after the election when thirty computer technicians working for the official Commission on Elections (COMELEC) left

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[78] Burton 1989:335-37.

[79] NYT, 7 Feb 1986:A10. Manila is twelve hours ahead of Washington and New York. Thus, the February 7 editions of the *Times* and the *Post* were able to report on elections that took place in the Philippines on February 7. For detailed first-person accounts of the day's events by American observers, see Lugar 1988:131-143 and Burton 1989:348-53.

their offices with computer disks in hand and sought refuge in a nearby church. The technicians reported that COMELEC was ignoring their data and shifting hundreds of thousands of votes to Marcos. As news of the walkout spread, journalists and members of the opposition mobbed the church. Also present was Sen. John Kerry, the ranking Democratic member of an observer mission sent by the White House and led by Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IA), Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. The technicians' walkout persuaded even the most skeptical members of the Lugar mission that Marcos was directly responsible for wholesale fraud.[80]

During a press conference four days after the Filipino election, Reagan declared that "we're concerned about the violence that was evident there and the possibility of fraud, although it could have been that all of that was occurring on both sides."[81] Even though the president's response was tentative and hypothetical, it ignited a firestorm. Cory vented her anger in a meeting with Amb. Bosworth, who made the extraordinary decision to disavow the president's statement and tell Cory that "It sometimes takes us a while to reach the right conclusion, but I'm convinced that we will soon. Please be patient." Bosworth himself was devastated after hoping that his embassy's extensive reporting on the wholesale theft of the election would ensure an appropriate reaction from the White House.[82] Cory and Bosworth were correct to interpret Reagan's statement as an indication of his inability to comprehend what Marcos had done. On the morning of Reagan's press conference, Sen. Lugar informed the president of what his mission had observed in the Philippines. Reagan responded by recounting an anecdote about how

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[80] For contemporary descriptions of the walkout, see WP, 10 Feb 1986:A1; NYT, 10 Feb 1986:A8. Bonner (1987:415-416) and Lugar (1988:145-148) describe the impact of the walkout on the observer mission.
[81] PP-RR, 11 Feb 1986, "The President's News Conference".
[82] Karnow 1989:414-415. On the embassy's efforts to provide a detailed, province by province report on electoral fraud, see Bonner 1987:423-24.

Cory's supporters had taken Marcos ballots and thrown them into a ditch. Lugar responded that the president should not be confused by such anecdotes. The government had committed wholesale fraud and was still in the process of adjusting the final results in order to ensure a victory for Marcos.[83]

In spite of Reagan's adamant resistance to overwhelming evidence of electoral fraud, the president admitted that he was wrong just four days later. On February 15, a written statement from the White House acknowledged that "it has already become evident, sadly, that the elections were marred by widespread fraud and violence perpetrated largely by the ruling party. It was so extreme that the election's credibility has been called into question both within the Philippines and in the United States."[84] Why did the president surrender to his critics rather standing by his old friend, Ferdinand Marcos? And why did a President notorious for his stubbornness suddenly display an unexpected degree of flexibility? The first answer to these questions emphasizes the role of the media. The second focuses on the role of Congress.

The American media provide their audience with short, intensive bursts of coverage about foreign events. It is hard to know in advance what sort of events provoke such bursts of coverage, although most of them involve either violence or elections.[85] In 1986, the Philippines had both. The challenger was the demure widow of a beloved martyr. The incumbent was an ailing dictator with a beautiful but avaricious wife. Moreover, both the challenger and incumbent spoke fluent English and constantly sought

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[83] Lugar 1988:152-3. A number of days later, Lugar found out that intelligence briefings for the President had also emphasized that Marcos was responsible for the fraud. Bonner (1987:421) and Karnow (1989:414) suggest that Nancy Reagan provided Reagan with his misinformation about the Philippines. The First Lady received her misinformation from Imelda Marcos, with whom she communicated via telephone.

[84] PP-RR, 15 Feb 1986, "Statement". The President's admission was written rather than spoken.

[85] Hess 1996:28-44.

to reinforce their credibility, both at home and abroad, by getting the attention of American correspondents. In anticipation of the drama, both ABC and NBC chose to broadcast the evening news from Manila. This decision ensured that every night, when tens of millions of American sat down to watch Peter Jennings or Tom Brokaw read the news, they would hear about Corazon Aquino and Ferdinand Marcos.[86]

Newspapers also lavished attention on the Philippines in an unprecedented manner. From 1981 through 1985, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* published, on average, one front page story about the Philippines per month. In January 1986, the month prior to the election, the *Times* published seven and the *Post* eight. But in the three weeks after the election, the *Times* published thirty-seven front page stories about the Philippines and the *Post* forty-four. In both papers, the Filipino election replaced the explosion of the American space shuttle *Challenger* as the most important story, bar none. During the first ten days of February, seven of the lead stories on the front page of the *Times* were about the *Challenger* and none about the Philippines. During the remainder of the month, twelve were about the Philippines and six about the *Challenger*. In short, Marcos' brazen effort to rig the election in the presence of so many foreign observers transformed events into an international sensation.

The total saturation of the American media with information about the Philippines made it impossible for Reagan to defend his personal belief that Marcos had not stolen the election. Even if Reagan had asked the networks to let him deliver a prime time address on national television, he couldn't have controlled the headlines for more than a

[86] CBS kept Dan Rather in the United States but dispatched its election analysis team to the Philippines, where it provided detailed coverage of the events in progress.

day. In the absence of such an effort to take back the headlines, Reagan had no control at all.

In addition to defending himself from the attacks of American journalists, Reagan had to contend with a hostile Congress, led by his fellow Republicans. On the morning after Reagan's remarks, Sen. Lugar told journalists that "The President was misinformed. The Philippine government was in control of the election. The preponderance of fraud was by the government."[87] Robert Dole (R-KS), the Republican majority leader in the Senate announced that if Marcos held on to power, widespread unrest would force the United States to withdraw its forces from the Philippines. Sen. Sam Nunn (D-GA), a conservative Democrat known for his expertise on military affairs and support for the *contras*, denounced Marcos and his allies for their "massive fraud, intimidation and murder."[88] Liberal Democrats criticized Reagan harshly as well, but that was to be expected. When conservatives turned on the president, there was no one left to defend him. Whereas standard practice for American journalists entails the presentation of both sides of an issue, the unanimity of Congress gave journalists sufficient license to treat Reagan's perspective on the Filipino election as an aberration rather than a legitimate perspective.

People Power

Reagan's admission that Marcos had stolen the election had no tangible impact on the crisis in the Philippines. Cory knew that she had won and would accept nothing short of Marcos' resignation. Marcos knew that he had lost but had no intention of letting the

[87] Lugar 1988:153. See also NYT, 13 Feb 1986:A1, "U.S. Tries to Limit Manila Confusion" and WP, 13 Feb 1986:A1, "Lugar Says Vote Fraud Could Halt Manila Aid".
[88] NYT, 14 Feb 1986:A1, "2 Key Senators Fault President on Philippines".

opposition take power. Reagan still refused to demand that Marcos step down in spite of his admission that Marcos had stolen the election. Thus the struggle for democracy took to the streets. The opposition held massive protests throughout the Philippines. Then, on Saturday evening, February 22, both Juan Ponce Enrile, the Filipino minister of defense, as well as Fidel Ramos, the acting chief of staff of the Filipino armed forces, publicly recognized Cory as the winner of the election. Within hours of their televised announcement, thousands of Filipinos began to gather around Camp Aguinaldo, the military compound in Manila in which Enrile, Ramos and their supporters had barricaded themselves in anticipation of a violent response from Marcos. The crowd outside the gates swelled from the thousands to the tens of thousands to the hundreds of thousands;

> Manila was delirious. The boulevard between the army camps was a human sea, the crowd surging and receding like a tide as government forces arrived and retreated and returned…One of several climaxes came when loyalist tanks lumbered into the area. As people changed hymns, priests and nuns knelt in prayer before the machines, and children pressed flowers on the crews. The tanks retired, the people advanced and the tanks withdrew.[89]

This was People Power. The swarms of jubilant protesters held their ground for three straight days, but Marcos refused to resign. As the crisis approached its crescendo, the United States government had to decide how it would respond.

Reagan sought to resolve the conflict between his perceptions and those of the outside world by sending Amb. Philip Habib to Manila. During his decades of service as an American diplomat, Habib became known as both a staunch conservative and a consummate professional. Shultz recommended that Reagan send Habib to Manila because the Secretary of State knew that the president had absolute confidence in the

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[89] Karnow 1989:418. Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, abbreviated 'Edsa', separated Camp Aguinaldo from a second military installation known as Camp Crame. Ramos and Enrile consolidated their forces at Camp Crame on the afternoon of Sunday, February 23. Thus, Edsa became the focal point of the protests. For a precise, day-by-day account of events in Manila, see Burton 1989:354-94.

Ambassador. At the same time, Shultz and other opponents of Marcos had absolute confidence that Habib would tell the president exactly what Marcos had done. The main drawback to sending Habib was that the ambassador would spend seven days in the Philippines, during which time there would be total paralysis in Washington despite the prospect of an explosion in Manila.[90] Armitage and Wolfowitz tried to rally support for Aquino by testifying yet again before Solarz's subcommittee, but the activism of the assistant secretaries no longer mattered now that decisions about the Philippines were being made by senior members of the cabinet, not to mention the president himself.[91]

The decisive showdown between the pro- and anti-Marcos forces within the Reagan administration took place on Sunday, February 23. At nine o'clock in the morning, Shultz hosted an informal meeting at his home in the Washington suburbs. Habib had returned the night before, just as the People Power revolution began to overwhelm Manila. On Sunday morning, Habib delivered exactly the message that Shultz was hoping for: Marcos had to go. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and National Security Adviser John Poindexter resisted Habib's advice. Weinberger wanted to know what would happen after Marcos left. Habib responded, "It's not Iran. There is a democratic opposition backed by the Catholic Church." Next, Weinberger insisted that Reagan would not be comfortable if the public thought he was going to abandon Marcos the way Carter had the Shah of Iran. Habib shouted back, "Give Marcos a chance to stay and he'll hang on. He has to go!" But the debate was not over. A final decision had to

[90] Bonner 1987:426-431; Karnow 1989:414-415. Habib's mission was a public affair and made front page news immediately after it was announced. See WP, 12 Feb 1986:A1; NYT, 12 Feb 1986:A1.
[91] For a transcript of the subcommittee hearing, see "The Philippine Election", CIS-NO 86-H381-43, 20 Feb 1986:55-103. Neither Armitage nor Wolfowitz could explicitly advocate supporting Cory, since that was not the administration's official policy. Their statements clearly suggested, however, that supporting democracy meant opposing Marcos.

be made at the White House, where the morning's protagonists met again at three in the afternoon along with Reagan, Bush, and Chief of Staff Donald Regan, who had announced on ABC in January that even if Marcos stole the election, the United States would accept the results. After Habib made his presentation, Regan invoked the Iranian precedent and insisted that getting rid of Marcos amounted to "opening the door to Communism." However, Reagan had sent Habib to Manila for a reason and ultimately agreed with him that Marcos had to go.[92]

The drama did not end on Sunday, however, since Reagan refused to call Marcos and inform him in person that the United States wanted him to step down, even though Reagan was prepared to offer Marcos asylum in the United States. Although Bosworth informed Marcos that the United States wanted him to stop down, Marcos ignored the message. Instead, Marcos bargained with Sen. Paul Laxalt (R-NV), one of Reagan's closest confidants, in the hope of negotiating some sort of compromise. Marcos' gambit paid off when Reagan consented to review his options at a Monday afternoon meeting with Laxalt and Shultz. Although Shultz persuaded Reagan to stand by decision that Marcos had to go, the president still refused to talk to Marcos himself. Laxalt, however, spoke to Marcos again, and this time the dictator listened.[93]

On the evening of Tuesday, February 25, three American helicopters arrived at the presidential palace in Manila to evacuate Marcos and his entourage. The helicopters

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[92] This account of the 9 AM and 3 PM meetings draws primarily on the work of Stanley Karnow (1989:419-420), who conducted extensive interview with many of the participants. Sandra Burton (1989:394-96) conducted similar interviews and provides an account of the meetings similar to Karnow's, albeit with less detail. The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* also described both meetings with a fair amount of precision less than one week after they took place. (See WP, 27 Feb 1986:A1; NYT, 28 Feb 1986:A12)

[93] Karnow 1989:420-21, Burton 1989:403-404. The details of Laxalt's negotiations with Marcos also became public within a matter of days. See WP, 26 Feb 1986:A1; *Time*, 10 Mar 1986 [Pagination unavailable in online archive].

flew their passengers to Clark Air Base, where Marcos and his entourage spent the night. Always grasping at some hope of reversing his surrender, Marcos tried to persuade the Americans to fly him to Paoay, his home town in the province of Ilocos Norte. After consulting with Cory, Bosworth decided to deny Marcos' request and send to him to Guam instead. Expecting resistance from Marcos and his bodyguards, who were still armed, the American general in charge roused Marcos and his entourage at 3:30 AM by telling them that the base was under attack by Communist guerrillas. The general then ordered his guests to turn over their weapons before boarding the American transport plane that would take them to Guam. Humiliated by the general's deception, Marcos' bodyguards hesitated to turn over their weapons. But finally, Marcos himself turned over his .357 Magnum to the American general and accepted his flight into exile.[94]

The Aftermath

Americans across the political spectrum celebrated the fall of Marcos and the inauguration of Corazon Aquino as president. Liberal columnist Anthony Lewis observed that

> It is a long time since Americans of all political views have felt so good about our country's role in a transforming event abroad. From left to right, we are proud that the United States helped the people of the Philippines carry out their Glorious Revolution.
>
> The reason for that rare unanimity of feeling is obvious. American policy in this instance expressed what we want to believe are the deepest American values.[95]

The only one who seemed to regret Cory's triumph was Reagan himself. The American president didn't personally congratulate Cory on her inauguration until two months after

[94] Burton 1989:407-414.
[95] NYT, 27 Feb 1986:A23.

she had taken office. During their three minute-long telephone conversation, Reagan invited Cory to visit Washington. Yet Reagan refused to elevate Cory's trip to the official status of "state visit" as he had done for Marcos in 1982. Moreover, before the White House announced that Reagan would speak to Cory, it announced that Reagan would speak to Marcos, who had taken up residence in Hawaii. In fact, Reagan had even considered visiting Marcos in person en route to an economic summit in Tokyo.[96]

In spite of Reagan's emotional attachment to the authoritarian past, he heralded American efforts to promote democracy in the Philippines as part of a global strategy of democracy promotion. In a written message submitted to Congress in March, Reagan declared that "In this global revolution, there can be no doubt where America stands. The American people believe in human rights and oppose tyranny in whatever form, whether of the left or the right."[97] Reagan's message made the front page of the *New York Times* under the headline "U.S. Vows to Resist Despots of Right As Well As Left". Two weeks later, an analytical essay in the *Times* observed that

> In large measure because of the Philippine experience, we now have a new Reagan approach, as set forth in his message to Congress: human rights and democratic revolution…And while senior Administration officials insisted in ensuing days that this was nothing new, it was, at least in emphasis. In fact, the text of the document was provided to *The New York Times* the day before its release because the White House wanted to call attention to its newness and importance.[98]

From Reagan's perspective, his administration's commitment to a global democratic revolution began with the 1982 election in El Salvador and the president's subsequent address to Parliament. Yet until the Reagan administration demonstrated that it would challenge dictatorships of the right as well as the left, journalists refused to take its

[96] NYT, 25 Apr 1986:A1, 26 Apr 1986:A1.
[97] PP-RR, 14 Mar 1986, "Message".
[98] NYT, 30 Mar 1986, Sect. 6 – Page 31.

democratic aspirations seriously. Even Richard Lugar, who played an important role in shaping US policy toward Central America, asserted that "the ideas of Jeane Kirkpatrick dominated conservative foreign policy debates from the time of her *Commentary* article [in 1979] until the Philippine election and revolution of February 1986."[99]

Conclusion

Why did the Reagan administration decide, in the final analysis, to support a democratic revolution in the Philippines if the president himself demonstrated such a clear preference for the preservation of the Marcos dictatorship? To be sure, no single cause bore full responsibility for the outcome of an extremely complex decision-making process. Balance-of-power considerations, bureaucratic power struggles, unexpected events and ideological forces all played a role. Yet no comprehensive account of American foreign policy toward the Philippines in the 1980s can afford to ignore the importance of public debates and presidential rhetoric. During the first year and a half of the Reagan administration, when the president refused to pay even lip service to the Wilsonian idealism he would later embrace, the United States consistently sought to consolidate pro-American dictatorships in the developing world, including the one in Manila. Yet once Reagan began to embrace democracy promotion rhetorically, he made it possible for his subordinates to promote democracy in practice. After the assassination of Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, an influential cadre of subcabinet officials launched an aggressive effort, in tandem with the Filipino opposition, to resurrect democratic institutions in the Philippines. Although the president never expressed any support for this endeavor in its initial stages, his public commitment to democracy promotion

[99] Lugar 1988:31-32.

provided the aegis under which men such as Stephen Bosworth, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Armitage and Michael Armacost could operate with considerable independence. After the proclamation of the Reagan Doctrine in February 1985, the increasingly pro-democratic thrust of the president's public statements made Reagan susceptible to his subordinates' argument that democratic reforms were the best defense against a Communist takeover in the Philippines. Neither Reagan nor anyone else seemed to anticipate that just twelve months later, this push for reform might force Reagan to abandon Marcos in almost exactly the same manner that Carter had once abandoned the Shah of Iran. Reagan tried to persuade both himself and the American public that Marcos had not stolen the February 1986 election, but found himself powerless to resist the evidence assembled by enterprising journalists and a united Congress. By putting himself on the record as an advocate of democracy promotion, Reagan inadvertently gave rise to the conditions that would one day force him to live up to his promise.

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